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**Study abroad instills passion for China and its people**

*Summary: During fall semester, University of Minnesota, Morris junior Savannah Schulze studied at Capital Normal University in Beijing, China.*

(March 6, 2007)-During summer 2005, Savannah Schulze '08, Ely, and 11 other UMM students traveled to Jiashan, China, Morris' sister city, to help teach English to high school students and live with host families. Before she left, Schulze knew she would return. Studying at Capital Normal University in Beijing during fall semester 2006 fulfilled that pleasant premonition.

Schulze's academic work at the college included studying Mandarin Chinese, taught completely in Chinese, for four hours each day. Two other classes, Anthropology and Chinese Culture and Introduction to Modern Chinese Society, were taught in English by Chinese professors. Language played a major factor in Schulze's experience. Basic tasks like ordering food, shopping, and getting from place to place were first obstacles.

"I had no Chinese before this experience and dove head first into learning!" shares Schulze. "As language skills increased, we managed our way around the city, a great feeling! Chinese people are very helpful and very patient. They will correct you and make you repeat it until you pronounce it correctly—a big challenge! There are four different tones. Pronounced incorrectly, the local Chinese will not understand you, not even a little bit! Being immersed in the language is the best way to learn."

During breaks, Schulze traveled. She visited Inner Mongolia, a 24-hour bus ride, stopping at cultural sights along the way. "We saw a monastery carved into the side of a mountain," shares Schulze, "and visited the Gobi Desert, where we rode camels into the sunset—literally! We also rode horses in the grasslands and slept in Yurts, traditional housing. It was cold, no heat!"

On another excursion, Schulze traveled to Huang Shan or Yellow Mountain near Shanghai. "We climbed one of the most important mountains in Daoism. The five-hour climb was straight up, very challenging even for the most fit, but the view was definitely worth it!"

Schulze believes her UMM education would not be complete without her China experiences. "I am an anthropology major," states Schulze. "Study abroad is absolutely essential to learn more about my field. I needed to know how it felt to live in a foreign country and how I would deal with challenges. In China, everyone knows by looking at you that you are obviously not from there and sometimes this can be a challenge. You do something wrong and everyone will notice! This experience taught me to have patience and respect for different cultural practices, to embrace differences."

While UMM's Center for International Programs helped prepare Schulze for study abroad, she did have one big surprise. "I didn't expect to make so many friends from around the world!" she remarks. "My class was made up of

Americans, Koreans, and Nepalese, students from Iraq, Suriname, Pakistan, Dominica, and Canada. That was just my class not to mention the diversity of people in my international dorm—a great chance to learn about other cultures.”

While wonderful, Schulze’s second trip to China did not satisfy her intellectual curiosity and interest in the country and its people. In fact, it had the opposite affect: “I am making plans to return to China for a fifth year of study abroad, if possible. This experience has changed me as a person. It has instilled an interest in not just China but other cultures around the world. I can’t wait for my next trip abroad and my next trip to China. I will definitely be returning.”

Photos below of Schulze in the Gobi Desert in Mongolia.

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