STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Initiative for U.S.-China Dialogue on Global Issues

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
ABOUT THE INITIATIVE
Founded in 2016, the Georgetown Initiative for U.S.-China Dialogue on Global Issues is a university platform for research, teaching, and dialogue among American and Chinese leaders from the public sector, business, society, and the academy. The initiative is premised on the view that despite inevitable national differences, there remains considerable room for the cultivation of shared U.S. and Chinese approaches to global issues, including peace and security, business and trade, climate change, global health, and social development.

ABOUT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
Established in 1789, Georgetown is the oldest Catholic and Jesuit university in the United States. One of the world’s leading academic and research institutions, Georgetown enrolls more than 18,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students across nine schools. A global institution, Georgetown provides a unique educational experience that prepares the next generation of global citizens to lead and make a difference in the world. The university’s educational mission and international partnerships seek to advance the global common good.
Inaugurated in September 2016, the U.S.-China Student Fellows program features a cohort of 10 to 12 young leaders selected from top U.S. and Chinese colleges and universities. Over the course of an academic year, fellows participate in dialogue through in-person meetings, a web-based platform, and networking opportunities.

Led by Managing Director Dennis Wilder, the program design emphasizes vigorous, substantive discussions both among the fellows and with renowned scholars and prominent policymakers, as well as the deep bonds formed among the Chinese and U.S. fellows in the program.

Amidst increasing geopolitical tensions, the program has provided a platform for dialogue between future leaders from the two countries, challenging students to reflect and debate on values, cultures, and critical global issues not only from their own stances, but also from perspectives of the other country.

**ZHANG YUQIAN**  
*Tsinghua University*  
*2016-2017 U.S.-China Student Fellow*

We came in with a lot of stereotypes and unwarranted assumptions, poised to initiate strikes or defend our ground. More often than not we attack and defend using conjecture and hasty generalizations, rather than facts, figures, and logic... When there is understanding, there is trust; when there is trust, the world stands as one.

**JESSIE DALMAN**  
*Stanford University*  
*2017-2018 U.S.-China Student Fellow*

This year showed me that familiarity doesn’t diminish complexity. These lessons subsequently prepared me to better engage with the ambassadors, trade ministers, and other leaders that we met with by enabling me to contextualize their opinions more broadly rather than trying to reconcile their perspectives with my own preconceived conclusions.
THE CRITICAL ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Media and communications technology are a vital way to maintain U.S.-China dialogue, even as geopolitical rivalry intensifies.

Student Fellow Clay Garner once worked as an assistant host on the Beijing TV talk show *Beijingke*, which sought to promote cross-cultural engagement. The experience left a lasting impression. “It was a remarkable opportunity to learn about Chinese media as an industry participant, and to get a deeper sense of the very different technological, political, and cultural forces that inform public attitudes in China,” says Garner.

As an East Asian Studies major at Stanford University, Garner immersed himself in the study of Chinese history, politics, and language. In the process, he grew more aware of the deep challenges facing U.S.-China relations, but also of commonalities of aspiration, especially among young people eager to enter the workforce and make a positive difference in their societies.

As a member of the 2016-17 U.S.-China Dialogue Student Fellows cohort, Garner relished the opportunity for more intense interaction with students from China and the United States, in person and online. The two fellows meetings, in Washington, DC, and Beijing, not only allowed him to connect with policy practitioners and students, but also to explore the complex links between the media, technology, and policy in both countries. “The visits and briefings with senior government officials and experts from the global business and media industry helped me to understand the critical importance of bilateral communications,” Garner maintains.

Upon graduating from Stanford in 2017, Garner returned to China for a year to study global affairs at Tsinghua University on a prestigious Schwarzman Scholarship. Now back in America, he serves as deputy chief of staff to the mayor of San Jose—America’s tenth largest city.

Clay’s academic background, deep experience with China, and professional trajectory position him well to understand the challenges of U.S.-China engagement present and future. “Throughout my life, I want to be an advocate for constructive dialogue in the bilateral relationship. Americans and Chinese must work together to solve the most pressing challenges of the twenty-first century.”
Selected from a highly competitive process, the fellows come from a wide range of disciplines, including international relations, journalism, environmental science, mathematics, engineering, and psychiatry, each contributing to the dynamic dialogues both in-person and online throughout and beyond the year of their participation in the program.

“WANG YUNXIN
Beijing Foreign Studies University
2017-2018 U.S.-China Student Fellow

In this simulation, it was a lot of fun to take a different perspective to look at things. I was on the United States side in the third simulation, and it was really meaningful for me to take their perspective and understand their values in order to learn their way of doing things in the global atmosphere.

“FAN CHANG
Tsinghua University
2018-2019 U.S.-China Student Fellow

I’ve engaged in countless discussions about U.S.-China relations, but this is the most frank, open, and widely-ranged one. Interactions among fellows are not only during the two-week intensive discussions and visiting, but also in the WeChat group, on Facebook, and through our monthly email updates.

“AARON BAUM
Georgetown University
2018-2019 U.S.-China Student Fellow

You can’t teach somebody to think differently about others like you can teach them about politics or economics. But it is exactly the lack of empathy that is causing discussions about these more objective issues to fall apart.”
BUILDING TRUST VIA COMMUNICATION

Effective communication among people from different countries and cultural backgrounds has become an essential tool to build relationships and dissolve mistrust at the personal, societal, and international levels in the era of globalization.

Having attended schools in three continents, Student Fellow Ruolin Zhao has always had a keen interest in international affairs. Witnessing distrust rooted from miscommunication and misunderstanding firsthand has inspired her passion for dialogue among cultures.

An international political economy major in Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service, Zhao was exposed to a wide range of topics and global issues, which reinforced her interest in cross-cultural communication. “From doing business overseas to conducting diplomatic missions, cross-cultural communication is about addressing divergent priorities, values, and habitual ways of thinking, avoiding unnecessary animosity or suspicion,” shared Zhao.

From briefings with senior government officials and diplomats in the United States and China, to small-group discussions with program faculty and fellows both in person and online, participation in the fellows program has deepened Zhao’s interest in the future of bilateral ties. Her experience leading the “U.S. team” made up of all Chinese students in a simulation of a North Korea nuclear crisis helped her to better understand American perspectives on security issues. “Understanding the situation from the other side helps to dismiss mistrust,” said Zhao. “In the end, both countries should take advantage of their own unique historical, geographical, economic, and cultural ties with other parts of the world in order to collectively deliver a solution to the most challenging global issues.”

Zhao is currently working for a Chinese artificial intelligence company in Beijing on international business development. Previously, she worked for UNESCO in Paris, developing projects and initiatives on digital transformation and technical training for African member states. Combining her interests in emerging technology and international affairs, in the future she hopes to apply her knowledge and cross-cultural communication skills to maximize the benefits of technology through investment and support from both the private sector and international organizations.
The annual program begins with the first in-person meeting held each September in Washington, DC. Fellows gather at Georgetown University for a five-day immersion experience, filled with visits, briefings, group discussions, and social events. Previous cohorts have enjoyed opportunities to visit the White House, the Chinese Embassy, U.S. Department of State, the Brookings Institution, and U.S.-China Business Council. They’ve had meetings with U.S. and Chinese senior officials including National Security Council Directors Ryan Hass and Matthew Pottinger, Chinese Ambassador Cui Tiankai, and Rick Waters, director of the office of Chinese and Mongolian affairs at the U.S. State Department. Between the visits, fellows are engaged in group discussions, roundtables with experts from Georgetown and other institutions, and social outings with Georgetown students.
STORYTELLING ON A GLOBAL SCALE

Since China’s reform and opening up in 1979, the country has seen an unprecedented economic and social transformation. Different sections of the country have developed at dizzying speeds while others have remained relatively rural and impoverished. This unique situation makes understanding China’s trajectory a complex undertaking.

Student Fellow Chang Fan grew up in a traditional civil servant family from a small town in the middle of China, and she attended Tsinghua University in Beijing, one of the country’s most prestigious and international higher education institutions. Her studies and her internships with Xinhua News Agency and the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy nurtured her aspiration to bring a better understanding of China to her international peers.

Fan switched her major from law to international relations so she could build a better understanding of China’s interactions across the globe. During her undergraduate years, she secured a Jean Monnet Scholarship to study abroad at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. She also attended the Forum for American-Chinese Exchange at Stanford University. “By enriching myself with insights on China in conversation and contact with people from all over the world,” she says, “I gradually learned how to tell the story of China on a global scale by combining my experience of rural China with global governance.”

As a member of the 2018-2019 student fellows cohort, Fan gained her deepest insights into the U.S.-China relationship by working closely with her fellows. She was able to take away a new understanding of the U.S. perspective on divisive international issues, while sharing her own life experiences with her peers. Fan reflected, “I am always willing to share opinions on U.S.-China relations from the perspective of people of my hometown, where international news is less accessible, and people barely know about the United States. Also, I highly appreciate the frank, open, and widely ranged discussions among the fellows, which have enabled me to understand the perspectives of Americans.”

Following her graduation from Tsinghua University in 2019, Fan took a position as a business analyst with the China Market Research Group, a consulting firm in Shanghai. After gaining some real-world job experience, she plans to pursue a graduate degree in the United States.
Highlights in Beijing

The fellows reconvene in Beijing the following May for their second in-person meeting, where they have a chance to hear presentations and engage in dialogue with a range of scholars, officials, professionals, and peer students from various Chinese institutions. Past visits include briefings at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, roundtables with panels of diplomats at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and meetings at U.S. and Chinese organizations such as the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center and the American Chamber of Commerce China.
AN INTERNATIONAL LENS

As China grows further into its role as a global power, understanding its influence across the developed world will be critically important for U.S. policymakers and the wider public.

Before joining the fellows program, Student Fellow Ivan Solomon Jr., a local of Wilmington, North Carolina, spent a year studying abroad in Rabat, Morocco. His interest in Arabic grew alongside the rising Islamophobia in the run-up to the 2016 election. Recognizing the similarities between anti-Muslim and anti-Black discrimination, he applied for the Boren Scholarship to explore these dynamics through an international lens. However, his research with Amnesty International quickly revealed a more complex reality.

As an international relations and Middle Eastern studies double major at Pomona College in California, he increasingly turned his attention to China. It turned out that many Moroccans were doing the same. While researching Moroccan attitudes towards migrants, he found that West Africans—the focus of the study—and Chinese immigrants were similarly viewed negatively as economic opportunists. The sentiments toward the latter group came as a surprise, especially considering that Korean culture was widely appreciated among Moroccan youth. To better understand these nuances, he participated in the U.S. Congress-ROK National Assembly Exchange Program and the Georgetown U.S.-China Student Fellows Program.

During the two in-person meetings in Washington, DC, and Beijing, Solomon learned more about China’s rising role on the global stage and its complicated relationships with emerging African economies. In addition to the academic debates and stately meetings, the program provided the same opportunities for cultural exchange that had led him to Morocco. Encouraged by the warmth of the other program participants, he embarked on a one-week solo trip to Nanjing and Hangzhou following the scheduled programming. The friendships he built within the cohort and during his travel will certainly keep him engaged with China on a personal and academic level for years to come.

Solomon was nominated to speak at his college commencement, and following his graduation from Pomona College in 2019 he returned to Rabat, Morocco, to serve as a Fulbright English teaching assistant. In the future, he plans to pursue a career in diplomacy, where he will use his experience in the program to encourage cooperation and exchange in the international community.
Throughout the year, fellows continue their dialogue on social media and through contributions to a curated blog with their thoughts and observations on current issues in the U.S.-China relationship.

While the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 imposed challenges for travel and in-person meetings, the initiative continues to create new ways to engage the fellows in Zoom meetings and digital webinars.

**U.S.-China Economic Decoupling**

*Considering the current state of U.S.-China economic relations, do you think the United States and China will go through economic decoupling?*

“In spite of economic leadership and dependence in high-tech, both countries are each other’s top consumer markets. To the United States, China is not only a giant supplier, but also a huge middle-class market with rising purchasing power for a full spectrum of goods. Once this market is lost during a decoupling, Europe would be happy to take over, and the recovery cost for United States would be huge. The world economy is no longer a bilateral zero-sum game.”

Yunfei Dai, New York University Shanghai 2019-2020 U.S.-China Student Fellow

“China is no longer the lowest-cost country for production, and labor-intensive manufacturing will likely move to Southeast Asia and countries like Mexico. ... COVID-19 has certainly also brought more political attention to economic vulnerabilities and the need for moving production closer to home. ... We will likely see accelerated diversification in pharmaceuticals and the semiconductor industry. However, complete economic bifurcation is unfeasible.”

Cathy Sun, Harvard University 2019-2020 U.S.-China Student Fellow

**Social Media and International Relations**

*How has the changing social media landscape affected international relations, especially the U.S.-China relationship?*

“How do we maintain cooperation on global issues of common concern in a time when the U.S.-China relationship is increasingly defined by a competition for influence?*

“Artificial intelligence’s inherently competitive nature combined with its propensity for transnational collaboration will force the United States and China to cooperate if they want to remain artificial intelligence superpowers. ... By simply focusing on developing useful, innovative technology for their own populations, each country will be forced to maintain cooperation on global issues.”

Lakshmi Iyengar, Yale University 2018-2019 U.S.-China Student Fellow

“Rapid technological innovation and its implementation is something that people in our generation are the most capable of noticing and able to act on. Innovation is not merely a measure of instrumentality; it is the engine by which we propel our lives forward. The youth of China and the United States are uniquely situated to engage in this milieu and are best capable of adapting to challenges and disruptions.”

Yamillet Payano, American University 2019-2020 U.S.-China Student Fellow

**Competition and Cooperation in U.S.-China Relations**

*How do we maintain cooperation on global issues of common concern in a time when the U.S.-China relationship is increasingly defined by a competition for influence?*

“The United States is and ought to be concerned about China’s rise. But the response to that concern should not be rejection of what makes America a country that ought to be emulated. We should embrace free trade, not reject it. We should be excited for high-tech competition, not attempt to destroy it. ... Let’s instead re-invest in our own capabilities and see the China challenge as a welcome step in our continual efforts to improve our institutions and ourselves.”

Aaron Baum, Georgetown University 2018-2019 U.S.-China Student Fellow

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For the full-length blogs visit the U.S.-China initiative website at uschinadialogue.georgetown.edu.
ADVOCATING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Although China and the United States face mounting political and economic tensions, environmental sustainability remains a key sector for deeper cooperation in the fight against climate change.

During her time as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania, Student Fellow Cynthia Wang spent a summer in Beijing interning for the Beijing Engineering Innovation Center, where she learned about environmental engineering, clean technology, and environmental policy in China. “I believe it is important to recognize the efforts of emerging markets in climate change,” she says. “Rapid population and economic growth places these countries in a position where they are both vulnerable to the effects of climate change and contribute greatly to emissions; they are tackling the most difficult question of how to best adapt to and mitigate climate change while still balancing continued development.”

As an environmental studies and political science double major, Wang dedicated her time to better understanding the intersection of diplomacy and sustainable development. She was active in various environment-related student organizations and conferences, and she was a research assistant on a project concerned with how border infrastructures and institutions reflect transboundary tensions and relations.

As a member of the 2017-2018 student fellows cohort, Wang gained a better understanding of the cultural factors in China that affect the country’s approach to environmental protection and sustainable development. “Hearing from both Chinese and American decision-makers, as well as engaging in meaningful dialogue with my diverse cohort, made it possible for me to develop a more holistic understanding of the current challenges facing the U.S.-China relationship,” she recalled. “But every challenge brings opportunity, and this experience helped me better situate China’s sustainable development goals within its other determinations.”

Following her graduation from the University of Pennsylvania in 2018, Wang returned to Beijing as a Princeton in Asia Fellow with the National Resources Defense Council for two years. In 2020 she finished up a summer internship with the Climate and Energy Project, a state-level policy nonprofit, and is pursuing her Master of Science degree in climate change, management, and finance at Imperial College Business School in London. Her drive to promote diplomacy, cross-sectoral collaboration, and sustainable development have positioned her to become a leading voice in the fight against climate change and to serve as a strong link for positive U.S.-China relations. According to Wang, “Climate is not a zero-sum game. Everyone is affected by it, albeit differently, making it the perfect stage for joint action at a time when few things seem mutually agreeable. We should take the climate crisis as an opportunity to continue fostering cross-national ties in order to establish a foundation for cooperation, while simultaneously preserving a sustainable future for generations to come.”
A GLOBAL CITIZEN

What is it like to be a global citizen, traveling and studying on four continents of the world? What impact does such experience have on one’s views of the changing international system?

2019-2020 Student Fellow Jiaqiao Xiang is passionate about learning the world and sharing Chinese perspectives. Coming from a small town in Anhui province, China, Xiang attended New York University (NYU) Shanghai and has studied through scholarships at Tel Aviv University in Israel, Duke-Kunshan University, NYU Washington DC, and Semester at Sea (SAS), which brought him to 11 countries while sailing with like-minded young leaders from around the world. Facing the stereotypes of Chinese culture during the SAS, Xiang decided to avoid direct confrontation. Instead, he showed his classmates around various cities in China and helped them to gain a better standing of China to break barriers and stereotypes among cultures. “The student fellows program reminds me of my SAS experience. We are lucky to have visited Washington, DC, and hopefully next year we will meet again in Beijing when the pandemic is over. Nothing can be better than a deep dive into the center of politics in both countries to gain firsthand experience.”

A finance major with math and social science double minors who is interested in international affairs, Xiang finds himself uniquely positioned to understand and find solutions for global issues, such as sustainable development. While interning at the Woodrow Wilson Center’s China Environment Forum during his junior year, he published several essays on waste management and wrote proposals regarding the Belt and Road Initiative.

Xiang’s truly global perspective and multidisciplinary background made him a valuable and thoughtful contributor in his student fellow group. During visits at the U.S. Department of State and the Chinese Embassy, Xiang raised questions on key issues regarding environment protection as well as Huawei and 5G. This helped the student fellows get a firsthand experience in conversations with policymakers and experts. “In today’s world under stress, the student fellows program offers a rare and valuable platform for students from the two countries to exchange thoughts and discuss tough issues. I am glad to contribute to the program with my own perspective. Consensus is hard to reach, but at least we developed a better mutual understanding,” said Xiang.

Following graduation from NYU Shanghai in spring 2020, Xiang continues his graduate study at Tsinghua University in the prestigious Schwarzman Scholars Program, along with two other U.S.-China Student Fellow alumni: John Rindone (Georgetown University, 2019-2020 U.S.-China Student Fellow) and Danny Li (Dartmouth College, 2017-2018 U.S.-China Student Fellow).

Still exploring different opportunities at Tsinghua, in the future Xiang hopes to pursue an international career in a wider global context.
### Student Engagement By the Numbers

- **43 TOTAL FELLOWS**
- **23 INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED**
- **4 SCHWARZMAN SCHOLARS**
- **3 FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIPS**
- **3 YENCHING ACADEMY SCHOLARS**

### Schools Represented in the Student Fellows Program

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### Alumni

Though only in its fourth year, the program has produced four Schwarzman Scholars and three Fulbright scholarship recipients; three fellows were selected as Yenching Academy Scholars. The program has served as a springboard to help students follow their interests and launch their careers with a focus on U.S.-China relations in global affairs.
China Study Tour

Since 2017 the initiative has coordinated an annual China study tour for Georgetown graduate students. Over ten days, Managing Director Dennis Wilder accompanies ten students to site visits with national and local government officials and leaders from business, society, and the academy.

The program, organized in cooperation with the Hong Kong-based China-United States Exchange Foundation (CUSEF), is designed to give students without strong backgrounds in Chinese studies an opportunity to learn about the country through site visits and dialogue with a range of partners.

BRODY WEINRICH (G’20)
Study Tour 2019

Guiyang represents a grand vision for one of China's poorer, more rural provinces and an ambitious project which could help millions of Chinese citizens. Furthermore, touring the big data exhibition center left my jaw dropped, as I had little prior knowledge of big data. Learning not only about big data's possibilities but also the rationale for trying to make Guiyang a big data capital proved fascinating.
EMMA RIDINGS (G’18)
Study Tour 2018

As a first-time visitor to China, this trip served as a deep dive into U.S.-China relations, allowing me to experience what was essentially a crash course on topics such as Taiwan, U.S.-China trade relations, and the ever-evolving state of U.S.-China political affairs.

DAVID MYUNG (G’19)
Study Tour 2018

Seeing the amount of goodwill between Chinese and American students, businesspeople, and even foreign policy wonks gives me hope that there will be ways to make the relationship endearing and mutually beneficial.

PETER LEE (G’20)
Study Tour 2019

Considering the U.S. trade war with China, Huawei was an amazing choice to include in our trip. Specifically, I was excited to engage with Huawei’s Public Policy Team and how they perceived the United States’ constant criticisms towards them.
Highlights of Past Visits

Study tour visits and dialogues to date have included the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, China’s Central Military Commission, National Development and Reform Commission, Baidu Corporation, Alibaba Group, Huawei Technologies, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center, and Xiamen University, among others.

TOP
The Georgetown student delegation visited the Chinese Military Museum in Beijing during their study tour (June 2018).

BOTTOM
Study tour participants learn folk dance from locals in Guizhou Province, China (June 2019).
ABOVE
A Georgetown study tour delegation visited the National Development Reform Commission (June 2019).

TOP LEFT
Students visited the headquarter of the Alibaba Corporation (June 2017).

MIDDLE LEFT
Georgetown students toured the Zbijin Cave in Guizhou during their China Study Tour trip (June 2019).

BOTTOM LEFT
The Georgetown student delegates held discussion with experts at the Shanghai Institute of International Studies (June 2018).
Other Opportunities

U.S.-CHINA STUDENT CHALLENGE

In the context of increasing geopolitical tensions between the United States and China, the initiative launched the U.S.-China Student Challenge in September 2020 to identify creative ways to reset the U.S.-China relationship at a turbulent, historic juncture. Teams made up of four undergraduates from U.S. and Chinese institutions competed to develop the best ideas to address critical issues and reset the relationship between the United States and China. After receiving 26 submissions from teams involving over 100 undergraduate students, in February 2021 the initiative announced the two winning teams, comprised of students from Duke University, Duke Kunshan University, Georgetown University, Zhengzhou University, and Communication University of China.

One of the winning teams explored how cooperation in the space sector, utilizing existing commercial technologies, represents a promising opportunity for peaceful collaboration on scientific projects that can improve overall bilateral ties. The other winning team proposed the United States and China should reinstate the “sportsmanship approach” and create a framework that will enable both sides to solidify communication, cooperate on shared interests, and align expectations on areas where interests diverge.

Explore the eight finalist student challenge proposals on the U.S.-China initiative website at uschinadialogue.georgetown.edu.
Through in-person events and online dialogue, the initiative engages students in discussions in the wider context of the U.S.-China relationship. The initiative also collaborates with student groups in bringing prominent speakers to campus. In 2018, with the support of the initiative, a group of Chinese undergraduate students invited venture capitalist Kai-Fu Lee for a talk at Georgetown. The event drew nearly 500 people from the Washington, DC, area.

ABOVE
Three of China’s top “U.S. watchers” participated in a public dialogue on the trajectory of U.S.-China relations (April 2019).

TOP LEFT
Ryan Hass, a Brookings Institution fellow and former director for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia at the National Security Council, spoke as part of the Initiative’s “China’s New Era” lecture series (April 2018).

MIDDLE LEFT
The initiative hosted Kishore Mahbubani, a leading Singaporean scholar, for a book talk (October 2018).

BOTTOM LEFT
Kai-Fu Lee discussed artificial intelligence, China, and a new world order (November 2018).