



# EducationFirst

The University of Iowa College of Education Newsletter

October 2008

## Remarkable Firsts

### China-BESTS, UI's First Undergrad International Admission Partnership

A group of top academic high school students from China experienced Iowa—everything from anthropology and engineering classes to ice cream socials and baseball games, thanks to a first-of-its-kind program at The University of Iowa and in China.

The China-BESTS (Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search) program brought 38 Chinese students to campus for three weeks this summer where they took six classes and enjoyed plenty of cultural immersion. The program offered students a taste of what it is like to be a U.S. university student while helping establish Chinese gifted education programs. Eventually, it will further diversity on the UI campus.

A cooperative agreement between the Belin Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development and Hangzhou Harvest Consulting Company made the program possible. The Chinese high school students were selected to attend through an academic talent search using ACT tests.

"China-BESTS gives top students from China an opportunity to experience student life at The University of Iowa," said Professor **Nicholas Colangelo**, director of the Belin-Blank Center, "and also interview for possible admission to The University of Iowa."

At the end of the program, the Belin-Blank Center recommended 27 students to the UI Office of Admissions for admission after the students complete their senior year in China. The undergraduate students accepted for admission will be part of the Belin-Blank Center transition program for gifted students, live in Daum Honors Residence Hall, and be part of the University Honors Program.

"The University of Iowa is interested in recruiting more international students, especially at the undergraduate level," said **Jan Warren**, Belin-Blank Center administrator for student programs. "These are very academically capable students who will enrich life for all students at the UI."

The students, using their American names, said they were impressed with all the hospitality and kindness they encountered.

"I would say people here are really friendly and warm-hearted," Catherine wrote. "I feel like home here. I love this city. I love this university—it is quiet, beautiful, and a good place to study."

Sally agreed. "Now I think I can begin to know the real

America apart from the illusions the media has made. And I love The University of Iowa a lot!"

Warren said that although this is the first year starting the program, Belin Blank Center staff members learned much



38 Chinese students participate in UI's first intl. undergraduate admission partnership.

from the students how to expand and improve future programs.

"This program is unique," she said. "In the next five years, we hope approximately 100 new UI undergraduate students will be from China."

## Teaching Centered on Student Learning

Professor Emeritus **Robert Yager** had a chance to reveal new ways of thinking about science education to 16 visiting Taiwanese upper elementary students and five educators. The trip was organized by **Pi-Chu Kuo** (PhD'05), who is currently an assistant professor at the National Pingtung University of Education.



Taiwanese students and educators enjoy Professor Emeritus Yager's methods of teaching and learning.

The group visited the Maquoketa Caves, Dubuque levees and museum, and the Coralville Reservoir. Daily instruction was centered at the University Field Campus and coordinated by Director **Edward Saehler** (MA '78).

Yager said he hoped that while the students experienced a different culture and new field experiences, they also practiced a new way of learning without textbooks or memorization.

"We wanted them to follow up on their natural curiosities, make mistakes, experience the idea of asking questions about the natural world, and trying to find the answers," Yager said.

"Not one of those things can be learned in a text book."

Yager said he hopes the visit also stimulated new ways of thinking about teaching for the Taiwanese educators.

"Our hope is that they learn some new approaches to teaching, become more student centered, and continue in collaborative projects in both the United States and Taiwan," he said.



Taiwanese students and educators practice field experience learning.

## Remarkable Outreach

### UI Students Give to Elementary Students in Need

ISEA (Iowa State Education Association) Student Chapter participants collected supplies to benefit local schools in its recent "Pack a Backpack" initiative.

The students, led by Elementary Education major **Julie Laidig** (BA '08) and Science Education major **Susan Philos** (BS '08), donated three backpacks and school supplies to the Mark Twain Elementary School Family Resource Center. The supplies were collected from students, faculty and staff at the College.

Chapter advisor Nancy Langguth (PhD '96) said she's proud of the students' efforts.

"It clearly is a privilege to work alongside students in our College who very much want to make a positive difference in the lives of others," she said.

The group had encouraging feedback from Twain Elementary



Laidig (L), Philos, and Negus (R) partner to help Twain Elementary students with the "Pack a Backpack" project.

as well. **Shonna Negus** (BA '00/MSW '04), Family Resource Center director, said she is grateful the students chose to donate the supplies to her school.

"Know that the supplies will be put to good use and will help ensure that all students have what they need to participate in learning activities here at school from the moment they walk through the doors," she wrote in a thank you note

to the group. "Your thoughtfulness and generosity are greatly appreciated."

### UI Students Connect with Diverse Elementary Students

#### UI Counseling Students Gain Experience, Local Elementary Students Learn about Bullying



Counseling students Kelsie Hinshaw (L) and Carmen Krapfl help elementary students learn about bullying.

School Counseling Assistant Professor **Malik Henfield** wanted his counseling master's students to gain experience working with diverse populations early in their education. So he arranged for his counseling class to present anti-bullying curricula

groups with the student groups and created activities for the students that would help them think about bullying but also relate

to students at the Mark Twain Elementary after school program.

Henfield said the hands-on experience at Twain, where the student population is a majority of African Americans, would provide a richer, more unpredictable experience than anything he could do in the classroom.

"They get to see things I just can't plan," he said.

The Twain program divides students into various interest groups, including drama, PE, even racecars. UI students worked in small

to their special interest.

The racecar group watched a short video clip about bullying on the race track.

The drama group made up skits.

Kelsie Hinshaw led the drama group with classmate Theresa Putnam. Hinshaw said this was her first experience in a school setting.

"We've learned how to prepare activities and how the process works," she said.

Putnam said she's enjoyed the chance to work with a classmate and discuss how their activities went over after the students leave.

"The support has been most helpful," she said.

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