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**International Scholar Laureate Program**  
**Diplomacy and International Relations**  
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The International Scholar Laureate Program was an event that changed my life. It was not only an eye opener into the life of a diplomat, but into the culture of the Chinese and the lives of the other delegates on this program.

China is a country, mostly unknown to me before this trip, which breathes tradition and heritage in everything it does. Yes, it's the world's fastest growing economic force and it has some of the biggest and most modern cities on earth, but it all rides on a solid foundation of preserving Harmony and a concept known as Guanxi – which can only insufficiently be described as building and maintaining connections or relations with others and treating them better than you would treat yourself.

I have had the pleasure to attend meetings and take part in discussions at the Beijing American Center, The Beijing Foreign Studies University, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, The World Wildlife Fund in China and the Shanghai International Studies Institute. These, although all addressing different issues, shed light on world affairs and various points of view and solutions to these issues.



Interaction with the locals at the Beijing Foreign Studies University, the English Corner at the People's University, a village and village school in Hu County and the Xi'an International Studies University has shown that the Chinese do not only embrace other cultures, but that we're all much more alike than our cultural differences or geographical separation would have it appear.

Then, after a busy day of meetings, discussions, debates, sight-seeing and learning about the Chinese culture, we – all the delegates – would go to a local bar or club, experience and absorb a bit of everyday life in China and learn about each other's cultures and ways of living. The diversity was astounding; a collection of phenomenal individuals from all over the world. This trip was not just about diplomacy and getting to know China and its people. It was completely international. It made me realise that life in one place, doing one thing and falling into a pattern of living has to be avoided.

I cannot say that there is any one thing that I have taken from the International Scholar Laureate Program, but rather myriad of experiences and emotions, strangers who have become friends and cultures both unknown and unfamiliar that enlightened me. This was an event that has opened my eyes to a whole new side of life.