Overview of George Mason University Connections with China, 2007-08

George Mason University’s international strengths include many academic and cultural links with China. The university has several hundred students from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, studying at all levels from undergraduate to Ph.D. programs, as well as visiting scholars and professors from China throughout the faculty.

Mason faculty members travel regularly to China to conduct research, attend conferences, and teach short-term courses. Faculty in the College of Science, School of Public Policy, College of Education and Human Development, and the Volgenau School of Information Technology and Engineering are among the most active in research and academic exchanges with Chinese institutions. Each year the university and the Mason Enterprise Center also host a number of delegations and training groups from China.

Mason students can take advantage of many opportunities to study about China, and do so in large numbers. The university offers courses in Chinese language, history, and art history as well as classes in Classical Chinese, contemporary Chinese film, readings in Chinese poetry, Business Chinese, and post-Mao literature. Students may elect to minor in Chinese language or in Asia-Pacific studies, with additional courses on Taiwan, Japan, Asian religions, Japanese and Korean languages, and other offerings. In 2007-08, the Chinese language program hosted a Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant from China to supplement the department’s language courses and cultural activities, and it will host a second FLTA in 2008-09.

Mason also offers several study abroad options in China at the undergraduate and graduate level. Each summer, a group of Chinese language students goes to Beijing Language and Culture University with the director of Mason’s Chinese language program for intensive language study. Students who are interested in working in China can choose to go to Beijing for a semester-long internship program. Graduate students in the School of Public Policy and the School of Management can also participate in short-term faculty-led study programs in China. And in both 2007 and 2008, the Chinese government awarded two Mason students a Chinese government scholarship to spend a year in China studying at the university of their choice.

In 2004, Mason became one of the first American institutions to participate in the US-China 1+2+1 Dual Degree Program, in partnership with 12 Chinese universities. Mason has enrolled 108 undergraduates from these partner universities in the first four years of the program. These students spend their freshman year in a Chinese university, their sophomore and junior years at Mason, and their senior year...
back at their original university in China. Upon completing all requirements, students receive baccalaureate degrees from each school. The first class of 16 Mason students will graduate in June 2008 in China, having earned a degree from both Mason and their university in China. Mason works closely with China’s Ministry of Education in the implementation of this program. (See also china121.gmu.edu)

George Mason University’s College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) offers one of the country’s only preparation programs for Chinese language teachers. The teacher trainees in this program include a special cohort of students from China. In the summer of 2008, CEHD will supplement its classes with two short-term summer institutes for Chinese language teachers. Mason faculty and teacher trainees also support the Chinese language programs offered in neighboring Fairfax and Arlington K-12 public schools by providing teaching assistants, help with after-school Chinese programs, and advice on curriculum development. The university also hosts a Chinese summer camp for elementary school students from Fairfax County.

Mason is involved in numerous Chinese cultural and artistic exchanges. The university’s Center for the Arts brings outstanding Chinese cultural performances to the greater Washington region every year. In fall 2007, Mason was the only American university chosen to host the international tour of Beijing Olympic Sculpture, which gave the university a chance to demonstrate its commitment to integrating the arts and international education. In April 2008, the university received an imposing new bronze statue of Confucius, which occupies a permanent position in front of the Center for the Arts, overlooking Mason Pond. The statue was a gift from the Confucius Academy of Hong Kong, in recognition of Mason’s multiple training programs and academic links with China.

George Mason University is home to several Chinese student and faculty organizations, which organize campus events throughout the year. These groups initiated the Plum Tree Project in 2006, to bring new meaning to the university’s Chinese name -- 梅森大学 -- which literally translates as Plum Tree Forest University. The students and faculty raised money to create a small Plum Tree Garden and plans are underway in 2008 to plant more plum trees and add benches to the grove. The statue of Confucius looks out over the growing Plum Tree Garden near Mason Pond.

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For more information on George Mason University’s global connections, visit http://www.gmu.edu/global/

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