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5-6-2007

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Recommended Citation

University Relations, "Student Liubing Chen reflects on her UMM experience" (2007). *Campus News Archive*. 1009.

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Student Liubing Chen reflects on her UMM experience

Summary: Chen is one of 19 students from China who studied at UMM during the 2006-07 academic year.

(May 6, 2007)-In early 2005, the University of Minnesota, Morris and Capital Normal University (CNU) in Beijing, China, began exploring student exchange opportunities. That summer, 12 UMM students and two advisers traveled to China's Jiashan County to jump-start an exchange program, the first with the United States in that region of China. This academic year, 2006-07, UMM welcomed 19 students from China, including Liubing Chen.

Chen is a senior English language and literature student from CNU, and editor of CNU's magazine. She chose to study at UMM because of the agreement between the two universities, UMM's excellent liberal arts education, and to improve her English.

"It's great to be a student here!" says Chen. "It's totally an English environment, and I have to use English to communicate every day, so it's really helpful for my improvement. It's much easier to learn English here than in China. What's more important is that the people are very friendly and helpful, so I feel very happy to be here." Chen lives in the on-campus apartments, a great location to hone her English skills.

While CNU is a very large university, with four different campuses and more than 20,000 students at her campus alone, Chen finds UMM comparable. "Both of the universities are very good. CNU emphasizes teacher training. It has great school spirit and pays much attention to moral character. The professors are all very nice and responsible. UMM students are all very diligent and cultured. The professors at UMM are at high levels in their subjects and fields, and they treat students very well, helping a lot in our academic area." Because of UMM's liberal arts emphasis, Chen has been able to take many different courses, which she enjoys.

Chen treasures her experiences at UMM: "I would definitely recommend for people in China to study at UMM. It's a wonderful place to study and live. You not only make progress in your academic career, but also in your personality." Chen is interested in a career involving American-Chinese communication. "I think it is very important work, and I'll be very satisfied if I can use my language skills to help people," she comments.

This is Chen's first experience in the United States. The native of Beijing, population nearly 15 million, is really enjoying the small town of Morris. "I come from a big city, so I don't have many chances to enjoy the peaceful country life. I love the fresh air in Morris! The most impressive thing is the tolerance among people. In Morris, people from different countries can get along with each other very well. I have lots of friends here, not only Americans but also students from other counties. I think the best word to describe Morris is 'harmony,'" she observes.

Reflecting China's one child policy, Chen is an only child. Her mother and father, both college graduates, are a designer and a manager of a company, respectively. "I feel really lucky to be their child because they are open-minded parents who love me very much. We three get along very well." Chen appreciates her parents' encouragement to study abroad. It is as invaluable to her as the support she has received at UMM. Chen is very thankful for all of the help she has received

through orientation, from the Center for International Programs staff, and from the tutors who aided her throughout the year.

Chen and Tap Payne, professor of theatre, at UMM's International Country Fair.

Chen on the UMM campus mall.

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