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Allegra Gallian
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Contact: Allegra Gallian, '09, (309) 556-3181

Illinois Wesleyan Students to Study Abroad at Oxford

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – During the 2009-2010 academic school year, two Illinois Wesleyan University students will study abroad in England at Oxford University. Chao Ren of Dongying, Shandong, China, a sophomore international student and history major, will study at Pembroke College as part of the Visiting Students Programme. Brandon Dorn of Glen Ellyn, Ill., a sophomore English literature major and economics minor, will study at St. Catherine's College.

While at Pembroke, Ren will take history lecture and tutorial courses. He discovered the Pembroke Visiting Students Programme from former participant Sneh Rajbhandari, class of 2009. "It is a great opportunity for a history major to explore and experience the oldest university in the English-speaking world," he said. "I hope that through an intensive immersion in history I will be able to better understand where and how our world came to be."

Founded in 1624, Pembroke College admits less than 100 undergraduate students each year from schools throughout Great Britain and a small number of students from other countries for a total enrollment of approximately 400 students. Pembroke is one of 36 colleges that, along with seven private halls, make up Oxford University. Pembroke has a relationship with 12 U.S. colleges and universities: Barnard, Brown, Bryn Mawr, Columbia, Cornell, Duke, George Washington, Georgetown, Haverford, Illinois Wesleyan, Tufts and the University of Pennsylvania. Illinois Wesleyan students have studied at Pembroke College since 1997.

Dorn will study at Oxford through Butler University's Institute for Study Abroad. He chose Oxford University and St. Catherine's College in particular because of his interest to live in a different environment. Dorn said that he hopes this experience will make him more comfortable as a citizen of the world.

He will study English as a main focus with a possible secondary focus in economics. Dorn hopes to improve his academic skills, specifically writing and research, at St. Catherine's College. "Oxford is known for being rather rigorous and demanding," he said. "I am looking forward to the challenge."

Many past and present students study abroad, and Ren and Dorn are not the only students

affiliated with Illinois Wesleyan studying in England. Illinois Wesleyan alumni have gone to Oxford for graduate work such as Megan Mondì, class of 2006, and Erie Roberts, class of 2006, who are working towards master's degrees.

Mondì, a history and English literature double major at IWU, studied abroad at Oxford during the fall of 2004 at Worcester College, Oxford, and while there, she discovered her love of England. After working in publishing for two years, Mondì decided to return to Worcester College to further her study of King James and British history. She is currently working on a master's of philosophy degree in modern European history at Oxford University.

Roberts also studied abroad at Oxford as an undergraduate and knew that was where she wanted to do her graduate work. She is currently studying at Green Templeton College. Oxford offers a one-year master's program in higher education, whereas American degree programs are generally two years. "Its education department is very good, and the policy in the UK regarding urban education is similar to the United States," she said. Roberts is studying higher education policy, philosophy, history, practice and theory. "My research," said Roberts, "is looking at the curriculum of a teacher education programme in London in order to see how well it prepares its student teachers to work in urban classrooms upon graduation."

For additional information, contact Stacey Shimizu, director of the International Office, at sshimizu@iwu.edu.