



Alumni Spotlight: Craig Simon

Kokomo High School Class of 2014 graduate Craig Simon has spent the last three months studying Mandarin at National Taiwan Normal University in an effort to become a more global citizen.

"I wanted to learn Mandarin because it is the language with the most native speakers," Craig explained via email. "I feel that having knowledge of Asia – especially its culture and language – is essential to remain competitive in today's globalized world."

Between language lessons, Craig has explored Taiwan, which is half the size of Indiana but has four times the population. Craig has tried stinky tofu at the night market, visited Taipei 101 (one of the world's top 10 tallest buildings), and hiked the famous Elephant Mountain.

Craig noted he chose to study Mandarin in Taiwan because of its geographic location, as many other countries are just a short flight away. A few weeks ago, Craig spent time in Cambodia and then Vietnam, which marked the 28th country he's visited. In May, Craig plans to visit the Philippines, Indonesia, or Malaysia.

Craig says that Kokomo Schools inspired his love of international affairs. In 2015, as a senior at KHS, Craig traveled with a Kokomo contingent to our sister city of Dongyang, China, as KHS's student representative. The following year, he served as an international liaison for Kokomo Schools, and has since served as a resident assistant in the male international dormitory in downtown Kokomo.

Craig will continue his international travels in August when he begins work toward a Master's degree in Diplomacy and International Law from the American University of Paris. He earned his Bachelor's degree in historical-political science with a minor in business from Indiana University Kokomo in December 2016.

Coursework toward his Master's degree begins in September, but Craig plans to arrive in August to spend several weeks walking a portion of El Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James) before settling in Paris.

"I am incredibly excited to be centrally located in one of the world's most historic and cultural cities," Craig added. "Living in Paris for nearly a year will further add to my understanding of the world. Also, while I'm in Paris, I will be able to travel to other European countries that I have not yet visited, including Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, and Germany."

Craig is thrilled that American University of Paris (an American School with accreditation from the United States) has a partnership with the University of Oxford. The capstone of his Master's coursework is a four-week course at the Oxford Law School, where he will study International Human Rights Law.

Craig credited his success to the foundation he built while a student in Kokomo Schools.

"I would not be where I am today without Kokomo Schools," Craig noted. "Had Kokomo Schools officials not had the foresight to encourage students to be internationally minded... had Kokomo Schools not offered rigorous college preparatory programs... had Kokomo Schools not had a superb international exchange program... I would not be in Taiwan right now, nor would I be studying in Paris in a few months. The administrators and teachers in Kokomo Schools opened my eyes to the rest of the world by encouraging me to travel, teaching me to be a lifelong learner, and motivating me to pursue my goals. Kokomo Schools prepared me to be successful in a global world."



ENRICHMENT

GRANT: Chinese Dragon



A Kokomo Public Schools Education Foundation Enrichment Grant supported the purchase of a large Chinese dragon for use by Kokomo School Corporation students and staff members, especially those in the International Baccalaureate program. Kokomo High School students recently used the dragon to celebrate the Chinese culture during the annual KHS International Festival.

This new dragon replaced one purchased by English as a Second Language Teacher Holly Kirkpatrick before her death in 2012. Holly, who taught at Sycamore Elementary International School, personally purchased the original dragon that Sycamore students used to celebrate Chinese New Year each January.

The staff at Sycamore honored Holly's legacy by continuing the Chinese New Year celebrations each January. As the original dragon deteriorated, the Education Foundation received a request to fund the purchase of a new dragon that all students in Kokomo Schools could use. The Education Foundation board granted the request, using money from the Enrichment Grant fund. The dragon already has been used during convocations at Central Middle International School and at the KHS International Festival.

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