

# Befriending Chinese Exchange Students

MELANIE ALLEN December 1, 2009



*Friendship is a crucial part of college life. Through friendships we are able to get involved in social gatherings, to share class notes and study together, and to*

A Leinenkugel Honey Ale in hand, I wave an enthusiastic goodbye to my friends Liye and Vincent. We make compatible friends because we share an enthusiasm for beer, good food, and shopping trips. These simple shared interests surmount what might seem to some American students like a formidable language and culture barrier. Judging by observation and the reports of the students that I have worked (or played) with, many SPSU students do not befriend the Chinese exchange students. There may be students who, once learning a bit about the Chinese exchange program and the students involved, will understand how investing time in friendships with Chinese and other exchange students can be as rewarding as friendships with traditional SPSU students.

I had several exchange students in my classes, but since I am shy, I never introduced myself to any of them. My third semester, I was assigned a Chinese exchange student as my dorm mate. Wei Wei was so excited to meet me, that I could not help but be excited in return. We met for lunch together with other Chinese students from our hall often. They enjoyed my company and were excited to be taught about American culture, to talk about Chinese culture, and to be my friend. This is how I learned that it was

difficult to learn well and make friends at SPSU for the Chinese students. This has caused me to want to get more involved in ISA and tutoring.

Southern Polytechnic State University began the cultural exchange with two universities in China in 2002. The Chinese students that attend SPSU are from either North China University of Technology (NCUT) or North East Normal University (NENU). It is a flourishing program with around 100 students arriving every year. Chances are that every student at SPSU will have at least one class with an international student from China. When I ask them



This year, I have been with the Chinese exchange students from the beginning. I started tutoring them during the summer orientation.

The students arrive in America about three weeks before the semester. We received the equivalence of a boxed lunch every day, although breakfast and dinner were almost buffet quality. The students soon became incredibly tired of sandwiches. I am not sure whether the culture shock was better or worse because of the sandwiches, but almost every student would complain- "Rice! I miss rice!". We took them on field trips a couple of times a week. We went to the Martin Luther King center, hiked at a waterfall, and went to the mall among other things. The idea was to remind them of important cultural ideas and to show them what was available to do in the United States. Of course it wasn't all fun and sandwiches. For about six hours a day, they would have English/living in America lessons and get tutoring on their papers for three hours. They would have to wake up early every day to take the lessons and write the papers. It was tiring for them. Their favorite part was always to talk to me and Samantha Rooks, the other American tutor.

Becoming a tutor over the orientation caused me to meet many more of the students than ever before.

Throughout this semester, I started to understand the general experience of Chinese students at SPSU better than ever before. Unfortunately, their experience is often a lonely and tiring one. Making friends and joining organizations are integral parts of the college experience that many Chinese find extra difficult to get involved with. It is much like the frustration of a new college student, except there is a language and cultural barrier to cross.

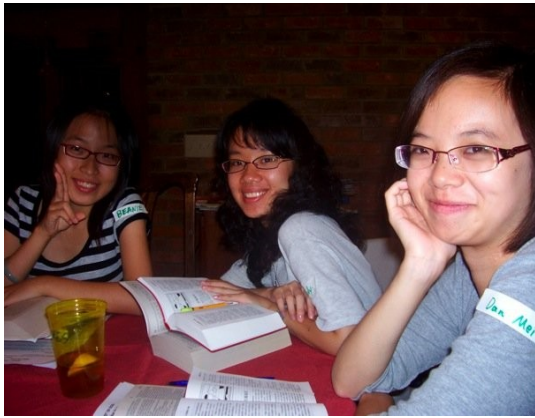


This will be a paragraph where I talk about how difficult it is for the students to find activities to participate in. I will talk about the exception of Friends of Internationals, Cafe Global, and Linna's participation in the Dance Team. Lastly, I will mention that leaders of student organizations or people who would like to start organizations could benefit from recruiting international students. I will mention that faculty could do a better job at preparing students and should not assume American students will be as helpful as they should be.

This will be a paragraph where I talk about how hard it is to study for class, especially when no one will be your friend. I will talk about their complaints with using the translator. I will mention that studying with them would improve one's own understanding of the material. This will be a paragraph where I talk about how hard it is to study for class, especially when no one will be your friend. I will talk about their complaints with using the translator. I will mention that studying with them would improve one's own understanding of the material.

This will be a paragraph where I talk about what happens when Chinese students try to make friends. I will talk about how they are sometimes rejected or ignored and the reasons the Chinese

students think it is happening. I will connect this to the difficulty everyone has making friends here. This will be a paragraph where I talk about what happens when Chinese students try to make friends. I will talk about how they are sometimes rejected or ignored and the reasons the Chinese students think it is happening. I will connect this to the difficulty everyone has making friends here.



This will be a paragraph where I talk about what I have learned about Chinese culture and how I have benefited from getting to know the Chinese students. I will talk about hanging out with Liye and Beanie. This will be a paragraph where I talk about what I have learned about Chinese culture and how I have benefited from getting to know the Chinese students. I will talk about hanging out with Liye and Beanie.

This will be a paragraph where I talk about how the other American tutor feels about making friends with the Chinese students. I will also talk about a student Ian Elmore about his experience with the students. Once I have established that it is worthwhile, I will give some tips to people who have decided it would be fun to meet an international student and provide positive encouragement. I will also encourage people to become tutors. This will be a paragraph where I talk about how the other American tutor feels about making friends with the Chinese students. I will also talk about a student Ian Elmore about his experience with the students. Once I have

established that it is worthwhile, I will give some tips to people who have decided it would be fun to meet an international student and provide positive encouragement. I will also encourage people to become tutors.

#### *Sources*

*Interview*

*Interview*

*SPSU Website*

*Image*

*Image*