Frequently asked Questions and Answers
2014 Summer China Experience (SCE)

What is SCE?
One of the many programs started by a million dollar grant given in 2004 by Ravenel Curry to enhance the Chinese program of the Asian Studies department. This grant sponsors a two-week tour of China to in-coming Furman freshmen, allowing them interaction with Chinese college students and exposing them to a different culture and language. Since 2008 Summer China Experience has also received the generous support of Carrie and Richard Tucker, and other donors.

Is SCE competitive?
Yes. Each year many in-coming freshmen apply to the program. Students are selected based in part on their academic excellence, but also on their desire to absorb all they can about China both inside of the classroom and out. The program is looking for student leaders who can serve as ambassadors for Furman and their home countries while in China, and who will share their experiences and knowledge with others upon their return. Many, though certainly not all, of our past participants have become exemplary Asian Studies majors. Nearly all have become leaders in some capacity across the community.

Where will this be held?
Soochow University in Suzhou, China. Suzhou is the canalled “Venice of China.” Suzhou is one of the few cities in China which retains the quaint architectural style of the pre-modern era. While so doing, however, the city has also become the country’s leading site for foreign investment. Suzhou is also a two-hour bus ride or a short train ride to Shanghai, one of the most modern cities in the world.

When will SCE begin?
The 2014 tentative schedule has selected participants departing on June 22, 2014, arriving in China on June 23, 2014. The group is expected to return home on July 5, 2014.

What would I have to do if I am selected to participate in SCE?
All students who participate take a full year of Chinese language their freshman year and participate in the First Year Seminar exploring current issues in China. These required courses will meet general education requirements of the university, and thus should fit quite readily into any chosen course of study.

Could I study more than one year of Chinese?
Yes! Further language study beyond one year is available but is completely optional, unless you are pursuing a B.A., in which case, three semesters of language are required for graduation. Furman University offers four years of nationally competitive Chinese language study.

Would I have to take the full year of Chinese?
Yes. In exchange for a free, two-week trip to China, we feel that a full year of language study that meets Furman’s graduation requirements is a reasonable expectation. We want this to be a positive learning experience for you, and one which complements and enhances your Furman experience.
Is the Chinese Language more difficult to learn than Western languages?

Well, yes and no. The vast majority of students who take Chinese at Furman have no previous exposure to the language, and perform quite well. Most students find the grammar rather simple, and focus on building vocabulary. While the writing system is different from those of Western languages, it is often the most rewarding part of the language learning experience. Chinese tones can be quite challenging, though Furman has excellent language lab resources and nationally recognized Chinese language faculty to help you master the language. If you would be interested in speaking with a current Chinese language student to learn more about Chinese classes at Furman, we can arrange a conversation.

Would I have to pay for SCE?

No. Roundtrip international flights, all travel within China, food, lodgings, and cultural experiences are covered by the program. The only money that participants will need is spending money and expenses related to securing passports and visas. A $300 deposit, refundable after students matriculate in the fall, will secure space for students who are accepted into the program.

How many students will be going?

Twelve students will be chosen as participants.

What will an average day be like?

The program is divided in half. The first half will be held in Suzhou, China. Students will have ample opportunity to experience the old and new aspects of Suzhou during the first week, when afternoons and evenings will be devoted to group projects and group outings. Expect to visit sites of historical and contemporary cultural significance, shop, eat regional cuisine, and attend evening shows with your Furman and Chinese friends. Mornings will be devoted to classes and discussions co-taught by Furman and Suzhou University faculty. Students from both campuses will engage, using English of course, in what we hope will be enlightening cross-cultural dialogue. The Suzhou students will be a part of the entire experience that first week – living in dorms, working on projects, and taking outings with the Furman students.

During the second half of the trip, the group will explore China’s rich diversity, including a trip to ultramodern Shanghai, the nation’s political capital Beijing, and more remote rural villages. Students will climb the Great Wall, walk in the footsteps of Emperors in the Forbidden City, be briefed at the American Embassy, tour the Shanghai Stock Exchange, and enjoy a wide array of additional briefings and special activities. Dr. Kate Kaup (James B. Duke Professor of Asian Studies and Political Science) and Dr. Ken Peterson (John D. Hollingsworth, Jr., Professor and Economics Department Chair) will lead the students. Both professors are experienced study away leaders, and Dr. Kaup has led nearly a dozen groups to China. The group will stay in 3- or 4-star hotels and travel by air, bus, and rail.

Are there any health risks or precautions that I should consider?

Individual cases vary, so it’s best to discuss this matter with your physician. Travelers can find health information about China at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationChina.aspx, and it is always a good idea to carry a basic first-aid kit.

Is China safe?

In an age of some global security concerns, China remains one of the safest places in the world for foreign tourists. Crime rates are much lower than in the United States. The program directors are very alert to political and health issues affecting China, and they constantly monitor the Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization, State Department, and Embassy websites for any changes to the current, very stable situation in China. While this program aims to be fun and enriching, student well-being is always the top priority.
I am not sure I will decide to go to Furman. Should I go ahead and apply for SCE or wait until I’ve made my decision?

Go ahead and apply. It will be easier to withdraw your SCE application (and we do appreciate the courtesy) than to submit an application at the last minute. It will be impossible to submit any applications after the deadline.

Why do I have to expedite my passport application?

The preparations for SCE must be arranged in a short period of time: too short for incorporating alternate participants. Expediting your passport application demonstrates that you are willing to help us see that every accepted applicant is able to participate in this amazing adventure. A late-arriving passport could singlehandedly hijack this amazing once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Can I apply to both the SCE and the JSE programs?

Yes. You may apply to both programs, but you can only participate in one. If you choose to apply to both, you must submit complete, separate applications and attachments.

What is the deadline for the application?

THE COMPLETE APPLICATION PACKET MUST BE SUBMITTED ONLINE BY MIDNIGHT APRIL 25, 2014.

Can the deadline for the application be extended?

No. The details for this trip must be finalized quickly, and so there can be no delay in the selection process if travel arrangements are to be made on time.

Can I send my application electronically and then mail other supporting documents?

No. All applications must be submitted in one complete electronic packet. Please be sure to attach supporting documents as instructed before clicking “submit”!

How can I know my application packet has been received?

Applicants will receive an email confirming receipt of materials. Should you not receive an email confirmation after submitting the online application, please contact Asian Studies to clarify: becky.duckett@furman.edu.