

# **ATTRACTING STUDENTS FROM CHINA**

**Dorothy Guyot**

## **Asian and Western Studies Initiative**

Dorothy Guyot is Executive Director of the Asian and Western Studies Initiative, a nonprofit organization to promote a new concept in international education. The Initiative has worked with Carleton College to launch a program to prepare graduates to live thoughtfully and work effectively in both a Western and an Asian country. In this program, students learn from one another in a comparative curriculum.

Professor Guyot has accepted the position of Director of International Education at DePauw University, effective fall 1999.

When American high school students talk of "college shopping" they are speaking from a market perspective that is almost unknown in China. The national examination in China determines students' access to the prestigious universities, and Chinese students and their families think that the same is true of the United States. The few undergraduates who consider study abroad generally look for a connection to a distinguished American university. Most principals of Chinese "middle schools" (grades 7-12) do not know that their graduates can apply directly to American institutions. Consequently, there are many shady outfits that charge families outrageous sums to get their son or daughter admitted to college in the United States.

### **Marietta College**

To counter this adverse system, Marietta College professor, Yi Xiaoxiong, assisted by colleagues, Michael Taylor and Richard Truitt, have worked, with unflagging effort, to establish exchange agreements between Marietta and thirteen outstanding Chinese middle schools. From the perspective of the students' families, their child's school is the agent, the connection, with higher education in America.

Marietta College's agreement with the middle schools is three-pronged. The school principal recommends academically strong students whose families are ready to pay the full cost of Marietta's education. Marietta pays the costs of teachers from the Chinese middle schools to enroll at Marietta for a term. Those middle schools that have programs for American teaching assistants will give preference to Marietta College students.

As a safeguard against the admission of unqualified students, a Marietta faculty member screens each

applicant. From among those who pass this screening, the middle school principal may award one \$2,000 a year Marietta scholarship.

### **Visa acquisition**

Marietta has established a full-time office in Beijing to manage these agreements and to obtain F-1 visas. Yi Xiaoxiong regards getting visas to be the most difficult task. In three years, 90 students have enrolled at Marietta, and the college has supported the studies, at Marietta, of six teachers. In 1999, five Marietta graduates will teach in four different cities, Xiamen, Chengdu, Beijing, and Jinan or Changchun.

American colleges interested in encouraging Chinese high school graduates to study in the United States should consider the following practical advice. Because of widespread problems in acquiring visas, it is preferable to recruit in cities where the United States Consulate has a higher than average rate of granting student visas. This precaution will not eliminate repeated consular interviews for some applicants, but it will avoid long trips from areas far from a Consulate office. Admissions officers should think creatively about ways to develop their college's direct connections to middle schools through alumni or professors.

Students need to be coached in strategies helpful for successful visa application. Part II in this series will provide specific strategies for successful visa applications.

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