

Editor's note: With the planning and support of the China Scholarship Council, Kansas State University and five other U.S. institutions collaborate with China Agricultural University and five other Chinese universities in training Doctors of Veterinary Medicine (DVMs). This program signifies a brand new step for China to adopt new models and mechanisms in veterinary education and to explore international collaboration in developing high-quality talents. It will significantly enhance China's veterinary clinical training and scientific research. To gather background information about this program, our journal recently interviewed Secretary-General of the China Scholarship Council Secretariat, Ms. Jinghui Liu; Dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine at Kansas State University, Professor Richardson (interview with Dean Richardson, see 2013 Issue #12); and one of the initiators of the Sino-U.S. collaborative DVM program, Chinese Veterinary Medicine Association vice chairman Professor Ming Wang.

Promote Innovative Training Models for High-Demand Talents and Further Develop Government-Funded Study-Abroad Programs

--Interview with China Scholarship Council Secretary-General Jinghui Liu

Interview and compilation by *Journal of World Education* Editorial Department

I. Enhance the scale and quality of government-funded study-abroad programs

Journal of World Education: According to China's *Education Planning Guidelines*, we need to train a large number of international talents who have global perspectives, are familiar with international regulations, and are able to participate in international affairs and competitions. The *Guidelines* also state that we need to innovate and refine government-funded study-abroad mechanisms and enhance the service for and management of study-abroad personnel. So first, could you talk about how our government-funded study-abroad programs have been developing in recent years?

Jinghui Liu: Since the establishment of the China Scholarship Council in 1996, government-funded study-abroad programs have adhered to the principles of "fairness, equitability, and openness"; taken the approach of "individual application, expert evaluation, equal competition, merit-based selection, contract-based funding, and breach-of-contract indemnity" to select and manage study-abroad personnel; and followed the idea of "innovative mechanisms, integrated resources, focused areas, and balanced development." We focus our work on the high-level talents needed by China's national strategies as well as economic and social development. We have gradually developed a method that is suitable for China's national context and one that selectively targets and cultivates high-level talents with global perspectives.

In recent years, the scale of government-funded study-abroad programs continues to grow, and their selection and management mechanisms continue to see innovation and refinement. In terms of the scale of selection, the number of people who participated in government-funded study-abroad programs has more than doubled from 7,500 in 2006 to 16,000 in 2012. As many as 24,000 people are currently studying abroad. In terms of the scope of selection, prior to 2007, most study-abroad individuals were visiting scholars. Now, that scope has gradually expanded to include senior research scholars, visiting scholars, doctoral students, jointly-trained doctoral students, Master's students, undergraduate exchange students, short-term trainees, etc. The

selection process is becoming more reasonable, covering various domestic industries and benefiting all facets of the society. Government agencies at various levels and individual organizations have an overall more refined understanding of talent development and their support for study-abroad programs continues to increase.

In 2012, a total of 31,256 individuals were funded to study in 87 countries. Of these individuals, 15,645 were new enrollees in 2012. Among the new enrollees, 6,903 were graduate students (including doctoral students, Master's students, and jointly-trained graduate students), accounting for 44.1% of the total enrollment; 7,135 were visiting scholars (including senior researchers, visiting scholars, and post-doctoral scholars), accounting for 45.6% of the total enrollment; and 1,607 were undergraduate exchange students, accounting for 10.3% of the total enrollment. In 2013, our plan is to select a total of 18,000 government-funded individuals in all categories combined, which will be a 12.5% increase from 2012.

In addition to broadening the scale of our work, we further improved the selection and management practices, focused on improving the quality of selected individuals, and tried to enhance the return-on-investment on studying abroad. Each year, we reform and innovate various processes such as how we select, enroll, and conduct overseas management of government-funded study-abroad individuals.

First, we follow a meticulous selection process. I will give examples from three projects. The first is the Junior Core Faculty Overseas Training program. The China Scholarship Council and the "985" and "211" institutions signed contracts to jointly fund and train these junior core faculty. With this program, individual schools select and recommend candidates, who are then evaluated and admitted by the China Scholarship Council. Last year, expert panels were organized to conduct random evaluations of the program and the results showed that 99.9% of the evaluations were satisfactory. We are continuing to improve the program's evaluation mechanism.

The second example is the joint doctoral training project between the China Scholarship Council and the Samuel Ting laboratory. This is our first time collaborating with the Chinese Nobel laureate Samuel Ting's laboratory in Switzerland to select jointly trained doctoral students and develop top-notch talents. Last year, Dr. Samuel Ting personally organized international experts to interview the 20 recommended students. Six experts separately conducted long-distance interviews of each student and used the veto system (as long as one expert objects, a candidate will not be accepted). Ten students were selected as the result, and the selection work was highly praised by Dr. Samuel Ting.

The third example is the Sino-U.S. joint DVM program. Dean Richardson from the College of Veterinary Medicine at Kansas State University and three other U.S. professors first evaluated the 25 veterinary medicine students selected by various Chinese universities and identified 10 candidates. Subsequently, they took a trip to China to interview each of the 10 candidates to make final admission decisions. This program requires that students have both excellent English language skills and veterinary medicine knowledge. It is better to have fewer admissions than unqualified candidates. We have also agreed that the veterinary medicine college deans from the six participating Chinese universities will join the selection next year.

Second, we continue to reform and innovate how we manage and regulate government-funded study-abroad programs. With the expansion of government-funded study-abroad programs and program adjustments, our management under the new situation faces many new challenges. In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance jointly issued the *Government-Funded Study-Abroad Graduate Students Management Regulations (Trial Version)*. Last year, after spending the whole year conducting research and revising the *Regulations* for more than 30 times, we created a revised version. The new management regulations embody two principles. The first principle is to be people-centered: emphasize the service component while following the provisions in the original regulations. The second principle is to have clear reward and punitive measures: provide maximum support to individuals who comply with the regulations and study hard; take punitive measures toward opportunistic behaviors that abuse the regulations.

The new regulations are more flexible and operable and include a few major changes. First, with the old regulations, an individual must come back to China after the stipulated training period and serve the country for two years before he or she can study abroad again. The new regulations, however, allow deferred service. For example, after students complete a joint PhD program, they can continue to apply for post-doctoral fellowships. Second, the new regulations provide studying-abroad students with a great degree of freedom, allowing them to go to third countries or come back to China for academic breaks. Third, through such channels as international instructors' feedback on students' learning, we conduct student annual evaluations to continue funding those students who pass the evaluation. Finally, we use modern methods to save human and material resources and to realize more open, just, and fair evaluations. This year, the application and evaluation for joint doctoral training projects were all completed online.

Although this series of reforms have tremendously increased our workload, we believe it is important that the good things we do for the country must be done well and that the country's funds need to be managed well. These management measures have created a good environment for studying-abroad individuals to grow and develop while increasing their sense of responsibility, honor, and urgency.

II. Sino-U.S. cooperation to develop talents urgently needed by China and fill gaps in domestic education

Journal of World Education: In recent years, the China Scholarship Council actively explored how to establish joint international professional training programs and develop various kinds of collaborative training programs with international institutions. The Sino-U.S. joint DVM training program is one example. Could you talk about this program, its innovations, and its challenges?

Jinghui Liu: Since 1949, no one from the New China has received a DVM from the U.S. or Europe. Even in the U.S. and Europe, the DVM programs are highly competitive with very rigorous admission requirements and a 10%-15% average admission rate due to their popularity.

In China, agriculture is a key development area and also an area we actively worked on in the past few years. Through research, we learned that China urgently needs expertise in veterinary

medicine. So, based on existing Sino-U.S. institutional collaborations, we, through negotiation, decided to promote training in this area of agriculture.

The significance of the program lies in training the very first DVMs since the founding of the New China, filling our domestic gap in this profession, and vying for a voice in international trade, import, export, and quarantine. It also has far-reaching implications on human health and on the exchanges and cooperation of China with other countries in food safety, trade, and various other broad areas. We hope to start with a few students as "anchor points" and, through the collaboration with the six U.S. institutions, to grow these "anchor points" into full-fledged "ground work" and expand cooperation in various areas of agriculture.

This program is innovative in four aspects. First, it has innovative content. It targets China's education gaps and weak disciplines, and it develops areas urgently needed for our national growth—public health, food safety, and agricultural development. It is internationalized and future-oriented and creates a reserve of high-level educational, technical, and professional talents. Second, it uses innovative models. It implements a comprehensive management system starting from selecting candidates and sending them overseas, to managing them while they are overseas, and to coordinating their return. Third, it employs innovative methods. It involves multilateral cooperation, overcomes institutional barriers, and includes funding from U.S. partners for students' one-year pre-veterinary study. Fourth, it has innovative mechanisms. It involves multiple partners. The domestic partners include the Ministry of Agriculture, Chinese Veterinary Medicine Association, agricultural institutions, and the China Scholarship Council, and the U.S. partners include six institutions.

In terms of challenge, the first is the academic challenge faced by the students. Chinese students must complete a one-year pre-veterinary study before enrolling in the four-year professional program. Even for U.S. students who have finished three years of pre-veterinary education, it is challenging to complete a DVM. In addition, there are people at the six U.S. institutions who raise objections. They think that it is difficult even for U.S. domestic students to be admitted into DVM programs, so why should they enroll so many Chinese students and fund their one-year pre-veterinary study? Many of them are undecided or suspicious about the program. Therefore, if our students can stand out academically in their professional training, that will have a huge impact on the future implementation of the program. The good news is that the four students all passed their pre-veterinary study with excellent grades and have all been admitted into further professional training. We hope that these students will be recognized by U.S. institutions so as to bring more development opportunities for Sino-U.S. collaboration.

III. Innovate joint training programs and promote returnees to serve the country

Journal of World Education: Will the collaborative model used in the Sino-U.S. joint DVM program be applied to other disciplines and professions? Does the China Scholarship Council have future plans?

Jinghui Liu: Moving forward, we will continue to target weak links and gaps in our education system, play up the advantages of government-funded study-abroad programs, boldly innovate the content, forms, and methods of international joint training, and develop more hands-on,

multi-dimensional, and technical international talents for the country. My vision is that our own experts should set up research topics or projects urgently needed by China so that we can issue calls for bids, so that students can go overseas for training with these tasks in mind and bring back research products to where they are needed, and so that we can produce the kind of results our country needs. We need to break through old ways of thinking and provide government-funded study-abroad programs with more support and flexibility. For example, the regulation that an individual may not receive a second study-abroad funding opportunity until five years after he or she had received the first funding opportunity is a restriction that we can modify or remove.

We have noticed that the majority of those individuals who study abroad do so at their own expense. To demonstrate that we care for these students, to reward those who have outstanding academic performance, and to encourage them to return to China or serve the country in various other forms, in 2003, we established the "National Merit Scholarship for Outstanding Self-Funded Study-Abroad Students." In recent years, a total of about 3,400 self-funded study-abroad students have won the scholarship. This year, we will conduct some research on the one-time awards for self-funded study-abroad students so we can better utilize funding to attract outstanding talents. In addition, we actively engage with domestic and foreign institutions to expand support in terms of capital and programs. Currently, we have formed memorandums of understanding with 23 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions; 159 domestic universities; and 130 foreign universities or educational institutions to establish collaboration. This collaborative format is very effective, controllable, manageable, targeted, and focused. We need to continue expanding this model.

Journal of World Education: How do we ensure that outstanding study-abroad individuals can successfully return to China for employment? What are their employment venues and prospects?

Jinghui Liu: The government-funded study-abroad work adheres to the idea of "return to work for the country or serve the country in alternative ways." It follows the "contract-based funding and breach-of-contract indemnity" management model. To summarize, we follow the principles of "individual application, expert evaluation, equal competition, merit-based selection, contract-based funding, and breach-of-contract indemnity." Before they depart, study-abroad individuals must sign a "Study-Abroad Funding Agreement" with the China Scholarship Council and pay a deposit. There are restrictions for government-funded study-abroad individuals; they cannot come and go as they wish. In recent years, the on-time return rate for government-funded study-abroad individuals exceeded 98%.

In terms of employment venues, we cannot, from a policy standpoint, arrange jobs for returnees. But we provide a lot of employment information, including working with universities to recommend outstanding returnees to work for them and establishing online forums to disseminate employment information. For the jointly trained doctoral students from 2007 to 2010, 73% were employed by universities and research institutes. In the next step, we will consider assigning point-of-contact personnel to be in charge of returnees' employment.

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