

TECC Talk

1 Introduction

This project reflects one of TECC's core values, which is embedded in the name of this organization itself: connecting culture. Today, geographical distances seem negligible when technological advances such as the Internet intertwine the world's cultures in deeper ways than ever before. In the advancing Information Age, each individual country's actions now have direct consequences for the whole world. This is especially true if those actions belong to the two Eastern and Western powers of China and the United States, who each hold major power in determining the fate of the world. At the heart of change, college students comprise the generation that possesses the power to determine the future actions of their respective countries. Therefore, we believe that providing an accessible platform where students from different countries can discuss relevant and controversial topics such as environmental, economic or human rights issues will result in significant cultural exchange from which both groups can learn much from each other. Furthermore, the differing perspectives held by Chinese and American students will shed light on various facets of these difficult issues. TECC Talk will provide this opportunity by setting up web conferences using common messenger programs between Chinese and American students, giving them a chance to discuss these issues in both large and small group settings.

2 Purpose

As a project initiated by TECC, TECC Talk's main focus is to create a means to harbor both academic and cultural discussions between two distinct cultures through technological means. Through this project we will help foster the exchange of both cultural opinions and give the students the opportunity to interact with each other through web conference. By utilizing free web conferencing software, we will be able to provide a cost effective and convenient method of communication. For this project, we want to give the Chinese teams the opportunity to practice their English and for both teams to be highly engaged in a seminar discussion on a given topic with people from very different backgrounds. By providing a venue through technology for two cultures to exchange information, the project will indeed help create a greater understanding for different opinions which have been cultivated by current social norms and long-held cultural values. This cultural exchange will provide positive, perspective-broadening experiences for tomorrow's leaders in both China and the U.S.

3 Methods & Mechanisms

3.1 Discussion Format

- Two phases:
 - I) Small group (2 vs. 2) discussions
 - II) Larger forums consisting of 6 students on each side
- TECC Stanford and TECC China chapters will alternate providing moderators and choosing topics for discussion (details below).

3.1.1 Phase I: Small Group Discussions

- Students meet in small groups (2 U.S. students and 2 Chinese students) to talk about the issue in a smaller, more intimate setting.
- Host chapter will begin with quick icebreakers.

- Hosts will also provide a short list of discussion questions on the topic of discussion.
 - TECC members will be present to help participants with initial web conferences setup to minimize technology difficulties.
 - Multiple timeslots (accounting for time difference) in which to do small group discussion will be provided.
 - Timeslots would have to be midday for China, evening time for US.
 - Ideal time would be Saturday evening (Sunday early afternoon or midday).
 - Look into meetings during the week - maybe late night for US, around 4PM for China.
 - Conferences are meant to take thirty minutes to one hour.

3.1.2 Phase II: TECC Talk Forum

- Meet in a larger group (6 students on each side) for a broader discussion,.
- Participants from each chapter will gather in a room around one computer for a larger discussion.
- Discussion will take on a debate format to begin with, with each making an opening statement stating their own current beliefs on the topic of discussion.
 - After opening statements, the floor will be opened and a general discussion will commence.
 - One moderator will be present (either from TECC China or TECC Stanford)
 - The moderator will maintain order within the discussion and ask questions to facilitate discussion as needed.
 - Conferences will last an hour and a half.

3.1.3 Frequency

- Large group forums will take place once a month on a weekend, with small group discussions taking place on any of the remaining three weekends
- Depending on the number of applicants, multiple “rotations” will be formed, with perhaps two or more discussions taking place per month on different weekends.
- We will create as many groups as needed to keep discussion groups to a reasonable size.

3.1.4 Parties Involved in Web Conference

The web conferences will include two parties:

- 1) Students at Stanford University (either members of TECC Stanford and/or students currently enrolled who are interested in Chinese-U.S. related topics). It is helpful if the students have experience with Chinese language.
- 2) TECC China affiliated students who can speak moderate English as there will be bilingual moderators hosting the discussions.

3.1.5 Means for Recruiting and Notification

- Members of both parties will be recruited and notified about our cross cultural exchange (and possibly language enhancement in China) opportunity by e-flyers and physical flyers from TECC Stanford and TECC China.
 - The applicant pool will consist of TECC members and any other interested students.
- *Note: Recruiting in the early stages of the project will consist of asking TECC members if they would be interested and TSI applicants who show interest. After the

first couple of conferences are completed, recruitment will open to the wider university community.

3.1.6 Application Process

- Applicants will indicate both weekend availability and specific areas of interest (politics, economics, social issues, etc.)
- This information will be used to pair students up into four-student groups for the small group discussions.

3.1.7 Technology to be Utilized

- Both the large and small group discussions will be executed using Skype, a messenger software that is prevalent and functional in both the U.S. and China.
- It has been confirmed by current members of TECC U.S. that Skype video chats are a viable option for audioconferencing. Some current members of TECC Stanford use Skype on a routine basis to talk to family members at home in China.
- In the event of a faulty or inconsistent connection, Skype's chat function will be used.

3.1.8 Language

- For each session, the language used for discussion will mainly be English. (Chinese is acceptable when there are specific terms difficult to convey in English.) For these purposes, it will be helpful to have a bilingual moderator.

3.1.9 Moderators

- Either TECC China or TECC Stanford will provide a moderator to lead discussion.
- Bilingual moderators are required.
- TECC US Department will provide moderators with some broad background research on the issue of discussion and come up with discussion questions for small-group meetings and for the forum.

3.1.10 Topic Selection

- The party leading the discussion will decide the topic by popular vote
- Some example topics: the recent Copenhagen conference on climate change, economic differences between China and the U.S., healthcare availability across the world.

3.1.11 Building a community

- A web forum is already set up to provide a space for all the program participants to stay in touch and further discuss the topics or discuss any other global issues. This will help making the effect of TECC Talk more long lasting.
- <http://tecctalk.ning.com/>

3.1.12 Gauging Success

- Success will be gauged by the number of participants and by their subjective feedback.
- Participants in TECC Talk will be given a short questionnaire at the end of each monthly forum to rate the content of the discussion and their overall experience with the program.

4. Tentative Timeline

4.1 First Conference

- Given positive feedback from TECC China on TECC Talk, the planning for TECC Talk #1 will commence the week of **April 3rd**.
- TECC Stanford will lead the first forum and send other TECC chapters the necessary information (topic, potential meeting times, application information) by **April 1st**.
- Recruiting will commence the week of **April 5th**.
- Big group discussion for mock conference will be on **April 10**.
- The first small group discussions will take place the weekends of **April 17th, 24th and May 1st**.
- The first TECC Talk forum will be held on **May 8th**.

4.2 Subsequent Conferences

- After the first conference, planning for the second will begin during the following week.
- Information will be sent to participants via an email list.
- The timeline will remain the same: three weekends of small group discussions and one weekend of the larger TECC Talk forum
- Recruitment will be ongoing depending on interest