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Spring Scholar Program 2016

### *Spring Scholar Program Experience In FNNR*

The program is an interdisciplinary project, which is funded by SDSU Research Foundation and the National Science Foundation and led by researcher Dr. Li An. Titled, "Impacts of Ecosystem Service Payments in Coupled Natural and Human Systems," the project consisted of 9 days of field work in the Fanjingshan National Nature Reserve (FNNR).

FNNR is considered a high priority for conservation although it is an area that experiences a high amount of human activity. The reserve is also a UNESCO heritage site, and is the last remaining habitat of the Guizhou Golden Monkey. The reserve is a biodiversity hotspot that is not only home to a wide variety of wildlife but also approximately 13,000 people, who use the reserve to collect timber, herbs, and occasionally animals for human consumption.

Our role, as the selected Spring Scholars, in the project was to film and document the research being conducted in the reserve by FNNR staff and Postdoctoral Scholar Hsiang Ling Chen. In addition to filming for a promotional video, myself and the other spring scholar were also fortunate enough to receive training on the data collection measures being used in the reserve.

Along with assisting Dr. Chen with the field data collection, we joined Phd. student Shuang Yang of the SDSU geography department to film and document him and his research team, which consisted of 4 students from a local university, while they conducted household surveys. The surveys consisted of a variety of demographic information and is used to examine the effects of human activity within the reserve.

#### Training and Field Work

Prior to leaving, Dr. An had arranged for us to receive video training at the I.T.S. department at school where Joseph Alvarez and Ari explained to us what our purpose was in documenting this trip. The training consisted of a basic overview of camera and tripod operations, which ranged from the various settings such as the camera specs and capabilities, how to record, zoom and recording footage under the proper video settings and lighting.

From there we covered the "do's and don'ts" of recording, which included when to use handheld vs tripod, shot duration, and proper camera etiquette and ethics. Then we practiced how to frame an image under different fields of view which including capturing footage in mid shots, close ups, and wide shots. The training concluded by discussing camera moves and planning a sequence of shots.

Ari and Joseph were highly knowledgeable on the equipment and explained everything in an incredibly relaxed environment, which made the experience seem less stressful for me as this was my first experience in recording footage that will be used for an actual production. Ari and Joseph will be helping us edit the film as well upon our return to the US.

Being an experienced traveler and having been to several countries where a language barrier could present challenges, I felt excited about experiencing another culture and learning as much as could in a short period of time. While some may find this intimidating, I enjoy the opportunity and feel that it will contribute to me becoming a better global citizen.

Traveling to Jiangkou where we began our stay to partake in the PES study took us 3 days. We began our travels on March 25, 2016 taking a plane from SD to LAX. We then flew from LAX to Shanghai and our last flight from Shanghai took us to Changsha. The flight from LAX to Shanghai was just over 13 hours where they served us dinner and breakfast. Each seat had its own personal touch screen TV where you could select from a variety of new movies, tv shows, music or games.

Once we landed in Changsha we stayed at a beautiful hotel called the Star Shar hotel. The hotel was very impressive and reminded me of something you would find in Vegas. The floors and walls were made of marble and there were several wooden carvings that were incredibly detailed and most certainly took the craftsman many hours to complete. In the morning, after breakfast, we took a high speed train from Changsha to Tongren. The train traveled at an average of 300 km per hour and we were able to get to our destination in 2.5 hours!

The land features and formation along the way were nothing like anything I have ever seen, the views were absolutely stunning and it was amazing to see all the agricultural lands and all the construction and engineering projects taking place. Seeing how human activity has changed the landscape through agricultural practices and development allowed me to understand that people have been living in conjunction with the natural world here for thousands of years. The area we traveled through and were fortunate enough to experience had much more vegetation being that it is humid climate and much wetter than the dry Mediterranean climate we have here in San Diego.

The reserve personnel picked us up at our stop in Tongren and brought us to Sofitel International Hotel. We ate dinner with reserve staff and researchers where we introduced ourselves and found out more about the project and how we would be assisting in the research.

We spent the night in the hotel and prepared for 3 day trip into reserve. It took me several days to get used to the time difference and a few days of waking up at 3 o'clock AM before I was finally able to get over the jet lag. After breakfast at the hotel we left in the morning for the reserve to spend the next several days at a Ranger's house. We arrived at Shaudon's house and ate a second breakfast before we ventured off to our first site inside the reserve to record field data.

We traveled into reserve following the path of the river to install two remote sensing cameras and record plot data and vegetation samples. On route to first camera site we found wild turkey that had been killed by predator, which was possibly wild cat according to Dr. Chen. Shaoudon had buried it at request of the reserve director in order to prevent any potential spread of a possible infectious disease.

After a 2 hour hike in rugged terrain following the natural course of the river and crossing it river several times over, we arrived at first site and recorded researchers documenting data on the plot for the documentary. The researchers utilized a handheld compass to establish cardinal directions for plot markers and flagged the locations of the plot to record the locations with GPS coordinates. Vegetation samples were recorded by a graduate student researcher Shushien, who is currently studying botany at a university in a nearby province.

Dr. Chen worked diligently to document slope, aspect, and canopy forest change utilizing equipment such as a digital camera equipped with a fish eye lens and a range finder, while Shaoudon recorded the diameter of the trees within the plot. The purpose of using the fisheye lens was to craft and image using 6 photos to record the seasonal changes of the vegetation in the plot and to compare the data with satellite imagery. When Dr. Chen used the range finder she would record the slope of the plot, which in some cases was very challenging due to the density of the vegetation, as well as the average tree height.

On our way to the second plot Shaoudon had found a deceased monkey along our path, which had appeared to have been there for quite some time. It is possible due to size that it could have been a golden monkey, but no one could be certain. However, examining the skull, I did not see a relation as this monkey's snout and brow region were different. It is possible it could've been a Tibetan Macaw. We documented sighting and location coordinates with the GPS.

After the discovering the corpse we proceeded on to our next plot and recorded vegetation data this time it was a 13 point plot where Dr. Chen recorded the canopy coverage, slope, and aspect, while Shaoudon recorded the diameter of the trees.

Our role for the first day was to record the researchers field work on video while they installed a total of two remote sensing cameras to capture any activity in the area, whether animal or human. Dr. Chen placed the cameras along paths that were commonly used by animals and double checked the placement by posing for the cameras and inspecting the footage in her camera before securing them in place. The settings were very sensitive and the vegetation around the camera had to be cleared in order to minimize the chance of a false trigger.

The cameras were set up to record 15 seconds of video and take 3 photos. After installing and securing the cameras we returned to Shaoudon's house for dinner. Shaoudon's father had offered us some of their homemade liquor that was made from corn and fermented for some time. I was the only one to drink it and it reminded me of a combination whiskey and rubbing alcohol, it was

possibly the strongest liquor I've ever tried. I was told it was 50% alcohol and could hardly finish the glass that poured for me.

On our second day of field work we recorded plot data in the experimental zone, which is located much closer to villages and road. The location is known as the experimental zone because it is the area that the Chinese government is actively promoting the payments for ecosystem services program. At the first plot Dr. Chen taught me how to record the data, mark the plot, record the slope, aspect, average tree height, and canopy coverage with fisheye lens while Inka documented on video camera.

Learning the data collection techniques was highly important to me, because it was a direct hands on experience with quality information that allowed me to understand why it was the data we were recording and how it was significant to the project. Dr. Chen was very helpful in explaining the steps used to document the data required by the project.

We recorded the data for the first plot and then took a short break at our local guides house, where he served us green tea. After the our short rest, we moved onto second location where Inka was shown how to document data while I filmed the research taking place. At this location the terrain was much easier to traverse as this area was a PES area and previously a terraced plot.

We managed to install 2 cameras to hopefully capture some wildlife inside the reserve. After we finished at the last plot we returned to Shaoudon's house for dinner. There were several people who were there talking to Shaoudon's father about a temple they were constructing nearby and gathering donations. Inka, Dr. Chen and myself each donated 100 yuan, which is approximately \$15 US dollars, to the temple project.

The project cost around 250,000 yuan and the village was nearly half of the way to their goal for funding their project. I felt it was the least I could do for these people who have opened up their house to me and shared so much with me. They told us that because of our generous donation we would have our names carved in stone at the site. I felt incredibly honored to be hosted by such a caring and generous family. Further, with the level of care and compassion these people showed, it was easy to see why they themselves were so passionate about the work they do and the mission of the grain to green program.

After breakfast we had a morning break and we played a game that was a combination of soccer/dodgeball/basketball followed by "rocks paper scissors" with local children. During this brief period of down time, the villagers began constructing temple near our hosts house. Dr. Chen had explained to us that this location had good fengshui because it is a place where dragons would come down to honor the location. The villagers made a feast of pork and chicken to honor the gods and they blessed the site with fireworks and burning of symbolic paper money.

After seeing them erect the first pieces of the inner framework of the temple, we rode on the back of a motorbike to a distant location and hiked down to a village where we recorded the

vegetation data on a plot which was designated as a PES site. Again I was able to assist in the research by recording the tree diameter with assistance from the highly experienced field ranger Shaoudon, while the rest of the research team had recorded the canopy coverage, vegetation samples, and GPS coordinates of the plot.

After dealing with with one of motorbikes, which had broken on our journey up the mountain, we headed back to Shaoudon's house briefly for a few quick photos before catching the bus back to Jiangkou. Shaoudon asked me to hold his son for the photo, I felt incredibly honored again by this generous family. I really hope to meet them again some day.

The following day was an incredibly special day, we were invited by the reserve staff to view the tourist part of the reserve where we rode a cable car up Mt. Fanjing. We were really fortunate to see this location on such a clear and sunny day. From what our guide had explained to us, the mountain is typically covered in fog and mist due to the elevation. The peak of the mountain was 2,572 meters or 8,438 feet above sea level. If you desired you could send a post card from the top of the mountain.

Personally, I thought it was amazing to see how the shop employees would bring supplies and materials for the local shops and rest facilities up to the mountain. They would carry the supplies balanced on a piece of bamboo to the top. This was no easy task as we were exhausted by the end of the day carrying just our body weight to this fantastic site. They must've been in peak physical condition in order to accomplish this task because even after the cable car ride there were many stairs that you needed to climb to get to the business service centers.

This site was constructed in the 1600's by buddhist monks as a holy site and has many amazing view points that are quite literally amongst the clouds. We were lucky to go on this day and time because it was warm and the sun was shining in addition, there weren't very many tourists. At each scenic location there was signage in both Mandarin and English explaining the significance of the site and a description of the legends that made the site famous.

After eating lunch on top of the reserve the fog began to roll in so we were able to experience the beauty in two different weather patterns. Tianyu, who works for the reserve and Shuishien told us that it was there first time seeing those sights as well. So it was a great experience for all of us, although a physically demanding. It is recommended to take two days to experience this site, however we were able to do it in one day due to the amount of stairs and its physically demanding peaks. The officials who escorted us to the cable car had informed us that after he dropped us off and on his way back to his office he had seen several monkeys near the road so we had only just missed them by about 10 minutes.

We returned to the base of the mountain for some tea with the reserve officials in their office and to exchange pictures. Then we headed to a beautiful village nearby and ate dinner with Mr. Sha, who is one of the local forest patrol officers, were he offered us some rice wine to go with our delicious food. The food was amazing and the wine was so sweet, it reminded me of white wine.

After dinner, we returned to Jiangkou and we met up with Dr. Chen who had taken the day to upload her data for processing and she explained to us what we would be doing the following day.

We were scheduled to go on a 7.5 km hike through the reserve to visit previously recorded plots and record vegetation data. The hike was expected to take approximately 6 hours however, the reserve staff was concerned about having foreigners in the core of the reserve, understandably due to the remoteness of the area and the safety issues so plans were changed and we were informed we would be meeting up with Shuang to aid in household surveys in the village adjacent to Shaoudon's house.

The following morning, we left Jiangkou to head back to Shaoudon's village, while Dr. Chen and Shushien went on their hike into the core of the reserve to record their data. We met up with Shuang, who we haven't seen since first departing Jiangkou because he needed to go to a local university to recruit students to aid him in the household surveys. When we arrived, Shuang and his selected team of surveyors from a local university in Tongren were finishing up a household survey and training for the new students.

We set up the camera and began recording from several different angles parts of the interview for the documentary and promotional video. The villagers who were nearby and could see us were very interested in the foreigners and the camera equipment and came by to check out what was going on. They shared sunflower seeds and cigarettes with us, I was really amazed at how giving these people are.

Shuang explained to us that this village was one of the poorest in China and the lady taking the survey was receiving approximately 200 Yuan per month in financial relief from the government in addition to food and an education grant for her children. The financial relief equates to around \$1 a day. The survey was entirely in Mandarin but Shuang had briefly explained part of the process.

The researchers recorded demographic data such as household size, income, and family history as well as any family migration out of the village. In addition to the demographic information they had the woman show us her farm land on google earth. This was a challenge because the woman had zero education and was unfamiliar with the aerial view of the land that google earth displayed. She could only explain how far away her plots were and the direction.

Once the researchers finished recording the data into the survey and her approximations on her fields, we followed her to her fields to record the locations with GPS in order to get an accurate location and size of her fields. Each survey takes approximately 2-3 hours to complete including traveling to the locations of their fields. Shuang told us that they are planning to get about 100 surveys total by the end of their trip. After lunch, Shuang and his team returned into the village to conduct more surveys. While Shuang was busy with surveys, we took a break to review film

footage for the projects promotional video to see what additional footage we needed to capture during our next session with the researchers.

On the following day, we were again tasked with assisting Dr. Chen and reserve staff in recording vegetation plot data. We traveled to first site which was a PES site and recorded vegetation data and plot survey info. The second site we visited was a location of a previous monkey sighting in which 2 years ago reserve staff had found a monkey in a snare trap. Today we found monkey poop in the area and it looked to be about 2 days old according to the forest ranger Mr. Sha.

Our role that day was to assist the research team in plotting this region by gathering aspect and slope and average tree height with the range finder, it was very challenging to complete this task due the steepness of the slope in the plot and the thickness of the vegetation. This plot was densely populated with magnolia trees and near a 45 degree angle. Although challenging, we were able to record the data we needed. The Rangers who guided us through this rough terrain, found wild mushrooms that were worth 60 yuan for .6kg. On our way out of the site, I found one of the wild mushrooms and added it to the collection for our dinner.

After a while in the field, my eyes had adjusted to the all the vegetation, which is much different then what we have in our local habitats in San Diego, I found an old horseshoe and was told from Mr. Sha that it was likely from 60 years ago when there was a gold mining project in the region. We ate dinner with the two Mr. Sha's, who are cousins, and the Mr. Wong who is the head of this regions ranger patrol department and is highly respected amongst the community members.

The next day, we traveled by foot to 3 previous camera sites that were installed in 2014 and checked the data on the cameras. We filmed the Dr. Chen and the rangers cleaning the equipment, testing the batteries, and installing new memory cards and moisture absorbency packets. The moisture packets are necessary because of the high humidity in the region and the sensitivity of the equipment.

We were told that the researchers had lost a few cameras in the past due to the humidity of the area, so protecting them from the elements was a high priority. The manufacturer was able to replace the damaged equipment and return new cameras to researchers, which required traveling out to the field and re-installing the cameras which can be a very time consuming and expensive task.

After we returned from the field, the two Mr. Sha's wanted to take us to a museum that honored the communist party. Shushien, a graduate student from a local university in a neighboring province, explained to us that this region is very famous for its historical context in the Red Army's Long March. The museum had several barracks rooms where members of the Red Army would stay and many artifacts from the time when they came through in 1934, including a horseshoe that was identical the one I found in the field.

It was interesting to think that the horse shoe could have been from that period instead of from the mine. Other artifacts that were there were old rifles, various potteries that were used for carrying oil and liquor, a meeting table and there were many pictures and displays explaining the history of the area. I wish I was able to read and understand more because the museum is a historically significant place to this region and the locals are very proud of their heritage.

After the trip to the museum we ate dinner with several of the regions reserve directors and they had this container that looked like a gasoline container filled with alcohol. Shuang explained to me that it was made from Rice and Corn and the alcohol content was nearly 52%. It was really harsh, much stronger the liquor I had at Shaudon's house and I could've definitely used a chaser. The restaurant was really beautiful and the food was amazing. Everyone warned us before we arrived that the food was really spicy, but I find Mexican food much spicier, this food was really fresh and amazing. The area is famous for it's tofu.

We had dishes of bamboo shoots, potatoes, lettuce, rice, carrots, and there were also several dishes of meat. After several plates of food and several rounds of shots everyone was real cheery by the end of the evening. We were complemented by the reserve staff on our chopstick skills. The reserve staff said they wanted Dr. Lewison from the SDSU biology department to return because she was the best drinker and they wanted to challenge her again.

The reserve staff also spoke very highly of Dr. An and his research in the area. Shuang explained to me that he is very well respected in this area and held with high regard in the reserve. As we were leaving the restaurant owner asked to take our picture to post on the wall. From what Shuang told me we were the one millionth customer. Again, I felt very honored by these people and their hospitality. I couldn't get over how nice everyone I met was to us even though there was the obvious language barrier, it did not stop them from being genuine and generous to us. I appreciated every moment with them.

The next morning, we accompanied Shuang and his survey team to conduct household surveys. We were able to film several of them and the families we met were very generous and offered tea at each location we went to. I must've drank 15 cups of tea that day. In the afternoon, we conducted a survey at this house that was having a family reunion for the holiday that occurred over the weekend known as Qing Ming or the "Tomb sweeping festival," which to me, sounded very similar to the Mexican holiday "dia de Los Muertos."

This holiday took place over 3 days, where families would visit their ancestors graves to clean them and bring them food, drink, and celebrate their ancestors with fireworks and burning of symbolic paper money. We were also told that some burn paper cars and paper houses for their ancestors so they can have those luxuries in the afterlife.

We filmed several of the interviews for Dr. An's documentary. During the surveys, Mr. Wong had found about 40 wild mushrooms on the hillside just right out side one of the houses that he gathered for our dinner. They tasted incredible and obviously very fresh. We ate dinner at a fish

fondu, the meal was cat fish, rice, tofu, and many greens. The dinner began with a traditional Chinese medicine soup that had little red vegetables in it that were very sweet and supposed to be great for promoting eye health. The food was delicious. Mr. Wong brought his container of whiskey with him and we celebrated the days work with a few shots, but not nearly as many as the night before.

After dinner, Mr. Wong invited us to the local high school that he attended and his daughter currently attends. The school was very large and had many students who were very excited to see who the foreigners were. Some of the students ran up to us in their track uniforms and said “Hello, it’s very nice to meet you!” In the distance we could see the kids practicing with each other they seemed to be having great fun.

The children loved seeing foreigners and were so very happy to practice their english with us. Some of the students we met are from local farms and villages around the area and have been learning english for 10 years. We were told that many are very good at writing it but they don’t have much opportunity to practice it. They loved being able to use their english with two native speakers.

The english teacher was very excited to have us there and she invited us to come back to teach the students. We visited several classes and one of the students explained to us the history of the area with the Red Army, the mining industry, and the 4 different mineral springs that are in the area. He told us we must try them. After we visited a couple classrooms, we went to the office to have a more relaxed conversation with some of the students. They asked us many questions about our customs, music preferences, our favorite Chinese celebrities, and shared with us their desires to come to America. They wanted us to sing for them but we respectfully declined.

The students were really good with their pronunciation, very intelligent, polite and inquisitive and I could certainly see why Mr. Wong was very proud of this school. We exchanged emails with several of the students to assist them in practicing their english. I really hope they write to us. They attempted to teach us some Chinese too and we tried our best but they are much better at speaking english then we are at speaking Chinese. It was great to meet such dedicated students.

This was the last day in the field for us before we began our journey back to the US. This morning we documented interviews and the students recording the GPS locations for the numerous farming plots. After collecting our data we stopped off at a local restaurant for a quick meal before driving to Tongren. I am really gonna miss the communal style of eating and the delicious fresh locally grown food. Surprisingly being a vegetarian, I was able to do really well and the researchers, staff, and restaurant owners were all incredibly considerate of my dietary preferences.

We drove in a van back to Tongren with the students from the local university to begin our travels back to the states. The students, who are from the college here, are having a few days rest

and the opportunity to visit their families before going back out the field to conduct more surveys. Tongren, a two hour drive from the reserve, is a city that has around half a million people and it is very different from the rural areas where we have spent the last 9 days. Personally, I enjoyed the rural areas much more than this bustling city. The traffic here is loud and the pace of the city is much faster than that of countryside.

One of the university students came with us to show us around the city and took us to a local restaurant, where the food was much spicier than anything we have had so far. On the way back to the hotel, Shuang stopped at a local vendor and purchased fresh strawberries for the team. From what we were told the strawberries were from the reserve area, and they were incredibly fresh and juicy. They will make a great fresh snack for our trip on the train tomorrow morning.

Upon departing Tongren, we had left again by high speed train to begin our return trip back to Changsha. The train luckily came to the station nearly every half hour and was a very smooth and reliable way to travel large distances. We arrived in Changsha after our 2.5 hour train ride at 300 km or 121 miles per hour.

After exiting the station we had to wait in a long queue for a taxi and the driver we had was more than happy to take us to our hotel after we had shown him the address on the reservation and a translation that Shuang had wrote for us requesting a receipt. The taxi was very rapid and only cost 20 yuan for a nearly 30 minute cab ride.

We again stayed at the hotel we used the first time in Changsha out of convenience and familiarity. The hotel staff was incredibly friendly and really accommodating to foreign visitors and several of the staff were happy to practice the english they knew with us. We ate dinner at the buffet which offered both western and authentic Chinese style cuisine.

At 4:00 we had to get ready to depart the hotel and the night staff was very helpful in calling in a cab to bring us to the airport to make our the first flight on our return home. Once we arrived at the airport it was quite challenging to find out information on our flight which had been delayed by two hours. Even with the signs displaying information in both Mandarin and English, it was difficult to find out information on our flight. Several of the staff had a smart phone app that was able to translate information into English for us which was very helpful.

We had managed to make it on to our flight although it was delayed by 3 hours and one of the passengers was able to translate the information he received from the information desk for us and was very helpful in making sure we knew when it was our time to board.

Once we arrived at Shanghai, traveling had become much easier as it is a much larger airport that was staffed with english speaking personnel. We made our connection flight, which was also delayed by 30 minutes and began our travels back to the U.S. On the return flight, our time on the aircraft was much shorter and we were only on the plane for 12 hours this time. It still felt like an eternity and I was unable to get comfortable enough to sleep.

When we arrived in LAX we had only 30 minutes to make it through US Border Patrol and Customs. Airport staff had given us emergency connection cards that were not very helpful in speeding up the process until I got to security. By the time I got through security I had ran with my bags out of the international terminal to the domestic connection flight and sprinted to the gate with only 10 minutes to spare. Inka was able to get through much faster then myself and had the airline crew hold the door for me.

The flight from LAX to San Diego had only about 10 people on it and we all seemed to be sitting at the back of the plane. It was a short 30 minute flight for our return and we had finally made it home after over 18 hours total in flying time. I thought it was really cool to be able to have half the day left on the 7th left to spend with my family and tell them about my travels.

### Lessons Learned and Experience Gained

It's great to be back home but I can certainly say that I truly will miss all the people I was able to meet and hope that I have the opportunity to return to China one day in the future and to further work on this project. The research is incredibly important to me because of the impacts it has had on my life and the impact it will have on my future career.

The people I've met would've given anything they had to share to someone they have never met and I would like to live more like that in my personal life. Each of the houses we went to within the communities had offered all of us tea along with fruit, sunflower seeds and cashews. The way Shaoudon's family treated us was incredible, they opened there house to us and fed us daily and were more than happy to adjust their taste preferences and meals to adapt to our dietary preferences.

Every time someone pulled out a cigarette, they would offer one to everyone present and hand them out to anyone who smokes. This is much different then the way we do it here in the U.S. I am a smoker and picked up on the way they do this and at first I had thought I would be losing out on cigarettes however, every cigarette I handed out always came back to me in one way or another. I really enjoyed how communal everything was and could really sense the strength of the communal bond that it created.

In the field Dr. Chen had explained the methods of research being used and why the data was relevant to the research. I was fortunate enough to aid her in gathering the information necessary for the research project. This type of data collection will assist me greatly in my future career as I plan to be an environmental planner and field surveying techniques are a crucial skill required by this role, especially in a state such as California where every development project requires CEQA documentation and Environmental Impact Reports. A major part of that documentation is conducting field surveys to examine how the project or human activity in the area could potentially impact any existing wildlife in the area. Gathering these skills in the field has given

me the opportunity to practice some of the field surveying techniques I will be doing in my future career field.

Between the communal connections I experienced and field survey techniques I have learned I feel that I have personally become a better person and more culturally rounded being fortunate enough to experience their holidays and customs. Since being back, I have attempted to cook several of the dishes that I was able to try in China and my family has really enjoyed the communal way of eating, where we have our individual bowls but each of us can select food from a variety of main dishes and individually choose how much of each dish we want.

I had many favorite moments about this trip, the food, the knowledge and friendships I've gained were all great, however personally for me, the people I met and was fortunate enough to interact with on a daily basis were my favorite part of this experience and that will never leave me. While the field work provided me with highly valuable experience in my future career, I will carry those people, the memories and moments we shared with me for the rest of my life. In our country, for the most part we do not treat foreigners, visitors or even our own neighbors like that and I think that is the biggest impact that this project has had on me and I hope to be able to spread the global citizen view of life and how we each have something valuable to share with another person or with an entire community.

If I were to sum up the main feeling I'm left with when thinking about the time I spent in China it would be "thankful." I'm thankful for the opportunity, the knowledge I gained, the culture I experienced, the good times I had, the people I met and the experiences I was able to partake in.