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Gregory Veeck

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WMU International News
June 2008

[Dr. Gregory Veeck](#)
Professor of Geography
WMU Fulbright Scholar



Dr. Veeck with researchers in China

Western Michigan University geography professor Dr. Gregory Veeck has completed extensive international research specializing in economic geography, agriculture, rural development and rural environmental/ecological issues in the United States, China, Japan, and Korea.

Veeck has been conducting field research for 24 years. He made his first visit to China in 1985, when he studied Chinese at Taiwan Normal University while working on an agriculture project; he has traveled to China almost every year since and has lived abroad for approximately six years. Currently, he is working with a team organized by the Asian Development Bank assessing the viability loans for six of China's provinces directed at improvements in land quality and irrigation networks.

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Veeck's research has been published in many journals including, *Economic Geography*, *Great Lakes Geographer*, *Eurasian Geographer*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, and *Eurasian Geography and Economics*. Funding for his research has been awarded by the National Sciences Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the National Academy of Science, National Geographic, World Wildlife Fund, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad Program, among many others.

Veeck earned his bachelor's degree at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, his master's degree at Purdue University, and a doctoral degree at the University of Georgia. He was hired as a geography professor at WMU in 1999, following his wife, Dr. Anne Veeck, a professor of business, who joined the faculty in 1998.

"My wife was hired as an international researcher by former WMU Provost Tim Light," said Veeck. "Provost Light had a program to recruit international scholars on campus. My wife and I have two kids, so we needed jobs on the same campus."

In recent years, Veeck has been working with herders in Inner Mongolia and Jilin, studying the relationships between pasture quality, herd size and composition, and household income. He has also completed 16 household-survey-based projects in East Asia, with 13 of these conducted in China, Korea, Japan and the U.S.

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“The surveys typically focus on rural, agricultural and environmental issues,” said Veeck. “All of these issues are at the farm level, but are linked to economic change at regional, national and global scales.”

Currently, Veeck is teamed up with fellow WMU geography professor Dr. Jay Emerson and their counterparts at the Rural Development Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to study grassland use.

“This is a multi-scale study of grassland use and health in Damao Banner, Inner Mongolia, China,” said Veeck. “We joined data including 172 household surveys with remote sensing-derived vegetation indices calculated for select years from 1975 to 2006. We are applying for funds for a nationwide inventory project combining county-level panel data with remotely sensed images from 1982 to 2009.”

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A research site in China

Veeck's research often intersects with his classroom teaching. He has authored or co-authored three edited volumes, and co-authored two others, including his classroom text, which he is working on a second edition. He also edited the 2006-2007 Journal of Geography, where Veeck voiced his concerns that student study abroad is becoming too limited in duration.

Veeck's essay, "Talk is Cheap: Cultural and Linguistic Fluency During Field Research," appeared in *The Geographical Review* in 2001, in which he compares his experience learning the Chinese language with how students and other researchers are learning it. In the article, Veeck admits he may have been the worst student in his Chinese language course, but he said through "a love for the language and the kindness of strangers" his language skills have greatly improved.

"I don't think there is anything that makes me quite as happy as my Chinese language skills," said Veeck. "I've learned the more you do it, the better you will get. Students often think they have to be perfect. That's not the case. It's more about just hanging in there."

Veeck is in China to conduct research for the spring 2010 semester. Stateside, he frequently gives lectures at other universities about his work, including a recent talk at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"When you love something, you want to tell people about it," said Veeck. "It is what makes publishing, teaching and speaking more interesting."