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Fall 2010

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- Reference experience put to good use for new CELCIS activities coordinator
Western Michigan University will celebrate the formal opening of its Timothy Light Center for Chinese Studies Monday, Oct. 11, with an on-campus lecture by renowned China scholar, Dr. Stephen R. MacKinnon, professor of history at Arizona State University, followed by a reception. Both events are free and open to the public.

MacKinnon will present "Impact of World War II on China: A Reevaluation" at 6 p.m. in the Fetzer Center's Kirsch Auditorium. MacKinnon, a former director of Arizona State's Center for Asian Studies, will go beyond the traditional political story of World War II and the 1937 to 1945 China War by discussing the social, cultural and economic impact of those wars on the Chinese people.

In addition to dozens of academic articles and book chapters, MacKinnon is the author of several books. His most recent text, "War, Refugees and the Making of Modern China," was published in 2008 by the University of California Press.

During the reception, attendees will be able to meet MacKinnon and many of the principals who helped found the Light Center, which opened its doors in early September.

The center is designed to further the work of WMU faculty members and graduate students who have expertise in some field of Sinology, or pedagogical or research interests in China. It also aims to enhance teaching and understanding of China studies through programs accessible to undergraduate students and the public. Dr. Wei-Chiao Huang, WMU professor of economics, has been named the center's first director.

The idea for the center came from the family of Dr. Timothy Light, WMU professor emeritus of comparative religion and a former provost of the University. Family members wanted to honor Light's lifetime achievements and commitment to Chinese studies, and they also provided a generous endowment to fund the center and its activities.

Dr. Timothy Light and Dr. Wei-Chiao Huang at the center's office
"We reviewed WMU's existing resources and strengths in the area of Chinese studies and considered the significant potential opportunities the University has to collaborate with local and international academic institutions, arts organizations and industries," Huang says. "We concluded and recommended establishment of the center as the vehicle through which WMU faculty, staff and students can coordinate China studies more effectively, and at the same time, strengthen partnerships with the local and global communities and gain visibility and recognition for WMU as an institution that contributes to and promotes China studies and culture."

A Kalamazoo native and expert on the Chinese language, Light joined the comparative religion faculty in 1991 and retired in 2003. He served as provost from 1996 to 2000 and as special assistant for international affairs to former WMU President Diether H. Haenicke from 1991 to 1996, with whom he also had worked at Ohio State University from 1980 to 1986.

Light's 50-year academic career includes teaching and administrative positions related to East Asian language and culture studies at international and domestic universities and colleges, including the Chinese University of Hong Kong and University of Arizona, and the publication of numerous scholarly books and articles for professional journals.

Huang, who began his career at WMU in 1985, specializes in labor economics. He has been preparing for the center's opening for the past two years, working with Light; Dr. Donald G. McCloud, dean of WMU's Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education; and WMU faculty members on the Light Center's advisory board.

In addition to Huang, Light and McCloud, that board includes Dr. Jue Guo, assistant professor of comparative religion; Dr. Ann Veeck, professor of marketing; Dr. Xiaojun Wang, professor of foreign languages; Dr. Victor Xiong, professor of history; and Bill Woods, associate dean of the Haenicke Institute. As the center's director, Huang will work with those principals and WMU's China Study Group faculty to expand and advance Chinese studies at the University.

"I feel honored to be entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating activities and promoting educational, artistic and research scholarships related to all aspects of Chinese studies at WMU," Huang says. "While being an ethnic Chinese, I am actually a Taiwanese American, not from mainland China, so I am humbled and grateful for the endorsement and support that I received from Dr. Light, Dean McCloud and the advisory board members."

McCloud, a specialist in Southeast Asian politics, says the Light Center will capitalize on and bring focus to WMU's considerable faculty resources on China.

"The Light Center, adding to the new capacity being created through the Confucius Institute at WMU, offers the University an opportunity to gain national prominence with regard to China and broadly to East Asian studies," McCloud says. "Over the next several years, these two
programs coupling with the resident competence already in place among our faculty will bear considerable scholarly fruit."

The Light Center plans to bring in highly regarded China scholars for lectures and seminars as well as to host Haenicke Institute Brown Bag Series presentations featuring WMU’s China researchers. In addition, Huang and Dr. Huizhong Zhou, professor of economics, have teamed up to make "Dragon vs. Eagle: The Chinese Economy and U.S.-China Economic Relations" the focus of the University's 2010-11 Werner Sichel Economics Lecture Series.

That series will begin at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 20, in Room 2028 Brown Hall with a lecture on the "Value Chains in Global Production and Networks--China and Asia in a Global Context" by Dr. Robert Koopman, Office of Economics director in the U.S. International Trade Commission.

Huang says the Light Center also will co-sponsor activities and work closely with WMU's Confucius Institute as well as area partner organizations such as the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, which opened its new Joy Light Gallery for Asian Art Aug. 28.

"China's ascent in the global economy is increasing demand for Americans proficient in Chinese language and culture to prepare for careers in fields ranging from foreign policy to trade and commerce," Huang says.

He adds that greater China is becoming more important, as well. That region includes mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and other Asian countries, such as Singapore, Korea and Japan, which have many people of Chinese descent or are heavily influenced by Chinese culture.

"In this new century of the global village environment, it is imperative for students to acquire global literacy and proficiency to be a valuable world citizen and to be competitive and productive in the marketplace," Huang says. "In particular, Greater China has become the economic powerhouse of the world. Students aspiring to be successful in this new age must possess a knowledge and understanding of various aspects of these societies and countries."

For more information about the Light Center for Chinese Studies or its upcoming events, visit www.wmich.edu/chinesestudiescenter or contact Christina Paruch at hige-lightcenter@wmich.edu or (269) 387-3951.

Story by Nate Coe, some information courtesy of University Relations
Aiding the development of local governments in Iraq and teaching Iraqis democratic processes and public management skills was the mission of Western Michigan University Professor Matthew Mingus, who recently served for one year in the war-torn country as a senior governance specialist for the United States.

Mingus was embedded with the State Department's Provincial Reconstruction Team at Camp Taji, where he also advised U.S. Army commanders. His responsibilities included assessing essential services, making recommendations on infrastructure funding, preparing analytical cables, advising team leaders on tribal reconciliation, increasing Iraqi vertical integration, and enlightening U.S. Army colleagues on Iraqi governance.

“My main goal was developing the local-level government in an area that's been a centralized dictatorship for longer than 2,000 years,” said Mingus, a professor in WMU's School of Public Affairs and Administration. “I was very excited about going there to get some hands-on experience because I've been largely in research mode when it comes to democratic reform, rather than in “doing” mode.”

Camp Taji
Camp Taji is both a U.S. and Iraqi Army base, which is located about 20 miles from the perimeter of Baghdad in a rural, agricultural area. Mingus said it’s a difficult place to get to: The State Department uses commercial airlines to fly personnel from the U.S. into Kuwait City or Amman, and then utilizes military aircraft for the last leg of the flight into Baghdad International Airport. Ground transportation or helicopters are used to move personnel to the various bases. Mingus said the trip takes about three days from Michigan, if the weather cooperates.

“Six months before I wouldn’t have had any thoughts of going to a conflict zone, for any time at all, even three weeks, let alone a year,” Mingus said. “After being approached by a couple of people about the opportunity I changed my mind. I thought this would be a good resume-builder, that it would help my teaching, and that it might help me break into the difficult consulting market at USAID and the United Nations Development Program.”

Mingus’ assignment included two major tasks: helping local government councils and leaders learn to conduct democratic, productive meetings; and, teaching the local administrators public management skills. His work took him throughout Taji, Tarmiyah, Sab al Bor and Abu Ghraib.

At formal council meetings Mingus’ role was to observe—he resisted the urge to speak. He answered questions directed to him, but he said in most cases he’d find a way to avoid giving too much information. However, Mingus said post-meeting discussions with the council members did include his observations from the meetings.

*Getting civil and security officials together in Tarmiyah*

“My aim was to teach the council leaders how local meetings could function, not to influence their policies,” he said. “Last summer (2009), the population and local leaders were disappointed when local elections were postponed. A lot of them see elections as the only way to gain legitimacy, and since elections were continually postponed, I was explaining to the leaders all the other components of democracy.”

Mingus’ guided the council leaders in decision-making by asking them the following questions: Is there a consensual decision-making process when you as the chair are running the meeting? Are you listening to people in the community and bringing their thoughts and feelings back to the meetings? Are their views changing the outcome and decisions or recommendations you forward to the provisional government?

“I was trying to teach all the points of democracy to them, not to rely solely on elections because that’s obviously not the only component of democracy,” he said. “One of my main challenges was to teach the council leaders how to run a meeting in a more democratic style when the people are so used to living under a dictatorship.”
Mingus, center, with U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell, left, on CODEL in Sab al Bor April 09

Mingus said a major obstacle is the ongoing struggle between local political systems (i.e. qada and nahiya councils, which are akin to county and township councils) and their tribal counterparts, the Sheikh’s support councils. He said there is not a great distinction between the local councils and the Sheikh’s councils, except that the Sheikh’s councils had responsibility for security issues in the eyes of the U.S. Army, like a neighborhood watch program.

“The reality is that the tribal structures in these fairly rural areas have long been involved in all aspects of governance,” Mingus said. “Local level elections would help straighten out this competition for power by generating legitimacy for the local qada and nahiya councils; only time will tell if they will ever happen as there are continual delays in completing the census, which have delayed local elections.”

The other half of Mingus’ responsibilities was working with public managers (akin to township and county administrators, and local representatives from national departments) to put in place public management principles and processes to better track how they are conducting local government business and running projects, including teaching them basic concepts of strategic planning. Unlike his mute presence at the council meetings, Mingus said he actively engaged in conversations with the public managers, who were often quite knowledgeable and well educated.

“It’s a tough process because local governments don’t have the necessary authority, legitimacy, and budget that they need,” he said. “Trash removal is one example. In Iraq a national ministry still picks up the trash. Much of America’s trash pick-up is the responsibility local government, while many communities have opted for privatized service. It’s a very important step to legitimacy for the national and provincial governments to spread out the budget and responsibility to the local governments.”
Communication was another challenge, particularly because Mingus doesn’t speak Arabic, let alone the Iraqi dialect of the language. He relied on translators to help—green card holders and U.S. citizens assigned to his team by the U.S. State Department.

"They were invaluable to our cause," he said. "Part of the translator's job was to help me avoid looking or doing something stupid. If they saw me doing things that would offend someone and it was important enough, I asked that they pull me aside immediately, or let me know on the ride back to the base, so I wouldn’t make the same mistake the next day."

He said working with the military was great in regards to safety, but that it also made community relations and government-building work more challenging. Whenever Mingus’ group went off base, they would plan to arrive very early to make sure the area was secure and to set up a perimeter—usually that meant arriving with 15-20 soldiers.

“Showing up at a meeting with more military personnel than Iraqis creates the wrong impression,” Mingus said. “We were trying to help them build their government, their sense of responsibility, their sense of ownership, and then we would show up with more Americans than there were Iraqis at many meetings, sending the wrong message even though our security was the goal. It made establishing solid relationships take longer. If military commanders are present before and after meetings, the community questions who really is making the decisions and whether local democracy is being developed or if it's another form of dictatorship.”

Helping the Army better understand its role in the development and reconstruction of local governments was another key task for the reconstruction teams. “The Army is not America's best tool for trying to rebuild a society,” he said. “Sure, the Army has skill sets that can help, but it's not their core mission. The most successful programs in Iraq are run by USAID, which goes in and does a much more grassroots level analysis of what needs to be done, using many more local people to do the job by working through local implementers. The vast majority of the reconstruction dollars, however, have gone to the U.S. Army.”

It was a mixed-bag response Mingus received when he talked with Army commanders about how to improve communication. Mingus believes that one factor significantly prolonging the reconstruction process is that the Army rotates commanders and troops in any area multiple times during their tours of duty. He was embedded with four units over the course of his one year in country.

“It's hard getting anything done within the first three or four months because Iraq has a very relationship-based culture,” Mingus said. “Change isn't going to happen unless the Iraqis get to know you for a long time and place trust in the individuals who are trying to help.”
Despite the problems Iraq still faces, Mingus believes the U.S. has helped the country make significant progress in developing local governance.

“Our reconstruction team has done an excellent job over three years in developing local public managers and we’ve made some good progress in the court systems,” Mingus said. “The provincial governments have also developed a high degree of legitimacy in the minds of the people.”

Physical discomfort was part of the program

Not only did Mingus have to adapt to a foreign culture working in Iraq, he also had to adapt to a harsh work environment.

“I've never worked so hard in my life,” he said. “My average work day was 12-14 hours, 7 days a week. Fridays were our day “off” because we only worked a normal shift of 7-8 hours, and attending internal team and Army meetings rather than leaving base. Friday's were much more flexible and casual.”

Mingus went out on about 100 missions over the course of the year he worked in Iraq, traveling off base 3 to 5 times a week, which was more than most military personnel. Most military personnel provide important support functions and can be on base nearly every day during their deployment.

He said another big adjustment was noise from all the helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles that took off and landed regularly. “It took a couple of weeks to adjust,” he said. “It didn't take long until I could sleep through just about everything except a helicopter going directly over my containerized housing unit (CHU), which was an old two-bedroom trailer with a bathroom in between the bedrooms.”

Working in the desert in a predominately Muslim country was especially challenging during Ramadan, Mingus said, because council meetings are often held in a very small room with poor or no air conditioning with about 25 people packed in behind a closed door for three or more hours.

“I couldn’t drink water in front of those observing Ramadan and I couldn't escape for a moment to down a liter,” he said. “I respected their culture. I've been at my house with no power for a week and it was nothing like those three-hour meetings when the temps hit 118 degrees.”

Back on WMU’s campus, Mingus said he is often asked if he was able to witness firsthand any positive impact of the U.S.'s involvement in Iraq.

“People have asked me if democracy is really taking root in Iraq,” he said. “The country has turned the corner and I think we’re at the point where we’ve done all we can do; the faster we get out the better. And, if I flipped a coin to guess whether Iraq goes to hell fast or holds on to democratic ideals and principles, I’ve seen signs that they will hold on.”

[Image]

[Image]

Dr. Mingus’ webpage
Story by Nate Coe
Fall orientation ends with a day at the beach

An action-packed week of orientation seminars and activities for new international students on campus was capped off September 3 with a field trip to Saugatuck and the shores of Lake Michigan, all hosted by WMU's International Student Orientation and Registration Program.

Juan Tavares, general manager of international enrollment, and Lee Ryder, immigration officer, were on hand to welcome new students at the ISORP table, along with the ISORP leaders pictured below.

Campus tours provided an opportunity to get outdoors and walk around WMU's beautiful campus. The students at left are in front of the University's library and computing center, walking through the Haenicke Garden recently opened in the center of campus. Students below are walking through Miller Plaza, which features a large pool with multiple fountains.
University President John M. Dunn and faculty welcomed all new students at a matriculation ceremony September 8. Miller Auditorium was brilliantly draped with flags from around the world.
The week concluded with a trip to Saugatuck, Mich. on the shores of Lake Michigan, where the students enjoyed a ride on a paddle boat, shopping in Saugatuck's artsy downtown, a picnic lunch and games at the beach.

The new Broncos eagerly gathered for group shots on the front and the back of the boat.
Shopping in downtown Saugatuck offered the opportunity to see local art and to pick up Michigan-unique gifts.

A walk along the beach after lunch was a perfect ending to a first week at WMU!

CLICK HERE FOR MORE ISORP 2010 PHOTOS
Global education translates into international career

Benito Hall, at left with WMU President John M. Dunn, studied on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and speaks three languages, attaining experiences and skills that will serve him well as the international partnerships coordinator for Western Michigan University’s Transnational Education programs.

A May 2010 MBA graduate of WMU’s Haworth College of Business, Hall is a native of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, who now loves snow, cold weather, and being a huge Bronco fan, especially for the football, hockey, basketball and volleyball teams.

His post-secondary academic journey began in the ESL program at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, then he crossed the ocean from his homeland in 1998 to study in the ELS program at Saint Edwards School in Oxford, England.

He returned to the Dominican Republic after completing that program and began working on a bachelor’s degree in business administration at the Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM) in Santo Domingo. His outstanding academic achievements earned him Summa Cum Laude designation and the honor of serving as class valedictorian at graduation.

Unable to arrange to study for a master’s degree in the United States, Hall moved to France to earn a master’s of science in management, with a concentration on financial management, from the University of Bordeaux. Upon returning to his homeland after finishing his first master’s, he completed a postgraduate diploma in university pedagogy and became a part-time faculty member of the business department at PUCMM, teaching undergraduate courses in financial math, financial statements analysis, and financial markets.
In 2008, Hall learned of two opportunities to earn a master’s degree in the U.S.—one at WMU and one at Utah State University. He chose Western and was ushered into the University and the Kalamazoo community in August 2008 through WMU’s International Student Orientation and Registration Program, facilitated by the Haenicke Institute for Global Education.

Being on WMU’s campus offered Hall multiple opportunities to get more involved and to demonstrate his leadership skills on campus. In October 2008, he started working with the Center for English Language and Culture for International Students (CELCIS) as a conversation table leader to provide international students with an opportunity to practice English outside of the classroom in small groups and to encourage them to get involved with campus life. He also became an active member in several campus organizations, including the International Programs Council, as a student representative on the Graduate Student Advisory Committee’s MBA program development subcommittee.

For the 2009-2010 academic year, Hall was selected as an ISORP orientation leader and to lead the piloting & development of the Sophomore and Transfer Student Program for WMU’s Division of Multicultural Affairs.

Hall was hired for his current position at WMU in June 2010. His main responsibilities include advising prospective international applicants regarding WMU programs of study and University requirements, advising current students regarding academic, financial, and other University matters and coordinating with partner institutions and WMU faculty to complete curriculum updates, student housing arrangements, and student registration. Hall’s rich experiences as an international student have well equipped him to welcome and serve WMU’s transnational education students.

Hall is an enthusiastic participant in WMU’s annual International Festival.
2011 STUDY AND INTERN ABROAD FAIR

Noon to 4 p.m.
Wednesday, Oct. 5, 2011
Bernhard Center East Ballroom
Reference experience put to good use for new CELCIS activities coordinator

In just a few short months on the job as the activities coordinator for Western Michigan University’s Center for English Language and Culture for International Students (CELCIS), Franki Hand has learned that new international students have a lot of questions and are eager to know what campus and the local community have to offer.

On an average day, she may give advice on finding a classroom, catching the bus, hiring a daycare service, or finding a good deal on a cell phone to any of the more than 100 students currently enrolled in the University’s English as a Second Language program. When she’s not busy helping students learn their way around, she plans a wide variety of activities to introduce CELCIS students to American and campus culture.

“If you’ve never visited Meijer with someone who just entered our country, it is so interesting to see their reactions to the many varieties of food, such as cookies and potato chips, and giant-size boxes of anything,” Hand said. “This job has made me see commonplace things in very different ways—adjusting the filters that have shaped my perspectives.”

Hand’s former work as a paraprofessional in the reference areas of libraries at the University of Michigan, her alma mater, and at the University of Texas’ Harry Ransom Center, has well prepared Hand for her work at WMU. Because she grew up in Portage, Mich., which is just south of Kalamazoo and WMU’s main campus, her knowledge of the local and regional communities is a wellspring students can tap to learn where to shop, enjoy live entertainment, or to plan a day at the beach.

Her original career plans were to become a biologist, but Hand discovered that degree required more chemistry courses than she was interested in taking. She graduated from the University of Michigan in 2001 with degrees in English and Japanese language, and then accepted a full-time position in the special collections area of the university’s library, where she worked for five years.

Austin, Tex. was her next stop—the Harry Ransom Center—where she spent another five years honing her resource-finding skills for students and faculty of that campus. She said that experience gave her the confidence to work in a position focused on serving the needs of international students.
“If you’re not from Texas and you end up living there, it’s like moving to another country,” said Hand, a graduate of Portage Northern High School. “Public service and helping people find a resource has been my background. I’ve always worked at universities, so I understand the culture and I enjoy working with students.”

As employment opportunities dwindled in Texas for her husband, Randall, the couple decided to move back to Michigan to be closer to their families, making the cross-country trek to relocate in February 2010. While looking for work, Hand came across an opening in WMU’s CELCIS office and was hired in June 2010.

She’s already planned and hosted several activities for CELCIS students over the summer, including a trip to Chicago, apple- and blueberry-picking outings to an area farm, and a visit to Michigan’s Mackinac Island.

“I love fall, and I am very excited about planning activities related to all the holidays,” she said. “We will be carving pumpkins for Halloween and making Christmas cookies in December. I am also planning a shopping trip to the outlet malls in Michigan City.”

Hand also coordinates activities that help new students become part of the campus and local community, which also aids their English language development.

Returning to her hometown has brought Hand a great deal of pleasure, who calls herself “Michigan’s biggest booster.” She is again enjoying having a home garden, which lends well to another of her favorite hobbies—cooking.

“I left a part of myself in Michigan when I moved to Texas,” she said. “I missed the seasonal changes and became very eager to move back. Randall and I talked about how Kalamazoo is such a great community and a resilient place where people can make things happened. We decided to move back, and if we couldn’t find jobs we planned to open a business. We also appreciate that we have all the conveniences of the city, but that we can hop in the car, drive 20 minutes and be out in wooded areas.”

To learn more about WMU’s ESL program, visit the CELCIS website: www.wmich.edu/celcis