Columbia's Students Design Practial Plans to Implement New Environmental Legislation

There are no easy answers to longstanding environmental policy issues such as the need to balance economic growth with environmental concerns, and the debate over the causes of global warming. But at Columbia, graduating students, whether returning to the U.S. or not, are finding that they, too, have something to contribute to implementing solutions to these issues. The overall aim of the work-shops was to help students analyze the scientific aspects of environmental management issues and their solutions to these questions and ultimately lead to a more successful project.

For instance, a team of 12 reviewed the U.S. Safe Water Curreny Act of 1990. Proposed by U.S. Senate Majority leader Bill Frist and Senate Minority leader Harry Reid, the act would provide individuals and organizations with the tools and knowledge to develop a new generation of transportation planners through the four student awards we are providing, and to enable the four organizations being awarded planning funds today to conduct important innovative and basic research on environmental issues.

Student to Assist with NYC's Transportation Problems

David Dayu Zhang, GSAPP'96 and a native Chinese graduate of Beihang University in Beijing, will soon be using his unique international experiences to bring New York's commuting troubles to a halt. Zhang is one of three recipients of the first annual Columbia 11th Memorial Program Award for Transportation Planning. In the upcoming weeks, he can look forward to a stipend and a one-year internship with the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), an association of regional governments and transportation providers. He plans to look into the feasibility of implementing a bus rapid-transit system at the regional level.

NYMTC created the new awards program in honor of three of its former employees—Ignazu Aldano, Charles Esperance and See Wong Shum—who lost their lives at the World Trade Center on September 11. The awards are extended to graduate students and local organizations that educate people in transportation technology and planning, to encourage innovative transport solutions.

The best way to honor our former colleagues is to help develop a new generation of transportation planners through the four student awards we are providing, and to enable the four organizations being awarded planning funds today to conduct important work on regional transportation issues,” said NYMTC Executive Director Joel P. Ettinger at the Sept. 6 awards ceremony.

With problems ranging from transportation for the aging to the need to provide safe routes for students to schools, NYMTC faces some daunting challenges. But Zhang, who has worked on a number of urban transportation projects in high-density cities including Beijing and Hong Kong, is optimistic about what he can contribute to New York’s transportation scene. “It will be challenging but exciting,” he says. “In particular, I am looking forward to creating better alternatives and solutions for commuters, drawing on my experiences abroad and here at Columbia.”

The third new trustee is Michael B. Rothfeld, who was also an international fellow at Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs from 1970 to 1971. Rothfeld is chair of the Board of Visitors of Columbia College and has served on the advisory board of the journalism school’s Knight-Bagehot program in business and financial journalism. He has been an associate editor of Fortune magazine, assistant to the chairman and chief executive officer of Time Inc., a managing director in the investment banking division of The First Boston Corporation, and, through private corporations, a general partner of Bessemer Capital Partners, L.P. and of Bessemer Holdings, L.P. Since 1998, he has produced plays on and off Broadway and has been a private investor.

Columbia’s Trustees traditionally serve six-year terms. The newly elected Trustees began their terms on Sept. 6.