

# CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

An undergraduate newsletter

May 2018 | Vol I

Highlights...

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NEW! ENGLISH,  
CULTURE, AND  
COMMUNICATING  
SCIENCE SEMINAR

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GRADUATE &  
UNDERGRADUATE  
SPOTLIGHTS

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MUST READ:  
UNDERGRADUATE  
CULTURE CORNER

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## Conversation and Discussion Skills

by Maddie Pagel '20

*During the spring term, undergraduate culture and communication consultants Amy Li and Maddie Pagel led a weekly discussion group for international graduate students and scholars who wanted to develop their vocabulary, fluency, and discussion skills in a friendly and supportive atmosphere.*

From the history of Harvard to travel, from the cultural significance of super bowl commercials to the basics of student life, our discussion group has covered a broad range of topics this semester. Beyond practicing English with supportive and encouraging peers, our discussion group has given us a way to learn from each other and compare and contrast our unique backgrounds. Hearing each member's perspective on a variety of topics has allowed for both impassioned debate and moments of great connection. This semester, members also have given presentations at the beginning of class, allowing even more room for learning and practice. In these presentations, we also see a diversity in topic choice, with some students presenting on topics such as the cultural significance of a favorite family dish and others on the history of the unionization of automobile manufacturers in Canada. We never know where the discussion will lead us, and that makes coming to the group incredibly exciting every week.

## Editors' Note

Welcome to our first newsletter! We are undergraduate Culture and Communication Consultants (CCCs) with the Professional Communication Program for International Teachers and Scholars at the Bok Center. With summer approaching, we wanted to wrap up the semester with a review of all the amazing activities we have done as part of this program, including language partner meetings, a discussion group, and a new seminar; we have been busy. In this first edition, we have sought to create both a resource and memory of the programming offered; in the future, we hope to utilize this newsletter as a source of communication to provide updates throughout the semester. Thank you for your participation and energy. We look forward to seeing you back for Fall 2018!

- Raylin Xu '19 and Samara Ford '18



Justin Robertson/CNN

## HOT TOPIC! DONOR- CLONED DOG: LONG LONG

by Raylin Xu '19

Chinese firm, Sinogene, clones gene-edited dog in a bid to treat cardiovascular disease. **Pictured to the left:** Longlong, the first dog cloned from a gene-edited donor, was born with atherosclerosis, a blood-clotting disorder.

Recently, a Chinese firm called Sinogene was the first to successfully clone a beagle from a gene-edited donor to study cardiovascular disease. While these dogs may look like other beagles, they are actually genetically coded to develop heart diseases such as atherosclerosis using gene-editing and somatic cell cloning. Scientists at Sinogene believe that these dog models are the next step to studying inheritable human diseases. However, they have run into many ethical issues concerning the utilization of dogs as subjects.

## ENGLISH, CULTURE, AND COMMUNICATING SCIENCE

by Natasha Dhamankar '20

*This term, the Professional Communication Program for International Teachers and Scholars piloted a new seminar for international SEAS graduate students. The seminar focused on cultural norms and clear oral English for communicating effectively in the sciences. Participants had opportunities to practice articulating and discussing hot topics in science and presenting on their own research interests.*

This semester, I have been a course assistant for the SEAS seminar “English, Culture, and Communicating Science” taught by Dr. Suprawee Tepsuporn for graduate students in engineering and other STEM fields. The seminar is very engaging, and its high emphasis on presentation and communication offers students many opportunities to practice. The communication practice has taken a variety of forms, from language exercises to role-play activities.

As a course assistant, I have been participating in these activities and also providing feedback. Throughout the course, students have been doing short individual presentations and receiving group feedback. Students present on topics of their own choosing. Just last session, I had the opportunity to learn about the science behind rainbows, the network effect, and confounding in statistics, among many other topics!

I have enjoyed learning about a similar range of topics in my language partner meetings with seminar participants, too. One of the computer science topics we discussed in a mini-microteaching has actually been relevant to my own coursework. Outside of academic and research topics, my language partner meeting discussions have also focused on issues of culture and politics in China and Taiwan.



Suprawee Tepsuporn, Ph.D  
Instructor for *English, Culture, and Communicating Science:  
A Seminar for International SEAS Graduate Students*

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Their most outspoken opponents, People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), claim Sinogene's research is “inherently cruel” and “unethical.” In addition, another concern is the degree to which legal protections for laboratory animals are enforced in China. Thus, while these dogs may become useful models for studying human diseases, there are many costs, both monetary and ethical, for scientists to take into account as they move forward in their efforts to utilize cloned dogs for research purposes.



## *Culture and Communication Consultant: Sasha Deshuck '18*

Hi ITFs! For those who don't know me, my name is Sasha and I've been a Culture and Communication Consultant at the Bok Center for 2 years now. Just some of the things that keep me busy day to day: I'm a senior in Eliot House, I study Slavic history and literature, I'm the president of my fraternity Sigma Chi, and I'm a member of Harvard's club boxing team. However, working at the Bok Center has undoubtedly been one of the most rewarding things I've done throughout my Harvard undergraduate experience. I've loved every minute of getting to know a diverse, passionate crowd of intellectual and friendly graduate students. I firmly believe that the most important part of our lives is the relationships that we invest in, and my favorite part about the Bok Center is that whether we are working with language, culture, or something else entirely, the foundation of what we are doing, always, is building relationships.



What is bittersweet, of course, is that my time at Harvard is coming to a close, as I will be graduating in May. Although I am sad to leave this place which has truly become my home, I am excited to return to my hometown city of New York to work as a paralegal at a large corporate law firm. I hope to continue using language and culture as a cornerstone of my professional pursuits, hopefully one day in the realm of international law, all of which couldn't have been done without the invaluable experiences from working with the ITFs and the rest of the team at the Bok Center. Thanks for everything. It's been real!

Meet Sasha Deshuk, one of the senior Culture and Communication Consultants. He introduces himself in this spotlight feature and gives you a sense of his daily life as a Harvard College student.

## *CCC and Graduate Spotlight*

If you or a friend would like to be featured in our upcoming issue, feel free to email us at [raylinxu@college.harvard.edu](mailto:raylinxu@college.harvard.edu) or [samaraford@college.harvard.edu](mailto:samaraford@college.harvard.edu).

For more information on the Culture and Communication Program go to: [bokcenter.harvard.edu/international-teachers-and-scholars](http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/international-teachers-and-scholars).

# Spotlight:

## Fenglei Wang

by Samara Ford '18

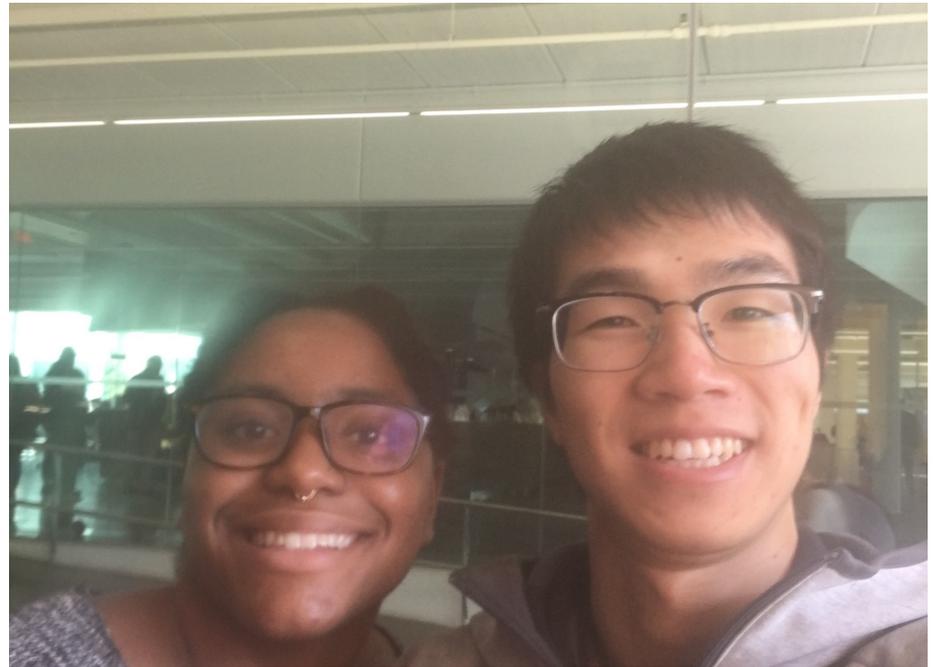
Meet Fenglei, an international graduate student who participated in our language partner program. Learn more about his background and experiences in Boston!

### Where did you grow up? What language did you speak there?

I grew up in a small town in southeastern part of China, near Shanghai. When people ask me which part of China I come from, I always add “near Shanghai”. Because most people know Shanghai city, but few of them know my hometown city. In my hometown, except in schools where our teachers taught us in Mandarin. I usually speak our own dialect. As my hometown is very close to Shanghai (about 1-hour drive), our dialect is similar to Shanghainese. Speaking of dialects, it's interesting that the dialects in China differ a lot from places to places, even in the same province. Take the province I am from as an example. I am from the northern part, and during my master's study, I had a roommate who was from the southern part of the same province. If we spoke our own dialect, we won't understand each other, not even a word.

### What are you studying here at Harvard, and why does this interest you?

I am study nutritional epidemiology in Chan School of Public Health. My research area is the relationship between diet, lifestyle and non-communicable diseases (like cancer, cardiovascular diseases, obesity, etc.). It is closely related to our daily life. Even I will not do academic



research in the future, learning the nutrition knowledge will be very helpful for me to have a healthy diet and lifestyle, and I can use it to guide my parents and friends.

### How long have you been here in the US? What do you think of it so far?

I came here at the end of last July. So, I have been here almost eight and a half months. I think my new life here is not that different from the previous one. Back to my undergraduate and master study period, the places I went to most were lab, library, dorm and university cafeteria. They are almost same here. The major difference is that here I don't often go to the school cafeteria. I usually cook the meals by myself. I like the Chinese food. But the Chinese food here in the restaurant is usually too greasy and salty. So, I choose to cook by myself.

### Have you studied in a foreign country before coming to Harvard?

No. I haven't studied in a foreign country before coming here. I just traveled to several countries, mainly Southeastern Asian countries like Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.

In addition, I have been to South Africa to participate an international conference and gave an oral presentation there.

### What is your favorite thing about Boston/Cambridge so far?

My favorite thing about Boston is its long history. The first time I know Boston is not from the television or Internet. It's from our history book, introducing the first gunshot in Lexington and the Boston Tea Party. Boston has a special feature that unlike other big cities where modern buildings and old buildings are separated (usually old buildings are protected in reserves), here we can see many old buildings like churches between modern ones. That's very special to me.

*Pictured top: Samara Ford, CCC, and Fenglei Wang, international graduate student, met as language partners once a week over the semester for oral communication practice and feedback. CCCs provide international graduate students opportunities to practice and get feedback on culture and oral English communication.*



# Undergraduate Culture Corner: Visitas

by Samara Ford '18

For the weekend of April 20-22, students who have been admitted to Harvard College came to campus for Visitas. During this exciting time, the College asked students to pitch in in various ways to help show off the best of Harvard. Undergraduates hosted prospective students in their dorms and put together an activities fair featuring different extracurricular opportunities to name a few of the many ways we get involved. For students who have spent a few years here, Visitas can evoke nostalgia as we are invited to remember how eager, hopeful, and nervous we were before coming to Harvard. Prospective students asked us about our favorite experiences during our time here, giving us plenty of chances to reflect and wonder what advice we would have benefited from in their position. Ultimately, Visitas was a time to meet students, visit classes, and maybe even explore Cambridge for those with a spark of adventure. It was the first step in learning what undergraduate culture is like and imagining how one might find one's place among the 1600 or so students in one's class.

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## Focus on Culture & Communication: A Workshop Series

This spring the Professional Communication Program for International Teachers and Scholars offered a series of workshops for those interested in developing intercultural communication skills for Harvard's international environment. Workshop titles included *Small Talk: Networking Across Cultures*, *Big Talk: Telling Your Professional Story*, and *Speaking with Authority*. Participants appreciated opportunities to explore culture and communication, learn implementable strategies, and get feedback in a supportive and friendly environment. We hope to see you at future events! Check out our website for upcoming workshops and seminars.

## The Professional Communication Program for International Teachers and Scholars

Contact us!

[bokcenter.harvard.edu/international-teachers-and-scholars](http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/international-teachers-and-scholars)

125 Mt. Auburn Street  
3rd Floor  
Cambridge, MA 02138



Pauline Carpenter  
Assistant Director  
International Teachers and Scholars



Pamela Pollock  
Associate Director for Professional  
and Scholarly Development