


tional Student Services, home of numerous travel abroad programs, including "Journey to China" [see sidebar]; and Robert Cox, associate professor and director of the School of International and Area Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences, which has added five faculty for enlarged Chinese-related programs and has some 40 students working on Asian Studies degrees.

"When he came here 12 years ago, President Boren said that all students must graduate with an international perspective, regardless of their academic discipline. He's also been very consistent in saying that China is very important to that," Cox says. "That's a good vision, and one we're trying to achieve. I'm really encouraged that so many students recognize they need to find their place in the global society."

A major step in the continuing expansion of Chinese-related programs is the creation of the Newman Institute of U.S.-China Issues and a corresponding endowed faculty chair made possible through a \$1 million gift from Ruth and Harold J. Newman (B.S. geography, 1951) of Connecticut. The new institute will focus on topics of great relevance to the two countries, including trade, the economy, natural resources, the environment and industrial policy.

Peter Hays Gries is the inaugural Newman Chair and institute director. "As we envision it, the U.S.-China Institute has two functions: to promote China studies at OU and around Oklahoma and to focus on research and policy at the national and international levels," Gries explains. "That includes networking with the Oklahoma business community and making it aware of what's going on in China and the opportunities and risks of doing business there. OU has the potential to become a big player in fostering these relationships."

Indeed. As the Greatest Master wrote so many centuries ago: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." 

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Journeying to

While the burgeoning Chinese language program provided the foundation for establishing the OU Confucius Institute, another crucial requirement was the number and type of available opportunities for strengthening ties between the University of Oklahoma and China. Perhaps the most well known is "Journey to China," a summer program in which 25 to 35 students experience four weeks in four different locations.

"The Journey to China program has given OU a presence and identity in China," explains Paul B. Bell Jr., dean of the OU College of Arts and Sciences and vice provost for instruction. "Many universities send students abroad with their own faculty, so the primary interactions are between English-speaking faculty and English-speaking students. They're in a cultural cocoon. We immerse our students in Chinese culture and the local community—they live in Chinese dormitories with Chinese students and are instructed by Chinese faculty."

Josh Woodward, who took the Journey to China in summer 2005, is one of more than 150 students who have participated in the program in its nine-year history.

"We started in Xi'an, the ancient capital of China, where we learned 'survival Mandarin' and got some basic history of and orientation to the culture," says Woodward, who graduated summa cum laude from OU in May 2006 with a double major in economics and marketing and currently is employed in the University's Honors College Leadership Center and the Center for the Creation of Economic Wealth.

The group then traveled south to Kunming, where they studied environmental, economic and cultural issues, followed by a week at Beijing University, where the curriculum focused on politics. "It was especially fun for me to see Beijing because one of my OU Cousins (international student friendship program) lives there, and I was able to meet his family," says Woodward. "It was incredible to be able to see him in his own environment after he'd seen me and my family in ours."

The last leg of the memorable trip was in Shanghai, the country's commercial center. "We learned about foreign investment in China, emerging markets and economic development," Woodward recalls. "In Shanghai, they're finishing a skyscraper every fourth day. Twenty years ago there were fewer than 20 in the city; now there are 4,000. Half the world's concrete was poured in China last year. They run out of metal scaffolding all the time and start strapping bamboo together to continue the process."

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China



Clockwise from upper left:

Josh Woodward ascends the Great Wall of China during his Journey to China experience in 2005. More than 150 OU students have participated in the summer learning program since 1996.

At OU, rich cultural exchange is a two-way street. Here, Chinese students at OU perform during China Night, an annual celebration of Chinese culture.

The last leg of the OU summer program includes a trip to colorful Shanghai, the country's vibrant commercial center.

Photos provided





Elena Songster, OU assistant professor of history, makes frequent trips to the People's Republic while researching the panda's place in modern China. Above, Songster visits with friends at the Chengdu Breeding Center in the city of Chengdu, Sichuan Province.



OU alumna Caroline Cochran visits the Imperial Palace in Beijing. The popular tourist spot was once known as the Forbidden City because commoners were not allowed inside the royal compound.



Each year OU students from China share traditional dance and song with their University family during China Night, held in the Oklahoma Memorial Union.

Lesser known than Journey to China but just as life changing, is a two-week summer course called Chinese Architecture.

Caroline Cochran, an OU alumna who earned bachelor's degrees in mechanical engineering and economics with honors in 2006, was one of roughly 20 students who took the course this past summer. The experience, she says, was way beyond what she had anticipated.

"I've been to Europe several times and to Honduras, so I've traveled quite a bit. But the non-Western culture really is something very foreign to us," explains Cochran, who works alongside Woodward as Internship Program administrator for the Center for the Creation of Economic Wealth. "At the time I went to China, I happened to be reading [German philosopher Friedrich] Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which he wrote about the Eastern idea of not getting beyond black and white, right and wrong. It's an interesting philosophy, but in China I saw the people living it. They have a different way of life, a different way of doing things. Reading it at that time really heightened the whole China experience for me.

"I've already told a lot of people that they really need to go to China," she adds, "and I hope to return some day."

—Debra Levy Martinelli