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Converging worlds -- studies at SFU and in China lead to dual degrees, global career opportunities

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A unique dual degree program being offered by Simon Fraser University, together with Zhejiang University (ZU) in China, will enable participating students to obtain degrees in computing science from both universities while experiencing an opportunity of a lifetime.

The five-year program is set to begin this September with a cohort of about 25 Canadian students and 25 Chinese students. They will study in English at SFU and in Chinese (Mandarin) at ZU. Applications for the program are now being accepted from across the country.

Students will study at their own university during the first year and undergo intensive language training, with the expectation they will be fluent in both languages by the end of the program's first year. Canadian students will also enroll in Chinese language immersion at ZU from May to August, prior to beginning their second and third-year studies there. They'll return to study for the final two years at SFU.

The program also has a co-operative education option, enabling students to obtain work experience in either country.

SFU President Michael Stevenson calls the program an important step in the university's internationalization efforts. "This program will create graduates who combine a strong command of their discipline with a deep cross-cultural understanding and a well-developed command of a foreign language," says Stevenson. "SFU is delighted to be partnered with one of China's top universities in this unique new venture in international education. Together we can produce graduates and research collaborations that fuel deeper economic and cultural linkages between China and Canada." Brian Lewis, SFU's dean of applied sciences, believes the program is one of the most important initiatives to come out of his faculty in recent years. "Graduates who are familiar with language, culture and society in both Canada and China will be in great demand in the years to come," predicts Lewis, noting China's rising significance in the global economy.

"Developing global citizens through higher education requires real global experience," he says. "Enriched understanding of languages, cultures and the complex and important global processes requires immersion in foreign cultures and their academic institutions in non-English speaking countries." Lewis says ZU was chosen because of its high quality of education, its commitment to developing the program and its location in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province, 150 kilometers southwest of Shanghai.

SFU's interest in program development opportunities in China span more than two decades. SFU signed its first international agreement with Jinan University in Guangzhou in 1982, the start of a long list of projects and programs that have been carried out with Chinese institutions, including an existing student exchange agreement with ZU.

"China has changed immensely since these early contacts, and so has its university system," notes Lewis. "It is much larger, individual universities are bigger and the quality of teaching and research has shown continuous development." A 2003 report from the Institute for Scientific Information shows China ranked ninth in the world for research output for the 1992-2002 period (Canada ranked sixth).

For more information check the following website: www.sfu.ca/international