During the four separate occasions I studied in China, I heard the same one opinion from my professors time and time again. They all felt that for the sake of their students’ intellectual growth and future career prospects there should exist an available alternative to the current Chinese educational system. My proposed project for peace will allow for a trial run of just such an alternative educational system, a small liberal arts seminar, and will also provide conferences for teachers and students to learn about liberal arts education and its potential impact in China. This project will be an excellent test for future educational alternatives and a significant achievement for greater peace within China.

Currently, the Chinese educational system relies heavily on tests and test taking. In general, the success of a student depends on how well he or she preforms on the college entrance exam. This reliance on test taking establishes a educational system which does not teach students to think critically or creatively. As China emerges onto the world stage as a leader in business and world politics, this ability to think in different ways will become all the more necessary.

Liberal arts education encourages students to think critically and creatively, and these are traits that will help create a better world for several reasons. First, on an business level, it will help students find jobs. Modern day businesses crave employees who have a creative capacity to think “outside the box.” Second, on a much larger level, liberal arts education will help affect peaceful change within greater Chinese society. Liberal arts has the power to do this because of the values it inherently bestows upon students and teachers. For individuals to think critically and creatively, they must create an environment of understanding and peace around them. Therefore, once a individual has grown to appreciate the ability to think critically, they will in turn create a space of peace and understanding around them. This will establish a society more willing to discuss sensitive topics and also move the country away from the rigid test taking system it currently utilizes.

The project will utilize my three year relationship with Qingdao University in Qingdao, Shandong Province, China, as well as my institution’s, Bard College's, fifteen year connection with the
school. The seminar will be held using the University’s facilities and faculty. It will consist of 10-15 students who plan to spend their one month summer recess living at the University. The class will meet three times a week during this time. The professor for the class will be one of three who have expressed interest in teaching a liberal arts class.\(^1\) These teachers are captivated by liberal arts and have years of experience teaching, any one of them will make an excellent professor.

Which ever professor ultimately leads the class, he or she will also design the curriculum with my assistance. Chinese students have a unique history and perspective, knowledge of how to motivate them to think in new ways will be foreign to a typical Western curriculum, therefore the curriculum must be adjusted by a liberal Chinese teacher. This aside, the liberal arts structure which depends on small class size and the horizontal exchange of knowledge will certainly be used.

The project will also host weekly conferences to discuss liberal arts in China. Interested faculty and students will attend. The conference will be held for 6 to 8 weeks with initial gatherings taking place before the start of the seminar. The conference will bring in speakers to engage in a dialogue that will address current problems and future solutions within the Chinese educational system. Ultimately, individuals who attend the conferences, along with those who participate in the seminar, will act as the legacy of this program, perpetuating the influence of liberal arts throughout larger Chinese society.

Leading and organizing the weekly conferences, while watching over the success and stability of the classroom, money matters, and organizational issues will be my responsibility during the program. I will devote 100% of my time to the project and ensure the greatest outcome possible.

This project for peace should be seen as foreign tool that will facilitate the internal betterment of the Chinese educational system by Chinese themselves. The creation of a one month liberal arts seminar and weekly conferences to discuss liberal arts education will set the foundation for liberal arts to take root in China. It is my aspiration that this program will help reform the larger Chinese educational system and create a more peaceful social environment for the country. Thank you.

\(^1\) Wang Jinsheng (Associate Professor Qingdao University), Liu Chen (Lecturer QU), Liu Qun (Associate Professor QU).