

Fellow picks UWSP over Cornell

China native impressed by environmental education

By CARLOS GIESEKEN
JOURNAL STAFF

Yu Wang, a native of Kunming, China, has learned much about Wisconsin, the United States and the English language since her arrival on the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus last August.

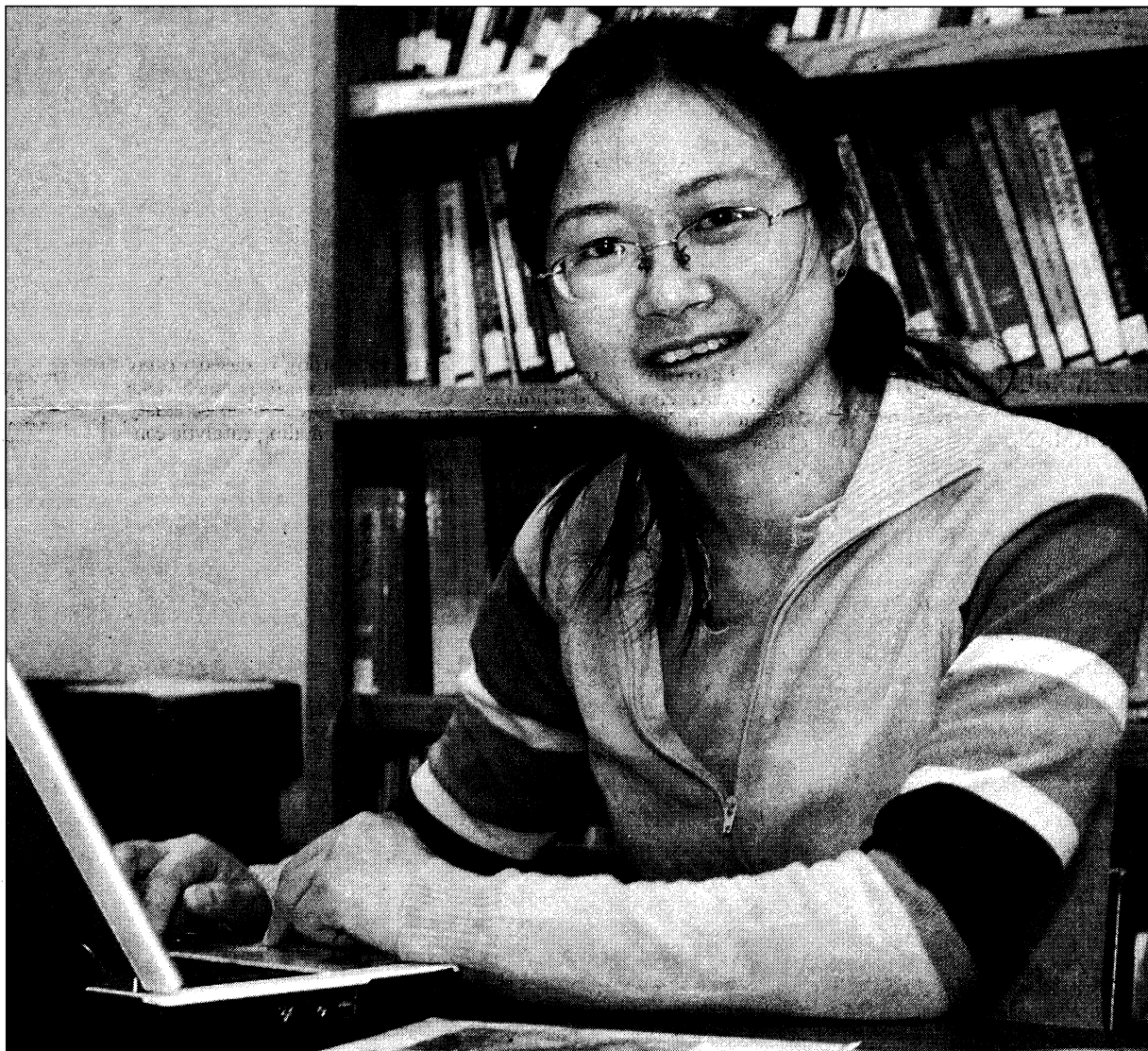
Wang is the first recipient of the prestigious Ford Fellowship to attend UWSP. She picked the school's College of Natural Resources over a similar program offered at Cornell University.

"When I compared the two schools, here the faculty had a much stronger emphasis on environmental education," Wang said in her accented but very articulate English. "I'm very glad I picked here."

The 27-year-old environmental education graduate student enjoys the American style of learning, which focuses on hands-on experience and practical education. Although the Chinese style of teaching environmental education has moved toward this approach in the last few years, it is still primarily a lecture-based system.

Wang was one of 460 Ford Fellows named in 2004, picked from 20,000 applicants in 22 countries. Each selection is based on academics, leadership and a commitment to the development of their native communities.

"I think it is probably a real milestone for our program in environmental education," said Wang's graduate studies mentor, Randy Champeau, associate dean of CNR and director of the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education. "It says a lot about our nationally known program. We're just really lucky to have her here."



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Yu Wang, a foreign exchange student from China at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, was awarded a Ford Fellowship.

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As part of her graduate studies project, Wang is helping the Global Environmental Teaching (GET) program at UWSP develop its China exchange program, to go along with its South Africa, Puerto Rico and Mexico programs. She

is also developing an online training component that Wisconsin teachers will take before leaving for a three-week trip to Beijing, Yunnan Province and the Xinjiang region of China in the summer of 2007.

"Her help is invaluable,"

said Susan Ermer, GET program coordinator. "She has first-hand experience with environmental education in China. She's been able to help us set up those networks."

Wang said China began to address its environmental degradation and pollution issues over the last 20 to 30 years. In the late 1990's, environmental education started and there are now state-mandated requirements in primary and middle schools.

"Now it's really flowering," Wang said. "Many more people care about it."

She said she eventually would like to be a university professor, but would also like to be a primary school teacher as well.

Wang said she is enjoying her time in central Wisconsin but misses the warmth of southern China, where she enjoyed outdoor activities.

"I love Wisconsin's forests, rivers and lakes," she said. "I grew up in a big, crowded city. The air quality and water are not as good as Stevens Point."

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