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Editor's note: Steve Groff is a graduate of Manhattan High School, and Scott Shackelford is a graduate of Shawnee Mission North High School, Overland Park.

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## K-STATE STUDENTS TEACH, LEARN DURING EXTENDED STAY IN CHINA

MANHATTAN — A student from Kansas State University and a recent K-State graduate have followed the road less traveled all the way to China.

Steve Groff, senior in sociology and international studies, Sugar Grove, Ill., and Scott Shackelford, May 2006 K-State bachelor's graduate in geography, Liberty, Mo., went to China in May 2006 through the Wuhan English Teaching Program.

After a summer of teaching English to Chinese children, Groff and Shackelford decided to extend their stay and continue teaching in Yangzhou, China.

"I simply love China and I love Chinese culture," Shackelford said. "I love the language, the music, the people and the food. I feel I am learning more now than I ever could in a classroom or behind some dusty desk."

Both Groff and Shackelford spend their mornings attending Chinese learning class at Yangzhou University. During the afternoon, they teach English classes to Chinese children of various ages, an experience both find rewarding.

"The kids are all very curious and that is what makes teaching so fun," Groff said. "There are not many foreigners in Yangzhou, so for a native English speaker to come and teach is a real treat for them. They have the chance to learn proper English, but I can also teach them about American culture."

"Teaching the Chinese children has reopened the playful, goofy kid that still lingers within me," Shackelford said. "I get to let loose and make them laugh, and I feel the children need that type of energy. These children have shown me that there still is so much to accomplish in the world with their attitudes, determination and group harmony."

(more)

While both Groff and Shackelford have developed an affinity for the Chinese culture, each had their own reason for initially pursuing this opportunity.

"The whole China idea came way out of left field and just happened to land in my lap," Groff said. "I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life, but I knew I wanted to further my education and travel. So, China seemed like a good idea for me."

"I had always wanted to study abroad and leave my comfort zone to experience something new," Shackelford said. "During my last year at K-State, I learned of the Wuhan English Teaching Program. It provided me with a chance to travel, and I received a small salary for my work, which helped me to do more local travel in China during the summer."

With assistance from K-State's study abroad office and the guidance of a K-State modern languages instructor, Wei Wu, both students prepared for their trip abroad by completing required English as a second language training and a semester course in Chinese culture and history through K-State.

The men were surprised when comparing their expectations of the country with the reality.

"Now that I am here, it's easier for me to notice how tainted American views really are," Groff said. "I thought China would be outdated and lacking modernity, but it really just depends on where you are. For example, Yangzhou is an awesome city — it's clean, it's modern and it's located near the eastern coast of China. Besides the architecture in Yangzhou, you wouldn't know the difference from any other Western city."

Overall, working in China has proven to be an unforgettable experience that has left its mark on both men.

"China was an escape for me. An escape from my friends, my family and my lifestyle — sort of my introduction into the so-called 'real world.' Regardless of how it turns out, this was the experience I had been waiting for," Groff said. "I will never forget China, its people or its culture — it's been absolutely wonderful."

"I live and see things on a daily basis that my parents back home cannot imagine," Shackelford said. "Through this experience, I have decided to give up planning out my life and just go for it. The future is mine."