tional Student Services, home of nu-
merous travel abroad programs, includ-
ing "Journey to China" [see sidebar];
and Robert Cox, associate professor and
director of the School of International
and Area Studies in the College of Arts
and Sciences, which has added five fac-
ulty for enlarged Chinese-related pro-
grams and has some 40 students work-
ing on Asian Studies degrees.

"When he came here 12 years ago,
President Boren said that all students
must graduate with an international per-
spective, regardless of their academic dis-

A major step in the continuing expan-
sion of Chinese-related programs is the
creation of the Newman Institute of U.S.-
China Issues and a corresponding en-
dowed faculty chair made possible through
a $1 million gift from Ruth and Harold J.
Newman (B.S. geography, 1951) of Con-
necticut. The new institute will focus on
topics of great relevance to the two coun-
tries, including trade, the economy, natu-
rnal resources, the environment and in-
dustrial policy.

Peter Hays Gries is the inaugural
Newman Chair and institute director.
"As we envision it, the U.S.-China Insti-
tute has two functions: to promote China
studies at OU and around Oklahoma and
to focus on research and policy at the
national and international levels," Gries
explains. "That includes networking with
the Oklahoma business community and
making it aware of what's going on in
China and the opportunities and risks of
doing business there. OU has the poten-
tial to become a big player in fostering
these relationships."

Indeed. As the Greatest Master wrote
so many centuries ago: "I hear and I
forget. I see and I remember. I do and I
understand."

Debra Levy Martinelli is director of public
relations and marketing for the OU Office
of Technology Development and writes
freelance articles for Sooner Magazine.

Journeying to

While the burgeoning Chinese language program provided the
foundation for establishing the OU Confucius Institute, an-
other crucial requirement was the number and type of available
opportunities for strengthening ties between the University of
Oklahoma and China. Perhaps the most well known is "Journey
to China," a summer program in which 25 to 35 students
experience four weeks in four different locations.

"The Journey to China program has given OU a presence and
identity in China," explains Paul B. Bell Jr., dean of the OU
College of Arts and Sciences and vice provost for instruction.
"Many universities send students abroad with their own faculty,
so the primary interactions are between English-speaking faculty
and English-speaking students. They're in a cultural cocoon.
We immerse our students in Chinese culture and the local
community—they live in Chinese dormitories with Chinese
students and are instructed by Chinese faculty."

Josh Woodward, who took the Journey to China in summer
2005, is one of more than 150 students who have participated in
the program in its nine-year history.

"We started in Xi'an, the ancient capital of China, where we
learned 'survival Mandarin' and got some basic history of and
orientation to the culture," says Woodward, who graduated
summa cum laude from OU in May 2006 with a double major
in economics and marketing and currently is employed in the
University's Honors College Leadership Center and the Center
for the Creation of Economic Wealth.

The group then traveled south to Kunming, where they
studied environmental, economic and cultural issues, followed
by a week at Beijing University, where the curriculum focused on
politics. "It was especially fun for me to see Beijing because one
of my OU Cousins (international student friendship program)
lives there, and I was able to meet his family," says Woodward.
"It was incredible to be able to see him in his own environment
after he'd seen me and my family in ours."

The last leg of the memorable trip was in Shanghai, the
country's commercial center. "We learned about foreign invest-
ment in China, emerging markets and economic development,"
Woodward recalls. "In Shanghai, they're finishing a skyscraper
every fourth day. Twenty years ago there were fewer than 20 in
the city; now there are 4,000. Half the world's concrete was
poured in China last year. They run out of metal scaffolding all
the time and start strapping bamboo together to continue the
process."

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China

Clockwise from upper left: Josh Woodward ascends the Great Wall of China during his Journey to China experience in 2005. More than 150 OU students have participated in the summer learning program since 1996.

At OU, rich cultural exchange is a two-way street. Here, Chinese students at OU perform during China Night, an annual celebration of Chinese culture.

The last leg of the OU summer program includes a trip to colorful Shanghai, the country's vibrant commercial center.

Photos provided
Elena Songster, OU assistant professor of history, makes frequent trips to the People’s Republic while researching the panda’s place in modern China. Above, Songster visits with friends at the Chengdu Breeding Center in the city of Chengdu, Sichuan Province.

OU alumna Caroline Cochran visits the Imperial Palace in Beijing. The popular tourist spot was once known as the Forbidden City because commoners were not allowed inside the royal compound.

Each year OU students from China share traditional dance and song with their University family during China Night, held in the Oklahoma Memorial Union.

Lesser known than Journey to China but just as life changing, is a two-week summer course called Chinese Architecture.

Caroline Cochran, an OU alumna who earned bachelor’s degrees in mechanical engineering and economics with honors in 2006, was one of roughly 20 students who took the course this past summer. The experience, she says, was way beyond what she had anticipated.

“I’ve been to Europe several times and to Honduras, so I’ve traveled quite a bit. But the non-Western culture really is something very foreign to us,” explains Cochran, who works alongside Woodward as Internship Program administrator for the Center for the Creation of Economic Wealth. “At the time I went to China, I happened to be reading [German philosopher Friedrich] Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which he wrote about the Eastern idea of not getting beyond black and white, right and wrong. It’s an interesting philosophy, but in China I saw the people living it. They have a different way of life, a different way of doing things. Reading it at that time really heightened the whole China experience for me.

“I’ve already told a lot of people that they really need to go to China,” she adds, “and I hope to return some day.”

—Debra Levy Martinelli