Chinese Studies Program at Morehouse College

Mandarin Chinese is the native language spoken by more people than any other language in the world.

Morehouse College is the institution that produces some of the most influential African American male leaders in the world, with a particular focus on developing those leaders for a 21st century global society.

So, when Dr. Henrietta Yang wanted to create an “ideal” Chinese Studies Program, she was inspired by the fact that Morehouse was “the whole package.” Not only did the College have academically gifted students, but also a commitment to interdisciplinary teaching and learning through a robust international curriculum.

In fact, Yang’s partnering with Morehouse to pursue a similar vision seemed to prove the point of an old Chinese proverb: Fate brings people together.
I had been hearing that the 21st century would be China’s century. Well, there’s no doubt that China has gotten stronger and stronger in politics and the economy. The goal of the Chinese Studies Program is to get the men of Morehouse out front on the global surge of interest in Chinese business, trade and culture.

– Henrietta Yang

The mission of the Chinese Studies Program is to prepare Morehouse students to play a leading role in the fast-growing political, economic, and cultural relationships between the United States and China, an emerging superpower. This means helping students develop fluency in the language, as well as familiarity with the culture that is shared by more than one billion people on the planet.

Since it was launched in fall 2008, the Chinese Studies Program at Morehouse College – which is among only a few undergraduate institutions in the United States that offer an advanced Chinese language curriculum – has been nationally recognized for its success in bringing together future leaders with a whole new world of opportunities to learn and to lead.
The Chinese Studies Program, an academic minor at Morehouse, offers a well-rounded international curriculum comprised of three key components: learning Chinese language, appreciating Chinese culture, and traveling and studying in China.

**LANGUAGE**

The heart of the program is a highly innovative approach to teaching and learning language skills. Beginning, intermediate and advanced courses in Chinese, as well as courses in conversational and business Chinese, use SMART boards and other instructional technologies to help students learn to speak, read and write the language.

**CULTURE**

In addition to the language courses, the program offers a course that explores Chinese culture through film and literature. Every semester, the program also presents a series of lectures featuring international scholars in politics, economics, and culture, as well as special events, such as Chinese New Year and Chinese Moon Festival celebrations.

**TRAVEL**

Because nothing teaches better than experience, the program offers both summer immersion and semester-long study abroad opportunities in China and Taiwan. The trips are designed to expose students to the language, culture and business practices of the country and help them forge meaningful friendships with people from around the world.
Le Mel Lindsey was first drawn to the Chinese Studies Program because he saw it as a unique challenge.

"Chinese is so different. It stood out from the other foreign languages taught at Morehouse," he said. "And it is a difficult language to learn. Not at all what I expected."

After taking a few courses, Lindsey, a political science major with a concentration in international relations, realized something else.

"I knew that China was doing well and beginning to get recognition on a global stage," he said. "Given that, I thought it was beneficial to keep taking Chinese and to study Chinese culture. It just seemed smart."

Smart, indeed. Lindsey’s reward for sticking with the rigorous program is that he is one of the first three students to graduate from Morehouse with a minor in Chinese Studies.

"The program made me into a more well-rounded global citizen," he said. "It showed me just how many opportunities there are and that my access to those opportunities is unlimited."

During his junior year, Lindsey participated in a three-week summer enrichment program, which took him to Shanghai. Then in his senior year, he spent an entire semester studying in Shanghai and visited Beijing, as well.

The next opportunity Lindsey plans to take advantage of is to attend either the Georgia Institute of Technology or Johns Hopkins University to earn a master’s degree in economics. His goal is to pursue a career in business and international development.

"Because of globalization, economic development is a way to tear down barriers and bring people together across geographic borders," Lindsey said. "I am in a position to contribute to that development because of how much the Chinese Studies Program contributed to mine."

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By the time Spencer Brooks got to Morehouse, he had already been studying Chinese for five years—since the eighth grade in middle school.

So, his decision to join the Chinese Studies Program was motivated not so much by his wanting or needing to take more language courses as by two other things that are important to him: relationships and service.

“I met with Dr. Yang and we had a conversation in Chinese about the direction for the program,” said Brooks. “I understood her end goals and saw that I could help Morehouse with the program.”

Brooks, a business administration major with a concentration in finance, took Chinese 101 and started tutoring other Morehouse students enrolled in the beginning-level courses. Then, in his sophomore year, he founded the Morehouse Chinese Club, a student-run organization that sponsors cultural events on and off campus.

In 2010, Brooks spent a semester studying in Shanghai, where he "became one with the community."

"Being there after so many years of practicing the language, I came to realize that sometimes there is a language barrier between cultures, not necessarily a race barrier,” he said. “Because I could communicate using Chinese, everything else went away. Having the language skill made relationships with them possible without me being Chinese.”

Brooks is pursuing a career in banking, but also hopes to grow a business he started when he was just 16, Spencer’s Bath Salts. He says the key to success in both endeavors is an invaluable lesson he learned through the Chinese Studies Program.

“Above all, what I got from the program is an appreciation for and knowledge of relationships,” he said. “It’s all about person to person. That’s what makes the world go round.”
Jermaine McMihelk’s friend kept telling him about a very challenging, but very exciting Chinese language course he was taking. When McMihelk enrolled in Chinese 101 in the fall of his sophomore year, he finally understood firsthand what all the buzz was about.

“I loved it,” said McMihelk, who graduated from Morehouse in 2011 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration-marketing. “As a business major, I knew that China was growing in importance and I was interested in learning about the culture.

“But it was how Dr. Yang taught the course that really made the difference,” he said. “Her approach was very dynamic. She taught in a way that wasn’t just a lecture. And she was always open to helping students.”

McMihelk was among four Morehouse students who had an opportunity to share their love of Chinese language and culture when a group of ambassadors from 50 countries visited the Atlanta University Center. The students each recited a poem famous in China – and then translated the poem’s meaning for the audience.

“That experience showed me just how much I had gained from the program,” said McMihelk. “I had mastered the language and understood the culture to the extent that I could share that knowledge with others.”

McMihelk believes his knowledge of Chinese will continue to serve him well, particularly as he pursues a career as a corporate attorney. Having completed his first year at Harvard Law School, he will intern during the summer of 2012 at Morrison Foerster, a global law firm with 15 offices in the United States, Europe and Asia.

“The Chinese Studies Program opened my eyes,” said McMihelk. “It gave me a foundation that I will be building on as I work in boardrooms around the world.”

“Milestones

• In November 2009, the program participated in the 100,000 Strong Initiative, a national effort designed to dramatically increase the number and diversify the composition of American students studying in China.

• In January 2011, Henrietta Yang and five Morehouse Chinese Studies students participated in a U.S. Department of State event that highlighted the importance of this U.S. China educational exchange and acknowledged Morehouse for helping to establish bonds across borders.

• The Coca-Cola Foundation acknowledged the program with $150,000 in support of study abroad opportunities.

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MOREHOUSE COLLEGE AT A GLANCE

DESCRIPTION
Founded in 1867 as the Augusta Institute in Augusta, Georgia, Morehouse College is the nation’s largest liberal arts college for men. Morehouse graduates approximately 500 students each year, historically conferring bachelor’s degrees on more African American men than any other college or university in the United States. The 66-acre campus is located just three miles southwest of downtown Atlanta.

MISSION
The mission of Morehouse College is to provide a comprehensive academic, social and spiritual experience that prepares its students for leadership and success in the larger society.

ENROLLMENT
With an enrollment of approximately 2,500, the student body represents more than 40 states and 14 foreign countries.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
Morehouse operates under the semester system offering the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. The College offers 26 majors in three academic divisions: Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Mathematics, and Business Administration and Economics, and a dual-degree program in engineering with the Georgia Institute of Technology.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS
Special programs include Phi Beta Kappa, Honors, Study Abroad, The Andrew Young Center for International Affairs and Global Education, and Research Careers. The College also houses the Morehouse Research Institute, The Leadership Center at Morehouse College, The Morehouse Male Initiative and the CLA Journal.

FACULTY
166 full-time; 67 part-time; 100% of tenured and tenure-track faculty holds terminal degrees

ATHLETICS
Morehouse is a member of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Division II. Varsity letter sports include football, basketball, tennis, golf, cross country and track and field.

AFFILIATIONS
Morehouse is a member of the Georgia Research Alliance, the Associated Colleges of the South, and the Atlanta University Center, a consortium of five historically black institutions, including Clark Atlanta University, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse School of Medicine and Spelman College.

ACCREDITATION
Morehouse is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) to award baccalaureate degrees. Morehouse is one of five Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and one of four undergraduate institutions in Georgia, with a Phi Beta Kappa National Honor Society chapter. The College also is one of only four liberal arts colleges in the nation with accreditation from both the International Association for Management Education and a Phi Beta Kappa chapter.

RANKINGS
One of the Top 100 Social Media Colleges in the country —studentadvisor.com
No. 3 HBCU in the nation for 2012 —U.S. News and World Report
One of 45 Best Buy Schools for 2011 —The Fiske Guide to Colleges
One of the nation’s most grueling colleges in 2010 —The Huffington Post
One of America’s Best Colleges for 2010 for third consecutive year —Forbes