CSB/SJU Adds Semester-Long India Program

Spring 2011 marked the inaugural term of CSB/SJU’s newest semester-long study abroad program in Kolkata, the students attended a number of India. Twelve CSB/SJU students spent the semester excursions and festivals, such as trekking living with host families and taking classes at St. through the Thar Desert, attending the Xavier’s College. These courses covered the Bengali 10th Cricket World Cup, and language, as well as the cultures, arts, and history of participating in the festival of Holi India. The students also volunteered for six to eight (also known as the Festival of hours a week at local NGOs as part of their service Colors). learning projects. Their service sites included Prayasam, an organization focusing on children’s Continued on page 3 welfare and education; Water for People, which provides filters for clean water and tests ground water; and Lareto Day School, an all-female school in Kolkata.
Greetings all! I am happy to be writing on behalf of my experiences in China. I have been employed as an oral English and American culture teacher with Southwest University for the past nine months. It would be difficult for me to express in words the incredible amount of changes I have gone through as a person during this period of time. I truly believe that a person is shaped by their experiences in life as much by their innate predispositions and background. In this way, whatever course my life may take, a piece of my experiences in China will stay with me forever. I believe that most things are neither positive nor negative in life. The trick is to find a way of bringing positive meanings to the things that sometimes did not go the best the first time. I believe that by finding these deeper meanings in life all experiences are worthwhile. In my case, I came to China expecting to embrace a new culture in a way I would have welcomed a new family member. I really was inspired by Professor Bohr’s Chinese history classes and guest speakers on Asian cultures. Along with being a young and idealistic individual, I believed that now was the time to make that positive impact.

Upon arriving in China I discovered a whole new world of thought. My experiences in China have taught me that Chinese people have so many interesting beliefs, ideas, and goals in life. I feel an injustice by merely writing these things down on paper. For a person to really understand Chinese culture they must experience it on their own. Traveling is not a sufficient means of really experiencing China’s ancient and unique culture. That is why I believe very passionately that all post-graduates should do their best to live in a foreign country in a capacity which suits their vocation best. For example, I enjoy working with people so I am a teacher in China. I believe young graduates would be wise to do so in their own field of work due to the ever competitive global market today. Lessons learned abroad regarding problem solving are also skills that are transferable to any career a person works in.

I have found the local people extremely welcoming and interested in my life every day. I find that I am teaching even outside of the classroom which at times does become taxing on me. Life is a cyclical experience which reminds me to be patient. After a short time I already become happy again to work with people and culturally exchange at a deeper level. My appearance alone makes it impossible for me to escape the constant attention. Being a tall, white, and blonde man engages the Chinese imagination at many different levels. I find that attention is always something to be very wary of because it correlates with jealousy, envy, and even contempt. I do my best to engage people in a meaningful manner or not at all. This becomes the most prevalent for me while exercising outdoors. I enjoy running six days a week. At times I will not engage people while I try to enjoy the natural rapture of the body in physical exercise. Other times I change my running pace to encourage communication. I know that it must be hard for the Chinese to understand at times if I am focused or want to talk; however, I too am a person and cannot always be taxing myself to be affable.

My experiences here have changed my life completely. I will no longer look at the world the way that I did before coming to China. I am looking to extend my contract with Southwest University for one more year. That would make it two wonderful years living in China. There are many things that are hard about living in a foreign country such as missing family and friends. Nonetheless, I know that I would not have been true to myself if I would not have made this incredible adventure. Each day I am faced with some unique challenge which I must discover an even better way to solve. These types of difficult situations help a person learn a great deal of patience. I have also improved my confidence in learning a new language on the fly. The entire experience has been a rewarding one for me; therefore, I believe that I will look to continue my unique experiences either in South Korea or Japan following my two years in China.

I hope to take these experiences into the business, education, or government fields following the completion of my time in Asia. Overall, I believe that life is not about paving one’s own path. Often times things happen which we are left to not understand. Did I believe that I would one day live alone in China when I started college? No. I can safely say that I did not. Likewise, I would not have believed that United States economy would have continued to remain stagnant for this long. What I can say is that I believe that I should take advantage of the opportunities given in life. I know that I enjoy living abroad for many reasons and, as long as that remains true, I will continue to take this unbelievable adventure to wherever it shall lead!
The students in India were able to meet with renowned Indian author Amitav Ghosh, best known for his English-language historical fiction. With funding from the Asian Studies UISFL grant, that program was repeated with author Kunal Basu during the Spring 2012 program.

Madhu Mitra, the trip’s faculty advisor and professor of English at CSB/SJU, had been involved in the development of the new program since its inception in 2005. As a native of Kolkata, she provided unique perspectives both on how to implement the program as it was developed, and to the CSB/SJU students as they lived, learned, and worked there.

The 2012 program was led by Sucharita Mukherjee, assistant professor of Economics at CSB/SJU. Mukherjee is an alumna of St. Xavier’s College.

Students celebrate the festival of Holi.

Courtney Kimball and Kunihiro Shimoji Participate in 63rd JASC

The Asian Studies Program would like to congratulate Courtney Kimball (CSB ’13) and Kunihiro Shimoji (SJU ’13) on their selection as delegates to the 63rd Japan-America Student conference in the summer of 2011.

JASC, a student-led exchange program founded in 1936, is held each year to discuss and analyze Japan-US relations. The conference ran from July 28th to August 21st, and delegates spent a week each at Tokyo, Okinawa, Niigata, and Kyoto over the course of the conference. 35 delegates from each country are competitively selected for each conference. After selection, the delegates are assigned to one of seven or eight roundtables, with whom they spend a month focusing on issues under that roundtable’s theme.

Kimball participated in “Understanding the Globalizing World”, where she and group members discussed how our paradigms and ideas must change as our world grows more and more interconnected. Shimoji, member of this year’s JASC Executive Board, led the “Comprehensive Security” roundtable, which discussed both strengthening ties between Japan and the US, as well as long-term strategic possibilities to promote the prosperity of East Asia and the international community as a whole.

This conference’s overall theme of “Question, Engage, Build: Collaborative effort to make a difference” reflected the importance the conference saw in discussing how to move forward after Japan’s disasters of March 2011.

After returning to CSB/SJU, Shimoji and Kimball presented at a Thursday Forum about the conference, how they had contributed, and what they had learned as a result of their participation.

Kimball and Shimoji continued their international studies by spending Spring 2012 studying abroad through CSB/SJU’s programs in India and London, respectively. CSB student Tiffany Vang will participate in the Summer 2012 Korea-America Student Program.

CSB/SJU Welcomes New Asian History Professor

The Asian Studies Program welcomes Jeffrey Diamond, Ph.D., to the CSB/SJU community. His academic focus is on South Asia and Islam, and he has taught South Asia since 1500 and Islam and the West, as well as the upper-division courses Islam/South Asia and Gandhi & Nationalism.

Diamond received his Ph.D. in Oriental and African Studies from the University of London. He received a Fulbright scholarship along with other awards in order to carry out his doctoral research on religious reform and Muslim responses to British imperialism in India, Pakistan, and the UK. Diamond held a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at Cornell University, then taught South Asian history at the College of Charleston before coming to CSB/SJU. He is also member of a number of historical organizations, including the American Historical Association, the Association for Asian Studies, and AsianNetwork. In 2005, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Diamond enjoys photography, yoga, and the outdoors.
CSB Students Receive S. Telan Hu Scholarship

The CSB/SJU Asian Studies Program wishes to offer its congratulations to Cindy Gonzalez and Jessica Studniski, 2012 recipients of the Sister Telan Hu, OSB Scholarship. The Sister Telan Scholarship is a yearly award given to CSB/SJU students in Asian Studies with a concentration in Chinese who demonstrate a strong commitment to service. The scholarship was established by Margaret Man-Hwa Wang in memory of her parents, Mr. Jung-Chun Wang and Mrs. Ji-Chin Liao Wang. Cindy is an Asian Studies major at CSB with a minor in Chinese, and studied abroad in China in the fall of 2011. She is also the Marketing Coordinator for the Minnesota-China Business Opportunity Conference. Jessica is a double major in Theater and English, with a minor in Chinese; she hopes to be able to incorporate her awareness of multiple cultures into a career in theater. We are very proud to offer these two women this scholarship.

Asian Studies Finishes Federal Grant

This summer, Asian Studies will finish the third and final year of its U.S. Department of Education Title VI Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Languages grant. The UISFL grant has been instrumental in transforming the Asian Studies program at CSB/SJU. Students are now able to declare a standardized Asian Studies major instead of creating an individualized major under the auspices of the History Department. This allows them to focus on Asia outside of the discipline of History and explore this vibrant region through a multi- and interdisciplinary lens. Further, the addition of an experiential requirement to the major mandates that students experience Asia in a hands-on way; Title VI-funded faculty and staff study tours to partner institutions in Asia have resulted in new study abroad, internship, and experiential learning opportunities that expand the way our students engage with Asia and its peoples. However, it is not only students who major or minor in Asian Studies that have been positively impacted by the reach of this grant: because the involved faculty teach across the four disciplinary divisions, students in other majors have been exposed to the Asia-related content added to courses in such diverse departments as Political Science, Environmental Studies, Nutrition, Literature, and Art History, for example. In sum, the UISFL grant has allowed Asian Studies to expand an already strong foundation of courses and co-curricular opportunities into a solid program that collaborates with departments across campus as well as with international partners and the broader community.

Asian Studies Curriculum Expands

The CSB/SJU Asian Studies Program has expanded its curriculum this year to include Japanese and Chinese minors under the auspices of the Modern and Classical Languages department, as well as introducing the colloquium for the standardized Asian Studies program at CSB/SJU. Students in Asian Studies have been exposed to the Asia-related content added to courses in such diverse departments as Political Science, Environmental Studies, Nutrition, Literature, and Art History, for example. In sum, the UISFL grant has allowed Asian Studies to expand an already strong foundation of courses and co-curricular opportunities into a solid program that collaborates with departments across campus as well as with international partners and the broader community.

Campus Groups Celebrate Asian Culture

Asian culture was well represented again this year at CSB/SJU as student groups such as the Asia Club and the China Cross Cultural Communication Club (5C) held and participated in a wide variety of events, at which they shared different aspects of Asia. In September, 5C held a celebration of the Mid-Autumn Festival on Watab Island, and handed out traditional Chinese mooncakes to those who attended. The Festival of Cultures, held in November, showcased music, dance, clothing, food, and other traditions from cultures around the world, including the Hmong people, India, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, and China.

The Asian New Year was celebrated in February and again included many East and Southeast Asian cultures as they welcomed the Year of the Dragon. Bringing together both Asian students and students from Western backgrounds, these events celebrated the diverse nature of our campuses and allowed Asian culture to be shared with other students and faculty.

Asian Studies Program

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