Report on OIP Supported Trip to China

Summer 2011

This past summer, supported by an OIP grant, I traveled to Beijing China to lead a three-week long intensive Chinese Language program at the Capital Normal University (CNU). The program was a huge success.

The objectives of the course, entitled Chinese 496: Chinese Language and Culture, were two folds: the enhancement of knowledge and skills in both Chinese culture and the Chinese language. Taking place on the campus of Capital Normal University, the course took advantage of the authentic locale and maximally integrated cultural immersion with the intensive development of language skills. Noteworthy features of the program include:

1. The language component of the program concentrated on oral proficiency, given the short duration. Due to the high quality of instruction and the intensity of the program (four hours of instruction in the morning and one hour of one-on-one practice in the afternoon), the students made tremendous progress in their listening and speaking skills.

2. In addition to classroom instruction, there was daily one-on-one conversational practice with volunteers from Capital Normal University, on assigned topics that reflect closely the content of the lessons and cultural excursions (for example, self-introduction, getting to know each other, navigating Beijing and the neighborhood, reporting on excursions).

3. Apart from the language classes, daily afternoon lectures were given on the Chinese language, strategies for learning Chinese, geography, society and politics of China, given by SDSU faculty members (Zhang and Guang) and guest speakers (David Moser, academic director of CET in Beijing, Chad Springer, SDSU alum/accomplished student of Chinese, Matt Schauer, ISCOR student association president/accomplished student of Chinese).

4. Outside of classroom, students went on many cultural excursions, which included the Great Wall, Forbidden City, Beihai Park, Jingshan Park, Yonghe Lama Temple, Summer Palace, Temple of Heaven, the Olympic Venues, the National Museum, the National Performing Art Center and Qianmen Shopping area. Students also completed real-life tasks such as ordering food, bargaining, interacting with the locals, and navigating the public transportation system.
learning Chinese and living in China. A questionnaire was sent by Prof. Mattingly to students before and after the program to access their level of achievement.

**Strengths:**

From the student feedback, the Beijing program was an unqualified success. The success can be attributed to a combination of factors:

1. Good facilities: The International Cultural Complex, where the program was based, includes classrooms, administrative offices, dormitory, shops, and restaurants, all in one building. The classrooms are modern and well-equipped; the dorm rooms are clean, and comfortable.

2. Ideal teacher-student ratio: CNU assigned 5 teachers for our 9 students.

3. Quality of faculty: The team of five teachers are well-trained and experienced, including a Ph.D. in linguistics from Beijing University and a senior instructor who has taught in Italy and Duke University. The teachers were also very receptive to feedback and suggestions concerning instruction.

4. Experienced staff: The staff in the office of international students was helpful, efficient and experienced.

5. Volunteers: the volunteer system worked extremely well, giving students both opportunities to practice their language and access to local culture.

**Areas for Improvement**

Since this is the first time the program was held, there were some areas for improvement:

1. The duration of the program can be re-considered, for two reasons: Most summer programs are 8 weeks long, covering the equivalent of one academic year. Some students also wish the program to be longer.

2. More cultural classes/experiences can be planned: such as calligraphy and martial art demonstration, traditional performances and so on.

3. Budget should be included for guest lecturers and incidental expenses such as the welcome/graduation dinners and copy and printing expense.