Alumni Profile: Qu Pengcheng (G3)  
China

Qu Pengcheng is the kind of guy whose smile is contagious. He never takes life too seriously, and classmates were always quick to identify him as the “nice guy” of the group—the one who could give sound advice, always act professionally, turn his papers in ahead of time, and do it all with a devilishly charming sense of humor.

For the past seven years, Pengcheng has been working in Beijing for the Division for International Organizations at the Department of International Relations in the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT). (How’s that for a mouthful of prepositional phrases?) He acts as the division’s contact point for several major international organizations, including APEC, PBEC, and the World Economic Forum. He also makes policy recommendations to the government on related issues.

What did you do immediately following the completion of the APLP?  
I returned to Beijing and took part in the preparation work for the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) International General Meeting in Beijing. That work lasted four months, and I played one of the major roles in organizing the project.

What specifically about the APLP have you found applicable to what you do now?  
One of the most important things that I learned during the APLP, and that I often use now, is facilitation skills. I apply this to my work during staff meetings and other teamwork activities and things turn out just fine. That is to say, the facilitation skills, specifically the process of legitimization and demonstrating respect to everyone on the team, helped me work with increased efficiency and satisfaction. In my work, I need to coordinate things and lead a group of people to finish a goal. Facilitation helps a lot.

Have you read your Personal Action Plan since graduating from the APLP, and if so, how closely has your life corresponded with your initial design?  
Yes, I have reviewed my Personal Action Plan. However, my life is not corresponding exactly with my initial design. This is to be expected as life changes. The PAP is a live document, a work in progress which should be regularly updated. But there are things that I follow as envisioned and designed in my original PAP.

What sort of coursework or preparation (during or beyond the APLP) would be helpful in landing a job in your field?  
Well, if someone wants to get a job in my field, that person needs to be proficient in Chinese and English or other major languages of the world. That person needs to have strong interpersonal skills to deal with different kinds of people, domestic or foreign. The person needs to be able to work under pressure and tolerate extremely hard work and long hours. A rich knowledge base, including regional literacy, is always helpful as well.

What personal attributes make you successful in your field? Do you think the APLP helped you to cultivate some of these qualities?  
There are several things that I remember learning and doing in the international setting of the APLP: (a) I contributed to the group. I believe that if everyone contributes even a little, the group will benefit a lot; (b) I learned that it is important to listen to others, especially in the APLP, as I knew almost nothing in the beginning about my classmates’ cultural backgrounds, life stories, opinions, goals, or other matters. Listening is an important tool to promote understanding; (c) Participating in group activities will help make friends and help us understand others; (d) Respect others.

Do you have a vision for the future of the APLP?  
The APLP was my first overseas study experience. I found it very rewarding, and I had much to learn from the program. I would like to see more countries and cultures represented in the APLP in the future. 45 countries in our alumni network is not enough!