San Diego State University-Imperial Valley students speak on their experiences in China

By ROMAN FLORES, Staff Writer

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Dragons and pagodas, markets and ancient monuments were some of the sights that six San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus students got to enjoy at their Shanghai 2010 Summer Program.

The program, part of SDSU-IV’s study abroad efforts, was from May 28 to June 20, international program coordinator Miriam Castañon said. Castañon said the students experienced primarily the sights and sounds of Shanghai. Some were able to go on a bonus trip to Beijing.

The students’ reasons for studying overseas were just as broad as their experiences while in China, they said.

“I heard there were job opportunities teaching English in China,” Calexico resident and recent SDSU-IV graduate Vanessa Quezada said. “When I heard this program was being offered, I realized I had in front of me the unique opportunity to experience China, and so to test myself — to see if I could survive there. I wanted to make sure I will be OK in China before engaging in any job,” she said.

“I really didn’t know what to expect,” Melanie Murguia, Heber resident and incoming senior at SDSU-IV, said. “I was told to be really open-minded and not have any expectations of anything; to just have a good time and that’s what I did. I gained a really broad perspective about a different culture,” she said.

During their trip the students experienced a tour of Shanghai including a trip to water village Zhu Jia Jiao, a night cruise on the Huangpu River, an acrobatics show and The World Exposition Shanghai China 2010.

Even with all these sights, the students said they enjoyed the people just as much if not more than anything else.

“What I enjoyed the most were the parks in the cities where mostly elderly men and women gather to practice different Chinese traditional dances such as the fan, the sword, the stick dances,” Quezada said. “You can even see people wearing their traditional Chinese outfits as they practice martial arts. Some people prefer to sing in the park (or) play cards; for sure everyone has fun,” she said.

“I have traveled extensively through Mexico and England before, but it was in China where I encountered the most welcoming people,” Quezada said, and her fellow SDSU-IV students agreed.

Another point the students agreed upon was the commonality between the Chinese and Mexican cultures.

“I saw a lot of things in common,” SDSU-IV senior Richard Ojeda said. “Their family values, respect for elders, education … a lot of things.
“We’re not that different. We may look different but in culture we’re kind of the same,” Ojeda said.

The students also said they learned interesting life lessons from their Chinese experiences.

“I learned that people that have an open mind live a happier life,” Murguia said. “If you’re open-minded you try new things and you get to have a lot of fun; you’re happier,” she said.

“You get a different perspective; a more positive one,” Ojeda added.

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