

Finding Hope in China



They met for the first time on campus in May, but Dan Tian '08 and Ziyue Liu '12 of China are nearly family friends. It was a book by Dan's mother concerning her college search that ultimately led Ziyue to Hope when her mother read the volume and realized that Hope matched Ziyue's interests as well.

When it comes to the college search, it is important to consider the insight of mothers.

As a soon-to-graduate high school student in Chongqing, China, Ziyue Liu '12 knew that she wanted a different kind of college experience, something other than the large, comprehensive university that she could anticipate attending if she remained in China.

"I started to be really interested in liberal arts colleges," Liu said. "I really liked the small-school atmosphere."

Hope helpfully connected Ziyue Liu with a current student from China who could share some perspective. They started talking, and both discovered just how small the world can be.

She decided to study in the U.S., but there was one problem: where to begin?

"Very few people know about liberal arts colleges in China," she said.

Liu had spent time in the U.S. as a high school exchange student and was comfortable doing some research online, but the long-distance process—and the fact that the

nation is home to hundreds of colleges—wasn't leading to a clear choice. Her mother appreciated her dilemma and wanted to help, but doesn't speak English and wasn't able to aid in her search.

Except... Liu's mother found a book in Chinese by another mother whose daughter had studied in the U.S. and had herself chosen to do her undergraduate work at a liberal arts college. The 2007 book, whose title can be translated as *Introduction to American High School*, spoke highly of the daughter's experience at Hope College and her involvement in the accounting program—the same major in which Liu was interested.

It was enough to prompt Liu to contact the college, and Hope helpfully connected her with a current student from China who could share some perspective. They started talking, and both discovered just how small the world can be.

"I told her how I found out about Hope and how I read the book, and she said, 'My mom wrote the book,'" Liu said. The surprise was understandable—Tian's mother had used a different name in the book.

Tian's journey to Hope had begun from a bit nearer than Liu's. She graduated from Walter Payton College Preparatory High School in Chicago, Ill., where her father was part of China's diplomatic staff. She had correspondingly been able to visit a number of the schools that she considered, and as so often happens it was when she set foot on the Hope campus that she knew.

"I really liked the people and the professors

that I met in that college visit," she said.

Tian participated in the Phelps Scholars Program and Hope's Asian Perspective Association (HAPA) and the International Relations Club (IRC). She has recently completed a master's in accounting at Notre Dame University and has gone on to work with a Big-Four accounting firm in Silicon Valley.

Like Tian, Liu is pleased with her Hope choice. She, too, has been involved in multiple campus activities, including the Phelps Scholars Program, HAPA and the IRC. She was a resident assistant with the Phelps Scholars Program this past year, and will be an RA in Columbia Apartments next year. She participated in the Japan May Term earlier this summer, and in the fall will be in the Baker Scholars and continuing an internship with the Holland Area Chamber of Commerce.

"I feel like this was my best decision ever," Liu said.

Although Tian helped bring Liu to Hope, she wasn't able to greet her when she arrived as an incoming freshman—she graduated the previous spring. The two women stayed in touch online, however, and were able to work out their first in-person meeting on campus this spring as the college's Finals Week drew to a close.

Appropriately, the conversation turned to their mothers. Liu noted that she had made a point of telling hers that she was finally meeting the person who had inspired her own Hope journey.

"My mom is so excited," she said. "She said, 'I want to thank Dan's mom.'" 🙌

