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Jiashan, Morris sign exchange agreement

Summary: Jiashan and the City of Morris have been accepted into the International Sister City Program. On April 17 at 3 p.m. China time, 2 a.m. Morris time, Chancellor Schuman reported: "We signed the formal exchange agreement."

(April 17, 2006)-Two weeks at Capital Normal, five days in Jiashan, and a walk on the Great Wall of China are all part of the China Exchange Program experience at the University of Minnesota, Morris. UMM Chancellor Sam Schuman and Tom McRoberts, director of the Center for International Programs, along with Jennifer Falzerano, coordinator of the Chinese Exchange Program and admissions counselor, have helped to create and develop the program. Jiashan and the City of Morris have been accepted into the International Sister City Program, which offers UMM students the opportunity to live in a Chinese home and visit a local high school. In addition Jiashan students will be able to attend UMM's Summer Scholars program.

"The students from China participating in UMM's Summer Scholars Program this May are part of the growing relationship and partnerships between UMM and select cities, high schools and universities in China," said James D. Morales, associate vice chancellor for enrollment. "These experiences help build bridges of intercultural understanding and strengthen our mutual capacity to engage in the global community as active participants. Educational interactions of this kind enlarge our community's ability to help shape the future of our global society. This summer program is another unique facet of the high-quality liberal arts education at UMM,"

A delegation representing both UMM and the City of Morris are currently visiting China.

"The cities of Jiashan in China and Morris have been accepted into the International Sister City program. It will be exciting for me to learn about our "Big Sister" first hand and be more prepared for a visit from folks from Jiashan when they visit Morris later in the summer," said Morris Mayor Carol Wilcox who is part of the City delegation.

"I am told that the official signing of the Proclamation will be followed by a Grand Luncheon followed by a tour of the city," added Wilcox prior to the group's departure. "Since I am a former teacher, I have requested a visit to a school and I am looking forward to that. We will be visiting a factory that Superior Industries of Morris does business with. We will also see a performance of the Chinese Acrobatic Circus."

"I am very excited about meeting the officials and students who will be in Morris this summer and grateful to Chancellor Schuman for including me on this trip. It truly is an opportunity of a lifetime," said Wilcox.

Schuman reported back to the campus at 3 p.m. on Monday (April 17) China time, 2 a.m. Morris time: "All seems to be going well. We signed the formal exchange agreement this afternoon. We have also had a good meeting with the staff from the U.S. Embassy here, and have met with a potential source of full-time regular students."

Those who traveled to China along with Schuman and Wilcox are Falzerano, Jaime Moquin, UMM Office of Admissions, Michael Korth, chair, UMM Science and Mathematics Division, Tap Payne, chair, UMM Humanities Division, Margaret Payne, Morris resident, Jooinn Lee, chair, UMM Social Sciences Division, Claire Lee, Morris resident, Pam Solvie, faculty, UMM Education Division, Mary Ann Scharf, Morris resident, Linda Schmidgall, Morris resident, Neil Schmidgall, Superior Industries, Michael Sparby, AURI and LaVonne Droegemueller, teacher, Morris Area High School.

Along with student exchanges for study abroad, the possibility of faculty participating in this program is undecided. UMM students have the opportunity to attend classes for an entire semester at either Shanghai University or Capital Normal, or to attend the May Term where they will spend two weeks at Capital Normal, five days teaching English in Jiashan, and the last five days visiting Shanghai.

“China is the fastest growing economy in the world. As many businesses continue to expand their operations in China, they are looking for graduates who understand the culture and economy of China. UMM is a top liberal arts school with a responsibility to prepare students for the future, and clearly China plays a major role in the future of the global community,” Falzerano said. Students who had the opportunity to attend the China Pilot program last year quickly signed up for this year's upcoming May Term and the program filled to capacity almost immediately.

Photo: UMM Chancellor Sam Schuman signs the formal exchange agreement with President Xiangyuan Xu of Capital Normal University in Beijing.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.