

AU G-MEO Summer Study Program End Evaluation

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Another summer of learning, exploration, and friendship has concluded in the Nation's Capital and NYC. From the courses, lectures, tours, campus visits and excursions, the students who participated in the American University G-MEO Summer Study Program will carry home with them a treasure chest of memories, experiences and friendships to propel them forward in their academic careers.

American University

Much of this has been covered in the AU report, but the students had high opinions of their two-week American University experience. Every student gushed over their professors for the English courses and The Government and International Relations courses. These teachers had experience working with international students and knew how to adjust to their students' needs. I saw several interactions and conversations between the students and professors and the professors were very patient and encouraging with the students and how they used English. I was impressed with how clearly some of the students could express themselves in English with a varied vocabulary.



The students took well and fast to Washington D.C. After just a few outings and tours, we could trust them to go off on their own and find their way back. Traveling is much more enjoyable when you start building your familiarity and autonomy within the city.

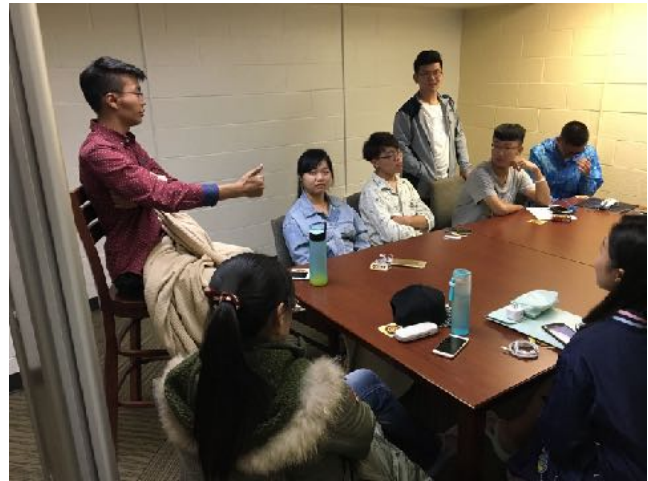
Life in the dorms for the students was active and very communal. We started making news videos of the days' activities and each group had their own opportunity to film an episode. After each group had their turn, the



video updates became more about the students' overall experience. It was a nice visual of what the students experienced each day even if editing each video turned out to be a little more time-consuming than anticipated.

When the students didn't have videos to edit they were often taking care of laundry or playing a Wolf & Hunter game which was too complicated in Chinese for me. These were often lively and competitively engaging games that would last at least a couple hours on some nights.

As nice as the dorms were, there were still a few minor complaints. The students wished the rooms had en suite bathrooms and they felt often that the AC was always a bit too cold. I noticed it a bit myself. We air condition our buildings more here the States than in China; not just the dorm rooms, but the classrooms as well.



At the end of our time at American University, the students had to give group presentations based on their visit to the Newseum, a museum of the news. Their task was to choose a picture from the Pulitzer Prize winning gallery and expound upon its meaning and importance in history. Each group performed exceptionally well and their professors were impressed by the students' insight expressed in the presentations.

To New York

From American University we were on our way to New York City with a quick stop at Princeton University in New Jersey. There, we were greeted by PhD student Suo Er Fu who gave us a nice tour of the campus and explained the history and significance of the buildings. He was a big hit with the students. After two weeks of taking classes in English, he led the campus tour in Chinese, which allowed for the students to really connect with what he was saying. I must say that the students performed well in all English settings, but every once in awhile you need to hear your mother tongue to add a little joy to your life.



New York City

In New York City, the students staid in a hotel attached to the Chinese Consulate. The main praise of this accommodation was the fact that all the meals served were Chinese food! After two weeks of the cafeteria food at American University, which wasn't bad, the students were able to have some of that good Chinese comfort food. While traveling, it's always good to have a taste of home every now and again.

As a group we explored the city. We visited the UN, looked up at the Empire State Building, strolled through Central Park, and did a little shopping on 5th Avenue.



To celebrate the students finishing their course work at American University, and to enjoy the fact that they were all now experiencing New York for the first time, we held a nice Certificate Ceremony at Evergreen Shanghai Style restaurant. During this time, Dr. David Chang, Cecilia Chang, and Dr. Sherry Sun, leaders of G-MEO, addressed the students and congratulated them on studying in the United States. They encouraged the students to use this experience to further push them forward in their lives and academic endeavors. The students also used this time to share with everyone about their most memorable experiences during the AU G-MEO Summer Study Program and how this adventure has changed the way they see the world.



But we were not done! There was still time to further explore New York and to learn. On their free day, some students saw Phantom of the Opera on Broadway while others visited the MET Museum or went shopping. Some of us, after the MET, went out for a steak and had a lovely dinner and conversation.

Shopping was always on the students' minds. I do believe the students could have had a full week of shopping and they still wouldn't have had enough. Now this wasn't simply new bags or shoes for themselves, but they all wanted to make sure they got good gifts to bring back home to their friends and families.

On our last Sunday, we drove to West Point to see the famous University that has produced so many important American leaders.



We had two further schools left to visit before the students could return to China. On Monday, we visited Columbia University for a tour of the campus and to have a look the labs where some of the PhD students work.



Later that afternoon, the group visited Stevens Institute of Technology where the students had probably one of their best lectures of the entire program. Dr. Peter Koen led the students through a lecture about entrepreneurship that was engaging and fully interactive on many levels. He really motivated the students to participate using class discussion, video clips, props, and hands-on materials.



And this is where I'd like to briefly write about what I noticed in all the lectures. Dr. Koen's lecture was successful because he didn't let the students get away with being silent. If no one had an answer or suggestion for one of his questions he would select somebody at random. He wouldn't allow lulls to happen. He was able to connect with the students. This is also true for Suo Er Fu and the course professors at American University. They knew how to engage the students. I saw many presentations from the faculty and staff of many Universities during this program, and most, if not all, were great. Where some fell flat in areas was when the speaker didn't know how to engage the students. Sometimes the speakers would use slang or cultural references that the Chinese students had never heard before. Then, when they'd ask questions, the students wouldn't have an answer. Sometimes the students didn't prepare themselves for the lecture. I think one way to combat less-than-stellar lectures or presentations is to encourage the speakers beforehand to be assertive with the students. If no one answers a question, don't be afraid to choose someone at random. And for the students, prepare them for the lecture by giving them a small task. For some lectures, I started telling the students that they each had to come up with one question. If everyone in the room had one question, it would usually mean that the time would be filled with a livelier discussion. If we all understand each other a little better, it will make for better lectures.

On the last day of the AU G-MEO Summer Study Program we crammed in some last-minute sightseeing. We first visited the Federal Reserve where massive rooms full of gold bricks were displayed. Sadly no photos were allowed. After a ramen lunch in Chinatown, we hopped on a ferry and shot down the river to pay a visit to the Statue of Liberty. Along the way we had great views of the skylines of Manhattan, Brooklyn and Jersey.



And with the very last excursion before heading back to the hotel, we visited One World Observatory, both a solemn memorial to those who lost their lives on 9/11 and an impressive feat of architecture and engineering, giving visitors the best views of New York City from above.



The next morning, we packed the students onto the bus and sent them successfully to the airport. It was sad to say farewell, but we have so many memories and pictures to remind us of the great times we had. I know for certain that every student in the program will remember this trip for the rest of their lives and it will have a great impact on their futures.