

SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY

The Honors Program
Horton Hall 104

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Contact: Dr. Kim Klein, Honors Program Director
(717) 477-1604

<http://webpace.ship.edu/honors>

Honors Student Spends Year in China, Plans to Launch Chinese Language Club

SHIPPENSBURG, Pa. — A Shippensburg University Honors Program student has spent a year studying in China and plans to establish a Chinese Language Club at the university for students and the community.

JohnPaul Bennett, a junior finance major from New Cumberland, spent the 2007-08 academic year studying business, culture, international relations, religion, and language at Central University for Nationalities in Beijing and East China Normal University in Shanghai. He returned to Pennsylvania this past summer, inspired to pioneer an academic club at Ship centered around the Chinese language.

The club that Bennett is organizing has already attracted the interest of several dozen students and is open to all Shippensburg University students and faculty as well as the community. Club members will learn how to speak, read, and write Mandarin Chinese and will be introduced to different aspects of China's lifestyle and people.

For the 20-year-old, his study-abroad experience included a number of "firsts": his first time flying on a plane or riding in a taxi, his first time living in an apartment, and his first time tasting such delicacies as octopus, dog, duck, yak, and cow tongue.

"I had made so many assumptions before going on the trip that I was completely surprised by what I saw when I arrived," says Bennett. "The China I thought I would see has been gone for more than 10 years, and I saw a place modernized in every sense of economy, culture, and social structure. It also helped when I saw McDonald's, KFC, T.G.I. Friday's, and Wal-Mart."

Working with the Council on International Educational Exchange, the Shippensburg University Honors Program, and the university's study abroad program, Bennett picked China as his destination because he was interested in the country's unique culture and language and wanted to venture outside his comfort zone. Bennett's trip was partly funded by the Freeman-Asia Award, a prestigious honor given to only 12 students in the United States annually.

During his year in the world's most populous country, Bennett visited the Great Wall, Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Summer Palace, and Tiananmen Square. His adventures included living with farmers and nomads in the remote provinces of Qinghai and Gansu, horseback

riding in the grasslands of Qinghai, drinking baijiao with monks, climbing the walls of an 11th-century Mongolian castle, and interacting with Tibetan villagers who had never met a foreigner.

“The feeling of being a minority in a distant land was new to me, and I felt the opinions of others toward my race and nationality,” shares Bennett, who plans to pursue a career in China after graduation. “By immersing myself in China’s vast culture, I learned about ethnic minority issues and issues that influence the economy.”

Bennett hopes the Chinese Language Club will serve as a springboard for the university to offer a Chinese language course in the near future as well as attract American and Chinese students interested in studying the Chinese language.

Exact meeting dates, times, and locations for the club will be announced on the Honors Program website at <http://webspace.ship.edu/honors>.

The Shippensburg University Honors Program is made up of more than 150 undergraduate students of diverse backgrounds who are accepted to the program based on academic achievement and evidence of leadership and community service.

The Honors Program offers small, dynamic classes with excellent instruction; opportunities for research projects, internships, and study abroad experiences; and cultural events, social activities, and service projects. For more information, contact Dr. Kim Klein, Honors Program Director, at (717) 477-1604 or kmklei@ship.edu.



Shippensburg University
1871 Old Main Drive
Shippensburg, PA 17257
(717) 477-7447