



Interview with Katherine Fleming- Strous

March 2007

Q. Why did you decide to attend the Friends World Program? How was the program different than others?

A. After spending a year as an exchange student in Chile, and later after graduating from high school and taking time to travel to different countries in South America, I decided that I wanted to attend a university that would allow me the opportunity to learn at a global level. The Friends World Program (FWP) seemed to offer exactly that. The underlying theories on which FWP lays its education allowed for a powerful application of education that I had never experienced before. Learning and education became more than abstract distant concepts, but it became alive in every perception, in every experience, and in every encounter. The program offered a global education that, through contacts with so many different ways of living, allowed me to expand my thinking in unimaginable ways.

Q. What was your area of focus while in the program?

A. During the program I focused on the complex relationship of international development and cross-cultural communication. Using knowledge that I gained during an eye-opening year with CRC (Culture and Religion Course) and two years at the program's China center, I saw that there was a poignant conflict between the desire of developed countries to address social issues within developing nations and the ability to implement their strategies in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way. This study accumulated into my thesis: "Cross-Cultural Perspectives: Civil Society Development in Mainland China."

Q. What are you currently doing (professionally)?

A. Currently I am a Professional Skills and Development Training Manager at a multinational company located in Hangzhou China. I provide on-site training and program development of professional skill sets specifically aimed towards increasing the effectiveness and capabilities of culturally diverse teams working with global clients.

Additionally, I am a free-lance intercultural consultant mainly for expatriates relocating to and from China, assisting in the development of intercultural skills and competencies to function within different cultures.

Q. How have you been able to apply what you learned at Friends World to what you currently do?

A. I believe that it is the education that I received at Friends World that led to my current career path. I realized through my experiences and education that intercultural competence is essential to function within a world that is so globally interconnected. I apply what I learned during my time at Friends World every day to my job and to my life.

Q. Is there any additional information that you would like to share that you think would be beneficial to readers?

A. Friends World offers a unique and challenging education. It takes a high degree of discipline and motivation. In many ways it is more similar to graduate work than to an undergraduate education, and this should be taken into consideration. For me, it taught me to love learning and it made me realize that life is about learning. It also taught me that there are many paths one can take in this life, and it gave me the courage to follow those paths wherever they may lead. It is a wonderful journey.