Confucius Institute at the University at Albany, State University of New York

Exchange Materials

9th Global Confucius Institute Conference

I. Introduction

The Confucius Institute for China’s Culture and the Economy at the University at Albany, State University of New York (UAlbany) was inaugurated on December 4, 2013. It is established in the Department of East Asian Studies of the College of Arts and Sciences. The Executive Director is Dr. Anthony DeBlasi. The Chinese Director is Dr. Dejun Cao, who is a professor in College of International Business at Southwest University of Finance and Economics (SWUFE). The rest of the UAlbany CI staff includes an administrative assistant, Ms. Michelle Huang, and a visiting language instructor sent by the Confucius Institute Headquarters, Dr. Yansheng Cai.

The office space of the UAlbany CI has met the requirement of the Headquarters and includes: one Executive Director office, one Chinese Director office, one office for the visiting language instructors, one conference room, and one comprehensive room. The office space has been recently renovated. Furniture, office supplies, and technical equipment are all in place.

1. Chinese Language Teaching

Our CI has one Chinese language teaching location which is a local high school near UAlbany, Tech Valley High School (TVHS), with 10 officially registered Confucius Institute students. Students are registered for Level 4 Chinese (based on TVHS’ internally set language level standard). Classes are taught for 2 hours on Mondays and Wednesdays with a total of 4 credit hours. The textbook that is used is composed by our visiting language instructor, Dr. Cai. We plan to select textbooks and reading materials offered by the Headquarters.

2. Chinese Language Teaching Workshop
The UAlbany CI is preparing to host its first Seminar on Chinese Language Teaching. Participants will include Chinese instructors from UAlbany, local Albany high schools, and colleges. This seminar is an import step in our CI preparing to become a training center for Chinese language instructors in New York Capital Region.

3. Cultural Activities

1) Inauguration Celebration

To celebrate the inauguration, the UAlbany CI organized a large-scale cultural performance including Peking Opera and Dragon Dance. On the night of the inauguration, a cultural showcase “Taste of China” was hosted with performance including Kung Fu, Chinese Tea Ceremony, and calligraphy. The total number of attendees was over a thousand.

2) 2014 Chinese New Year Celebration (Year of Horse)

The UAlbany CI co-hosted the 2014 Chinese New Year Celebration with the Chinese Community Center of the Capital District of New York and the UAlbany Chinese Student and Scholar Association. The show presented to over a thousand audience the traditional Chinese opera, music, dance, and Tai Chi. The participants also had the opportunity to enjoy Chinese food as well as Chinese calligraphy and painting after the show.

3) Mid-Autumn Festival Celebration Events

The UAlbany CI hosted two cultural events to celebrate the 2014 Mid-autumn Festival. The first event was co-hosted with UAlbany Chinese Student and Scholar Association with the main audience including Chinese students and scholars from UAlbany as well as other students, faculty and staff interested in Chinese culture. The second celebration was co-hosted with the Chinese Community Center of the Capital District of New York with an audience mainly from the local Chinese community. The total number of participants was over five hundred.

4) SWUFE Chinese Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition

At the beginning of May, UAlbany CI hosted a Chinese Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition of artworks from Southwest University of Finance and Economics (SWUFE) at the Shaker Junior
High School in Latham, NY. The SWUEFE President Dr. Zongyi Zhang sent his congratulatory remarks. The Exhibition displayed 36 pieces of artwork including ones by Dr. Shibai Li, the Honorary President of SWUEFE and a prestigious Chinese economist. Over four hundred teachers, students and their parents attended the Exhibition.

II. Confucius Institute Day Celebration

The UAlbany CI hosted a series of events to celebrate the Confucius Institute Day from September 27 to October 4, 2014.

The focus of the CI Day Celebration by the UAlbany CI was the spectacular Sichuan Opera. The performers from the Sichuan Art Vocational College were invited to perform for the events. The performers did not ask for any compensation for the performances. UAlbany CI provided travel expenses, meals and accommodations. The series of performances included:

**September 27:** The CI Day Celebration on September 27 took place in the Main Theater at the Performing Arts Center at the University at Albany. Over six hundred people attended the event.

**September 29:** Performance at the Albany High School. Over eighty students and faculty members attended the event.

**September 30:** Class Demonstration at UAlbany. The performers did a class demonstration of the Sichuan Opera in a Chinese Studies class at the University at Albany for over twenty students.

**September 30:** Over fifty students and teachers enjoyed a performance of Sichuan Opera during the Chinese Language Corner at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI).

**October 1:** Over one hundred and sixty students and teachers attended the performance at the Tech Valley High School (TVHS) in Albany, NY.

**October 1:** Celebrating the Chinese National Day with the local Chinese community at the Chinese Community Center in New York Capital Region. Over eighty people attended the celebration event.
There was an estimated audience of more than one thousand people at the various events during the week of UAlbany CI Day Celebration. The events promoted the theme of “Confucius Institute Day” and increased the publicity and reputation of the UAlbany Confucius Institute in New York Capital Region. We have received extensive positive feedback and compliments. The events were reported by media such as Sichuan Daily in China and the local Albany Times Union newspaper.

The highlights of these events included:

1. Emphasizing on the theme of Confucius Institute Day
   1) The logo of the Confucius Institute Day was emphasized on the promotion materials such as flyers, posters and programs along with the wording of Confucius Institute Day in both Chinese and English. The promotion materials also put focus on the classic Sichuan Opera performances of “Mask Changing” and “Fire-breathing.” These promotion materials were created with high quality.
   2) During the September 27 performance at the UAlbany Performance Arts Center, the logo of Confucius Institute Day was projected in the center of the stage for over an hour.
   3) The remarks on the theme of celebrating the CI Day were given at the beginning of each performance. It has demonstrably increased publicity for the Confucius Institute as well as the Confucius Institute Day.

2. Sichuan Opera entered American Classrooms for the first time
   We have arranged and introduced the Sichuan Opera into the classrooms in American universities and high schools. With PowerPoint presentations, live demonstrations of the dancing, singing and musical instruments from Sichuan Opera, the students were presented with a vivid image of Sichuan Opera and also had the opportunity to interact with the performers. This was the first time in Sichuan Opera history that Sichuan Opera stepped into the American classrooms.

3. The Program and Performing Troupe had a Distinctive Quality
   The performance presented by the Sichuan Opera troupe was of very high standard. Some of the performers are nationally ranked performers with expertise in more than one performance art. The specially invited performer, the American Elizabeth Bielby (Liza), performed her
awarding-winning “White Eel Takes in the View.” Besides performing, Liza also took on the roles as the host of the ceremony, translator for the troupe, and presenter during the classroom demonstration. Liza has a high proficiency in Mandarin and Sichuan dialect. Many students expressed that they were amazed and also motivated to learn Chinese by her language proficiency.

III. Supporting International Conference

The UAlbany Confucius Institute provided financial support to the 2014 International Conference on Contemporary Urban China Research organized by the Department of Sociology at the University at Albany (May 9-10). Our Executive Director, Dr. Anthony DeBlasi, and the University Provost, Dr. Susan D. Phillips attended the opening ceremony and gave remarks. In his remarks, Dr. DeBlasi introduced the mission of the UAlbany Confucius Institute. The CI Board Member, University Vice Provost for International Education, Dr. Ray Bromley also gave a keynote speech at the conference. The CI Chinese Director, Dr. Dejun Cao hosted the panel discussion in the second session. Over fifty professors and doctoral students from American and Chinese universities attended the conference.

IV. Institutional Development and Sino-American Cooperation

1. Institutional Development

The UAlbany CI hosts weekly staff meeting on Mondays or Wednesdays. Three main sessions are included in the weekly meeting: information reporting, work planning, and implementation.

Each action item of the UAlbany CI is discussed at the weekly meeting. The decision is made only when agreement among the CI staff is reached. It ensures the trust between the two sides. No disputes have occurred. The two parties have been developing increasing understanding of each other.

Our CI has implemented the division of tasks. The Chinese Director is the point contact with the Headquarters. He is responsible for reporting to the Headquarters, contacting the Chinese partner university, and other related organizations and departments in China. The Executive Director (as well as the Assistant to the Director) is responsible for reporting to UAlbany, connecting with the
local organizations and agencies in New York Capital Region. The cooperation of the two parties utilizes the advantages of both sides.

As for financial and accounting aspects, the UAlbany CI strictly follows the rules and regulations at the University at Albany. All financial transactions are documented with records in place.

2. Board Meeting

The UAlbany CI has hosted two board meetings since the Inauguration on December 4, 2013. The first meeting took place on the day of the Inauguration. The Chairperson of the Board, the University at Albany Provost, Dr. Susan D. Phillips hosted the meeting. The proposal for the 2014 work plan was approved at the meeting. The second meeting was hosted on June 2, 2014 in Chengdu, China. The UAlbany President Robert J. Jones attended the meeting and gave a speech expressing his support to the Confucius Institute. Dr. Susan D. Phillips used video conference software to attend the meeting. At the meeting, the board members approved the replacement of one SWUFE board member due to personnel changes. The Chairperson of the Board for SWUFE is its Vice President for International Relationships. The Director for International Relationships at SWUFE is now a new board member.

3. Facilitating Cooperation between Chinese and American Universities

The UAlbany CI successfully organized the UAlbany delegation’s visit to China led by the University President, Robert J. Jones. The delegation visited the Headquarters and met with Madam Xu Lin, Associate Director Mr. Wang Yongli and Mr. Diefeng Cao. The two parties agreed on the implementation of the Confucius Institute. It will have a profound influence on the UAlbany CI’s future development.

As planned by the CI, President Jones also visited SWUFE and had a meeting with the SWUFE President Zongyi Zhang. At the meeting, the official implementation agreement for the Confucius Institute was signed. The Presidents reached an agreement on academic, research, and student exchanges.
Our CI also supported two faculty members teaching at SWUFE in the summer semester of 2014. More faculty and students exchanges will be arranged with SWUFE in next year.

V. Conclusion

The Confucius Institute for China’s Culture and the Economy at the University at Albany, State University of New York is a newly established institute operating for less than one year. We sincerely hope to communicate with and also learn from colleagues from different CIs at this annual conference in order to further facilitate the Sino-US cultural and educational exchange.