

High Aims for Hangzhou Study-abroad Program

[Daniel](#) | Jan 21, 2013 | [0 comments](#)



On May 12, 2013, Jason Yu (Mass Communications) and Tom Lavalley (Foreign Languages and Literature) will take a group of students to Hangzhou, China for a five-week travel-study program. The program consist of two courses: “International Advertising” and “History, Culture, and Languages of China.”

The Hangzhou program is unusual in that students will spend most of their time living in Hangzhou and attending classes in a typical classroom setting at Zhejiang University, where they will be working directly with local students. Most travel-study programs take more of a guided tour group approach. Yu and Lavalley felt that by spending a longer amount of time in one place offered a valuable learning experience, particularly toward understanding how marketing works within the culture.

“This is very different from most travel studies,” Yu explained, “they have a classroom and they combine what they learn with what they experience while they are living there.”

“Hangzhou travel study is a little different because the idea is that they’re going to live there,” explained Lavalley, “once you get past the third week, you really don’t feel like a tourist.”

While the majority of the student’s time abroad will be spent in Hangzhou, they will make a short field trip to Shanghai. Lavalley shared that his plan is for the first couple weeks to be a crash course in Chinese, learning the basic terminology they need to survive and engaging in group activities. As the course progresses, his goal is to have students branch out and experience the community on their own. Lavalley also intends to use a lot

of video and photo assignments so that students can document their journey and practice with the language while interacting in a real world setting.

The course marks the first time a study-abroad program has been offered by the Department of Mass Communications. One of the main goals of the program is to give students a perspective on how advertising and marketing work in an international climate. China's role in international commerce and growing economy make it a very appealing market for study.

"This is the very first step in building a relationship with a Chinese university so that our Mass Communications program can be international," Yu shared.

In her annual address last fall, Chancellor Julie Furst-Bowe mentioned that one of the major goals for SIUE moving forward would be an increase in the globalization of campus. An increased emphasis on travel-study programs helps to further these goals. International efforts help to improve SIUE's reputation in a global marketplace, while simultaneously opening up new enrollment possibilities to the university.

"I support this program one hundred and ten percent," Joao Sedycias (Chair of Foreign Languages and Literature), "one in four international students in the country today comes from China."

With Illinois and Missouri high school graduation rates in decline, schools on both sides of the river are attempting to appeal to international students to fill enrollment numbers. Sedycias explained that SIUE has a geographic advantage that St. Louis-based schools lack in that it is a safer small town environment, yet still close enough to the city that students can take advantage of the culture and resources.

The Hangzhou travel-study program was made possible by an Excellence in Undergraduate Education (EUE) grant. The EUE program provides funding for innovative projects in undergraduate education at SIUE. The funds from the grant will help to offset the cost of travel and hotel expenses while abroad, making the program more affordable for students.

"Cost really determines what we can do and what time frame we can do it in," Lavalley shared, "the EUE is a great source of internal funding to have for this kind of long term program."