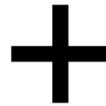
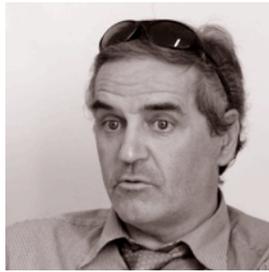
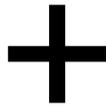


# FACE to FACE



**In October four tutors from the University of South Wales; Rae Gordon, Jeff Hutchinson, Rickie Lee, and Shane Galvin came to the International Education School to teach the engineering students who are planning to go abroad their senior year. M.M was able to secure an exclusive interview with these four tutors to talk about Suzhou, education, studying abroad and cultural differences.**

## **1. Before you came to Suzhou, what were your thoughts of Suzhou, did they change after you got here?**

**Ricky:** This is my first time to Suzhou and I've been told that this is one of the most beautiful cities in China. After living in the city for a week, I was amazed by its views, the rivers (there are so many of them around the city!), the gardens etc. To be honest, the city is much better than I thought. Apart from its beauty, the city is also full of prosperity and development opportunities! It is also close to the mega cities such as Shanghai and Nanjing and serves as a manufacturing hub in the Changjiang Delta region. Great food, nice people, a fantastic city!

**Rae:** This is our second year teaching in Suzhou.

**Jeff:** First to Suzhou

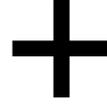
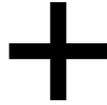
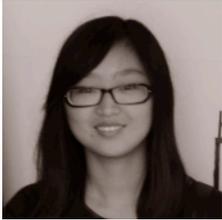
**Shane:** I have been here 6 times under the international exchange program, I have only been to Suzhou and Shanghai. It's good, It's a good place.

## **2. Do you change your teaching style when you teach Chinese students, if so, how do you prepare before you teach us?**

**Jeff:** You have to do everything much more slowly, deliberately speaking slowly, which is different in Europe and the UK because students have better English language skills and they are able to interact more freely. The Chinese are very good students but I think the language skills holds them back from interacting in class. I also think you have to lead the class in China while back home you can get the class to lead the lesson. A big difference is in the UK students get 12 hours of contact during university time but then have to do a lot of reading on their own while Chinese students are being taught all day every day. The UK has moved away from reciting and reciting to applying what we have just learned, allowing the students to think for themselves.

**Rae:** In the UK for engineering majors we would do a lot of experiments but I am not sure that happens as much in China. Experiments can include a whole range of things including any type of friction tests, gyroscopic motion, and equilibrium forces experiments. We have reasonably extensive

# with the tutors from the University of South Wales



learning experience. We also have a flight simulator where students can design an aircraft and program it into the flight simulator and see if it flies. At the University of South Wales we are trying to prepare students for their working career. Industry professionals come to our university to tell us what students should be learning. We are trying to prepare students to be able to work in their industry of choice as soon as they leave the university.

**Ricky:** Compared to my teaching back in the UK, I do use a different pedagogy and teaching approach when teaching Chinese students. I use plain English to introduce and explain concepts of accountancy. I also use plenty of examples to help students fully comprehend complex theories. In addition, I've prepared a lot of in-class and after-class exercises to ensure students are able to put the theories into practice.

### 3. In your opinion what is one skill Chinese students and UK students lack before they attend university?

**Jeff:** I think one thing Chinese students can do more of is practice their English language skills.

**Ricky:** I think one thing Chinese students do is once they get to our university they tend to stick together and feel very comfortable with each other and do basically everything together, and I think I would encourage them to integrate and make new friends with locals. In my observation those students who have a lot of local friends tend to While those who stick together rarely see any improvements in their language skills.

**Rae:** In the UK students do GCSE's and focus on two or three subjects from ages 16-18, so when we have a class initially in the first year we have people who have studied many different subjects and we have a wide range of different people attending the university. It is a bit of a challenge because how the A levels work in the UK they are given lots of information and when they come to our university they enter a new type of education system.

**Jeff:** In university you are taught and you write it down, but students need to learn to think about what they wrote and apply it and think for themselves about what exactly they wrote. In High School students recite and memorize but at the university level it encourages you to think for yourself, to innovate and those who can make that transition tend to do the best.

### 4. Why did Suzhou University of Science and Technology form a partnership with the University of South Wales? Can you also give us some advice we should know before we study there?

**Ricky:** The University of South Wales has a long history in offering high quality degrees in a wide range of disciplines. After the merge with Newport University, we are now the biggest university in Wales and the 6<sup>th</sup> largest university in the UK by student number. Our teaching staff are world-class and experts in the subject. We have a large number of international students who come from many different countries. Our staff and lecturers have a rich experience in delivery degree programs in an



international setting. You will have an excellent learning experience during your study at the University.

**Shane:** They formed a partnership for a cultural and knowledge exchange to give students in China a chance to study in the UK, to receive an international degree and to study in English. I think it should also be noted that last year we won an award for Best University in the UK for Student Support, a national award.

**Rae:** It's a foundation for building better relations with other countries and universities. I run a program with a German University at the master level and based on the success with that we now have an agreement in place for a PhD system in place, so it went from a teaching exercise to a research exercise. It's a two way street, we can both learn from each other. We see what is important in Germany and they see what is important here. It is a shrinking world, it is becoming a global market. Everybody is everywhere and I think that is a critical element of it, it is important to open up cultures and be able to work in a global environment. This is a great opportunity for SUST students to go to the UK and receive a degree in the UK which I know is a very positive thing for their future career. We also have a Chinese Society at the University of South Wales, so there are lots of other Chinese students there as well and they put on various banquets, celebrate the Chinese new year and there are still some of the cultural elements found here, also some of our staff can speak Chinese.

**5. As we know, from kindergarten to primary school, from senior school to high school, a group of students attend classes, do homework, and graduate and another group of students attend the same classes, do the same homework, and graduate. So, do you think education is like an assembly line?**

Personally, I think the basic and secondary education in China is world-class. Students in China study many different disciplines in junior and high school. The education model of China provides its students with solid academic and theoretical foundation. This is evidenced by its outstanding academic performance in key disciplines such as maths, chemistry and physics,

compared to the OECD countries. However, Chinese university graduates are less competitive mainly because they lack creativity and a sense of curiosity. They tend to accept the theories and concepts taught by their lecturers and rarely criticise or challenge them. Maybe it is a culture difference, in western countries, university students are encouraged to express their own ideas and thoughts and the lecturers are happy to discuss the idea with an open mind.

**6. Did you study abroad? What are some of the advantages to Studying abroad?**

**Shane:** Yes I did, we did something very similar to what these students are doing. They call it a franchise there. I went to the UK to receive my degree and I stayed, I never left. Another thing to remember is that everybody in the class is Chinese here, in the UK you can be in the class with people from all over the UK, Africa, the middle east, China, and the Caribbean. When you are walking around the campus you can see people from all over the world. You may never get the chance to meet somebody from around the world, and the more people you can meet the more you can learn. The learning of life is important.

**Jeff:** It is just a bigger picture to study abroad, if you just study in Suzhou that is your frame of reference but if you study in other countries around the world your frame of reference becomes bigger. The best ideas are not in the mind of one person but in many people.

**Rae:** It is not just academic you learn so much more about countries and people when you study abroad. At the end of the day you are going to be dealing with people with cultural differences and this opportunity makes it easier to handle.

**M.M wants to thank Rae Gordon, Jeff Hutchinson, Rickie Lee, and Shane Galvin for taking the time out of their busy schedule to talk with us and give students a chance to learn more about education in the West.**