Overland Park’s Confucius Institute tops
KU Edwards Campus facility teaches Chinese culture, language to executives, tourists, schoolchildren

KATRINA SEGERS
STAFF WRITER

Confucius say University of Kansas has best institute.
The Confucius Institute of KU, which teaches Chinese language and culture, took the top spot out of 220 institutes around the world when administrators “looked to see which institute was really fulfilling the mission,” Executive Director William Tsutsui said.

“Here in Kansas we’ve been very fortunate because we have a community that is very receptive to learning about China. They really need information about China because in New York or San Francisco you can walk out your front door and find Chinatown, find all these resources about China, it’s harder here in Kansas City,” Tsutsui said.

“We’ve been able to work closely with schools, to work closely with businesses like Black & Veatch, and then just to offer services to the general public in Johnson County, (which has) really gone a long way of raising people’s knowledge of China and raising people’s confidence in China.”

The Confucius Institute opened in May 2006 on the KU Edwards Campus, 12000 Quivira Road, Overland Park.

“We are the fifth Confucius Institute founded in the United States,” Tsutsui said. “Like all Confucius Institutes we are a partnership between an American institution and the Chinese government, in this case, KU and the Office of the Chinese Language Council International.”

He said the organizations foster Chinese study around the globe.

“Basically they are intended to help people around the world better understand Chinese heritage and language,” Tsutsui said. “That’s what we’ve been focusing on here in Overland Park. It’s focusing on helping all the people out there who want to learn more about China and speak Chinese do just that.”

He said the institute also allows the university to establish partnerships with the growing community of Asians and schools and businesses.

“The Confucius Institute is a great bridge between the institution and that really vibrant community that’s right on our doorstep,” he said. “We’ve been working with schools throughout Kansas, even in places like Missouri and Arkansas to help bring Chinese language into high schools. Even in the pre-K classrooms.”

Tsutsui said learning about China gives children an advantage.

“Parents realize now that to prepare their students for the future, Chinese is a really great thing to have and it sets them apart, it gives them a little leg up that they need,” he said.

Businesses benefit from partnerships with the institute, especially if their employees deal with Chinese companies on a regular basis, Tsutsui said.

“We’ve got an office in Beijing. We’ve got hundreds and hundreds of employees there because of projects they are working on,” Black & Veatch Energy College Manager Dave Swift said. “It kind of helps bridge the gap working with the Chinese. Chinese colleagues appreciate their American colleagues trying to learn their language.”

Swift said mainly engineers and technicians take the courses the company offers: one a basic Chinese language and culture course and the other a Chinese language course. He said the courses last 10 weeks and this spring will be the company’s fourth semester in the partnership.

Black & Veatch also utilized the Confucius Institute to hold a workshop for the chairman and board members to prepare for a conference in Beijing.

“On a weekly basis (employees) have conference calls. The engineers that have taken the classes have at least some basic Mandarin that they can utilize,” Swift said. “The biggest thing is just the rapport.”

Tsutsui said the partnership with Black & Veatch has proved successful and the institute recently established a partnership with MartinLogan, Lawrence, which produces speakers and “does a lot of business in China as well.”

Swift said before the institute, the company did not have a way of educating employees about China.

“I don’t know where else we would get it,” he said. “I personally don’t know any place else to get it in a structured way if it were not for the Confucius Institute.”

Tsutsui said he attended a conference at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, where he was one of five speakers from around the globe. He said while no one had heard of Overland Park, “people there have heard of (companies) like Black & Veatch and Sprint, so you realize that the business community is a very global community and it really does keep Johnson County connected to the world, even if a lot of people on a day-to-day basis aren’t thinking about China.”
"KU is one of the first institutions in the Midwest to teach the Chinese language as one of the largest Chinese study programs in America," he said. "The Confucius institute is just really the latest example of KU’s commitment to serving Kansas as a region when it comes to understanding Asia."

Official says Chinese easy to learn

William Tsutsui, executive director, Confucius Institute at University of Kansas, said the Confucius Institute offers Chinese language classes from a very elementary level. "It's preparing you to be able to go to China and speak," he said. "A lot of the people who have taken this are adoptive parents who are going to China. We've worked with people who are going as tourists to China, business people who would like to learn Chinese because of their dealings and also people who just want to do something fun."

Tsutsui said learning Chinese is often intimidating, but should not be. "Everyone thinks Chinese is going to be hard to learn. Chinese grammar is incredibly easy," he said. "You can start learning Chinese and be speaking Chinese pretty darn fast. If you want to start reading and writing, that is really hard, and that takes a long, long time."

He said the classes teach students about the culture and heritage of China including dining etiquette, communication and geographic history of the land.

For more information about the KU Confucius Institute, visit www.confucius.ku.edu/language_classes.shtml.
LEARNING LANGUAGES ... Dutch Muder and Lily D'Anieri display Chinese Horoscopes during Confucius Institute summer day camp in Chinese language and culture at the KU Edwards Campus in 2007.
Some feel anti-Semitism still occurs on television

DENNIS SHARKEY
STAFF WRITER

Some in the Jewish community say anti-Semitism remains high in America, and television and the media are not helping.

A recent episode of the hit TV show “House” attempted to poke a little fun at Jews.

The popular show aired right after the Super Bowl and drew millions of viewers.

The show’s main character, Dr. House played by Hugh Laurie, poked fun at the relationship between a Hasidic Jew and his new bride, who had a somewhat undesirable past.

One fan of the show said on a message board that she usually is amused when the House character pokes fun at religion, but the Jewish comments went over the line. Other people have expressed similar thoughts.

University of Kansas theater professor Henry Bial addresses how Jews are portrayed on TV and in the media in his book “Acting Jewish: Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen.”

Bial said there are four basic questions he tries to answer in the book, including, “How do viewers know when a character is Jewish?”

He said viewers who are Jewish are more likely to know, especially if raised in urban areas.

Bial said quite often “knowing” happens on a subconscious level through clues and implications.

“To know someone is Jewish, you have to know the codes,” he said.

Bial used the popular 1990s sitcom “Mad About You” as an example. Bial said the show touches on the issue of mixed marriage, but never does the show tell you Paul Riser’s character is Jewish.

Bial’s book also addresses the question, “Why do we care?”

Bial said Jews who identify Jewish characters take a sense of ownership from the experience.

“For some people being able to recognize members of the tribe is a way of affirming their status,” he said.

Others care for different reasons. Some believe that negative portrayals lead to anti-Semitism in society.

Rabbi Debbie Stiel’s congregation in Topeka recently hosted Bial to discuss his book.

“I felt that is true we feel a sense of enjoyment from picking that up,” she said. “Unless the person is portrayed negatively and then there is a sense of worry that it’s going to further negative stereotypes.”

During the presentation Bial showed clips from TV shows such as “Family Guy” that seem to portray Jews in a negative light.

Stiel said discussion of topic included differing views.

She said teenagers did not seem as worried about anti-Semitism as older members of her congregation.

Stiel thinks the youth’s perception will change with age.

“I remember being young and thinking that anti-Semitism is really an issue of the past and then you get older and you see it’s still around,” she said.

Bial said over the past 15 years a shift has occurred in American culture that makes Jewish writers and performers more comfortable with making fun of the religion.

“I think for a very long time and for very good reason the Jewish community was very active in policing stereotypes,” he said. “Some things you were not able to talk about you now can.”

Bial said he feels cautiously optimistic and that most of his students do not seem overly concerned.

“I think the generation in college now has been raised to think critically about the media,” he said. “Today we are bombarded with so many images from so many sources a single TV program isn’t destructive.

“If there seems to be a trend toward people taking things serious we would have to go back and look at it again,” he said.
Fire district concerned about tax loss

RYAN D. WILSON
STAFF WRITER

Consolidated Fire District No. 2’s governing body is asking the University of Kansas to pay for fire service.

The board is concerned about losing tax dollars should two buildings in the Fairway Office Park be used for biosciences or medical research.

The property owners don’t have any idea what the impact on fire services will be,” Fire District Chairwoman Marcia Jacobs said.

A building being purchased by the Hall Family Foundation that may house KU Medical School’s cancer research center generated $12,670 in property taxes for the fire district in 2007. The other building, which the Hall Family Foundation plans to maintain, generated $12,186.

Board members are concerned that losing the funds may necessitate a mill levy increase.

County Commissioner Ed Peterson, who represents the northeast district, recommended the fire district seek an agreement with KU Med for payment in lieu of taxes to soften the blow tax exemption would have on the district.

The board agreed KU Med would mostly likely agree to a one-time payment, though previous conversations with KU Med representatives have not indicated the school is interested in making payments, Jacobs said.

The fire board is unique from other governing bodies in that it would provide direct services to the research center, Peterson said.

“From the board’s perspective, what makes you different from all other governing bodies is that you provide direct services,” Peterson said. “It’s only fair that you ask something for that.”

Peterson warned the fire board that the research center may have a greater impact because of legislation being considered by the Kansas Legislature that would exempt leased from property being used for biosciences research.

Peterson said he also considered a one-eighth-cent sales tax proposed for the research center and two other bioscience facilities.
Enrollment spikes in the engineering and education schools increased second semester overall enrollment at KU Edwards Campus, 12600 Quivira Road, Overland Park, by 3 percent. Engineering school enrollment grew by 6 percent while education enrollment increased 14 percent.
Retiree turns keepsakes into decorative lamps

SYBIL KAPLAN
STAFF AFFILIATE

A retired Prairie Village man has the solution for what to do with special photographs of children’s weddings, grandchildren or an unforgettable trip.

J. Hoyl Lockett, 75, worked on construction/development teams in Tulsa, Okla., Denver and Philadelphia. In 1999, he and his wife, Judy, moved to the Kansas City area to be closer to their two children and three grandchildren.

Lockett decided he would be “really retired and get the basement cleaned out,” but his son kept coming up with entrepreneurial ideas for a business.

“He finally thought I ought to take up a new life because of my background,” Lockett said.

They came up with the idea of ImageLights – a decorative accent lamp not meant for reading, either in a truncated pyramid or a box shape with a customer’s favorite photos or graphics as the “shade” which can be interchanged with other shades.

The lamp base is walnut and can be painted black or white. On top is the triangular or square, clear, acrylic plastic lens. The interchangeable image is printed on a mylar page and the outer lens also is acrylic plastic. A full range dimmer switch allows the owner to adjust light according to the ambiance of the room.

Lockett said he first started receiving orders in December 2007. Lamps he has made include photographs of grandchildren, art images and a University of Kansas theme.

“Kansas is the only collegiate licensing we went after and in the next two weeks there will be an ad in the KU Alumni magazine, which is our target market,” Lockett said.

At www.imagelights.com, customers can upload their own digital photos, select the lamp shape template they want and drag photos onto the template.

Lockett assembles the lamps with the help and support of many local people and businesses, he said.

Wedding photographer Roland Omoresemi developed the Web site, Brad Niezer of Evolution Photographics helped set up templates to allow uploaded photos to be made in pyramid and box forms, and Lynn Stockelein, a graphics software expert, Kansas City, Mo., taught Lockett about digital graphics.

Miller Cabinets of Overland Park produces the painted bases and the walnut lamp bases are made in Indiana. Clear Impact Acrylics of North Kansas City make the lenses and Cope Plastics of Kansas City, Kan., make the outside pyramid lens.

Recent customer Kelly Young, Overland Park, a preschool teacher, sought Lockett’s services after he had a booth at the Cure of Ars Church, Prairie Village, during a gift gallery, which Young co-chaired.

“I had seen the product online and fell in love with the nursery lamp,” she said. Young designed a lamp for her mother-in-law with pictures of her children.

“I like that we can change the pictures as the kids get older,” she said.
LAMPMAKER
J. Hoyl Lockett, Prairie Village, assembles a University of Kansas lamp for sale on his Web site, imagelights.com, March 12 in his basement.
Area grads perform in college one-acts

Several area students will participate in undergraduate one-act plays at the University of Kansas theater in April.

In "The Bald Soprano," senior Joe Carey of Lenexa, a Shawnee Mission Northwest High School graduate, will play the Fire Chief; senior Hillary Kelman of Shawnee, a Shawnee Mission North graduate, will play Mary, the Maid; and senior Andi Porter, a Bishop Miege High School graduate, will play Mrs. Smith.
The University of Kansas School of Business has nominated five students for scholarships for the Chartered Financial Analyst exam taking place in June. Johnson County nominees are: Ryan J. Peschka, Overland Park, master’s student in business administration; Marc S. Mixon, Roeland Park, senior in finance and accounting; and John Stephen Spillane, master’s student in business administration.
East graduate helps build Greensburg

William Cary Lockwood, Shawnee Mission East High School graduate, is a participant in Studio 804 at the University of Kansas school of Architecture and Urban Planning. The group will design and construct a sustainable prototype for Greensburg, Kan.
Clark Graduated From KU Law Enforcement Training Center

KU announces 54 graduates of law enforcement training center. Located near Hutchinson, the training center is a unit of KU Continuing Education and provides training for the majority of law enforcement officers throughout Kansas.

Hometowns include Anthony and Harper. Hutchinson Fairway Police Chief John Simmons congratulated 54 graduates of the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center at a March 7 ceremony in the 4-H Encampment Building on the Kansas State Fairgrounds.

The graduates, who began their training course Sept. 10, represented 37 municipal, county and state law enforcement agencies from across Kansas. They were the 195th basic training class of graduates.

The training center is a unit of University of Kansas Continuing Education. Established in 1968 as the central law enforcement training facility for the state, the center is near Yoder.

Graduates receive certificates of course completion and Kansas law enforcement certification from the Kansas Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training, the state's law enforcement licensing authority. The training course fulfills the state requirement for law enforcement training. Classroom lectures and hands-on applications help train officers to solve the increasingly complex problems they face in the line of duty.

The center trains the majority of municipal, county and state law enforcement officers in Kansas and oversees the training of the remaining officers at seven authorized and certified academy programs operated by local law enforcement agencies and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

About 350 officers enroll annually in the 14-week basic training program.

The center offered continuing education and specialized training to more than 2,500 Kansas officers last year. Funding for the training center is generated from court docket fees from municipal and state courts. No funds from the state's general revenue are used to operate the center.

Graduating from Harper County was Sheriff's Department Ryan Clark, Deputy Harper. From Sumner County Sheriff's Department Wellington, Aaron Lamb, Deputy Argonia.
KU students moving building to Greensburg

LAWRENCE, Kan. — A group of University of Kansas students and their professor will take on a giant task Monday when they move a community building they constructed to Greensburg.

The project is the students’ contribution to a reconstruction effort for the tornado-ravaged town.

The group of architectural students built the structure in a warehouse on the site of the old Farmland Industries plant. They started in January, gathering wood for the project at the former Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant in De Soto.

Last week, they began disassembling their creation to get it ready for the 400-mile trip to Greensburg, which was mostly destroyed when a massive tornado struck the western town last May. The drive to Greensburg is normally only 270 miles, but the journey to transport the building will take longer because the group will go east past Wellsville before heading west to avoid overpasses and narrow roads.

The 22 graduate students will live in southwest Kansas starting Monday and stay through May 4 — the one-year anniversary of the tornado. They will live in dorms at Pratt Community College and drive a half-hour to Greensburg each morning. They couldn’t stay in Greensburg because of a shortage of buildings.

The students said they have a lot more work to do, including painting, installing electrical fixtures and laying flooring. The building will be moved to Greensburg in seven sections and completed on site.

One of the students, Zack Arndt, said their deadline is May 4 but “we’d like to be done a couple of weeks before that, just so we can tie up some loose ends.”

The building will be named 547 Arts Center. It is a direct reference to the date the tornado ravaged the town: 5-4-2007.

“I don’t think my emotions could have swelled much more throughout this process because I’ve been waiting so long for it,” said Jenny Kivet, another student working on the project. “But to know it’s going to a place that needs it and to people that appreciate it and want it is something very special and exciting.”