

University Scholars Leadership Symposium 2011

Symposium Report and Scholar Reflections

By Carolyn Gao, Christina Hang, Garen Kwan, Hoang Thanh Tung and Melisa Kaslan

ABSTRACT

This document is a compilation of the reflections and thoughts of the scholars that attended the Symposium organized by Humanitarian Affairs in Pattaya, Thailand from the 1st of August 2011 to the 7th of August 2011.

Table of Contents

Heal the World, Make It a Better Place by Carolyn Gao	3
A Day at an Orphanage by Christina Hang	7
A Refreshing Experience that Awakened Me by Garen Kwan	9
Amazing, Exciting, Attractive by Hoang Thanh Tung	11
My Experience Being in a Prison in Pattaya by Melisa Kaslan	14

Heal the World, Make It a Better Place

By Carolyn Gao Yating,
Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, Year 4

This 2nd University Scholars Leadership Symposium was a touching and an enriching experience for me. The program was well organized and went deep into each site of global issues. It consisted of workshops, group discussions, site visits and networking sessions with outstanding humanitarian leaders from across the globe.



Through all these days' symposium, one of the most memorable experiences was the learning journey with the less fortunate children. Our group was assigned to visit women prison near Pattaya, Thailand. Before we went there, I was quite afraid as the common image of prison in my mind was violent, scary and miserable. However, it was far beyond my imagination when we went there. The phenomenon was very friendly and warm with the smiling face on each of the people there.



Figure 1 Making Pastries at the Girls Home

We went to two workshops in the women prison, which were basket making and cookies making. They were very skilled and patient to teach us how to make the baskets and cookies step by step. Although there was language barrier between us, we still understand each other quite well by eye-contact and body language.

We worked together very well and finally we made a very nice basket and a big piece of cookies.

This learning journey was quite unique and unforgettable. Through this experience I have gained several insights of the people with less fortunate situation.

First of all, they are not the people that we should be afraid of or think lower of. Although they made some mistakes in the past due to the wrong environment or lack of education, they can still contribute to the society if given a second chance. Hence the society should be more tolerant and give more attention to them instead of purposely ignore this group of people.

Secondly, the environment there was just like a high school with restrict boundary. They all love each other with friendship and kind heart, and the teachers love them too. They try to provide a warm environment so that each of them could learn from the past and grow up as a perspective youth.

Thirdly, the prison doesn't only tell them what should not be done, but on the other way empowers them and equips them with the necessary living skills, such as making basket and cookies. This gives them a sense of value and hope within themselves that they can do something to change their lives.

Last but not least, they also set up micro finance by selling their handicrafts and cookies, as shown in the picture below. This teaches them how to fish instead of just giving them fish, which is the practical way of sustainable development.



Figure 2 The girls selling the pastries they had made.

Apart from the lessons that I learned from the journey with the unfortunate children, I had a deeper insights into the humanitarian work as shown in the following:

Firstly, huge humanitarian works are needed throughout the world. There are many children who don't have shelters to sleep or don't have enough food to eat. From my own experience of volunteering work in Uganda, Africa, I realized how poor the children are educated and how low the hygiene systems are there.

The following table lists the problems that are in great needs and the possible solutions to them.

Problems	Solutions	Humanitarian Organization
Food	Educate the local children	Sunrise Foundation
Hygiene System	Build a community and bonding for them	Father Ray Foundation
Health Care	Bring the public's attention through media or website	Sustainable Development

Furthermore, I understand the importance of Taking Action. During this conference, everyone is discussing about the poor and how to help them, but it is those who act upon their words that are true leaders. I was inspired by an outstanding delegate of 1st USL named Terry Seminara from Montreal Canada. She immediately established a Humanitarian Affairs Chapter at Concordia University right after her returned from the symposium in Year 2010. This is the strength of taking action. Sometimes we just complain or merely expect the world to change. However, this is not help in the real case. What we should do is to use the basic humanitarian knowledge to help and do something for them. So we should ask ourselves, are we ready to adjust the broken sails?

Last but not least, the network and the friendship build between our delegates are valuable for all of us. We understand the culture difference and learn to cooperate with each other efficiently. The following picture shows some members from my group, the countries that the delegates come from (the left to right) are: Philips, Malaysia, South Africa, Singapore, Korean, Australia and Bangladesh. As a future leader, we understand how important the global cooperation is, especially dealing with the humanitarian issue across the globe. I truly cherish the friendship and hope it will last long.



Figure 3 With friends from the Symposium

To end this report, I would like to address the song that touches me the most during the symposium. It is from Michael Jackson, We are the world.

Together, We CAN!

We are the World

There comes a time
When we head a certain call
When the world must come together as one
There are people dying
And it's time to lend a hand to life
The greatest gift of all

We can't go on
Pretending day by day
That someone, somewhere will soon make a change
We are all a part of
God's great big family
And the truth, you know love is all we need

We are the world
We are the children
We are the ones who make a brighter day
So let's start giving
There's a choice we're making
We're saving our own lives
It's true we'll make a better day
Just you and me

A Day at an Orphanage

By Christina Hang Tianyu



Figure 4 Participants who went to the orphanage with me.

The 2nd University Scholars Leadership Symposium is held in Pattaya, Thailand from 1 August to 7 August. The theme of this year is Power of Dreams. About 350 university scholars from 37 countries came to the symposium and we are divided into 10 groups to work together in all kinds of events, e.g. community service event, group discussion, presentation and show buzz.

The symposium is really an eye-opening and meaningful experience for me. I learned a lot about humanitarian affairs through listening to the speech given by some leaders of several NGOs from all over the world. From these presentations, I know more about the current humanitarian affairs in the world, such as discrimination, human trafficking, education problems and wars. I start to think proactively and critically about those issues and feel that I am responsible to change the world as one of the university scholars. I believe as long as we have dreams and we work hard together to achieve our goals, we can change the world.

During the symposium, I spent one day with my group members going to a community service event in Pattaya Orphanage. Thirty of us took care of three groups of children in the orphanage from eight months to pre-school age. We assisted the staff in orphanage to feed the children and play with them. Although some of the children are too young to express their thoughts, we can tell from their lovely smile that they really enjoyed the time with us and our effort brought happiness to them. The



key lesson I learned from this experience is that no matter what language we speak, no matter what culture background we come from, people will feel and appreciate our effort if we have love in our hearts. Communication barriers can be overcome as long as we have love and dreams.

The symposium gives me an opportunity to meet talents from the globe. I enjoyed the seven days of working, discussing and playing with them. We shared different cultures, argued about various humanitarian issues, worked collaboratively on presentations and show buzz. We not only know more about different languages and cultures, but also built close friendship with people from all over the world. Furthermore, my teamwork spirit and communication skills are also strengthened through the experience.



Figure 5 Cheers to a job well done!

A Refreshing Experience that Awakened Me

By Garen Kwan Yue Chau,
Physics and Applied Physics, Year 4



Figure 6 Baking with the girls.

I am thankful for having been given the chance to attend the symposium as it has changed the lenses through which I see the world. I am generally interested in world affairs and human issues, but having been to the symposium, my awareness of global issues and my capacity to feel for these issues have grown.

The symposium featured guest speakers who were involved in different fields of work, but all dealing with the issue of raising the people that they worked with out of their current unhappy condition. Standing the most clearly in my mind were an orphanage director Ms Geraldine Cox, the creator of the Super30 program in India, Mr Anand Kumar and a Singaporean working to improve the situation for the common person in Afghanistan, Mr Hakim. The love that they displayed for the people in their community and their willingness to take up the responsibilities as a global citizen has increased the limits of my personal horizons and increased my resolve to make a visible change in the world.

I went to the symposium with the mindset that technology and particularly the work that I wished to embark on would aid in the bigger picture of global inequality and to help narrow the gap that divides the haves and the have-nots. I believed that finding a source of cheap abundant energy would aid in reducing the disparity and unhappiness that I saw in the world.

Through discussions with new-found friends and the viewpoints of the speakers, my vision of the use of technology has changed and I now think that technology in itself does not hold the final solution. But instead, all the work and all the sacrifices that the other people are making in other arenas contribute as much, if not more towards global stability.

In my opinion, the platform was a good opportunity for the exchange of ideas and meeting of minds from different parts of the world that was not harnessed to its full potential by the organizers. Many people I spoke to agreed that a better way to group the participants would be according to their interests so that the participants could engage in discussions and perhaps even embark on projects together.

Still, the symposium was useful for me as it allowed me to connect my work with the issues of the world. The pursuit of science in itself, though fulfilling, disconnects the individual from other issues of the world. As it is, people agree that progress in the pursuit of science and technology has far outpaced the progress made in society and that has brought about negative consequences and social dilemmas. It is my belief that the informed researcher should have a balanced viewpoint about the needs of society and his scope of research so that he may maximize his effort by not only forwarding the frontiers of science, but also pushing these boundaries in arenas useful to mankind by focusing his time and effort on research that he believes will have the greatest effect on mankind.

Amazing, Exciting, Attractive

By Hoang Thanh Tung,
Mathematics and Economics

Amazing, exciting, attractive are the words that I can say after the 2nd **University Scholars Leadership Symposium.**

In this symposium, I made friend with many friends come from more 39 countries, understand many different cultures. Such as the traditional custom of Philippines, Chinese or traditional dances of Thailand... I feel really exciting and strongly attractive.



Figure 8 The lunch with the friends come from Taiwan, Myanmar and Phillippine.



Figure 9 A girl comes from SMU (Singapore)

Figure 7 The friends come from Thailand.

The first time I participate in a symposium, so I am quite worry about the communication with the other students. But with the comfort and friendliness of all, I forget this worry. I feel confident and comfortable to talk, discuss or share my ideas to the others. That really makes me very happy.

Another thing that I study from this symposium is “The world is having many big problems”. From the speeches of the speakers, the discussions with the other candidates, I realize that many big problems are waiting for us to solve them. For example in Thailand, the prostitute is very complex. Although it is legal, there are many crimes and gangsters join in it. Many girls are beaten and forced to service. Their life is very bad and difficult. Or in Myanmar, many people are poverty. They do not have enough foods and drinks. The government operates very slowly and inefficiently. In South Africa, the white people occupies almost important positions in society, many blacks do not study, do not go to school. They do not have a job, foods and many children die each day... Almost problems are visible, existing... And we must do something to change them, to improve the society...



Figure 10 The discussion



Figure 11 The talk between students and speaker.



And...Action

After the symposium I strongly believe that I can change something. I do not know what I can do but I will try my best to study, gain the knowledge, experiences and then devote to the society, the world...

"We are the world....

We are the children ...

We are the ones who make a brighter day.. "

I will remember forever...



My Experience Being in a Prison in Pattaya

By Melisa Kaslan,
School of Biological Sciences, Year 4

I attended the 2nd University Scholars Leadership Symposium in Pattaya from August 1 to 7. I was very excited because this was my very first overseas conference. I met people from extremely diverse background, even from countries I had never heard of. For the opening ceremony, we wore our traditional costumes, and we could never stop admiring one another's culture.

Speakers gave us inspiring talks. The first speaker was the most memorable to me. Her name is Geraldine Cox. On her twenties, her boyfriend called off their marriage because from the pre-marital medical test, she turned out to be infertile. This made her a successful businesswoman, believing that money brought happiness. However, on her 50s, her longing to have a child caused her to start Sunrise Children's Village. This is a turning point in her life when she truly realizes what her real source of happiness is.

Cambodia is one of the countries with the most heartbreaking condition. Auto-genocide happened. Educated people were all killed. Children lost their parents, becoming victims of all the evil things I had never imagined as far as being the source of organ transplant.

Through Sunrise Children's Village, she helps these children, tells them that good things can happen, encourage them to build their dreams, gives them love and education.

Besides listening to talks, we were divided into groups and each group proposed a sustainable project to fight poverty. We presented our ideas to other groups. We also had a chance to visit places such as orphanage, disabled home, and so on. My group was allocated to visit a women's prison. I was very surprised because to begin with, I did not even know that strangers could visit a prison. Although I knew that prisoners actually behave well, I was a bit scared, but excited at the same time, because I think it was a once in a lifetime chance. When we arrived, we were all very surprised to see that the place was nothing like a prison; there were no layers tall electric fences at all.



Figure 12 Ms Geraldine Cox



All prisoners were teenagers. We were not told what they did until they had to be there for on average 1 to 4 years. They were not different from normal beautiful cheerful energetic teenagers.

There, they were trained to bake and make handicrafts. They sold their products and the money would be useful after leaving the prison. Also, the skills they acquired would enable them to support their own life. We were taught how to bake cookies and made a basket.

I feel very grateful to have a chance to participate in this symposium. It reminds me to be more grateful and not to waste the opportunities I have. Thank you CN Yang Scholars Programme for informing and sponsoring me 😊