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MPD in China 2013: An Introduction ^[1]

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In January 2013, a group of nine Masters' of Public Diplomacy students will embark on a trip to Beijing, China. A mixture of native Chinese and Americans, we hope to accomplish an ambitious set of goals: to gain an understanding of how public diplomacy is thought about and engaged in academic contexts as well as how it is innovatively used in practice—through film, at airports, over the Internet, in media, and by corporations.

We've capitalized on the diversity of the MPD program in setting out our agenda. Some of us have worked in journalism or for think tanks in China, others for political campaigns or in corporate social responsibility at major corporations. We speak over five languages among us, and have differing ambitions to become academics, consultants, and practitioners of public diplomacy. What unites us is a passion for the field, and a desire to contribute to a better understanding of the role communication can play in forging better relations between our homes: the United States and China.

Our objectives are as follows:

- 1. Engage fellow researchers in China to assess innovative approaches to public diplomacy interactions between the U.S. and China.* As students of PD, we are seeking to engage in dialogue with peers in academia as well as Chinese and Western practitioners of PD to explore cutting-edge approaches to the field.
- 2. Work toward a mutual understanding of the variety of perspectives on the field of PD at work in China through peer-to-peer engagement.* In order to do so successfully, we hope to use one of the core tools of public diplomacy – listening – in order to better understand the goals and complexity of China's attempts to influence the world, as well as global attempts to influence China.
- 3. Build upon the foundation for future collaborations between USC Annenberg and Chinese research institutions.* We would be remiss to approach this trip as a one-off venture. The underlying goal of our trip is to lay groundwork for MPD students to engage in future collaborations with the PD community in China. In particular, we hope to build our relationships with the academic community, so that we can engage in future joint research projects.

Over the next few weeks we will be publishing a series of short blogs that encapsulate the variety of our projects. We would greatly welcome comment and criticism from the public as we make our preparations. Following our trip, we will be preparing a report, *Innovations in Public Diplomacy in China*, that will showcase our findings. We have greatly appreciated the support of the Annenberg community, and the Center on Public Diplomacy in particular, in our

preparations for this trip. We look forward to sharing our findings when we return!

Sarah Myers is a graduate student pursuing a Master's degree in Public Diplomacy from USC's Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism.
