

CONNECTING FUTURE LEADERS ACROSS CULTURES (Fall 2006)

Five years ago on September 11, a bright blue autumn morning, two planes crashed into the World Trade Center. The fall of the twin towers changed the skyline of New York City forever. It also changed the shape of our world, signifying the birth of a new world disorder.

The reasons for the spread of terrorism are many and complex. International injustice, poverty, ignorance, and the self interest of nations are all part of it. But the answer is not in strength or revenge, but communication and reconciliation. We need world leaders who embrace values and worldviews for peace and cooperation, not power and dominance.

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China and the United States are important players in the 21st century world community. Sino-American relationships can affect the family of nations for greater peace or for more instability. The PESI network includes Asians, Americans and Christians. With these ethnic and cultural identities come unique resources and responsibilities. We are therefore committed to connecting the future leaders of China and the U.S. and building bridges between East and West.



For over 15 years, PESI has been sponsoring student, faculty and professional exchange programs and supporting conferences, translations and publications towards this end. But our world is rapidly changing, so we are updating ongoing programs and launching new ones to meet the changing needs.

Our China Summer Program started in the early 90's as an English language program. College students from North America helped fellow students in China with their listening and speaking skills through an activity-based curriculum and made friends in the process.

A decade or so later, Chinese students at the leading universities we work with have much better English proficiency and many more opportunities to meet native English speakers. So our program's focus shifted to cultural exchange, encouraging discussions, debates and dialogue on topics of interest to young people from the two countries.

This summer, we added a new component - community service. American and Chinese students worked together on service projects where Chinese students took the lead. The result? A greater sense of camaraderie as well as invaluable peer learning. Our American students also gained more cross-cultural exposure beyond the campus.