



Teaching to Learn: IAFS Student Interns in China

Renee Gagne (IAFS '20) was nervous when she walked into the classroom on her first day of teaching English in Anhui, China. However, her nervousness immediately subsided upon being greeted with enthusiastic hellos and high-fives from smiling students. It was in these moments that she realized the significance of engaging with people on the other side of the world.

In 2019, Gagne accepted a summer internship in Shanghai at [Stepping Stones](#), an organization focusing on educating children of migrant families in urban and rural communities of China. For her internship, she taught English classes in Shanghai and spent a week at a rural school in Anhui, China. Her lessons varied from reviewing vocabulary to singing songs in English. Her week in rural Anhui was particularly memorable because she would spend recess time with the students. "They invited me to share activities with them such as making *zongzi* (sticky rice dumplings), attending a martial arts lesson, and administering English proficiency exams," explains Gagne.

Through her time in urban and rural areas of China, Renee has seen the effects of the developing economy on its people of Shanghai. Upon returning, Gagne decided to integrate her experience in China with her honors thesis, examining how institutional barriers impact the relationship between housing and education of temporary migrants in Shanghai. Her living, learning, and working days in China are far from over: Gagne plans to pursue graduate school and become a U.S. diplomat in the Foreign Service stationed in China. "I will always value the knowledge and memories I collected from teaching in China," Gagne says, "And, teaching in the rural community of Anhui has given me a new, wider perspective of China that will impact my future career aspirations."

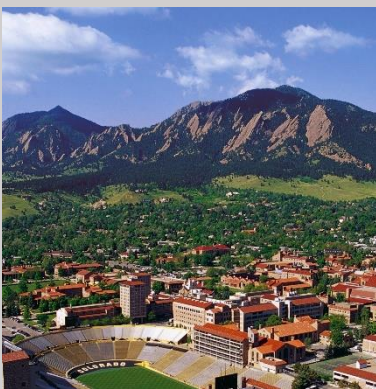
Renee Gagne is majoring in International Affairs and pursuing minors in Chinese and Business. In 2018, she received a [Global Grant](#) for a summer global seminar study abroad program to China.



Gagne with students, Anhui, China.



Gagne teaching in a classroom, Anhui, China.



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