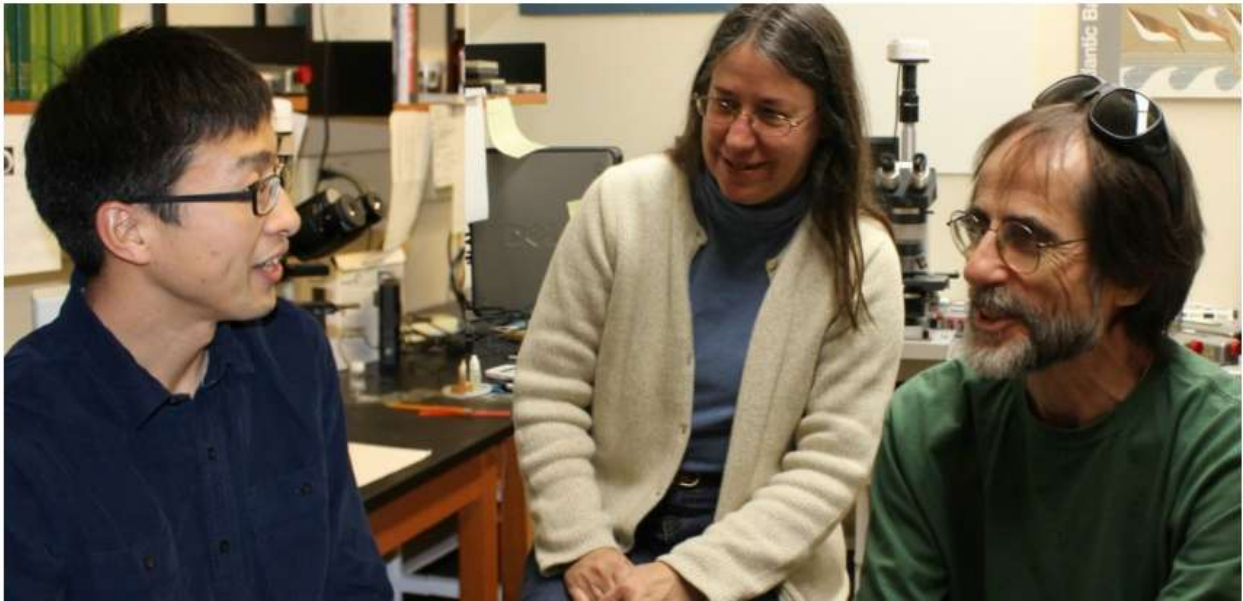


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Biology professor collaborates with Chinese researcher

Posted January 31, 2014 at 3:53 pm by [Tom Scherberger](#)



Guangjie Chen (left to right), Biological Sciences Chair Melanie Riedinger-Whitmore and Thomas Whitmore

It has been 21 years since Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences Thomas Whitmore, Ph.D., conducted the first large systematic water quality studies in lakes around Yunnan Province in China. Now he is working with a Chinese researcher on a new study that will expand the original work.

Guangjie Chen, Ph.D., a geography professor at Yunnan Normal University, spent this week at USF St. Petersburg collaborating with Whitmore on new research and discussing how they can work together in the future. They also discussed the possibility of creating a scientific student exchange program between USFSP and Yunnan Normal.

Chen has received four years of funding by the China's National Science Foundation and is working with a team of graduate students on the project. Whitmore's work in the early 1990s was funded with a U.S. National Science Foundation grant.

"There have been considerable changes in water quality since those original studies because of nutrient runoff and pollution," Whitmore

says. They will be able to compare Chen's new findings with those Whitmore and his colleagues gathered.

Chen will have some advantages Whitmore lacked. Back then, the technology was far less advanced and the region was far less accessible.

"We went to many places where westerners had never been," Whitmore said. "Crowds would gather when we arrived. It would take us days to reach some locations. It was an adventure!"

Chen describes those earlier studies as pioneering research.

Whitmore and Chen have been discussing the collaboration since 2010 and are excited that it is finally under way.

Whitmore, who was a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Florida when he conducted the original research, has done many similar water quality studies across Florida. The climate and geography in Yunnan are very similar to Florida's, he says. Among other things, Whitmore is the principal investigator on a Florida Department of Environmental Protection research contract with USFSP to establish water quality standards in the state.

International collaboration is common in the fields of paleolimnology and water quality research, Whitmore says. "It is a highly collaborative discipline," he explains. "People use many scientific skills so we often have international teams."

"The collaboration between Dr. Whitmore and Dr. Chen is an excellent example of the world-class research underway at USF St. Petersburg," said Vivian Fueyo, Ph.D., interim regional vice chancellor for academic affairs. "I am particularly pleased that they are discussing an exchange program, which would benefit both institutions and particularly our students."



Thomas Whitmore and Jiang ZhiWen, Senior Geologist from the Yunnan Institute of Geological Sciences, in 1993 stand next to Lugu Hu on the border of Yunnan and Sichuan provinces.

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