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Bringing China-U.S. youths closer: President Xi Jinping's reply letter to Kean University

"I was surprised to get President Xi's reply letter to me," said Dr. Lamont O. Repollet, President of Kean University in the USA, "President Xi's sincere words are truly inspiring."

In the recent reply letter to Lamont O. Repollet, President of Kean University in the United States, Xi encouraged the universities in China and the United States to strengthen exchanges and cooperation and contribute to the China-U.S. friendship. Xi recalled that in 2006, he witnessed the signing ceremony of China-U.S. cooperation in establishing Wenzhou-Kean University. He also asked Repollet to convey his greetings to Dr. Dawood Farahi, former President of Kean University.

Repollet was deeply moved by President Xi's concern for the university, his emphasis on China-U.S. educational exchanges and cooperation, and his greetings to old friends. He told the reporters that efforts would continue to be made to bring Wenzhou-Kean University, the China-U.S. joint education program venture university that had received care from President Xi, to a higher level.

In an interview from Hawaii, Farahi said he was "deeply honored" to receive President Xi's greetings. "It is the foresight of President Xi that has opened up the way for our undertaking," he said.

► "To take this undertaking to the next glory"

On June 7, Dr. Repollet gave an invited speech at the graduation ceremony of Wenzhou-Kean University. This university has seen a continuous rise in rankings in recent years and was celebrating the graduation of its first 9 doctoral students this year. He said that the good news that kept coming "makes us excited."



Dr. Lamont Repollet, President of Kean University, delivering a speech at the Wenzhou-Kean University graduation ceremony.

"This undertaking that Xi initiated has already borne great fruit. Whether it is between the U.S. and Chinese universities or between the provinces and states, close cooperation has been established, providing great support for the development of China-U.S. educational cooperation," Repollet explained the reason why he had written to Xi.

In May 2006, with the assistance of Xi, who was then the secretary of the Communist Party of China Zhejiang Provincial Committee, Wenzhou University and Kean University formally signed an agreement about the founding of Wenzhou-Kean University. In September 2014, with approval from the Chinese Ministry of Education, the university was officially established. Currently, Wenzhou-Kean University has about 4,500 students at undergraduate, master and doctoral levels and over 3,300 have earned their undergraduate degrees over the past 8 years. In September 2015, on the third U.S.-China Governors' Forum in Seattle during his visit to the United States, Xi singled out the university as "making good progress."

Xie Shuhua, former Chairperson of Wenzhou University, told the reporters that Zhejiang Province and the State of New Jersey had established the sister-state relationship since 1981. The long-lasting friendship facilitated the founding of Wenzhou-Kean University.

In 2006, Dr. Farahi had "a deep conversation for several hours" with Xi, when he visited New Jersey and Kean University. Over the years, Dr. Farahi's constant visits to China have shown him a China that is continuously developing and innovating. This is especially true for Zhejiang Province, where the university is located. It is at the forefront of scientific and technological innovation. "As President Xi said in 2006, we chose the right place and the right time," Dr. Farahi noted.

Repollet stated that the development of Wenzhou-Kean University was like a "relay race." Xi and Dr. Farahi "started the chapter" of this cooperation and exchange. "Now, we need to take this endeavor to the next glory."

► "Youth are the force that will change the future"

In the corridor of the Student Center at Kean University in New Jersey, photos of the university's various campuses are displayed. Among them, the photos of the beautiful campus scenery of Wenzhou-Kean University and the founding stone laying ceremony attract the most attention. Everyone interviewed on the campus is familiar with this China-U.S. joint venture university.



Founding stone laying ceremony photos of Wenzhou-Kean University in the corridor of the Student Center at Kean University's main campus

In his reply letter, President Xi emphasized that educational exchanges and cooperation helped promote mutual understanding and friendship

between the people of the two countries, especially the youths, and this was a project for the future development of bilateral relations.

"Youths are the power that will shape the future," Repollet said. Educational exchanges will allow young people to find more common ground and help them enhance people-to-people friendship between China and the U.S.

"We encourage more students to engage in exchanges with China by establishing innovative projects in artificial intelligence, computer science, and other fields, thereby deepening mutual understanding between the students from both countries," Repollet said. Over the past 18 months, Repollet has visited China for four times. He has set a personal goal to visit China at least three times each academic year, believing that to encourage the students to appreciate the "meaning of exchange and cooperation," educators should set an example.



Chinese and American teachers and students in an International Cultural Festival event at Wenzhou-Kean University, on April 26

Diana Castañeda, a junior at Kean University majoring in Business Management, planned to apply for an exchange program at Wenzhou-Kean University next summer. "I am eager to learn more about China," she said.

Yan Xiaopeng, Vice Chairperson at Wenzhou-Kean University, stated that the university had been actively promoting exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and American students, and had facilitated over 1,750 student

exchange to date. He also mentioned that this summer would welcome another 25 American students coming to China for an exchange program.

"President Xi's reply letter is a high recognition of our efforts," said Mick Balmer, an American teacher who has been teaching at Wenzhou-Kean University for nearly five years. "The closer connection between the younger generations of China and the U.S. not only benefits mutual understanding but would also make the world a better place."

► "This is the key to managing the bilateral relationship in the future"

"You and other individuals from the American educational community are welcome to pay more visits to China." President Xi Jinping's reply letter has encouraged American educators.

Dennis Simon, a senior research fellow at the China-U.S. Research Center and former Executive Vice Chancellor of Duke Kunshan University, said, "China-U.S. educational exchanges and academic cooperation have always been the fundamental elements of bilateral relationship."



Chinese and American students with a panda toy at the giant panda exhibit in Shijiazhuang Zoo, April 21

Madelyn Ross (Chinese name: Rao Mei), President of the U.S.-China Education Trust, stated that President Xi's reply to the President of Kean University was a strong support for continuing education exchanges between the two

countries. "We need to provide opportunities for young people from China and the U.S. to understand each other's country and study in each other's country. This is key to managing the bilateral relationship in the future."

Various forms of educational cooperation programs between China and the U.S. have been developing rapidly. Besides Wenzhou-Kean University, institutions like Duke Kunshan University, NYU Shanghai, and Tianjin Juilliard School are also well-known. Additionally, dozens of other cooperative projects, like the Center for Chinese and American Studies jointly established by Johns Hopkins University and Nanjing University, are also being actively promoted.

U.S. National Speech Contest Winners China Tour Program held

The "Chinese Bridge Program: U.S. National Speech Contest Winners China Tour" was held by Beijing Normal University from June 2 to 15. Nineteen award-winning participants including students from Harvard University, Stanford University, and other institutions, as well as some high school students, took part in this event.



The school attached great importance to this study program and made a meticulously planned curriculum according to the students' Chinese language proficiency and interests. The program had the teaching objectives of four dimensions: cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, cross-cultural awareness, and cultural attitudes; and the teaching

content consisted of three sections: social life, traditional culture, and contemporary China. The program had a series of themed classes and cultural experience activities - "Beijing Study Tour". A "Dialogue with Beijing" study guide was also prepared for the students. Thus, the program formed a combination of a curriculum consisting "language and culture themed classes," "cultural experience activities" and the "study guide". Through the teaching methods of "teamwork," "task-oriented activities" and "game section", the learning process became very engaging and the students gained a deeper understanding of Chinese society and culture.



"I think the study guide is a very comprehensive tool for understanding Chinese culture and learning Chinese". "The interactive activities in the study guide combined our experiences in the culture field trip with our Chinese proficiency. These activities have enriched our vocabulary." "It allows the activities to be measurable and tracked easily."



At the end of the summer program, the students wrote in a letter, "I will remember the time I spent at Beijing Normal University with the teachers at the age of 16" and "I had thought I would go to university in Utah, but now I feel like I can study and work in China. This is one of my best experiences in life. I want to say again, 'Thank you, Beijing Normal University.'" "If the fates have it, may we meet again, whether as a student, or through an exchange program, or otherwise, I would love to come back to my beloved, beautiful Beijing Normal University."

Shaolin Temple welcomes disciples from the U.S.

On June 4, Yuan Long, the head of the Longyun Shaolin Kung Fu Academy in the U.S., and Yan Qing, the head of the Shaolin Cultural Center in Arizona, respectively took 44 and 66 American Shaolin disciples, on a pilgrimage trip to Shaolin Temple.



In front of the abbot's chamber at Shaolin Temple, the American Shaolin disciples performed traditional Buddhist rituals, bowing and paying respects to Master Shi Yongxin, and demonstrated what they had learned. Abbot Yongxin welcomed the international disciples and hoped that their visit would allow them to deeply experience the integrated Zen and martial arts culture of Shaolin, and appreciate the profound heritage of the Zen ancestral home.



Additionally, the delegation traveled to Beijing, Xi'an, Luoyang, and other places to explore the beautiful landscapes of China, experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture, and engage in cultural exchanges with Capital University of Physical Education and Sports and the Liangjiadian Primary School Affiliated to Renmin University, aiming to promote Shaolin culture and strengthen the friendship between China and the U.S.



Music bridges friendship: Yale University's Whiffenpoofs choir visits Zhejiang University

Czech folk song Aj Lucka, Lucka iroká, Mongolian folk song Sihai (The Four Seas), the Broadway musical's theme song On a Clear Day You Can

See Forever... What kind of sparks will be produced when Chinese and foreign folk songs are on the same stage with contemporary pop?

On June 10, the Whiffenpoofs Choir from Yale University and the Wenqin Choir from Zhejiang University jointly presented an auditory feast to the audience through music. The choir's performance combined eastern and western cultures brimming with youthful vitality.



The performance featured a cappella, covering a variety of musical genres, including traditional folk songs, pop music, classic songs, and original works. The audience enjoyed the wonderful pieces such as Goodbye Yellow Brick Road, The Whiffenpoof Song, and You Are the Music, and applauded enthusiastically after each song. As music danced with the soul, the show concluded with the beautiful melody of September Song by Chinese and American youths together, leaving every participant with fond memories.

Peter Sykes, the musical director of the Whiffenpoofs Choir and an undergraduate student at Yale University, said, "My chorus members and I enjoy this performance, and we love listening to the Wenqin choir. Although

we come from the other part of the world, we share a common passion for singing, and we have more in common than anticipated." Jin Zhengyuan, a member of the Wenqin Choir and an undergraduate student at Zhejiang University, said that the joint performance with the Whiffenpoofs was a cross-ocean dialogue among the youths. "Their musical skills and talent have opened our eyes. Following the rhythm of the music, we feel the charm and resonance of culture."

During their stay at Zhejiang University, the Whiffenpoofs Choir also participated in a series of cultural exchange activities.

In the morning of June 11, a China-U.S. Youth Workshop was held. The Whiffenpoofs and the Wenqin Choir each introduced their histories, organizational structures, training models, and recruitment processes. They also shared their performance and competition experiences as well as their favorite types of music. There was also an in-depth discussion on China and the U.S. campus life, humanities and arts, and personal plans, creating a relaxing and lively atmosphere.



In the afternoon of June 10, some members of the Whiffenpoofs and the Wenqin Choir made Zongzi (a kind of traditional Chinese food) together to celebrate the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival. Together with the canteen staff, the students gathered around, learning to make Zongzi while chatting about the traditional customs and historical stories of the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival.



The Whiffenpoofs Choir also visited the Zhejiang University History Museum. As a museum tour guide, Chen Siyu, a student from Qiushi School, shared vivid historical stories of the university and the spirit of the people of the university, helping the Yale students understand the university's development journey and the perseverance and vigor of its academic tradition.



The two-day visit quickly came to an end, but the Whiffenpoofs Choir's trip to Zhejiang University planted a seed of "melody" in the hearts of the students. Everyone looked forward to continuing to compose a beautiful chapter of China-U.S. youth exchanges through their actions.

"Yangtze - Mississippi" China-U.S. Youth Exchange Roundtable held

On June 10, more than 40 youth representatives from Chinese and American universities, enterprises, and social organizations gathered at Central China Normal University, for the "Yangtze-Mississippi" China-U.S. Youth Roundtable. They shared their experiences and insights on the theme of Unite Youth Power, Promote Green Development. American youth representatives said that China's progress in green technology, urban planning, and environmental protection was impressive, and the youths of China and the U.S. should work together to contribute to global green development.



In Hubei, Chinese and American youths visited the magnificent Yangtze River, experienced the profound Jingchu culture, and felt the vigorous momentum of green development. Strolling around Mount Wudang, the delegation visited the ancient architecture amidst majestic peaks and secluded cliffs, watched martial arts performances, and even learned the 24-form Tai Chi with foreign disciples who were practicing

martial arts on the mountain.

"Learning about the history and culture of these temples amid such stunning scenery is awesome. Practicing Tai Chi is far from as easy as it looks; it requires a lot of practice and precise control over the body. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn more about Chinese culture here," said Laura Herbert, a master's student at Northeastern State University.

With the drums pounding and flutes playing, Herbert, who had been learning the violin since childhood, watched an erhu performance for the first time at Wuhan Conservatory of Music. When she learned that erhu, as a musical instrument with only two strings, could perform a piece as grand as Horse Race, she exclaimed in amazement: "Unbelievable!"

At sunset, as they boarded the Glory - a Yangtze River cruise, Lea Alex immediately recognized the Yellow Crane Tower on the shore. She told the reporters that her mother participated in an art exchange program in China last year and visited Wuhan, Yichang, and Beijing. After returning to the United States, her mother created a series of oil paintings themed around Chinese landscapes, one of which was the Yellow Crane Tower. "Under my mother's influence, I'm no stranger to this city at all," Alex said.

Wang Leyi, a student from Hubei University of Education and a volunteer for this China-U.S. youth exchange program, said, "Cultural differences didn't hinder communication. Everyone respected and valued the exchange and mutual learning of diverse cultures with an open and inclusive attitude." Her program pair, Ryan, also expressed her appreciation for the detailed introductions by Wang Leyi, her Chinese friend, which allowed her to understand a vibrant and charming China. "This trip has enabled me to have a more comprehensive and vivid understanding of China," Ryan said.



Intercultural Montessori Language School delegation visits Soong Ching Ling School

The Chinese Language

*"The world is learning Chinese
Confucius's words are getting popular
The world is speaking Chinese
The words we say
will be carefully heard"*

As the melody of the song, The Chinese Language, echoed, the Chinese and American students stood on the central lawn of Soong Ching Ling School hand in hand. Each word and note from their mouths revealed a deep respect and love for Chinese culture. When the choir reached the climax, their voices merged into a warm stream, touching every listener present, enriching the hearts of the youths from both countries, and establishing a cross-border friendship.



On June 11, 2024, a delegation of 33 teachers and students from the Intercultural Montessori Language School in Chicago visited Soong Ching Ling School in Shanghai. This visit was

not only an educational exchange event, but also a vivid representation of the friendly relations between China and the United States among young people.



Chicago and Soong Ching Ling A great love that transcends time and space

America & China



Yang Zao, Han Chun, and a soldier in Yan'an standing in front of a cave house, 1949

Chicago is the hometown of the nuclear physicist and internationalist fighter Han Chun (Joan Hinton). In 1948, with the help of Soong Ching Ling, Han Chun came to China

without hesitation. A deep friendship had been established between Soong Ching Ling and Han Chun, with Soong naming Han's son "He Ping (meaning peace)." Han Chun and her husband lived and worked in China for more than 60 years. She was the first foreigner who had received a permanent residence permit in China and had dedicated her entire effort to the cause of China's socialist construction.



The friendship transcends time and space. During the COVID-19, the students in Chicago showed their love and support by promptly raising funds and donating valuable medical supplies to China. They wrote letters in Chinese, "We hope that more people could support China and Wuhan." These letters, like a warm ray of sunshine, pierced through the pandemic's gloom and deeply touched all the Chinese people.



This spirit of great love has been passed down through generations of students at Soong Ching Ling School. The Montessori delegation visited the "Soong Ching Ling Library," learning about Soong Ching Ling's extraordinary efforts in uniting international friends and striving for world peace. They felt her spirit of love that transcended borders and cultures. This spirit will continue among the students of the two schools, and the torch has been passed on from generation to generation, illuminating the way forward.

Find resonance in China-U.S. culture exchange



The performance by the Song Qingling School orchestra was like summer thunder, powerful and passionate, welcoming the American guests from afar. The music and melodies captured the hearts of everyone. Music, this borderless language, with its harmony and strength, bridged culture and language gaps and tightly connected the hearts of people of different colors and languages.

The American students then presented a Tai Chi Fan performance. Their movements were so smooth, combining strength and softness, that they showcased the profundity and elegance of Tai Chi culture.



This was not only an audio-visual feast but also a dialogue of the soul, so that every audience present was immersed in the charm of traditional Chinese culture.



The atmosphere of the Dragon Boat Festival was still lingering, which brought the tradition of sachets to the campus. Students from both schools made sachets together, experiencing the unique charm of this tradition. Their fingers wove through the threads like they were weaving the bonds of friendship, tightly connecting the hearts of Chinese and American youths.



These handmade sachets not only carried the auspicious meaning of warding off evil and disease but also embodied the appreciation and blessings of friendship. As they carried these heartfelt wishes back to America, like the fragrant spices in the sachets emitting a lasting and enchanting aroma, this cross-border cultural exchange experience will become a shared and treasured memory in the hearts of both Chinese and American youths.



"The relations between nations lie in the bonds between their peoples, and the bonds between peoples lie in their connected hearts." In the relaxing and joyful exchanges, students from different cultural backgrounds discovered more similarities - thirst for knowledge, appreciation of friendship, and shared aspiration for a bright future.

Two American high school delegations visit the high school affiliated to SUSTech



On June 12, two delegations from Bolingbrook High School and Romeoville High School in Chicago, U.S., visited the High School Affiliated to Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech) in Shenzhen, China. They attended classes, experienced Chinese culture, and gained insights into contemporary China.

This event was not only a friendly interaction between schools but also a bridge for China-U.S. education and culture exchange. As a high school featuring international, digital, and innovative education, the High School Affiliated to SUSTech would fully showcase its unique advantages in education philosophy and resources. He hoped that during this exchange, the youths from both sides would explore the frontiers of science and technology together, appreciate the charm of diverse cultures, and write a new chapter in the China-U.S. education exchange history.



Flight Simulation Class | Dream with C919



General Technology Class | Laser Manufacturing



An old Chinese saying goes: "Isn't it a pleasure to have friends coming from afar?" It is believed that through this exchange, the seeds of friendship have quietly taken root in the hearts of the youths from both countries and will grow and flourish. It is hoped that the young people from the three schools in the U.S. and China can take this exchange event as an opportunity to enhance mutual friendship, learn from one another, and work together to inject youth vitality into a stable, healthy, and sustainable development of China-U.S. relations.



Welcoming songs and dance



PE Class | Wing Chun Principle and Mentality



Biology Class | Extraction and Separation of Plant Pigments



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