Sixteen DSU Students Spend a Month Studying in China

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After watching Chinese exchange students learn about life in America on their Dover campus over the last year, a group of 16 DSU students traded places with them by spending a month studying in China and learning about the culture there.

From l-r: DSU music students Tynisha Hearne, Andrew Dixon, Krystina Grayson, Donavon Higbee and Leah Williams give a performance on the traditional Chinese instruments they learned to play.

DSU sent 11 students from the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and five music student to China, where the studied at Ningbo University, in the Zhejiang province of China from May 19 to June 21

The DSU music students learned the Chinese system of music and each learned a different traditional Chinese instrument from Chinese music instructors.

Tynisha Hearne, a senior education music major from Wilmington, Del., said that she found Chinese approach to music interesting.

“They stress putting the music into your heart,” Ms. Hearne said. “They told us to sing the music before trying to play it.” Ms. Hearne, who plays the violin, viola, cello and bass, learned to play the Erhu, which is a Chinese violin.

Andrew C. Dixon, a music performance major, learned how to play a pipa, which is similar to a guitar. “The thing I most enjoyed about China though was how all of the students and teachers at Ningbo University were so friendly, Mr. Dixon said. “My Pipa teacher and student teacher were always encouraging me during lessons – although I think that I really am not as good at Pipa as they made me out to be.

Leah Williams, a sophomore business economics major with minor in music, said the hardest part was learning Chinese music notations. “They use numbers for notes and they use lines for rhythm,” said Ms. Williams, who learned to play the goo cheng (a harp-like instrument). “And they don’t use the notes A through G, but instead us do, ra, mi fa, so, la ti, do.”

Donovan Higbee, a senior music major from Dover who learned to play the dizi (Chinese flute), was impressed by the Chinese students’ serious approach to their studies. “Chinese students were very much focused on their work,” Mr. Higbee said.

“We got a real Chinese experience,” said Krystina R. Grayson, a music education major who learned to play the yuang chén (a xylophone/piano-like instrument). “They live simple lives there.”

Atiya Overton, a senior chemistry major from New Castle, Del., was one of the 16 DSU STEM students who worked on research

projects. Ms. Overton, who researched the use of electrolysis for the early detection of diabetes, said she was impressed with the resourcefulness of the Chinese people.

“Their resources are limited, so they learn to utilize everything to the fullest extent,” Ms. Overton said.

Miranda Spina, a junior physics engineering major from Milford, said language was definitely a challenge. “My Chinese professor’s English was very good, but the graduate assistant that worked with couldn’t speak much,” she said.

Ms. Overton said that she and her non-English speaking graduate assistant used Google Translate to bridge the language gap.

DSU Students Ashley Stevenson and Kasey Cosden give a presentation on the research project they did in China.

Kasey Cosden, a sophomore biology major from New Castle Del., said that she was friends with a bilingual Chinese student who was an English major. “She taught me a lot about traditional Chinese food, the culture and history,” she said.

Ms. Cosden, who did research on the Camellia flower and its introduction into the Chinese tea market, said she liked the Chinese food. “The ingredients they use over there are different (from American-Chinese food), and the way that they cook it is not as rich as it is here in the U.S.,” she said. “But I think it is healthier the way they cook it there.”

Brittany Watson, a senior biology major from Felton, Del., said she found her algae research “amazing” and was grateful for the opportunity to study abroad.

“Even with the language barrier, everyone knew how to get the work done,” Ms. Watson said. “Once we had a goal, it was easier; we communicated by doing the work and showing the results.”

DSU President Harry L. Williams, who was on an Asian trip, stopped at Ningbo University to check his students. He was treated to a concert by the DSU students on the Chinese instruments they had learned to play and research presentations by the STEM students.

Accompanying the students on the China trip were DSU faculty members Dr. Patrick Hoffman, Dr. Charlie Wilson and Dr. Mazen Shanin. The trip was funded by a $30,000 grant from the Delaware Office of International Trade and Development and by $30,000 from the National Science Foundation through its Alliance for Minority Participation Program.

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