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# Red Rope Magazine: A Sustainable and Creative Model for a Magazine for Chinese Students in the U.S.

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**Red Rope Magazine**  
**A Sustainable and Creative Model for a Magazine for**  
**Chinese Students in the U.S.**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at  
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors  
May 2013

Honors Capstone Project in Creative

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Date: May 7, 2013

## Abstract

Last year, China surpassed India for the first time and became the leading country of origin of all international students studying in the United States. With the increasing number of students from China, American students are getting used to the amount of Chinese faces on campus, and the growing Chinese community has created a comfort zone for the newcomers to live a familiar life within their native language. However, the fundamental issue lies in the need for a stronger sense of empowerment.

*Red Rope* magazine, with red symbolizing happiness and rope symbolizing binding, will be the first general-interest magazine in the United States to serve the entire Chinese student community in American higher education institutions. From Chinese news to American immigration policy, academic majors to music concerts, travel to home-style cooking, *Red Rope* magazine aims to make the lives of Chinese students easier and better. With practical and in-depth content in both Chinese and English, *Red Rope* is the source of information, insights and motivation for all Chinese students who are independent, determined, and fearless to dream big.

Since the magazine's targeted audience is Chinese students across the U.S., *Red Rope* will begin as a website, but the content and style of design are similar to a print magazine. The website will be available in both Chinese and English. The magazine also will have a social media presence, including a RenRen (the Chinese version of Facebook) public page and a Weibo (the Chinese version of Twitter) account.

Depending on the success and popularity of the online magazine, I hope to recruit a team of skilled editors, writers, researchers and designers to publish and print monthly issues that will be distributed via local CSSAs in the future. When an extensive readership is established, I plan to form a network of Chinese students in the U.S. who could facilitate a more efficient knowledge exchange, and a Parents Network in China for those who have children studying abroad.



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## Reflective Essay

### Context

One day last month, my roommate Olivia came home crying. It was not the first time, and I guessed that she had just come back from another on-set filming. A senior studying television, radio and film, Olivia is an international student from Beijing, China. I waited until she stopped crying, and then I knocked on her door. She told me only three students in her team showed up that day. The two American graduate students took up the role as the director, who was absent, without any idea how to be one. Olivia kept making suggestions, but her input irritated the ego of the grad students. The filming ended with one grad student pointing a finger at Olivia and telling her to “shut up.” The attack felt like discrimination to Olivia, and she understood that her status both as a female and as a Chinese student prompted the discrimination.

“I feel like I am forced to be tough,” Olivia said. “Being a Chinese student doesn’t mean I have to lower my head to American students all the time.”

Olivia’s experience is not uncommon. Every day, I see Chinese students eating alone in the dining hall; I see them raising their eyebrows in an international relations class whenever China is mentioned; I see them at a party looking befuddled by the alcohol. Language is certainly a barrier, but it might not be the only or the most important one. Navigating a foreign country poses a challenging task for everyone, especially those with an objective to make a presence and succeed.

According to the Institute of International Education's Open Doors Data, 194,029 Chinese students studied in American universities during the 2011-12 academic year. China surpassed India for the first time and became the leading country of origin of all international students studying in the United States.<sup>1</sup> With the increasing number of students from China, the challenge they face only deepens. American students are getting used to the amount of Chinese faces on campus, and the growing Chinese community has created a comfort zone for the newcomers to live a familiar life within their native language. It is obvious that all these Chinese students need a great amount of services and information, including where to buy food, how to find cheap housing, how to write a research paper, and how to navigate American culture. Moreover, the fundamental issue lies in the need for a stronger sense of empowerment.

The idea to create a magazine for Chinese students derived from my final feature story for my magazine writing class last semester, in which I investigated the situation of Chinese students who graduated from an American university and were looking for jobs in the U.S. During the process of researching government data, interviewing experts such as policy makers, college career counselors, recruiters and immigration lawyers, and interviewing Chinese students who are very talented but struggle to find jobs in the U.S., I realized that the problem is multifaceted. For example, the student's academic major, the company's willingness to sponsor a work visa, the government's restriction on the number of H-B visas granted each year, the student's own language and cultural familiarity,

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of International Education. (2012). "Top 25 Places of Origin of International Students, 2010/11-2011/12." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>

or simply the timing of OPT and the job opening might all contribute to the level of difficulties in finding a job in the U.S. as a foreign student. I received new information from every interview that could have been addressed separately as a new article. From trying to combine all the essential issues in my final story, I realized the scale of the problem and the lack of support for Chinese students. In the end, I decided to start a new magazine for them, and for myself.

### **Mission Statement**

*Red Rope* magazine—with red symbolizing happiness, and rope symbolizing binding—will be the first general-interest magazine in the United States to serve the entire Chinese student community in American higher-education institutions. From Chinese news to American immigration policy, academic majors to music concerts, travel to home-style cooking, *Red Rope* magazine aims to make the lives of Chinese students easier and better. With practical and in-depth content in both Chinese and English, *Red Rope* is the source of information, insights and motivation for all Chinese students who are independent, determined, and fearless to dream big.

Unlike a travel book that lists the essential information about dining, flight tickets, transportation and housing, and targets students in China who will come to the U.S. to study, *Red Rope* mainly serves students who currently study in American universities. As a national magazine that speaks to Chinese students in different states, *Red Rope* addresses the common challenges and aspirations shared by Chinese students across the U.S. The magazine will develop into a

popular platform for students from different parts of China studying in different American universities to exchange ideas and establish networks. Through the Chinese Student and Scholar Association (CSSA) already in place at most universities, Chinese students have access to information necessary for daily lives. On the other hand, the existence of CSSAs also makes it easy for students to rely on the wisdom of fellow Chinese students rather than forcing themselves out of their comfort zones. Therefore, part of the mission for the magazine is to encourage Chinese students to be experts themselves and to prosper beyond the Chinese community.

In addition, the pressure from China on students who leave the country to study abroad also becomes problematic and unrealistic. Some people in Chinese society assume that all the students who can afford to study in the U.S are spoiled children from wealthy families. The anger created by the wealth gap in China has been sometimes directed at these students. If students return to China after receiving an American diploma, they often have to combat the presumption that they ought to be more successful if they studied in the U.S., and that they have returned because they have failed. As a result, I hope this magazine will also help the domestic audience in China understand these students better, because for them, the challenges come from both sides.

From my preliminary research, I found four existing magazines for Chinese students studying abroad. However, these magazines either target the domestic audience in China or cover a broad spectrum of study-abroad destinations. Below is a list of the four magazines already in the market:

1. *International Students*: Founded by the Euro-American Alumni Network, the magazine publishes both abroad and in China. It targets all Chinese students studying abroad, not only in the U.S., but also in Europe and other countries. The tone of the magazine is very politics-heavy and ideology-driven. It does not cater towards the daily needs of Chinese students.
2. *21st Century*: Founded by the Communist Youth League and China International Youth Exchange Center, this magazine focuses on the scholar community abroad and international scholar exchanges, which include both students and professionals. It mainly targets students and parents in China who wish to study abroad.
3. *Studying Abroad*: This magazine provides information about foreign institutions and exchange programs, training programs, and third-party agencies for students who plan to study abroad and in Hong Kong or Macao. It also targets students in China who have not gone abroad yet.
4. *Chinese Students*: Published in both English and Chinese, the magazine targets Chinese students who wish to study overseas. Information in the magazine is very broad and covers all studying abroad destinations.

Besides some on-campus publications that might speak to the needs of international students at a particular university, a national magazine that serves all Chinese students studying in the U.S. is currently absent in the marketplace. And

the number of Chinese students in the U.S. is likely to continue growing. Therefore, the readership potential for such a magazine is very promising.

### **Name and Logo**

Coming up with a good magazine name was harder than I expected. Bearing in mind the audience and the mission of the magazine, I wanted a name that could relate to the Chinese culture and appeal to the generation of youth who are also exposed to the American culture. From my experience working with fellow Chinese students in the U.S., I found many of them are nostalgic for traditional Chinese culture, and some are more patriotic than students who stay in China. The name should also create a sense of community within Chinese students. Although there is a large Chinese population in the U.S. and on American campuses, they don't always unite together or they lack the means to do so.

I had several name choices, but none was satisfactory. For example, I wanted to call the magazine *Quanzi*, which means circles; *Six and Half*, which, in traditional Chinese timing, refers to 13 hours, the time it takes to fly from Beijing to New York; *Mahua*, a traditional Chinese snack made of fried dough twists. One night, I was talking on the phone with my boyfriend in China, who projected the ultimate goal of the magazine to unite all Chinese people in the U.S. like a rope. I laughed at the idea and said, "Why don't you just call it *Rope* magazine? It sounds so ugly." Then I decided to call it *Red Rope*, which added a soft tone to the word. At first, I eliminated the idea because I didn't want to use the word

“red.” However, I found myself keep coming back to this name. I liked the way it sounds in Chinese: *hong sheng zi*. It refers to the red string that girls in Chinese countryside wear in their braids during special occasions, it refers to the red string that is used to make Chinese knots—a symbol for unity, and it refers to the simple idea of connection and binding. For better or for worse, red is the easiest color to be associated with China, the color of the flag, the Forbidden City, and the wedding gown. Finally, when I stopped thinking about other names, I settled on *Red Rope*.

The next step was to create a logo for the magazine. With the title, the idea came naturally. I wanted to create the three Chinese characters with a red string and incorporate a symbol of Chinese knot inside the character. It took me a whole day to find the perfect red string in a Chinese market, and another whole day to find a calligraphy style that speaks the right tone. I decided on the writing of Pu Xian, one of the descendants of the last emperor in China, copied the three characters on a piece of notepaper, then traced the words with the red string. I took a photo of the paper so that I could finalize the logo in Photoshop and added in a Chinese knot as part of the second character. With some shadow effect and a stamp mark that reads *za zhi*, magazine, the finished logo looks sophisticated while maintaining a sense of tradition.

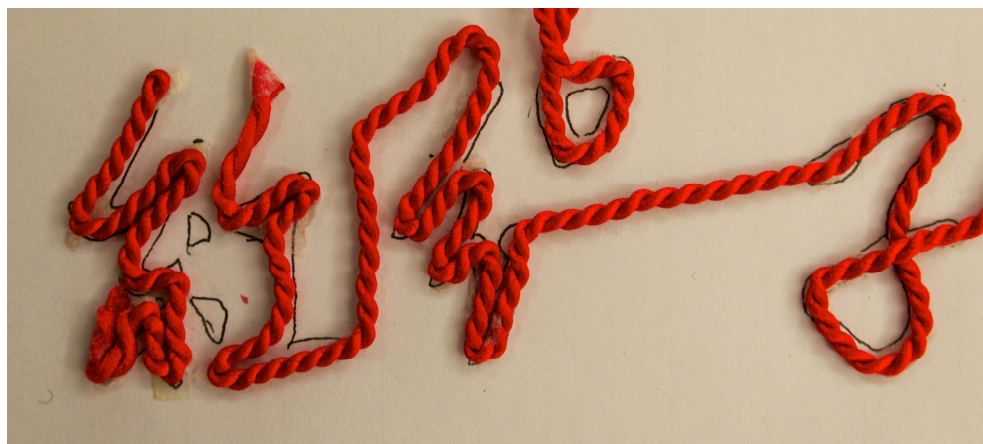


Photo of the handmade characters using a red string



The final logo after adjustments in Photoshop

## **Format**

Since the magazine's targeted audience is Chinese students across the U.S., *Red Rope* magazine begins as a website, since the online platform has a faster and wider reach nationally and internationally. Considering the Chinese domestic audience should also have access to the magazine, I didn't use Wordpress because I planned to launch the magazine as a formal website rather than a blog, and because Wordpress is inaccessible from China. I registered a domain name under redropemag.com to host the website.

From a market research survey I conducted online with 88 Chinese students currently studying in the U.S., I found that they rarely read print magazines and spend the majority of their time looking for information online. For students who have been living in the U.S. for more than a year, 47 percent of them search online for information when they encounter a problem in the U.S., whereas 37 percent would ask other Chinese students in CSSA for help. Also, 58 percent of the total respondents said they prefer the magazine to publish both online and in print. The survey results confirmed the need for an online magazine, but they also reflect the continual interest in print publications. This serves as a foundation for future print magazines if the website is successful.

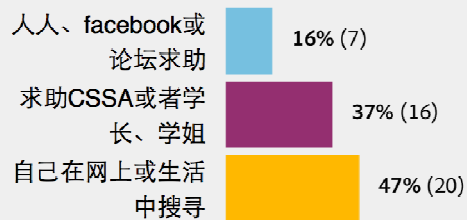
The websites of major American magazines are designed in a similar structure, with the magazine's logo on top, several navigation tabs for different departments, a changing slideshow of cover stories, and a clustered homepage of constant updates from every section. As someone who believes in the survival of print magazines as the main carrier of content and reading experience, I wanted to

make the website as close to print as possible, while maintaining some of the positive features of interactivity. Like a monthly print magazine, the website has a theme for every month, which will be accompanied with a corresponding feature package. The homepage of the website resembles the cover of a print magazine, with a cover photo that changes every month according to the theme, the logo that stays the same, and several cover lines that are updated daily. The readers navigate the website as if they are flipping the pages of a magazine. Following the cover, the page of the “Editor’s Note” appears, on which I will write a personal message about the theme and articles for that month. The next page is a table of contents, which will be updated daily with new articles. Instead of creating a template that stays the same for every page, the website will showcase individually designed articles on different pages. The content inside the magazine will be updated regularly throughout the month. However, it should all fit within the theme of the month if possible. In other words, the content published on the website should be able to translate into a monthly print magazine by the end of each month.

The website will be available in both Chinese and English. Unless the author writes in English, all articles will be available in Chinese, and all feature stories will be translated into English. The magazine also has a social media presence, including a RenRen (Chinese version of Facebook) public page and a Weibo (Chinese version of Twitter) account. The page on RenRen will publish updates of articles along with photo albums. Some of the feature articles will also be available on the public page, with a link to the website on the bottom, so that

the social media users can easily share and comment on articles. The traffic on the RenRen page is as important as generating traffic to the website. Therefore, making the articles available on RenRen should attract more readers and increase the magazine's popularity. Readers should still have a preference for the website for the page layout and design. The magazine's Weibo account will not only share links to new articles on the website, it will also retweet other news, share good quotations every day, and disseminate information for current events.

16.如果你现在仍然有很多的生活问题（例如不知道该去哪里买水果，怎么订飞机票等等），你准备通过什么办法获取这些信息：



\* 43 total responses, 49% of submissions

#### Survey report 1

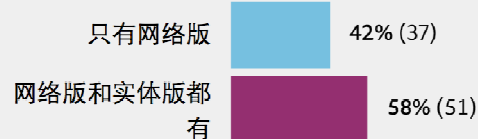
16. If you still face many problems in daily life (for example, grocery shopping, booking flights, etc.), how do you seek out for information?

RenRen, Facebook, or online discussion forum

Seek help from CSSA or senior Chinese students

Search for the information online

你希望这样一个只属于你们的杂志：



\* 88 total responses, 100% of submissions

#### Survey report 2

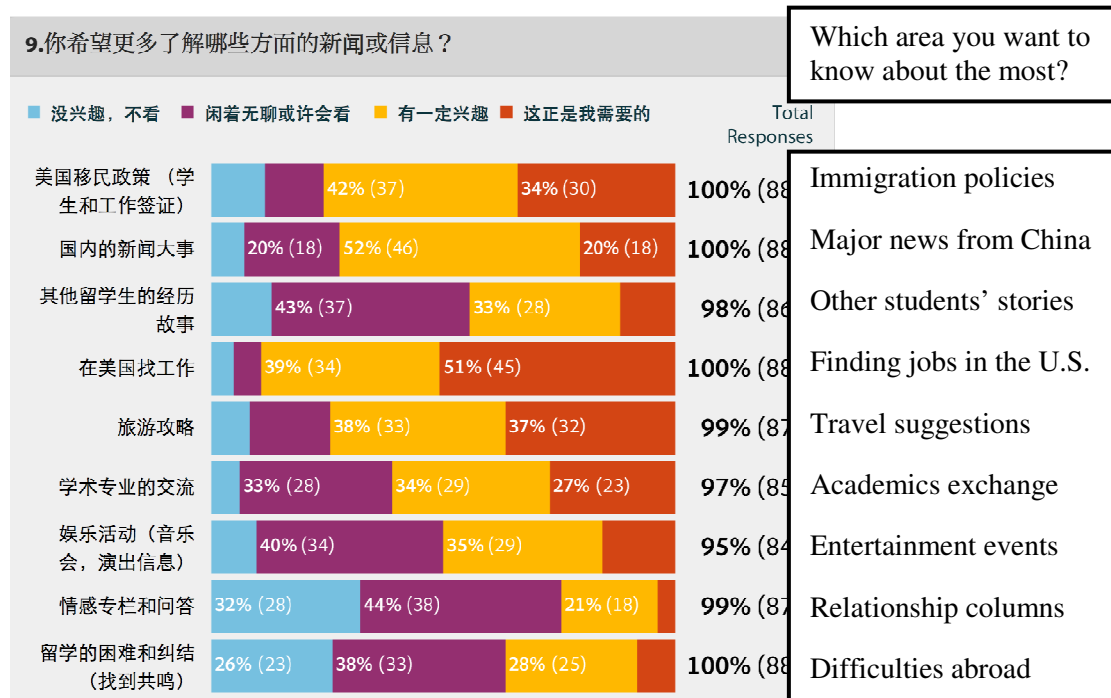
You hope a magazine for Chinese students would:

Only have a website

Have both a website and a print version

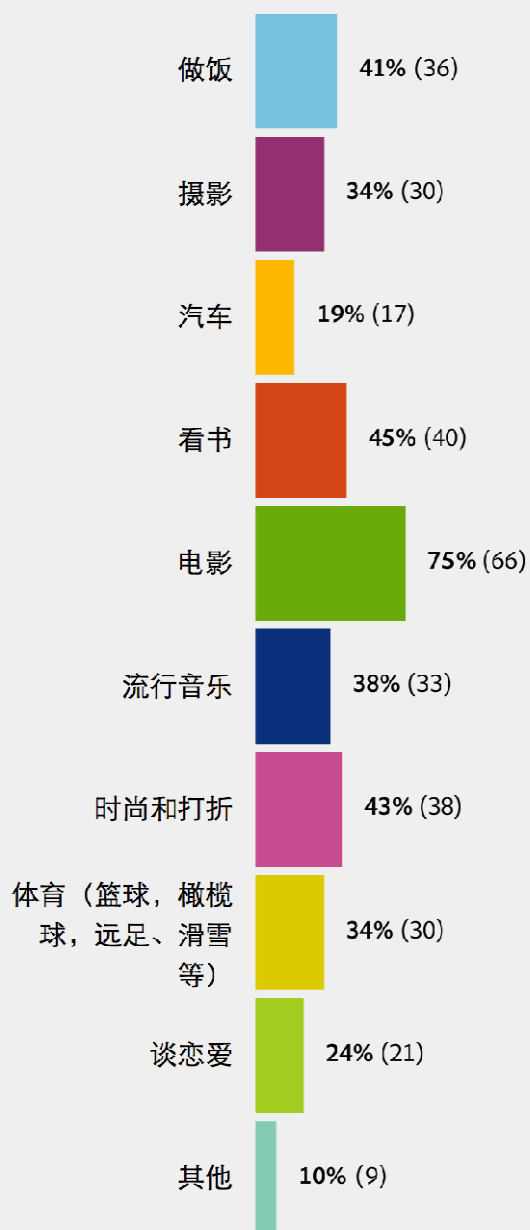
## Content

According to the survey results, the top four issues that Chinese students are concerned about the most are finding jobs in the U.S., travel suggestions, immigration policies, and news events in China. Among all respondents, 54 percent of respondents said they are interested in knowing more about Chinese news, but lack the channel to do so, 61 percent showed interest in knowing more about the lives of Chinese students in other American universities, and 47 percent said they were interested in sharing their personal stories but lack the means to do so. When asked about their hobbies in the U.S., the top categories are movies, reading books, fashion and cooking. These survey results largely confirmed my design for the magazine's content: features, academics, news, entertainment, relationships, travel, and blogs.



Survey report 3

8.平时在美国除了学术,  
你还有什么个人爱好?或  
者希望了解更多这方面的  
信息?



\* 88 total responses, 100% of submissions

8. Besides studying, what do  
you do in your spare time  
when you are in the U.S.?  
Or which area you would  
like to know more about?

Cooking

Photography

Automobiles

Reading

Movies

Pop music

Fashion and sales

Sports

Dating

Others

First, the feature section is the heart and soul of the magazine, which includes a package of three to five articles that fit the theme of the month. The package consists of one long-form feature story of 2,000-3,000 words—which will be accompanied by original photos, sidebars, and multimedia—and other fixtures, such as personality profiles of successful Chinese figures or ordinary Chinese students with extraordinary stories, Q&As with experts, trend stories, and service information. The theme covers broader issues important to Chinese students in the U.S., such as job searching, major news events like campus shootings, or the trend of Chinese students returning home. For the first month, the theme is looking for jobs in the U.S., and the feature story covers various factors that affect the issue, including immigration restrictions, corporations' considerations, academic majors and the students' own familiarity with the language and culture (See Appendix for the entire article). The first feature section also includes a service article that offers suggestions from experts on networking, an interview with an immigration lawyer, and a contributing article from a human resources expert about common mistakes Chinese students often make in searching for a job in the U.S. For the feature story, I also did a series of studio photo shoots of Chinese students with an American flag, a resume and their Chinese passport. The cover photo is one selection from this photo series.

The academic section explores one specific academic major per month, and it aims to reveal what it is really like to study this major in an American university. The audience will not only be students in China who are interested in pursuing this major, but also students of other majors in American universities

who are very isolated from the lives of those in different fields. This section includes a feature story, a day-in-life photo essay documenting a day's events of one student in this major, a "things they carry" photograph that shows what the student carries in his bag every day, a profile or Q&A with a successful figure in this field, and some tips about what to expect and how to prepare. For the first issue, I chose computer science (CS) major because it is known as the easiest major to secure a job in the U.S. In the feature story, I interviewed four Chinese students studying this major, including one graduate who is already working in an American company, a Chinese professor who teaches computer science at the University of Ohio, and a senior professional in this field who immigrated to the U.S. many years ago. I followed a CS student at Syracuse University for three days and photographed his daily activities, including working as a residence hall advisor, studying in Bird Library every day with other Chinese students, participating in the English Conversation Group offered at the Slutzker Center, and cooking at home every day after midnight for the meals next day. During the process, I realized how little I knew about this major and how different the lives of these students are from other majors. The structure of this section is transferable to any academic major.

The news department includes a weekly round up of major news events from China, with coverage from both Chinese and American media. The summaries of news are short and succinct, and since most students should have already heard of the news events, the summary carries a humorous and personal tone that only offers the significance or the take-away message from the news

piece. The section also includes news related to college recruitment, immigration policy, and anything concerning the Chinese community in the U.S.

The entertainment section features entertainment news from both China and the U.S., trend stories such as the popularity of Gangnam Style, and a monthly event calendar that shows information about concerts, performance and exhibitions in major American cities where a large number of Chinese students is present, such as New York, Boston, Los Angeles and Chicago.

The relationships section offers a mix of opinion columns, personal essays, and service pieces on issues such as long-distance relationships. The topic of essays is not limited to romantic relationships, but also relationships with parents back home and relationships with other students in the U.S. This section aims to provide a common platform for Chinese students to share their stories and seek advice. Readers can send letters and emails to the editor and ask about relationship-related questions, and also submit their personal stories relating to dating, friendships and families.

The travel section features holiday special packages before long vacations such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring Break and summer vacation, since international students often choose to travel during breaks. The articles offer destination ideas, sightseeing sites, and hotel and restaurant reviews. During non-holiday months, the section features submissions about personal trips and local college cities with special events, unique cultural environments or simply good places to hang out. The articles mainly come from contributions from students. In the first issue, for example, a journalism student wrote about her study abroad

experience in Jerusalem, a student interning in Washington D.C. wrote a one-day itinerary in the nation's capital, and other Chinese students contributed five travel ideas for a post-graduation family trip.

Finally, the blog section includes cooking, photography, automobiles, movies, books, fashion, and music. The blogs are designed based on the hobbies of Chinese students. One to two bloggers who are passionate and have some expertise in these interest areas are responsible for updating the blogs weekly. For example, the cooking blog will publish recipes that Chinese students can cook in the U.S., grocery store information, and stories related to the food culture in China. The automobile blog is hosted by a Chinese student who dropped out of an American university to become a professional car tester and mechanics. He shares his expertise on auto mechanics, driving experience, and how to choose a car on the blog. The blogs provide a place to share knowledge and events, and they offer a platform to meet friends.

## **Future**

Unlike a complete issue of a print magazine, the website and the blueprint for the magazine serve as a test model for a continual publication, whether in print or online. What I created for this project is far from perfect, but it carries a grand ambition. Depending on the success and popularity of the online magazine, I hope to recruit a team of skilled editors, regular contributors and writers, researchers and designers to publish print monthly issues in the future. Most of the writers are Chinese students who currently study or work in the U.S., or those who have

graduated from an American university but returned to China. In a few cases, for example summarizing Chinese news or contributing blog posts on Chinese books, I allow students in China to write the articles. Future print magazines will be distributed via subscriptions and the CSSAs in various universities. Although the magazine is not for profit now, future revenue will mostly come from advertising. Potential advertisers include travel agencies, Asian restaurants and markets, auto companies, insurance for international students, airlines and hotels.

When an extensive readership is established, I plan to form a network of Chinese students in the U.S. that could facilitate a more efficient knowledge exchange, including offering career help and organizing networking events. Although there are many Chinese student organizations in the U.S. already, they are scattered in different places. The magazine should provide a foundation of membership nationwide and common interests among students. In China, I also wish to set up a Parents Network for those who have children studying abroad. Most Chinese families only have one child, and parents often feel lonely and very distanced from their children. A Parent Network could help these adults make friends, arrange U.S. travel plans, and share information with each other.

### **Conclusion**

Following the recent tragedy of the Boston Bombing, the last victim identified was Lu Lingzi, a Chinese daughter studying at Boston University. Throughout the course of the investigation, there were many erroneous reports about the identity of the Chinese student. Some American news outlets reported

the death of another Chinese student, who, in fact, suffered minor injuries. Some call Lu an exchange student when, in fact, she was a full-time undergraduate. On the other hand, Chinese news outlets struggled to obtain any first-hand information. This tragic event demonstrated to me the need for a publication that speaks directly to Chinese students studying in America. In fact, the need for such a magazine seems almost too great and too urgent for a personal project that lacks the size and scale to meet the demand.

Chinese immigrants began coming to the United States decades ago. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 3,794,673 ethnic Chinese living in the U.S. in 2010, constituting 1.2 percent of the total U.S. population.<sup>2</sup> However, it is one of the unfortunate aspects of the Chinese culture that its people often have a hard time uniting with each other. Internal conflicts happen frequently. I hope the magazine can help unite and empower the Chinese community in the U.S. The ideal may be too great, but the power of media is immeasurable.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). "Race Reporting for the Asian Population by Selected Categories: 2010." *2010 Census Summary File 1*. Retrieved from [http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC\\_10\\_SF1\\_QTP8&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_SF1_QTP8&prodType=table)



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## Appendix

### Feature Story

Hed: The Chinese Dream Chasers

Dek: Two hundred thousand Chinese students come to the U.S. to study, three thousand get to work. Who decides those who stay and those forced to leave?

Word Count: 3207

A Chinese girl with light makeup and a clean-cut suit stood outside the CBS building in New York City. In her hands, a résumé showed the name Qian Chen and 15 internships during her four years of college, including CBS Beijing. Her new haircut resembled what her friends call a “CCTV anchor style.” It was a Tuesday morning, and the sun shone on the skyscrapers in the City and reflected on the flowing crowds on the streets. Qian squeezed her eyes, crumpled her résumé and threw it into the trash. “I was so close, so close,” she murmured.

In November two years ago, a human-resources representative from CBS looked at her résumé at a career fair and said, “This is one of the top three résumés I have seen in my six years at CBS.” The HR representative asked Qian to contact her when she graduated. She did. Her résumé still shined. And a job opened.

The interview went great until the woman asked about her visa. The job starts in February of next year and lasts one year, but Qian’s OPT status ends in August. “We really like you, and we are very impressed by your résumé,” the woman said, “but our company doesn’t sponsor visa status and cannot hire you if your OPT expires. Sorry.”

OPT stands for Optional Practical Training, under which foreign nationals who have graduated from an American higher-education institution can obtain an

authorization to stay in the country for a period ranging from 12 to 29 months, provided they secure a job or an internship in their declared field of study within 90 days of graduation. Qian was in the first month of her OPT when she walked out of the CBS building, and she asked herself the question that would emerge in her mind again and again: “What am I doing in America?”

According to the Institute of International Education’s Open Doors Data, 194,029 Chinese students studied in American universities during the 2011-12 academic year, making China the leading place of origin of all international students in the U.S. However, the U.S. Department of Labor only certified 3,100 work permits to all Chinese nationals in the 2012 fiscal year. The current federal policy sets a limit on the number of H1-B non-immigrant work visas allowed to be issued every year. Permanent residence status, beyond the H1-B non-immigrant visas, has additional quotas by country. Last year, only 6 percent of the H1-B visas were granted to Chinese nationals, the same as Iceland, which sent 391 students to the U.S. to study last year. In a way, this disproportionate ratio revealed the different priorities between American universities and the American government. According to David Hawkins, Director of Public Policy and Research at the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), the forces of government encouragements, combined with the economic and diversity benefits international students bring to campus, have created a “gold rush mentality” among American education institutions. “Colleges often run in a clump. We’ve seen their interests migrate from country to country,”

Hawkins said. “But I don’t think any country has been a focus of recruitment in the past decade had approached the scope that we see in China.”

As the number of Chinese students grows in American universities, more and more also want to stay in the U.S. to work or intern. Chuck Reutlinger, associate director of Career Services at Syracuse University, said traditionally more graduate students use their service. “But now we are seeing many more international students, especially Chinese students at the undergraduate level, where there’s no assurance that they know exactly what they want to do,” Reutlinger says. Although the Career Services office doesn’t record the data of student appointments based on nationality, Reutlinger estimated more than 50 percent of the appointments come from international students. For Chinese students, staying in the U.S. to work or intern provides a valuable learning experience, but some also believe it is a better environment for their career development. Andy Liu graduated from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs two years ago, with a master degree in public diplomacy. He interned at the World Health Organization during his OPT, and then found a job as a communication consultant at the World Bank. He knew he wanted to work in the U.S. when he came here. “For a complete life experience, you need to have academic life, social life, and professional life,” Liu says. He plans to stay in the U.S. long term, because as a young professional, he feels he has more opportunities here for career growth.

When she interned at Xinhua News in New York, Qian met a Chinese American freelancer who just started her own private media company. The woman, in her 30s, was looking for a part-time video producer to help with her personal show that she plans to sell to Chinese websites. After Qian graduated, the woman found her again and threw out many attractive words: “I see you as a little sister. I know how hard it is to work in journalism in the U.S. My start-up company has great potentials to grow...” Attracted to the promise of a work visa and paychecks, Qian started working for the woman’s self-promoting TV program.

After the three-month “free trial period” and countless midnight assignments, Qian finally asked for her salary. She received \$1,000 per month. In the city, Qian paid \$800 for her housing, plus utilities, food and transportation, and her bank account dropped to two digits. In recent years, the quota for H1-B visas was reached within the first couple weeks. Qian could not wait until the next year to see if this woman would actually sponsor her visa. So she quit her job. She only had six months left on her OPT before she had to leave.

The U.S. government holds a completely different view on the issue of immigration than universities regard international recruitment. Faced with the continuing challenge of illegal immigrants, the American public continues the heated debate about immigrants working in the U.S., while American policy makers are starting to differentiate between illegal immigrants and foreign graduates from American higher-education institutions. The former chair of the International Students Concern Committee of the National Association of

Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS), Tursun Ablekim, is a Ph.D. student from Xinjiang. He had been working on international students' issues both on university campuses and with Congress for more than five years. "Our argument is, since you are giving millions of green cards to foreign people, regardless of their skills and values of their contribution to the country, why does it hurt to issue another fifty thousand green cards to highly-educated and U.S.-background international students?" Ablekim says. From his experience talking with congressmen, Ablekim understood the reality that compared with other problems such as the budget and the 11 million illegal immigrants, the concerns of international students are simply not a priority on the politicians' agenda. Last year, Sen. Lamar Alexander proposed a bill called the "SMART Jobs Act," which would amend the immigration law to allow more graduates from the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields to stay and work in the U.S. The bill died. Ablekim said this kind of bill has been introduced almost every year, but it has never passed.

Under the current immigration law, international students still face many restrictions on their visas. When Ablekim graduated from Washington State University in 2008 with a Master's degree in electrical engineering, he went to California with his friends to start their own computer software company. He later ran into legal complications when he tried to open a company while on OPT status, so Ablekim found an American citizen and registered the company under the American's name. "Everything affects what I do. Because I'm not a green card holder, I'm not a citizen, I cannot get paychecks. " Then came the financial

crisis, and Ablekim lost all his funding from investors. He persisted for a year until he finally gave up his entrepreneur dream and went on to pursue a doctoral degree.

Many doctoral students like Ablekim didn't need to think about their plan for the next ten years when they first came to the U.S.; they only considered what and where to study while hoping the American economy will become better. On the other hand, from Reutlinger's 29 years of career consulting, he found most international students were unaware of all the visa limitations when they came here; rather, they came to know them almost by necessity. Oftentimes, international students fail to start early in terms of job searching. "There's no penalty for American students for taking a long time to try to find something. And they may have more natural supports in this country, their families; they can go and live at home," Reutlinger says. For international students, the natural supports are absent, and they also have an extra dimension of time limitations. "If they don't get started early enough, the disadvantages magnify," Reutlinger said.

It was 3:39 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon' five international students were sitting in a circle in the living room of the Slutzker Center for International Services, talking about "watching television," "hot and spicy food," and "fear of heights" with a grey-haired American couple, Ray and Ruby Adams.

"Do you get colds easily?" Ruby, who has been leading the English conversation groups for more than 12 years, was asking questions to each student. They were not allowed to answer with a simple yes or no.

It took a Chinese student several “ums” and “huhs” to form his first sentence. “I hardly get cold,” he said, with a voice lower than the other girls, “but I have some problems in my nose, I don’t know how to say it in English...”

“Congestions?” “Allergy?” Other foreign students tried to help him.

“Allergy! Oh, yea, yea, *dui*.” He accidentally said yes in Chinese. The Chinese girls giggled quietly. He immediately covered his mouth with his hand—a natural gesture in China after saying something wrong. “Yes. Sorry.”

The language barrier commonly faced by Chinese students not only hinders classroom performance, but the problem appears more severe when it comes to job searching. Ablekim observed many Ph.D. students who have stayed in the country for five years but still don’t speak good English. This will reduce anyone’s chance of getting a job. “If your English is not very good, there’s really no place to go,” says Dan Beaudry, author of *Power Ties*, a book that aims to help international students find a job in the hidden job market in the U.S. Beaudry has encountered international students during job interviews on the phone, when the interviewers would look at each other because they didn’t understand what the person was saying on the other end.

The demand of language particularly challenges students majoring in liberal arts fields, since language often involves layers of cultural context. “It’s not that our English is not good, it is cultural,” Andy Liu said. “Compared with native students, we just need to make more efforts to overcome this barrier.” Even for someone like Qian, who studied broadcasting in one of the nation’s best journalism schools, she said she still faces a great disadvantage in career choices.

Her American classmates often start their broadcasting career from a local station then climb up the ladder, but these small local companies rarely hire international students, given that they don't need the students' international backgrounds.

Sometimes stations would have clients from China, but this situation is rare and there is more internal competition within the Chinese community. On the other hand, big news stations in the U.S. refrain from sponsoring work visas, and there are really only a few "big" ones.

Besides the restrictions on their visas, which the government controls, the level of difficulty in job searching also differs among fields of study. Within all the jobs for which the Immigration Department granted work permits to Chinese citizens, computer software engineers—a field that traditionally lacks native applicants—tops the list. In general, STEM fields enjoy a relative privilege over other majors, including the option to extend their OPT up to 29 months in some cases. However, professions that relate to national security, such as nuclear engineering and electron magnetic engineering, are not available to foreign students either, despite the number of openings and America's need for such talents. Reutlinger said international students majoring in communications might face the toughest challenge in finding a job. These jobs never lack domestic applications, and they require a high demand of language. "Somebody who is completely bi-lingual, fluent, might have some real benefits, but if someone is not a native speaker of English, they might have trouble in communications where either writing or speaking is the main activity," Reutlinger said.

Qian came to the U.S. because she wanted to make a difference. Back in 2008 when she had just graduated from her high school in Chengdu, an earthquake hit Sichuan, and Qian became a volunteer in the disaster area. There, she came to know some local journalists. At that time, the entire communication system stopped, so people affected by the earthquake could only rely on the television broadcasters to know when the ambulances would arrive. Qian realized that a profession in journalism could really help people, in big and small ways. “I felt then that this job was really exciting. Later I found that I really like it and am actually good at it. So I like it more and more, now to a point that I can’t even find a job.” Qian joked about her choice, but she didn’t sound regretful. When she finally graduated with a degree in journalism, with all her anxiety and eagerness, all her internship experience, and all the As she received in class, Qian believed she could find a job and then cover the presidential election, the London Olympics, and all the other news events. The opportunity never came. “Sometimes an opportunity will come, and you might get it. But if it doesn’t come, if no one would sponsor your H1-B, if there is no job opening, there’s really not much you can do,” Qian said.

Corporations in the U.S. have their own considerations when hiring international students. Unlike the American government or universities, many medium and small sized companies have limited knowledge about immigration regulations and procedures. Few have their own immigration lawyers. So even if they want to hire a foreign student, most companies lack the means to do so and they would prefer to avoid unnecessary trouble and expense. “A lot of managers,

they hear ‘visa,’ and they think working with the government, which they don’t like. And they think working with lawyers, which they don’t like,” Beaudry said. Based on his experience working in both campus and corporate recruiting, Beaudry explained that a big misconception companies have is that sponsoring a visa is difficult. “It’s 5,000 bucks and you send in some forms,” he said. “It has been a tempting thing for people to cut in this environment because it looks like an extra expense.”

Ultimately, international students have to prove to the employer that their value to the company will triumph over the cost of their visas. And Beaudry said the answer is oftentimes a yes, since the cost of not having the right person is much greater than \$5,000. This is also why Beaudry encourages international students to focus on networking with industry leaders rather than wasting time applying for jobs online—a system designed to keep them out. He said that 75 percent to 80 percent of the jobs in the U.S. market are never publicized. They are filled by internal referral or personal networks. The only way for international students to bypass the system is to develop a professional network of influential professionals, so they can get the jobs in the hidden market.

While networking constitutes a critical part in job searching, it is also one of the deadly spots for Chinese students. Beaudry found many Chinese students to be very smart and have a lot of experience, but they are horrified by the concept of networking. Nonetheless, both the language and cultural differences played a role. According to Reutlinger, American culture emphasizes more individual achievements and self-promotion, whereas other cultures might emphasize

contributing to the family or the nation. In a job interview, he gave an example: American students tend to ask more questions, but other cultures might consider it inappropriate. “It’s a sense of knowing how a game is played, what’s allowable. And what might not be allowable in their home cultures are perfectly allowable here, but they don’t know it,” Reutlinger said.

Andy has been living in the U.S. for more than three years, but he admits that adapting to the culture was hard at the beginning. In class, professors require all students to participate, to talk and ask questions, but Chinese students often have bad participation scores. “In the end, you will know that it is not what you say that matters, but whether you say it,” Andy said. “It is the same in networking events, you have to sell yourself and make yourself noticeable. Too much modesty is useless.”

On the night of April 24, Qian wrote a long Facebook status starting with “My H1B working visa just got approved today.” After eight months of OPT, an unpaid internship at Phoenix TV, the scam at the private company, a job working part-time as a tour guide and translator, another job working part-time as a video producer, she found her current company “Wallstreet Multimedia,” which agreed to sponsor her work visa. Then she waited for immigration to pick her application among millions of others’. Qian finally became the lucky one.

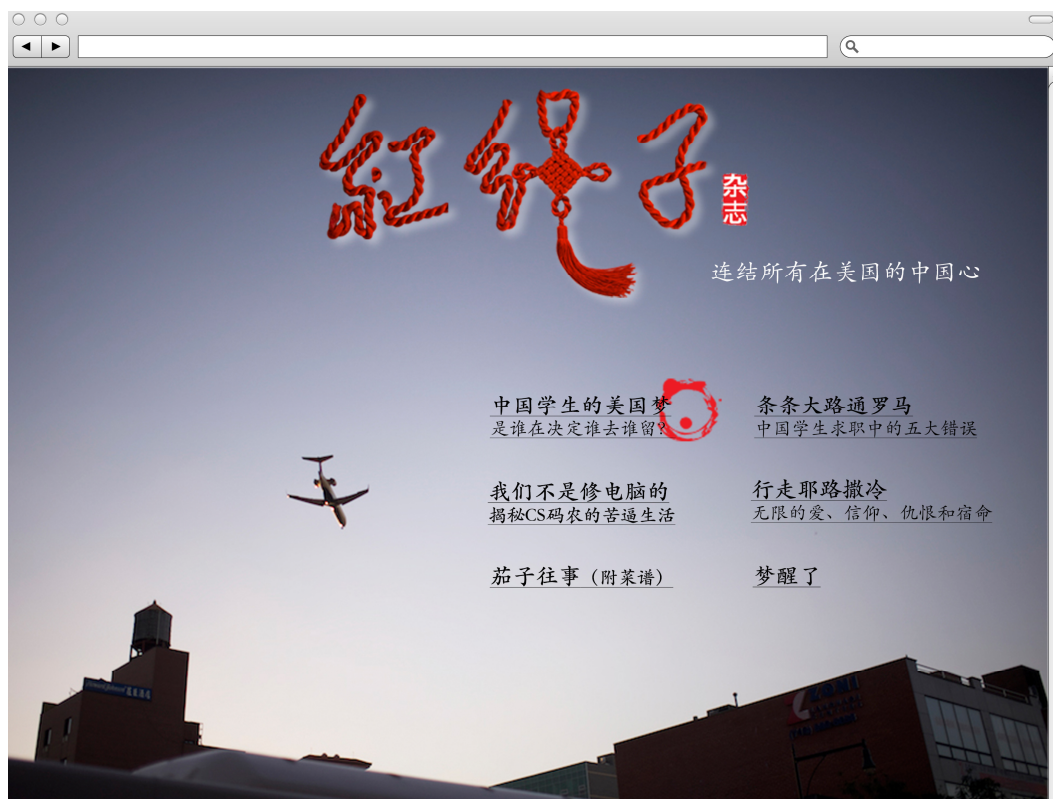
“I had no idea how hard it is to pursue a journalism dream when I was in college. Now I know, and I’m so glad I didn’t give up. Yes, my salary is awful and

workloads are overwhelming, but so what? I'm learning to live a champagne life based on a lemonade salary, with pride," she wrote in her status.

Some may say that finding a job and getting a green card in the U.S. is really easy. Clement Dai graduated from an unknown university in Minnesota two years ago, but he had secured a job right after he left school in a company that trades with China. He said he helped design the job. In the meantime, he was also accepted for an internship position at the Kissinger Institute at the Wilson Center, one of the top think tanks in the American capital. Clement believes that a visa is never a problem, but it's only limited to medium and small companies. So he never expected a job that is high up there. "Any Chinese, if you want to become a middle class in America, it's easy, very easy. But I didn't come here to stay and be a middle class," Clement said. The hardships and the achievements of these Chinese students come from their pursuit of their own dreams. If the last generation of Chinese immigrants came to the U.S. because they were attracted to the equality in the "American Dream," then the younger generation has arrived to fulfill themselves.

"I am not going to achieve my American Dream. I saw the American Dream, and I think it is a great path. To be more ambitious, I think China should have its own Chinese dream," Clement said.

## Website Design Samples





## Letter from the Editor

Olivia, my roommate from Beijing, came home crying again. It was not the first time, and I guessed she just came back from another on-set filming. I waited until she stopped crying, and then I knocked on her door. She told me only three students in her team showed up that day. The two American graduate students took up the role as the director, who was absent, without any idea how to be one. Olivia kept making suggestions, but her input irritated the ego of the grad student. It ended with the grad student pointing finger at Olivia and telling her to "shut up."


A senior studying television, radio and film at Newhouse, Olivia hates her major every time she must produce a video with a group of American guys. "I feel like I am forced to be tough," Olivia said. "Being a Chinese student doesn't mean I have to lower my head to American students all the time."

Even when language is not a barrier, it can be hard to navigate a foreign country. As China becomes the leading country of origin of all international students studying in the United States, the challenge Chinese students face only deepens. American students are getting used to the amount of Chinese faces on campus, and the growing Chinese community created a comfort zone for the newcomers to live a familiar life within their native language. It is obvious that the nearly 200,000 Chinese students need a great deal of service and information—where to buy food, how to find cheap housing, how to write a research paper, and how to navigate American culture. Moreover, how to develop a stronger sense of empowerment.

*Red Rope* magazine, with red symbolizes happiness and rope symbolizes binding, will be the first general-interest magazine in the United States to serve the entire Chinese students community in American higher education institutions. From Chinese news to American immigration policy, academic majors to music concerts, travel to home-style cooking, *Red Rope* magazine aims to make the lives of Chinese students easier and better. With practical and in-depth content to enrich the mind, *Red Rope* is the source of information, insights and motivation for all Chinese students who are independent, determined, and fearless to dream big.

Following the recent Boston Bombing tragedy, the last victim identified was Lu Lingzi, a Chinese daughter studying at Boston University. Throughout the course of the investigation, there were many erroneous reports about the identity of the Chinese student. And Chinese news outlets struggled to obtain any first-hand information. This tragic event demonstrated to me the need for a publication that speaks directly to Chinese students studying in American. In fact, the need for such a magazine seems almost too great and too urgent for a personal project that lacks the size and scale to meet the demand.

Chinese immigrants began coming to the United States a long time ago, and the Chinese population in the U.S. is significant. However, it is one of the unfortunate of the Chinese culture that its people often have a hard time uniting with each other. Internal conflicts happen frequently. I hope the magazine could help unite and empower the Chinese community in the U.S. The ideal may be too great, but the power of media is immeasurable.



THE JOB ISSUE May 2013 | Issue 1

### FEATURE

**The Chinese Dream Chasers**  
After an American diploma, we decide those who stay and those forced to leave?

**Shake Their Hands and Speak**  
Experts offer suggestions on networking

**Ask a Lawyer**  
Q&A with an immigration lawyer on everything from OPT to H1-B

**Employer Reveals 5 Mistakes Chinese Students Often Make**  
The message is uncomfortable, but the truth is you have to act American

### CULTURE

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The reasons behind the success of Psy

**Events Calendar**  
Concerts, performances, operas, movies in major cities

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It might be the easier major to find a job, but what it's really like to study CS?

**Photo Essay:**  
A day in the life of a coding slave

**Interview:**  
Founder of Linus tells how he did it

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**Awaken from a Dream**  
Reality won. Distance triumphed

**Everything Passed. Everything Stays**  
Lessons learned from the death of a first love

**When Love and Cultures Collide**  
One good mother, one unfaithful father, one Tango teacher, and one unhappy daughter

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What did you miss in China

**Immigration Reform**  
How the law changed and it affects you

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Endless love, faith, hatred, and destiny

**No Flirting Afar**  
One-person trip to Southeast Asia

**One Day in Washington DC**  
What you must see in the national's capital

### BLOGS

Cooking, Photography, Autos  
Books, Movies, Music, Fashion



A Chinese girl with light makeup and a clean-cut suit stood outside the CBS building in New York City. In her hands, an résumé showed the name Qian Chen and 15 internships during her four years of college, including CBS Beijing. Her new haircut resembled what her friends call a "CCTV anchor style." It was a Tuesday morning, the sun shined on the skyscrapers in the City and reflected on the flowing crowds on the streets. Qian squeezed her eyes, crumpled her résumé and threw it into the trash. "I was so close, so close," she murmured.

In November two years ago, a human-resources representative from CBS looked at her résumé at a career fair and said, "This is one of the top three résumés I have seen in my six years at CBS." The HIR asked Qian to contact her when she graduates. She did. Her résumé still outshined. And a job opened.


The interview went great until the woman asked about her visa. The job starts from February next year and lasts one year, Qian's OPT status ends in August. "We really like you, and we are very impressed by your résumé," the woman said, "but our company doesn't sponsor visa and cannot hire you if you OPT expires. Sorry."

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nationals in the 2012 Fiscal Year. The current federal policy sets a limit on the number of work visas allowed to grant to each country's nationals every year. China is entitled to 6 percent of them, the same as Iceland, which sent 391 students to the U.S. to study last year. In a way, this disproportional ratio revealed the different priorities between American universities and American government. According to David Hawkins, Director of Public Policy and Research at the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), the forces of government encouragements, combined with the economic and diversity benefits international students bring to campus, had created a "gold rush mentality" among American education institutions. "Colleges often run in a clump. We've seen their interest migrates from country to country," Hawkins said. "But I don't think any country has been a focus of recruitment in the past decade had had approached the scope that we see in China."

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Patricia Burak, director of the Slutzker Center for International Service for International Service, has been working in international education for more than 30 years. "There are still some traces of people feeling like someone shouldn't come here from another country and have it better than I have it," Burak says.

when he came here. "For a complete life experience, you need to have academic life, social life, and professional life." Liu planned to stay in the U.S. in a long term, because as a young professional, he feels he has more opportunities here for career growth.

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Under the current immigration law, international students still face many



## 紅繩子

### 記仕聞樂緣游群

#### 肉末茄子粉丝煲

主料:  
茄子三根, 粉丝40克, 肉末50克

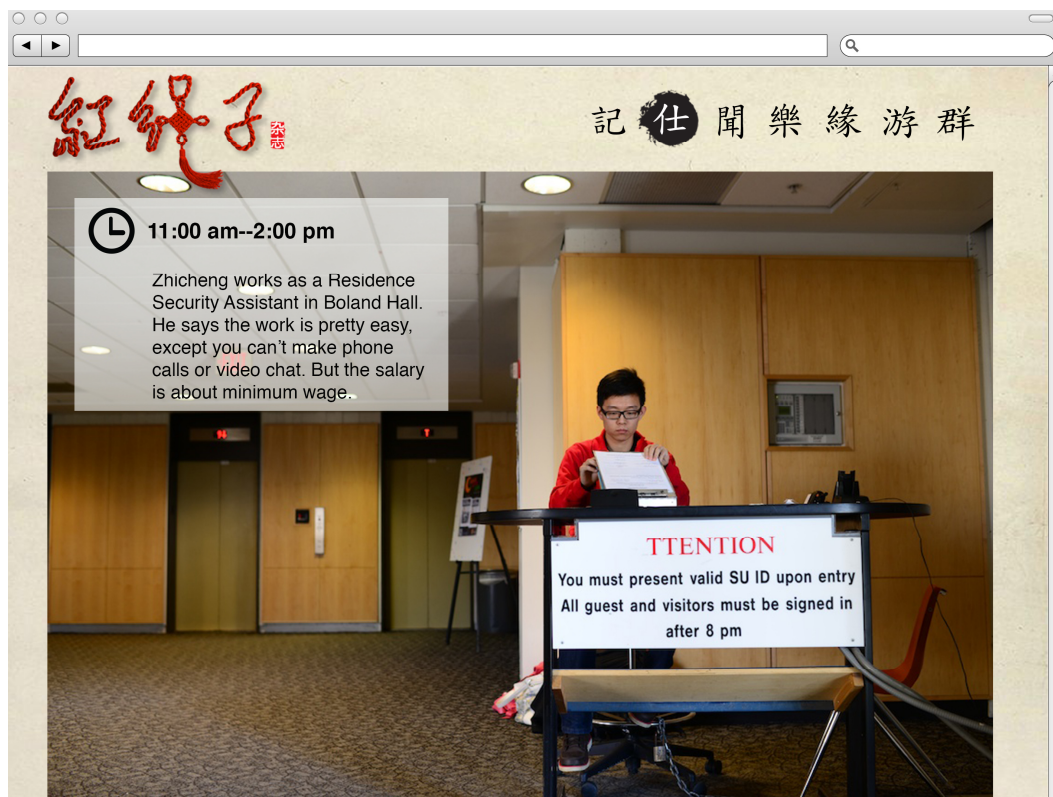
配料:  
蒜末、姜末、葱花各1勺  
料酒1小勺  
生抽2大勺  
老抽1小勺  
糖1小勺  
老干妈1大勺  
清水60毫克

做法:

1. 茄子洗净去头去蒂切滚刀块后, 上面撒点盐腌15--20分钟(这样可以防止茄子吸油)。之后倒掉因腌制渗出来的水分。
2. 粉丝提前用凉水泡软。
3. 起油锅下一半量的姜末蒜末炒香后倒肉末煸炒至颜色发白, 炆料酒后翻几下捞出。
4. 锅里倒一点油后烧热后倒入剩下的姜末蒜末炒香后倒入茄子炒至变软, 下生抽老抽翻匀。
5. 下粉丝肉末, 老干妈, 糖和清水, 炒1分钟后全都倒入土锅里。
6. 盖上土锅盖, 小火焖5, 6分钟。
7. 开盖, 撒上葱花即可。

(来源: 豆瓣@凉大爷 已经得作者同意转载)

食 象 車 書 戲 音



### **Summary of Capstone Project**

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Unlike a travel book that lists the essential information about dining, flight tickets, transportation and housing, and targets the students in China who will come to the U.S. to study, *Red Rope* mainly serves the students who currently study in American universities. As a national magazine that speaks to Chinese students in different states, *Red Rope* addresses the common challenges and aspirations shared by Chinese students across the U.S. The magazine will develop into a popular platform for students from different parts of China studying in different American universities to exchange ideas and establish networks. Through the

Chinese Student and Scholar Association (CSSA) already in place at most universities, Chinese students have access to information necessary for daily lives. On the other hand, the existence of CSSAs also makes it easy for students to rely on the wisdom of fellow Chinese students rather than forcing themselves out of their comfort zone. Therefore, part of the mission for the magazine is to encourage Chinese students to be experts themselves and to prosper beyond the Chinese community.

In order to fulfill the mission of the magazine, I created six departments and a blog section. First, the feature section includes a package of three to five articles on the same topic. The theme is different for every issue. The package consists of one lengthier feature story, some sidebars, and other fixtures such as personality profiles, Q&As, trend stories, and service information from experts. The feature package covers broader issues important to Chinese students in the U.S., including looking for jobs in the U.S., major news events, or critical issues such as the trend of Chinese students returning home. The academic section explores one specific academic major per issue, and it aims to reveal what it is really like to study this major in an American university. This section includes a feature story, a day-in-life photo essay documenting a day's events of one student in this major, a profile or Q&A with a successful figure in this field, and some tips about what to expect and how to prepare. The news department includes a monthly round-up of major news events from China, with both coverage from Chinese and American media, and news related to college recruitment, immigration policy,

and anything concerning the Chinese community in the U.S. The entertainment section features monthly concert events, entertainment news, and trend stories. The relationship section offers a mix of opinion columns and personal essays including service pieces on issues such as long-distance relationships. There are also letters from the readers and the sharing of personal experiences relating to dating, friendship and families. The travel section features holiday special packages before long vacations such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring Break and summer vacation, since international students often choose to travel during breaks. The articles offer travel pieces on destination ideas, sightseeing sites, and hotel and restaurant reviews. During non-holiday months, the section features submissions about personal trips and local college cities with special events, unique cultural environments or simply good places to hang out. Finally, the blog section includes cooking, photography, automobiles, movies, books, fashion, and music. One to two bloggers who are passionate and have some expertise in these interest areas are responsible for updating the blogs weekly. The blogs provide a place to share knowledge and events and offer a platform to meet friends.

Since the magazine's targeted audience is Chinese students across the U.S., *Red Rope* will begin as a website, but the content and style of design are similar to a print magazine. From my survey of Chinese students in the U.S., they rarely read print magazines and spend the majority of their time looking for information online. Except for the blog section, which will be updated regularly, the other departments will produce content based on a monthly publishing schedule. The

cover of the website will change each month depending on the topic of the feature stories, and the timeline for news and events is monthly as well. The website will be available in both Chinese and English. Unless the author writes in English, all articles will be available in Chinese, and all feature stories will be translated into English. The magazine also will have a social media presence, including a RenRen (Chinese version of Facebook) public page and a Weibo (Chinese version of Twitter) account.

What I created for the capstone project is far from perfect, but it will function as a critical blueprint and test model for the future development of the magazine. It starts small but carries a grand ambition. Counting on the success and popularity of the online magazine, I hope to recruit a team of skilled editors, writers, researchers and designers to publish and print monthly issues that will be distributed via local CSSAs in the future. When an extensive readership is established, I plan to form a network of Chinese students in the U.S. who could facilitate a more efficient knowledge exchange, including offering career help, and organizing networking events. In China, I also wish to set up a Parents Network for those who have children studying abroad. Most Chinese families only have one child, and parents are often lonely and feel very distanced from their child. A Parents Network could help these adults to make friends, arrange U.S. travel plans, and share information with each other.

The anxiety and helplessness Chinese parents feel can best be illustrated in the recent tragedy of the Boston Bombing. Following the event, the last victim identified was Lu Lingzi, a Chinese daughter studying at Boston University. Throughout the course of the investigation, there were many erroneous reports about the identity of the Chinese student. Some American news outlets reported the death of another Chinese student, who, in fact, suffered minor injuries. And Chinese news outlets struggled to obtain any first-hand information. This tragic event demonstrated to me the need for a publication that speaks directly to Chinese students studying in America. In fact, the need for such a magazine seems almost too great and too urgent for a personal project that lacks the size and scale to meet the demand.

Chinese immigrants began coming to the United States a long time ago, and the Chinese population in the U.S. is significant. However, it is one of the unfortunate aspects of the Chinese culture that its people often have a hard time uniting with each other. Internal conflicts happen frequently. I hope the magazine can help unite and empower the Chinese community in the U.S. The ideal may be too great, but the power of media is immeasurable.