

Scope of the Wuyi-MCC Exchanges and Online Instruction 2008-9

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Introduction

In 2000, the exchanges involving students began with a group of students going to Wuyi University. In 2008, the first group of students from Wuyi visited Mesa Community College (Mesa). The thrust of exchanges appears to now be heading in a direction that best fits the model of a community college in the United States and yet provides a base that benefits China as it seeks to reform education. The future is directly based in part on what we have been doing with the online advanced writing course and a series of events that have all coalesced toward a common direction. Students who go to China will be involved in conducting undergraduate research and will be involved in intense interaction with students at Chinese universities. Students coming from China will be exploring the differences between Chinese and American educational systems and focusing on learning innovative teaching strategies while at Mesa.

Several years ago, attempts to integrate the exchanges through online education began. This has been changed and will be an innovative effort to bridge students from Mesa with those in China.

So this is an exchange that has three parts now. The first is the China Study Abroad program taking students to China in May and June every summer. The second is an aspect of online learning that now takes the exchange of content and ideas and enables students to interact in what is a “flat” world through technology. This is a new dimension in what we traditionally think of as an exchange. There is interaction without having to travel and students can learn from each other in the process.

The third segment of the program involves both faculty and students coming from Wuyi University to Mesa. The focus of the faculty exchange has been for several years on stimulating ideas on teaching and learning innovation. The student exchange has evolved in one year to focus on English majors who will be teachers in the future. Students from Wuyi will be part of a cooperative venture with Rhodes Junior High and Mesa Public Schools that will enable them to observe and interact with teachers. They will also be able to compare the education systems in China and the United States.

1. China Study Abroad

The China Study Abroad program has developed over the years into something that has at its basic philosophy to place students in our program with students in China – to have a dialogue between the two groups that is the heart and soul of the learning process. This is in every respect an exchange. We spend time in Chinese university classrooms for a purpose. While it provides Chinese students with an opportunity to apply their English speaking skills, it is a chance to exchange ideas, life stories, and even dreams of what is in the future.

There are experiences in China that are memorable. You can stand on the Great Wall and see a temple or two. But the meaningful impact is the interaction. Students will visit schools, tour factories, shop, eat real Chinese food (and maybe stress out over that) and live within China. The stays are on university campuses making them very different from a trip to China. In a way it is an experience students have in China.

Students earn four credits from two courses (ISG291; GLO298). Some times, it is important to look beyond just the credits however. This is extremely important when it comes to this program. It is rare to be exposed to actually learning how to perform research. This experience at an undergraduate level is significant when students begin to work at upper division levels and go onto graduate school. It will also be something students can put on your resume that will separate them from other students who might apply for jobs. It provides an opportunity to perform research and have a publication on record. In a competitive world everyone ought to think about how to position oneself so you can get into better graduate programs and get a better job. This is where credits and grades don't necessarily separate someone out from others. This experience in China and the foundation the courses provide in doing research will be critical steps someone can utilize to separate themselves from students who don't have the same experience.

You can look at the Academic Certificate of Global Citizenship in the same way. This is something that students may easily qualify for based on the courses they already have taken or would normally take for an AA or transfer to another university. The capstone course students take for the China Study Abroad program will be that last little thing they would be required to fulfill. So it is ideal to look at this as another way of separating oneself from other people. In a global world, having the certificate will be something that again can impress someone who looks at an application for graduate school or a job. It is something little but can be so valuable.

A variety of domains can be define for potential research endeavors, but this is by no means an exhausting list. It is a starting point by which you might define your own research focus.

1. Genealogy update with a focus on monitoring one-child policy affects to include work on number of siblings over three-generations and adding attention to sexes of siblings to see if the sex ratio has changed.
2. Assessment of a Chinese business from manufacturing to distribution of finished products. Variety of businesses can be explored in a comparative study or focus can be on one company.
3. Study the educational system in China and focus on testing to move through this system.
4. Study the Wuyi University English program for children and interview students as to their attitudes toward learning English and how it pertains to their future.
5. Explore attitudes toward issues pertaining to the environmental quality created by development in China over the past several decades.
6. Interview students from two cities to explore the changes they have perceived over the past decade. Assess if the changes taking place are parallel or diverse in how cities are developing. Contrasts in city size and distance from places such as Guangzhou might be used for control factors.
7. Interview students from different majors to assess their feelings on future job prospects after graduation. Can control for attitude changes from freshmen to seniors to see if these change, as students get closer to graduation.
8. Assess attitudes toward materialism in China as Chinese become more affluent.
9. Analyze the use of ancestor worship and other traditional elements of Chinese religion (defined in an Anthropological perspective.) Explore how these are changing in today's China.

10. Analyze the nature of market strategies for acquiring vegetables, meat and other goods in terms of the distance from the market to the source. Define proportions of this that comes from less than 25 km, less than 50 km, and less than 100 km.

The Program Prior to Departure

- Students will complete a self-evaluation of their goals and expectations pertaining to the study abroad experience.
- Students will assess their knowledge of China and identify a list of tasks to enhance their knowledge of China.
- Students will explore and analyze ethics of involvement and identify their responsibilities to others prior to going to China.
- Students will be exposed to the concept of culture shock, learn about the different forms it can take and ways to minimize associated effects during the immersion experience and upon re-entry to the U.S prior to departure.
- Students will develop a one-page prospectus of what they intend to learn from the trip. This will define their research objectives.

Outcomes for the course while in China

- Students will construct, throughout the stay in China, a portfolio of relevant materials including a profile of socio-cultural conditions in China that they observed, observations on ethics of involvement and individual responsibilities that were required of them, evidence of culture shock, and other things that a student deems appropriate.
- Students will complete a research project to enhance their cultural learning in conjunction with the IGS291 course.
- Students will investigate how their views of the world and their own country and culture have changed as a result of their time abroad as a final summary statement.

2. Global Learning Pilot – Mesa Community College/China

Introduction

Making a connection for students to the world around them has been a challenge for educators for many years. While many schools have focused on study abroad programs as a primary opportunity for students to “see the world,” at Mesa Community College (MCC) we have been working on a holistic approach to offer students a global perspective. As educators, we have not been satisfied with some success and have tended to reflect on ways that we can enhance the online opportunity with Wuyi University for greater student success. The goal has always been to improve English writing proficiency, but there is far more potential in what we are doing in the fall of 2008.

Based on discussions, we are now exploring a new format for the course; one that does not necessarily conform to the standard course but is what can be called a hybrid course. This means part of it can be class based but most of the work will be done through tasks that are specific to a set of goals. The goals are: **Promote Research Skills; Learn to Critically Evaluate Information; Develop Collaboration Skills; Enhance Abilities to Synthesize Information and Draw Conclusions; Develop Writing Proficiencies.**

The coursework will be based on researching a theme or themes. The theme or themes (more than one might be explored simultaneously by different subsets of students) would be drawn from what I would term global themes such as: sustainability, world population, hunger, housing, peace, tolerance, equity, health, literacy, community building, cultural differences in a global world, preservation of culture, spiritual and inner peace, and technology transformation. These themes enable to students to focus on things that will be relevant to their future. Michael Wesch recently wrote: “the most significant problem with education today is the problem of significance itself. Students – our most important critics – are struggling to find meaning and significance in their education.” This means they tend to see education as less than true learning experience and much of education irrelevant to their lives. They memorize for tests or learn strategies for passing tests so they can graduate.

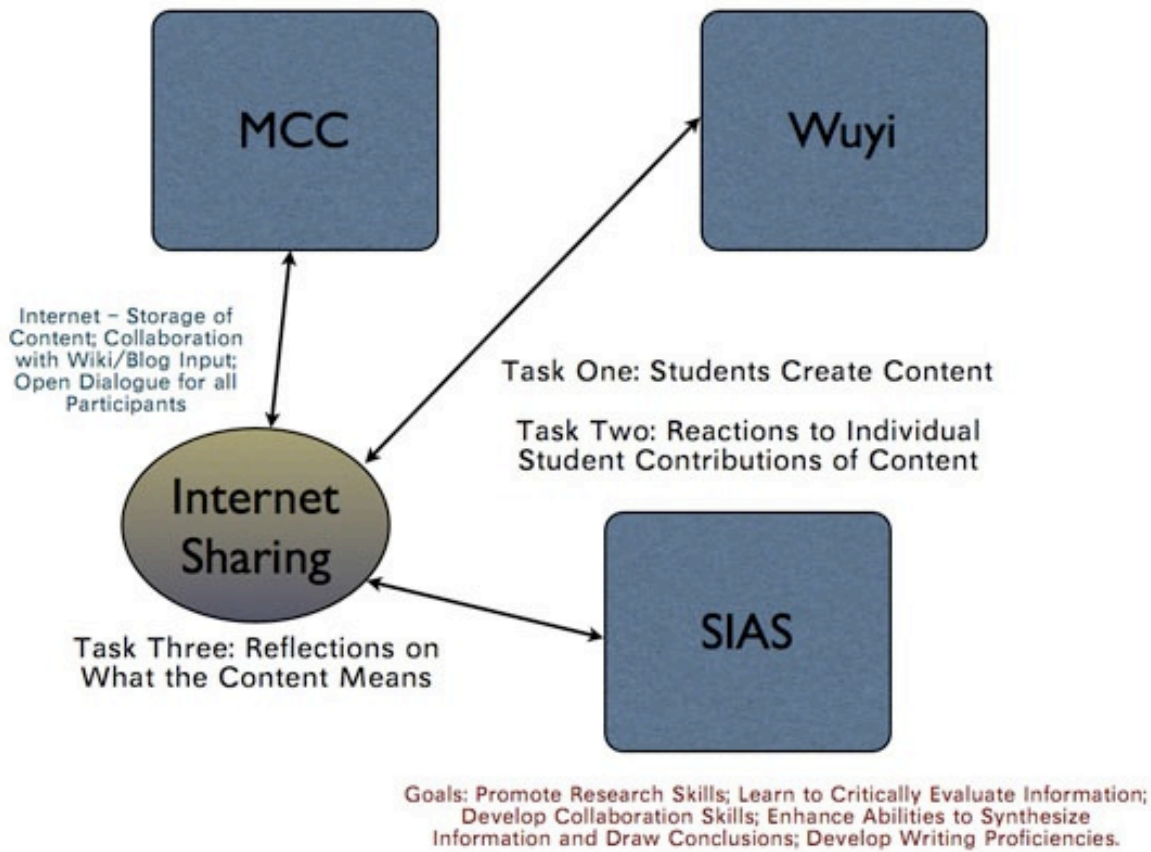
Three institutions will participate ultimately, Mesa Community College (MCC), Wuyi University, and Sias International University (SIAS). The concept is to have a class in each institution that is devoted to the project. English majors would be involved in China. The institutions would enroll their own students in a class. A central coordinator would guide these students from Mesa Community College and perhaps separate facilitators in the other two institutions. Responsibility for grading would fall on individual institutions.

MCC would handle all technological coordination with cooperation of the partner universities in China. This would involve server space for student content and management of a writing center (wiki or some other tool) that would be open to every student providing for a shared dialogue.

The concept can be seen as three separate classes but with an overall strategy linking all of them to a common base on content and interaction. Writing will be collaborative so can be reviewed by all of the students. The work will be writing intensive.

Three phases of work will be done. The first is to build content. Students will select a topic from within the theme – i.e. World Population as a theme might include students working on issues relating to Africa, Japan, China, the United States, etc. Their research results would be put into a presentation that would be placed on the Internet. The second phase would be for students to critical evaluate each individual project that is online making comments and creating a discussion of merits, omissions, and relationships that might be identifiable. The third and final phase would be to begin to synthesize the content exploring trends and parallel issues that crosscut the content.

The following visually defines the nature of the learning environment:



Main points: 1. Three groups of students enrolled in three different institutions of higher education, 2. Students work to build and share content materials for the class, 3. Students critique and expand the content through collaborative writing, 4. Students synthesize results and explore global patterns.

The ultimate goal is to not only provide for a format to make Chinese students want to write but to also to provide them with the skills and abilities that will prepare them to create a better future for themselves and others. This latter is true for American students as well.

Operational Considerations

Over the course of the fall semester, students at MCC and in China will use technology to interact with one another, exploring problems of world population (size and dynamics of it) and unequal distribution of resources such as oil, water, and agricultural land. These are global themes and as such will create a meaningful basis for dialogue and exchange. The following steps will be important.

1. Students are introduced to the scope of the work that they will be required to perform.
2. Teams will be created based on interests that students express as to their preference on themes they wish to work with. These teams will include both Chinese and American student. The teams will be expected to work on building content in a collaborative way.
3. Individuals will each create a presentation as their contribution to the content for the project.
4. Individual documents will be created as Google Documents that can be shared and collaboratively written and edited. Each project will be represented by an individual document so students can react to the content of the presentation. (The benefit of the Google Documents is that these can be downloaded as final produced by everyone involved - teachers and students.)
5. An open Google Document for the final phase where students will begin to synthesize their thoughts will be created so that all students can collaborate in one place. Sharing ideas in this forum will

demonstrate the learning in a meaningful format - a collection of ideas from everyone that can be compared and contrasted by students and faculty involved.

Mesa Community College Course: ASB222 (Honors Only section) and volunteer anthropology majors in other sections taught by Dr. Richard Effland

Wuyi University Course: Advanced Online Writing Course – facilitated by Richard Chen

Live Interactive Sessions: Wuyi Semester 18 weeks. Course would run 16 weeks. The first five weeks would be devoted to researching a topic and creating a presentation. One 2-hour class with video interaction to explain the project initially and one 2-hour class following in the third week to discuss issues and address questions not already addressed with online interaction; students would prepare a report on progress at the end of the third week submitted online. Student will be expected to have at least 10 hours of course work completed by the end of this segment.

The second five weeks would focus on discussions on each of the contributions that have been made. Every project will require a comment online evaluating issues and adding to the content if necessary. Students will be required to write intensively during this segment. They will be responsible for one 2-hour video interaction session and extensive writing in a collaborative environment. At least 10 hours of course work will be completed during this segment.

The final six weeks will be devoted to writing summary impressions focused on a series of questions that will be posed. This segment also will involve a lot of writing with a focus on answering a series of questions and exploring issues relative to the content. Two 2-hour video interactive sessions will be conducted at the end of the semester providing students an opportunity to discuss what they are learning. At least 12 hours of course work will be completed in the process of the video interaction and intensive writing that will take place during this segment.

3. Wuyi Student and Faculty Exchange Focus 2009

The focus on the second Wuyi Student Exchange to MCC will be on English education majors and helping them understand American education better. It will involve working with MCC education faculty and with teachers and administrators at Rhodes Junior High south of the campus. Rhodes Junior High has an innovative program that they call the **World Studies Academy** and the goal is for their students to better understand the world at large. Visitation to Rhodes by Wuyi education majors would enhance their understanding of the American educational system and at the same time provide Rhodes with a first-person experience with Chinese people. It will provide the students with a means by which to compare and contrast the American and Chinese educational systems. The ability to observe and work with teachers at Rhodes for a five to ten day period would benefit these future teachers, but they too can contribute to Rhodes through the experience at the same time. It is hoped they might prepare lesson plans that would explain Chinese culture for example, but the day-to-day interaction would create better understanding of Chinese people and their culture for so many at Rhodes.

The students will also work with educational faculty at Mesa during their stay and participate in classes with these faculty. The student will observe different classes and interact with students from different majors, but with a focus on those majoring in education. Again, Wuyi students will be expected to make presentations to MCC classes as well as at other colleges within the Maricopa Community College system. The students also will be exposed to a variety of other parts of the State of Arizona educational system including Arizona State University and the Department of Education for the State of Arizona.

Five students will be involved. Dr. Richard Effland will select one student to be a facilitator or team liaison. The Foreign Languages Department and the FAO at Wuyi University will select the other four students. These four students would be drawn from the English majors who will be future teachers and who will be entering their seventh semester in the fall of 2008. The primary focus of the selection process should discover how those interested in the program want to use this opportunity to explore the differences and similarities between educational approaches both in the United States and in China. They should be able to explain their reasons for wanting to participate in the program in terms of the following criteria:

1. How this program would enhance their understanding of teaching and learning;
2. How the program would enhance their abilities to teach; and
3. How they feel they would personal grow from this experience?

Different from last year, the students who are selected will have a more or less formal orientation over the Internet directed by several individuals from MCC and Rhodes. They will formulate a series of study questions as part of the fall semester planning. The orientation will focus on preparing them for the experiences here through a dialogue online that will enable them to define their individual goals more specifically and build a **team** who will work together while in Arizona. The building of a team will be different from what we had last year and will create more in-depth study with stronger outcomes.

There will be a liaison between me and the other students. The desire is to create a solid team effort that will benefit everyone involved. This will assist in reacting to issues during the program and create direct outlets for questions and issues that the team defines. This should help shape a stronger learning community for the entire group during the exchange.

Both the presence of a strong relationship with one student and the ability to work through an orientation during the fall should create a group that is solid and can work more as a team than what we experienced last year. As well, this will enable all of the participants to bond and define their own goals more clearly making the experience more meaningful. It will enable an essential line of communication between the team and me that will tend to enhance our ability to be flexible to the needs of the team. All of this is designed to shape greater outcomes from the experience.

The coursework for the English education majors includes review of instruction during the seventh semester

(Fall of 2008). Wuyi will work to tie the experiences at Rhodes into the normal seventh semester schedule and shift a portion of this course time to coincide with the exchange. This would make it possible for the education major students involved in this exchange to receive credits for a portion of the time in Arizona.

Schedule

The MCC Spring Semester start January 17, 2009 and Spring Festival this year is January 25/26, 2009. The student exchange would involve a five-week program to provide more time for the students to both observe and participate in different aspects of the program. The goal would be to maximize the program for students as much as possible. **This would run from January 15th to February 19th, 2009.**

Holiday periods: Martin Luther King Holiday January 19 2009;
President's Day February 16 2009

4. Wuyi Faculty Exchange for 2009

The faculty exchange will once again focus on teaching and learning and will faculty will spend a portion of their time at Estrella Mountain Community College as well as Mesa Community College. They will be able to integrate with the students and faculty. They will be responsible for making presentations at both colleges (as well as other colleges within the Maricopa Community College system) during their stay.

5. Jiangmen Educational Program

As a pilot, the MCC China Study Abroad program would like to propose that one Jiangmen teacher and one senior middle school student be selected to participate in this years exchange. The teacher will be working with MCC education faculty and Rhodes Junior High teachers in a program basically similar to that of the Wuyi students but with elements of what we are doing for the Wuyi faculty who visit. We will attempt to link this teacher with the Mesa Public Schools to provide a broad perspective on education in Mesa at the middle school level. The middle school student will be working with this group but we will make attempts to find a suitable home stay with someone with a student of comparable age so that we can shape a slightly different experience.

This part of the program would be a small step toward something that we can expand in the future, but for now would be a pilot where we can try to find a good fit that will shape future planning.