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Brown China Initiative

ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

THE CHINA INITIATIVE is an interdisciplinary hub for the study of modern China at Brown University. The initiative's goals are threefold: to produce cutting edge academic research on the Chinese development experience, to apply that research to the resolution of real world societal challenges, and to connect China-focused research efforts to new forms of pedagogy and experiential learning. The Initiative seeks both to better understand China itself and to use the Chinese experience to better understand broader global phenomena in a comparative context.

A person wearing a blue shirt and dark pants, holding a bright red umbrella, stands in a valley. The valley floor is covered in green crops, possibly tea. The surrounding hills are steep and rocky, with patches of green vegetation and some brown, dry-looking areas. The overall scene is a rural, mountainous landscape.

THE CHINA INITIATIVE HAS EMBRACED THEMES CENTRAL TO BROWN UNIVERSITY'S COLLECTIVE MISSION: SUSTAINING LIFE ON EARTH; CREATING PEACEFUL, JUST, AND PROSPEROUS SOCIETIES; USING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE HUMAN LIVES; AND DECIPHERING DISEASE AND IMPROVING POPULATION HEALTH.

Message from the Director

We entered 2014-2015 — the inaugural year of the Brown China Initiative — with ambitious goals. First and foremost, we sought to catalyze a research-focused program that would begin to contribute solutions to the sustainability challenges now so central to the Chinese experience. Such challenges — whether related to environmental quality, rapid urbanization, healthcare availability, technology innovation, economic competitiveness, or social equity — are bearing down on China, but so too are they deepening across the rest of the world, including here in the United States. That reality defines our second goal — to build a program that simultaneously develops insights into China, and uses those insights to better understand the wider world. In this sense, from its very inception, the China Initiative has embraced themes central to Brown University's strategic plan: sustaining life on earth; creating peaceful, just, and prosperous societies; using science and technology to improve human lives; and deciphering disease and improving population health. We are inextricably linked with the Watson Institute's ambition to address the world's great challenges in the areas of development, governance, and security.



Finally, like the Watson Institute and Brown as a whole, we at the China Initiative are committed to the idea that research need not come at the expense of teaching or service. Indeed, from day one, we have sought to prove that when done right, pioneering research, inspirational pedagogy, and dedicated public service are mutually reinforcing and profoundly intertwined.

These are lofty ambitions. All will require years of steady effort and patient fostering to be fully realized. Yet, during this, our first year of the China Initiative, we have demonstrated that through the dedicated efforts of Brown faculty, students, and the tremendously hardworking staff of the Watson Institute, real progress is attainable. In many cases, these individuals have made the extraordinary seem routine. They have worked together to establish a community infused with intellectual creativity, openness to new ideas, and a generous spirit of collaboration. In doing so, they have brought to fruition, even at these very earliest stages of the Brown China Initiative, my greatest hopes as director.

Edward S. Steinfeld
Director, Brown China Initiative
Dean's Professor of China Studies
Professor of Political Science



RESEARCH PROGRAMS

研究项目

The Brown China Initiative has four major areas of research focus: The Public Health Consequences of Environmental Pollutants; Technology Innovation and Global Energy Sustainability; Sustainable Urbanization; and Labor Standards and Equitable Production. All of these efforts involve cross-disciplinary work extending outward from the Watson Institute and into the School of Public Health, the School of Engineering, and departments spanning the social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities disciplines. From there, our efforts extend onward into global networks of scholars, practitioners, and policy makers.

**ALL OF THESE EFFORTS
INVOLVE CROSS-DISCIPLINARY
WORK EXTENDING OUTWARD
FROM THE WATSON INSTITUTE.**

Public Health Consequences of Environmental Pollutants

The China Initiative this year supported the recruitment of Professor Tongzhang Zheng to Brown's School of Public Health from his previous position at Yale. With China Initiative funding, Professor Zheng and faculty colleagues from the School of Public Health and the Watson Institute have begun four China-based empirical studies in collaboration with Chinese government public health agencies. These studies apply sophisticated epidemiologic and biostatistical methods to extensive environmental health data from multiple Chinese cities to quantify the effects of air pollution on morbidity and mortality. The ultimate aim is to generate empirically based findings that will inform environmental policy in China, particularly with regard to how different types of environmental remediation efforts will be sequenced, and which pollution sources will be addressed with highest priority. As with all our research programs, we seek here to understand macro-level problems by delving deeply into their micro-level causes.

In the spirit of the China Initiative's mission, the core research effort here has been coupled with public outreach.

- + In July 2014, Brown professors Tongzhang Zheng, Gregory Wellenius, and Edward Steinfeld held a joint research workshop in Beijing with the Chinese Institute of National Environmental Health Sciences.
- + In April 2015, the China Initiative, in collaboration with the School of Public Health, hosted on Brown's campus the "China Forum on Public Health, Environment, and Public Policy," a two-day meeting between Brown faculty, Chinese public health officials, and Chinese scientists to explore opportunities for collaborative empirical studies and deeper research partnerships.
- + In June 2015, the China Initiative supported a follow on workshop in Xi'an, China, in which Brown School of Public Health faculty members Tongzhang Zheng, Karl Kelsey, Joseph Braun, Cici Bauer, Stephen Buka, and Simin Liu joined colleagues from the Chinese Institute of National Environmental Health Sciences and China's National Cancer Center to provide training in advanced epidemiologic and statistical methods to junior scientists, including those involved in collaborative data studies with Brown.

THE ULTIMATE AIM IS TO GENERATE EMPIRICALLY BASED FINDINGS THAT WILL INFORM ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN CHINA.

Technology Innovation and Global Energy Sustainability

This research program, led by China Initiative director Edward Steinfeld and Watson Institute postdoctoral fellow Jonas Nahm, and now extending into the School of Engineering, examines the role China-based firms are playing in global technology innovation, particularly in the renewable energy domain. This research program involves extensive field work and participant observation in Chinese firms, with the goal of understanding how these firms are innovating, how their behavior is affected by public institutions, and how their interaction with overseas commercial partners drives global technology trajectories. Understanding how these firms learn has important implications for how the cost of sustainable technologies can be driven down and how competitiveness across a wide variety of global economies — including both the United States and China — can be enhanced.



In early 2015, the research effort was bolstered by a two-year, \$1.05 million U.S. Department of Defense grant, which is now being used to support field work, postdoctoral fellow positions, and research fellowships for Brown graduate and undergraduate students. During 2014-2015, the research team made four data collection trips to China, and two additional trips to Europe to conduct comparative research in German and British firms.

Throughout, Brown students have been deeply involved in the effort. This year, paid research positions have been held by Brown undergraduates

Chris (Yichao) Feng, Rebecca Levy, Daniela Flores, and Aoying Huang, and Brown graduate student Moises Costa.

Again in the spirit of the China Initiative, the research effort has been linked to pedagogy and public outreach.

+ In October 2014, the China Initiative sponsored an on-campus visit by Troels Beltoft, former China-based senior executive in the Danish wind turbine firm, Vestas. In addition to delivering a public lecture and working with Brown faculty on joint publications, Beltoft held informal teaching and



THIS RESEARCH PROGRAM EXAMINES THE ROLE CHINA-BASED FIRMS ARE PLAYING IN GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION, PARTICULARLY IN THE RENEWABLE ENERGY DOMAIN.

advisory sessions with Brown undergraduates focused on global technology entrepreneurship and “green tech.”

- + During the 2015 spring semester, Watson postdoc Jonas Nahm brought research directly into the classroom by teaching the undergraduate political science seminar, “The Political Economy of Renewable Energy.”

Here, as in all its research programs, the China Initiative seeks to help scholars accelerate and advance their publication efforts. An important vehicle for this is the focused workshop, a 1-2

day event organized by a Brown researcher, involving outside invited scholars, and structured around the goal of producing research output, whether an edited volume, a special journal issue, a sole-authored book, or a policy “white paper.”

In May 2015, the China Initiative sponsored Jonas Nahm’s workshop “Environmental Governance in China,” which involved academic presenters from the United States, Germany, and China. The papers are now under review as a special issue of *The China Quarterly*.

Sustainable Urbanization

China today is undergoing the largest scale and most rapid process of urbanization in human history. With the transition to city life for hundreds of millions of rural citizens, monumental opportunities have clearly arisen for wealth generation, living standard improvements, and long-term productivity increases. But, with developmental opportunities have come profound governance challenges — challenges spanning everything from the delivery of public infrastructure, healthcare, housing, and education, to the addressing of income disparities, widely perceived social inequity, governmental corruption, and rising demands from social groups for political voice.

Our research program in this area has sought to reposition Chinese urbanization in a comparative context. The Brown China Initiative — working jointly with the Brown India Initiative and Watson Institute Public Policy Program — sponsored the “Comparative Gilded Ages Workshop,” a year-long seminar run by Brown faculty members James Morone, Ashutosh Varshney, and Edward Steinfeld; Brown faculty, graduate students, undergraduates; and invited speakers from outside. The seminar explicitly compares the respective urbanization experiences of contemporary

India, China and the United States in the late 19th century. Brown undergraduate Thawzin Gyi served as the seminar’s rapporteur.

With rapid urbanization in any society comes questions about the fate of those left behind in the countryside. In February 2015, the China Initiative sponsored the two-day research workshop “Recasting the Rural: State, Society and Space in Contemporary China.” Run by Brown postdoctoral fellows Jia-Ching Chen (Department of Sociology) and John Zinda (Institute at Brown for Environment and Society) and focused on producing an edited conference volume, the workshop involved invited presenters from the U.S., Australia, India, and China. The workshop’s first day, devoted entirely to public presentations for the Brown community, was particularly well attended by undergraduates focused on development studies and contemporary China.

In May 2015, the China Initiative sponsored the conference “The Next Generation of Urban China Research,” a two-day event organized by Brown sociologist and leading expert on comparative urbanization Professor John Logan. The conference, involving scholars from both the U.S. and China, represents an extension of Professor Logan’s “Urban China Research Network,” and together with that network seeks to promote research by graduate students and young faculty.



CHINA INITIATIVE DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES

知名学者演讲系列

In connection with its research programs and the Watson Institute's broader agenda across governance, development, and security, the China Initiative during 2014-2015 commenced its distinguished speaker series.

In October 2014, Dr. Gao Jian, vice governor of the China Development Bank – the Chinese government's leading provider of development aid and infrastructure financing both domestically and overseas – delivered a talk titled “The Chinese Approach to Development Aid: The History, Mission, and Challenges of the China Development Bank.”

In November 2014, *New Yorker* journalist Evan Osnos delivered a talk on his book *Age of Ambition: Chasing Fortune, Truth, and Faith in the New China*. The presentation, closely linked to the China Initiative's program on urbanization, came one day after Osnos's *Age of Ambition* received the 2014 National Book Award.

In April 2015, world-renowned Chinese sociologist and marriage equality activist Professor Li Yinhe delivered a lecture on “Same-Sex Marriage Rights in China.” Coming at a time of rapid change worldwide in the area of gender identity and rights, this talk attracted a large campus audience and was livestreamed globally on the internet. Professor Li remained on campus for a week as a China Initiative distinguished fellow, and made additional presentations to undergraduate audiences in Brown's Department of East Asian Studies and the Watson Institute.

**CHINA TODAY IS UNDERGOING THE
LARGEST SCALE AND MOST RAPID
PROCESS OF URBANIZATION IN
HUMAN HISTORY.**



AN IMPORTANT MISSION OF THE
CHINA INITIATIVE IS TO PROVIDE
A NONPARTISAN PLATFORM FOR
COMMUNITY-WIDE DISCUSSION
OF MAJOR GLOBAL EVENTS.

UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCES

本科生研讨会

Brown China Summit 2015

In what will now be an annual springtime event, the China Initiative in April 2015 sponsored the undergraduate student-organized Brown China Summit. This two-day conference seeks to introduce the Brown students and the campus community to thought leaders from contemporary China. Panel discussions at this year's conference focused on social media and the Chinese internet; China-based entrepreneurship and innovation; Chinese educational reform and Sino-foreign educational partnerships.

Strait Talk Brown 2014

The China Initiative in 2014 was a major sponsor of the Strait Talk Symposium, an undergraduate-run weeklong conference that seeks to foster peaceful resolution of Taiwan Straits issues by connecting, educating, and empowering young leaders from Taiwan, Mainland China, and the United States. The 2014 Symposium, held at the Watson Institute, brought together delegates from all the countries involved and engaged in over 35 hours of dialogue sessions, lectures with prominent policy experts, and conflict resolution workshops.

Teach-In on the Hong Kong “Occupy Central” Movement

An important mission of the China Initiative is to provide a nonpartisan platform for community-wide discussion of major global events. In October 2014, the China Initiative convened a “teach in” on the Hong Kong “Occupy Central” Movement. Expert panelists included Brown Professor Robert Lee, Cornell University Professor Eli Friedman, Watson Institute Diplomat in Residence Richard Boucher, Dartmouth Professor David Rezvani, and New York University student Jeffrey Ngo. The extensive discussion involving students from across campus was also livestreamed on the Internet.



CHINA INITIATIVE FACULTY COLLABORATION GRANTS

为教员提供的合作研究基金

Every semester, the China Initiative invites Brown University faculty and researchers to submit proposals of up to \$15,000 to support projects and events aimed at expanding our understanding of Greater China (Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan). Proposals are welcomed from all parts of the University, including the social sciences and humanities, engineering, the sciences, public health, and medicine. Proposals may involve collaborations with partners in Greater China, and the China Initiative is particularly interested in proposals that span multiple disciplines.

In March 2015, the China Initiative awarded its first round of collaboration grants to the following Brown faculty members:

PROJECTS AND EVENTS
ARE AIMED AT EXPANDING
OUR UNDERSTANDING OF
GREATER CHINA.

Matthew Gutmann (Anthropology), Joint development with Nanjing University of Advanced Workshops in Cultural Anthropology

Dore Levy (Comparative Literature), Research project on the *Visual World of the Story of the Stone*

John Logan (Sociology), Organization of doctoral student conference, Urban China Research Network

Rebecca Nedostup (History), Multidisciplinary Project on the *Field of the State in Modern China*

Elena Shih (American Studies), Project on Collaborative Public Art in Southwest China (China-Burma border region)

Wang Li (East Asia Collection, Brown Library System), Workshop for preparation of edited volume on *China's Burgeoning Publishing Industry*.



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