Chinese Study Abroad: Jiayou!
By Oladoyin Zaccheus, International Business Major

For most unadventurous people like me, going off to live in a new place where you neither speak nor understand the language spoken is inconceivable. However, as unadventurous as I am, fall 2011 found me on a study abroad trip to Beijing, China. The plans and the eventual execution of the trip are inconsequential in this story, though it suffices to say that it is very fuzzy since it was a last-minute decision.

It may be bold to say that this last-minute fuzzy decision is my best decision yet in my scholastic life. Academic knowledge and credits aren’t all that I gained from the experience. The cultural and social aspects to it cannot be quantified. I had the opportunity to intern in a company there and this enables me to immerse myself into the community. Even with my non-existent Chinese language skills, I was able to get around easily and even communicate, contrary to my thoughts prior to departure.

The program I went with organized tours biweekly to different parts of Beijing. Some of the places include the Summer Palace, Arts District, Silk Market and the Great Wall of China, among other places. The food is delicious and the people make you feel like a mini celebrity. Towards the end of the program, we went on a 2-week tour to the south of China. My summary of that 2-week trip in one word: bliss!

Yes, Beijing is an ancient city but that is its major charm as it has a very rich culture. Moreover, who wants to go all the way to China only to feel as though she never left the United States? Certainly not me!

All in all, to fellow unadventurous souls, if I could do it, so can you. Take a study abroad trip somewhere new before you graduate…Jiayou, go for it!
Last year The College at Brockport announced a new Strategic Plan designed to guide the College’s endeavors over the next 5 years: “To be a nationally recognized comprehensive master’s institution focused on student success.” Setting its sight on achieving this goal, the College has already begun to introduce new initiatives aimed at enhancing the campus living and learning environment and attracting a more diverse student body. These include several new Honors Program initiatives beginning in the fall 2012 semester. You may have already heard about the new Honors scholarship package for freshmen admitted this coming fall: full tuition for New York State residents (or $9,000 for out-of-state residents), an on-campus parking pass, and an Apple iPad which will be used for collaborative learning activities in the “Introduction to Honors” HON 112 course. Other new initiatives for Honors Program freshmen include an online application system and an Honors Living-Learning Community.

These Honors initiatives are intended to help the College achieve its 2016 Strategic Plan, especially the goal of attracting even more extraordinary students to enroll at Brockport. I know some current students who are reading this feel disappointed that they are not eligible for the above scholarship package—I would probably feel the same way if I were in your shoes. Still, I hope everyone can understand that it’s important for an institution of higher education to be on a continuous path of self-improvement and to have a future trajectory, striving to be on the cutting-edge of the latest knowledge, technology, and “best practices” of all kinds—including new student recruitment strategies that will enable the College to compete with other universities and attract a more diverse student body.

As I write this essay, we have already experienced a very large increase in applications from all across New York State, as well as from other states and other countries. Admission into the program will be more competitive than it has been in the past. It will also be interesting to see how our Honors Program evolves over the next five years. According to the College’s Facilities Master Plan completed last year, our program will be moving to a new facility housed in Hartwell Hall, although we don’t yet know when this will happen (see http://www.brockport.edu/facilities/FaMP/). We may also grow in size, recruit new faculty to teach Honors courses, and offer new services to students.

It’s exciting to see new possibilities on the horizon for the Honors Program. Although most, if not all of you will be alums by the time these initiatives come to full fruition, I hope that you will take pride in Brockport’s efforts to become a nationally recognized institution that is known for its commitment to student success.

P.S. To find out about scholarships for current students, visit the Financial Aid Office in Rakov Hall. Also, pay attention to announcements about scholarship opportunities that appear in The Stylus and in Honors Program announcements sent by email.

**UPCOMING HONORS EVENTS**

**Improv Night**: March 21 at 7pm in Union 119

**I Love the 90s Party**: April 1 from 2pm-5pm in Gallery

The Honors Program now has an official Facebook page! Become a fan by searching “The College at Brockport Honors Program” or by typing in the url below. Look for the big ‘H’ photo and get updates from the Program!

One excruciatingly important lesson can be learned from the life of Dr. Temple Grandin—forget labels. Grandin is an Associate Professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder who was diagnosed with autism in 1950; upon diagnosis, she was referred for institutionalization. Luckily for the world, Grandin’s parents chose otherwise; instead of institutionalizing her, they sent her to a school. With the help of strong teachers, she reached heights unthinkable for psychologists in the 1950s—she earned her doctorate in animal science and went on to become one of the most famous livestock handling engineers in history. In spite of the many challenges autism can bring, Grandin fervently claims that autism was not her greatest struggle: it was the label of autism. In our medical world we have become fixated on the label, looking to normalize abnormality. Rather, Grandin reminds us that children with autism are really no different than neuro-typical children. As she says in *The Way I See It*, “every child with [an Autism Spectrum Disorder] has his or her own personality and profile of strengths and weaknesses, this is no different than with a typical child” (*The Way I See It* 25). Thus, the key to success for those with autism is not normalization, but accepting their diverse minds and ways of life and accommodating for weaknesses. Grandin did not reach success by conforming.

Grandin’s message for those with autism is universal. We should all embrace our individuality; it is the key to genius. After meeting Grandin in the fall, I am reassured of this principle of unconventional genius. Grandin’s strength is in her ability to visualize her knowledge, a trait found in many autistics. Essentially, her mind works like a computer that categorizes information in pictures and short movies. During one of our conversations, Grandin laughed at the inability of Japanese engineers to see potential disaster in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant’s design. When first constructed, the engineers built large restraining walls to protect the reactors from tidal waves; unfortunately, there was no way for water to drain if it passed the restraining walls, something the engineers overlooked. Grandin found this comical—if there is no way for the water to drain, then the restraining walls merely hold the water in! If that water then backs up, it will break the pumps, and the trouble only continues from there. Unlike the engineers, Grandin envisioned the whole disaster. Her ability to fixate and to see the world in pictures allowed her to see the details that no one else saw. These details made a world of difference in her famous cattle chutes. She understood and saw that the cattle chutes cast shadows that startled the animals; she noted that cattle tend to move in circles; in turn, she designed chutes that move cattle in circles and reduced shadows, and the cattle began to naturally move through the chutes. Other engineers who tried to force and prod the cattle through were mesmerized!

Everyone has unusual traits and fixations; they’re part of our identity. The key is to foster diversity, “to work with [atypical people], not against them. Discover their hidden talents and develop them” (*Emergence*). The key is not labels, but individuals; the key is not normalcy, but effective abnormality. Thus, we should strive to be divergent, to change our viewpoints, and to learn from everyone. Grandin believes that autism is part of her identity, as she states in *Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism*. “If I could snap my fingers and be nonautistic, I would not—because then I wouldn’t be me. Autism is part of who I am.”
On December 3, 2011, the Honors Club held one of its most successful events—Potter Party! With over 115 students in attendance at the Gallery turned Hogwarts, Potter fans from all across campus played a variety of games including Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them (where magical creatures were hidden throughout the Union), Trivia Challenge, Broomstick Waltz, Quirrell’s Turban Roll, among several other fun games. Magical foods such as jellied slugs, cauldron cakes, acid pops, and more filled the Brockport witches and wizards as they watched an incredible performance by the Rock ‘n’ Roll Club, who played rock versions of the Harry Potter theme song and more. Prizes such as the complete DVD collection, Harry Potter Scene-It, light-up wands and more were distributed to students, some of which dressed up as their favorite Potter characters!

“This was literally the best event I ever participated in during my three years here at Brockport!” one survey response stated as another asked, “Can we have a Potter party every week?” The event wouldn’t have been possible without the organization, leadership, and creativity of many Honors Club students who made decorations, prepared food, ran games, and put in many hours to make this event as successful as it was.

What’s the Honors Club’s next event such as this? On April 1, the Honors Club will be hosting another themed party— I Love the 90s! Already, the Honors Club Board has begun making plans, creating decorations, and searching through their childhoods to make this even more successful than the Potter Party. Ideas include Legends of the Hidden Temple games, Pokémon hunts, an orange soda fountain, Bop-It competitions, and more!

Check your email for more information about when Honors Club meets!
Dr. Anne Macpherson, Honors Modern World
“I’ve had the chance to teach Modern World History Honors sections three times, and the reason I jumped at the chance was because of the smaller class size and higher skill level of the students. Because reading comprehension is better, it’s possible to have deeper and richer discussions of readings. The smaller class size even allows for a seminar-type discussion, which I think gives Honors students a taste of graduate seminar work. I also found that students showed great independence and analytical ability with the final projects on the post-WW2 period. It’s just fun to teach skilled students who love to learn, and who can teach me to think of the subject in new ways.”

Mrs. Susan Hopkins, Honors Improv Theater
“I teach an Honors section of Improv Theater every semester because these students are so highly motivated and are much more willing and eager to become engaged. Often times in my other classes, I see eyes glued to the clock when it comes close to the end of the class. But in this class, we often go well over the class period and no one has even noticed. Honors kids are just generally overall good kids, and I love to have them in class.”

Dr. Roger Kurtz, Honors Literature and Forgiveness
“I like teaching Honors courses because of the students. They tend to be motivated, curious, and engaged. They often bring new perspectives to class that I enjoy and that help me learn new things too. I like teaching Honors because it gives me an opportunity to create an enriched learning environment, trying things that I might normally not do. Above all, I like teaching Honors because the classes tend to be smaller, which is probably the best way to assure that you are getting a high quality educational experience.”

Mr. David Hoffberg, Honors Professional Ethics
“I was a lawyer until January of 2000. I had worked closely with President Yu since he first became President; he asked me what I wanted to do when I retired, and I told him that I was working on ideas for creating a seminar in which students could meet with experts on legal, medical, journalistic and business ethics. He told me at that time that what I was considering was a perfect concept for Honors students, and I was glad to take his advice. One of Brockport’s great accomplishments is that the College produces graduates such as sociologists, teachers, health care workers and law enforcement officers, among others, who become the backbone of our society. I thought that the Honors Program would present an opportunity for me to participate in that important mission. That has certainly proved to be the case.”
In October 2011, four Honors peer mentors traveled to Phoenix, Arizona to represent Brockport at the National Collegiate Honors Council’s annual conference. Peer Mentoring co-coordinators Jessica Geraci and Allison Sawyer and mentors Justin Jackson and Nick Kinney gave a detailed presentation about the peer mentoring program to a national audience.

The mentors attended presentations on mentoring programs from around the country, gaining ideas about program structure, mentor-mentee ratio, and extracurricular outings. We were excited to see that many Honors programs across the country have students that have recently begun peer mentoring programs for their freshman students.

“It was very exciting to see and talk with students from other universities who have begun peer mentoring initiatives. They were very open to our suggestions, and were excited about the impact they could have on their new students,” says Jessica.

Nick, an NCHC first-timer, attended a session entitled Non-Honors Students in Honors Courses: Promoting Diversity or Tarnishing Academic Integrity?, where he learned that “having Honors and non-Honors students in the same class makes for more diverse conversation. It leads to a deeper understanding of the subject matter, and academic and non-academic connections between the two groups of students.” Brockport Honors occasionally offers some classes that are composed of both Honors and non-Honors students.

Another popular session at the conference, attended by all four mentors, was SIRP: Reinventing Fantasy, Folklore, & Mythology: Dragons, Mordred, and Harry Potter. “Attending presentations like this allowed us to generate ideas about future Honors courses that we could offer at Brockport,” says Justin. “Hearing what each Honors Program contributed to the conference got me excited about some of the methods that could be introduced into our program,” says Allison.

During their down time between sessions, the mentors and Dr. Kowal ate authentic Mexican food; visited pueblo ruins; toured the Heard Museum, an innovative museum housing a large collection of Native American artifacts; and toured downtown Phoenix on foot. This year’s conference’s special event was a trip to the Arizona Science Center, full of fun, interactive scientific exhibits.

As always, NCHC was an eye-opening experience for our students, as they have made many suggestions to improve the Honors experience at Brockport and create a support network of Honors alumni to influence and support future Honors students. Next year’s conference will be held in Boston, Massachusetts.
**Failure**  
By Peter Rydzewski

For the most part, we strive to do our best; however, our goals may sometimes take longer than we had originally planned.

On our road to victory, we will certainly fail. Before our eyes, failures begin to exceed the number of digits that we have hanging from our hard-working extremities. Nevertheless, we must once again erect our bodies and complete the day’s monotonous tasks.

Those tasks, whether a business meeting or a heavy food order that must be fulfilled, do not have to be dull or boring. It’s important to remember that boring people will always be the first to exclaim infinite boredom.

Visionaries, leaders, and the genuinely happy are never slowed by an almost-impossible climb or an unthinkable jump. Life is full of uncertainty, but those who desire to make it certain will prosper, no matter how many times they fall.

Remember: time is limited, it moves quickly, and cannot be purchased. Life should never be seen through an insipid eye glass; rather, it should be taken step by step, only observing that which faces us to smile.
Contribute to The Promethean!

The Honors Program Newsletter is an award-winning publication dedicated to the Honors Program faculty, students, and alumni. Articles are written by Honors students and are designed to provide information to the Honors community. Content will include a variety of topics, including research, Honors program news and events, student and professor spotlights, experiences, and creative work. For submissions or more information, please contact Justin Jackson at jjack4@brockport.edu.

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Prometheus sculpture on cover created by Arno Breker.

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