

Chinese Law Students Attend Program at UC Davis School of Law

Undergraduate and graduate students from the China University of Political Science and Law (CUPL) recently completed a three-week program in the American Legal System at the UC Davis School of Law. The program is the result of an expanding relationship between the UC Davis School of Law and the CUPL in Beijing, one of the top law schools in China.

Over the past few years several prominent UC Davis School of Law faculty members have visited CUPL to teach and share legal research and expertise with CUPL's faculty and students. CUPL faculty members and doctoral students have also visited the UC Davis School of Law in order to learn more about various aspects of law from a Western point of view. Three years ago, the UC Davis School of Law also established a student exchange program between the two law schools.

Beth Greenwood, director of International Programs at the UC Davis School of Law and UC Davis Extension, notes that "Faculty members at the UC Davis School of Law welcome the opportunity to expand our relationship with China University of Political Science. Our UC Davis law students have enjoyed meeting Chinese law students from a top legal institution in one of the world's most dynamic legal and economic environments."

This summer's program included 37 students and four law instructors who were introduced to the U.S. Constitution and other fundamentals of the common law system. Chinese law professor, Libin Xie, commented that "There is a greater degree of reasoning and detail that goes into the interpretation of law in the United States." For that reason a segment of the program focused on gaining first-hand experience in the Socratic method. Students also visited courts, law firms and the California State Legislature during their stay. Professor Xie explained he hoped his "students would gain the ability to think more independently and to question and differentiate rather than rely on their professors and others for legal interpretations. They must also learn to think globally."

Professor Liu Xiaojuan expressed her excitement for the program by noting it not only met her expectations academically but that the cultural exchange was equally worthwhile. UC Davis law students hosted events for their Chinese visitors, and participants traveled to Lake Tahoe, the Napa Valley and San Francisco.

Greenwood observed that as China's economy grows so does its political influence. "Its legal system is undergoing many changes as well, and the UC Davis/China University of Political Science and Law program exposes participating students to new perspectives about the U.S. legal system, which helps them to understand and shape their own legal system in this period of transformation." This rigorous academic program for talented law students is intended to expand those international perspectives.