

News Release

China Visit Provides Faculty and Staff an Opportunity to Learn More about Educational Partnerships, Culture and Communication

By Krista Lemos on Monday, October 8, 2007

Diving into new cultures is not an easy task, especially when you are trying to share the same curriculum. A partnership between Zhejiang Economic and Trade Polytechnic (ZJETP) in China and the University of Minnesota Crookston have aided students, faculty and staff from both countries in learning more about global perspectives, studying abroad and culture. Delegates from the U of M Crookston were sent to China in early summer 2007 with succinct goals at hand; to combine curriculum, gain international experience to share with others on campus, attain information about culture, knowledge and communication.

The two University's relationship began in earnest in August 2006, when U of M Crookston faculty and staff traveled to ZJETP to support coursework development for U of M Crookston courses being taught at ZJETP. The University of Minnesota Crookston established an international partnership with ZJETP in late 2005 to enhance opportunities for students to study and faculty to work collaboratively. Students begin their studies in China, completing coursework in the areas of agriculture business management and computer software engineering and information technology management, and travel to the U of M Crookston to complete their bachelor's degrees.

U of M Crookston faculty and staff have worked with ZJETP to develop curriculum taught in China that will transfer to the University of Minnesota. ZJETP students will study for three years in China taking one U of M Crookston course per semester along with English proficiency classes and then transfer to the University of Minnesota Crookston for three semesters to earn a bachelor's degree from here. The purpose of the meetings between the two universities was to benefit their existing relationship, which will foster future collaboration with the Zhejiang Forestry University (ZFU) in Zhejiang province in China.

"Two main goals of the trip were to produce actual course exchanges. It is designed to help prepare Chinese students who are taking the same course as a student at the University of Minnesota Crookston," said Pam Elf, U of M Crookston biology professor. "The other goal was curriculum matching with one of the Universities."

UMC faculty members Jingpeng Tang, Ph.D., Pamela Elf, Ph.D., and David Crawford and Twin Cities instructor Peter Border continued to help ZJETP construct and teach educational courses based on their contract between the U of M Crookston and ZJETP signed two years ago. These faculty members, along with Kevin Thompson, Ph.D., Kenneth Johnson, David DeMuth, Jr., Ph.D., and John Loegering, Ph.D., and Director of Communications Krista Lemos were U of M, Crookston's ambassadors and met with ZFU to seek a possible future collaboration with UMC, similar to the partnership that UMC has with ZJETP. They aided in recruiting perspective new students, along with making arrangements to teach courses at ZFU.

"We wanted to expand our view of the world so that we could relate it back to our students," said Thompson, assistant communication professor. "We are now able to connect with students on a whole new level. Communication is key in every culture and we gain information by that."

Relationships and reputation are strong assets in Chinese culture, as well as the American culture. According to Lemos, the University of Minnesota Crookston is building relationships with other countries to market the University on a global scale. "The University of Minnesota has a strong reputation in China, which we can leverage," said Lemos. "ZJETP introduced us to ZFU because of those strong ties and reputation."

One advantage that the U of M Crookston has in China is that it is very advanced technologically. "China sees our campus as very progressive and that we have the drive to advance and deliver courses around the world," said Lemos. The University of Minnesota Crookston was the first campus in the nation to provide laptop computers for all students and faculty. Along with technology, the U of M Crookston campus has strategically worked to attract international student to campus to benefit all students. Lemos commented, "The more diverse the U of M Crookston's student body, the broader everyone's global perspectives will be."

The delegates also visited Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an and Hangzhou for culture tours and to explore new opportunities for University of Minnesota Crookston students to study abroad. The experiences are something that they can share with students preparing for the same type of trip.

College is about experiencing everything that it has to offer, and the University of Minnesota Crookston has it all. Not only can students have unique opportunities, but more than likely, the faculty and staff they know have shared the same experiences. The U of M Crookston prides itself on its relationships, on campus, in Minnesota, in the nation and now, in the world.

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2900 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716
800-862-6466 | 218-281-6510 | umcinfo@umn.edu

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