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NSU graduate student visiting China to teach English

(Tahlequah, Okla.)—Taking her third trip abroad as a student at Northeastern State University, Elaina Ross of Tulsa will travel to China during the fall 2011 term as a teacher and representative of the university at Weifang University in Weifang, Shandong Province.

Ross, who graduated in May with bachelor's degrees in English and history, is pursuing her master's degree in English at NSU. She is visiting China with the assistance of CIBT Education Group Inc., a Canada-based education management company.

"I've signed a contract to work for CIBT," she said. "All my responsibilities will be explained when I arrive, but I will spend the majority of my time teaching English classes and recruiting prospective students for NSU."

Dr. Richard Carhart, executive director of international studies at NSU, said demand is increasing at Chinese universities for diversification and internationalization of faculty, students and programs.

"Because these institutions want a foreign presence, CIBT offers to facilitate partnerships between schools in the U.S. and China," Carhart said. "These can take the form of student exchanges, 2-plus-2 or 3-plus-1 degree programs or the global learning center being established at NSU-Broken Arrow."

The China trip will be Ross' third overseas since enrolling at NSU. She traveled to Paris with a Living Literature Study Abroad and spent the fall 2009 semester at Swansea University in Wales, United Kingdom, as a Brad Henry International Scholar. She also traveled twice to Europe while in high school.

However, this is Ross' first trip to Asia and she said the excitement of immersion in another culture drew her to go overseas again.

"To be honest, I'm looking forward to sitting down for a meal in China," Ross said. "I know that will be completely different from what we do here. The utensils are different, the food is different – it will be totally new for me."

NSU Provost Martin Tadlock, who worked with CIBT to forge the academic agreements with Weifang University, said sending students abroad is congruous with Northeastern's mission to empower students to be socially responsible global citizens.

"It is our responsibility to provide students with opportunities to understand a different language, culture and people and integrate that into their academic experience at NSU," he said. "The world is changing. Many Americans have jobs that are in other countries or that take them abroad. There is a great need to learn about languages, customs and traditions, to establish cross-cultural relationships and to foster global understanding. It is life-changing to live abroad for an extended period of time."

Ross said living by herself in another country lifted her confidence and made her believe "I can do anything." She added that living overseas affected her interpretation of the world.

"Before I went to Swansea, I saw the world as a lot bigger," she said. "Now it seems smaller. Swansea and China are roughly the same distance from Oklahoma. It also changed my perspective on the differences in how we live culturally. In the United States we do a lot of things differently than elsewhere. I actually found it reassuring to see things done another way in another country. It's just how people live."

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