

My Summer Trip to China

By Jermaine Coble



Photos Courtesy of Jermaine Coble

Fayetteville State University's Student Government Association President Jermaine Coble in China over the summer.

This past summer, I was given the opportunity of a lifetime, to not simply study Mandarin Chinese, but to actually go to China and learn the language. A former recruiter for Altria suggested that I take the opportunity to get out of the country, as I had two Fortune 500 companies on my resume, and pursuing any chance to travel to China would be beneficial to my career and personal development. The office of International Education in Hackley Honors hall was instrumental in helping to make the trip to China possible.

The search for a school that offered a program that matched my schedule was difficult at first, but eventually we were successful in finding a program and school that could accommodate. A lack of scholarship availability meant that I would have to foot the bill, which included tuition, plane fair, a visa, a passport and transportation while in Shanghai.

Once I arrived in China, I found that my classmates included Mongolian, French, and Korean students, and we

were to be taught by two Chinese instructors. Many people say that to learn another language, it is best to immerse yourself in the culture. As I was surrounded by those who only spoke the Mandarin Language, I was forced to ask questions in their native tongue, as well as to use context clues to figure out what was being said.

During my down time away from the classroom and studying, I was able to visit the Zhujiajiao (pinyin: Zhūjiājiǎo, jew-gee-ah-gee-ow) Urban watering tower as well as the city of Wuxi (pinyin: Wúxī, woo-shi). Proof that Fayetteville State is far reaching and produces great graduates, I able to link up with alumni, Ivory Osbourne and Brittany Harrison, who are both pursuing their Master's in International Business. Both were helpful in getting me acclimated to the culture, as they have had more time in China. Some of the cultural differences noted while there was the political correctness we attempt to embody here in America does not apply to Chinese culture, they simply

state things in a blunt manner and with little regard to how it may sound. Also, a big shock was seeing children using the bathroom in the streets; they actually had slits in their pants for this sole purpose. Of course every American wants to know if the food is like our American Chinese food; not at all. In China the food is fresh and served family style, which encourages sharing and interacting with others. Having rarely seen African American people, people outside the city were very eager to take pictures of me, which often caught me off guard.

Easily one of the most important lessons I learned while on this amazing adventure was that people are not all that different, it is simply a language barrier. We all want the same things for ourselves and those we care about, although achieving and representing those emotions are different. I recall my Mongolian friend who I gave the nickname "Slim" who did not speak as me but could be found with headphones in, listening to the same music.