

News Release

U of M, Crookston Receives \$100,000 Grant from the U.S. Department of State to Establish an American Cultural Center in China

By Itolfe on Monday, November 12, 2012 A \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of State will fund a collaborative effort between the University of Minnesota, Crookston and Zhejiang Economic and Trade Polytechnic (ZJETP) to establish an American Cultural Center in China. The purpose of the cultural center, to be located on the campus of ZJETP in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, is to cultivate greater understanding between the United States and China. One of the unique aspects of the American Cultural Center at ZJETP is the construction of a 3-D immersive lab similar to the one located on the Crookston campus.

Students in China will be able to use the lab to demonstrate American historical scenes and visit sites in the U.S. including universities, national landmarks, and other places of interest. The lab combines the most recent computer technology, sensor technology, and visual technology to allow users to "immerse" themselves in a virtual environment and interact with that environment. Along with the 3-D immersive lab, the American Cultural Center at ZJETP will include a multimedia conference room and theater, a reading room, and an e-reading room.

To be eligible for the grant, an applicant had to demonstrate expertise in one or more of the following subject areas: people-to-people exchanges, cultural and academic programming, international cooperation, institution-to-institution partnerships, and the ability to develop and implement programs in China. The one-time grant funding, which runs from September 20, 2012, through September 20, 2013, will promote a greater understanding of and appreciation for American culture.

Jingpeng Tang, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Math, Science, and Technology Department on the Crookston campus is the grant's principal investigator. Kim Gillette, Ph.D., director of the Office of International Programs will join Tang to serve as the cultural center's deputy directors. Serving as their counterpart as deputy director in China is Mingdi Gu, who is the director of the international office at ZJETP.

According to Tang, the American Cultural Center is the natural outgrowth of a long-term relationship between the U of M, Crookston and ZJETP. "We have been partners with Zhejiang Economic and Trade Polytechnic since 2005," Tang says. "This American Cultural Center will help foster mutual understanding between both countries, assist with student recruitment, and further our campus mission of outreach. We are excited about the opportunity and proud to be included among the campuses that have this kind of collaboration." The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities is home to the only other center of this kind in the U of M system.

One of the long term goals for the American Cultural Center at ZJETP is to use it as a bridge to universities, businesses, industries, governmental and non-governmental agencies in the United States and Zhejiang province and the Yangtze River Delta of China, including Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. The Center also opens doors for potential research opportunities across both campuses.

Background

Over their history, the U of M, Crookston and ZJETP have collaborated on student exchange, faculty exchange, curriculum construction, and joint programs. More than 50 students from ZJETP have attended the U of M, Crookston in the software engineering, business management, and agricultural business programs. These programs allow ZJETP students to transfer to the U of M, Crookston to complete a bachelor's degree. The Crookston campus also established an English as Second Language (ESL) Center on the ZJETP campus. Study abroad opportunities for both faculty and students at the U of M, Crookston have been enhanced by the relationship with ZJETP and many have taken advantage of the opportunity to visit the campus in China. Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 26 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and 39 concentrations on campus--as well as 10 degrees online--in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

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

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