

Tianyi Tan

**Graduation Year:** Sophomore

**College:** Arts & Letters

**Major(s):** History

**Minors(s):** N/A

**Scholar Group Membership:** Kellogg International Scholars Program

**Did you received other funding for this project?:** No.

**Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding?** No

**More details on CUSE funding assistance?**

**Project Title:** Latest Chinese Judicial Reform (2014): Construction of the Legal Professional Community

**Project Location:** Shanghai, China

**ND Faculty Mentor:** Peter Moody

**Project Type:** Research

**Why did you undertake this project/experience?** Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Prepare for professional school (MD, MBA, JD), Career discernment and/or preparation

**Did your funded experience help you:**

**[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]:** Yes

**[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]:** Very Much

**[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]:** Very Much

**[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]:** Yes

**[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:**Yes

**Tell us about your experience.**

My research centers on the latest Chinese judicial reform that formally launched in 2014 yet has only made much substantial progress in this year. Since the reform still largely stays in the initial stage, I chose to focus my research in Shanghai, one of the seven pilot cities of the reform. I hope to find out the impacts this latest judicial reform on the career patterns of legal practitioners and more importantly, the construction progress of the legal professional community. During my summer in Shanghai, I have conducted several individual interviews with legal practitioners including lawyers, law school students, legal scholars and judges. Due to schedule issues, the interviews took place throughout the whole summer instead of densely concentrated within two weeks as planned. Nevertheless, the spread-out pattern of the interviews unexpectedly helped me to keep amending my research paper along the writing process. I have also gathered important information from the online database [www.cnki.net](http://www.cnki.net) with the assistance of Professor Dongying Hong from East China University of Political Science and Law. Fortunately I also managed to intern at the Shanghai office of Zhong Lun Law Firm for a month, which gives me a precious opportunity to closely observe lawyers and their working patterns. My biggest challenge has been to balance between the macro perspective of reform policies and the concrete individual experiences of my interviewees. While this research does

not generate one definite judgment of the latest Chinese judicial reform, it is very thought-provoking to see how general guidelines from the central government would turn into various specific policies that directly influence people's life. In a sense my research has more to do with policy-making than professional legal studies.

**Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.**

This research is indeed my first individual research that requires me to restrict my perceptual understandings of the Chinese legal system in order to be relatively objective, which because of its daily familiarity to me has been challenging. Moreover, to fully comprehend the latest judicial reform I also have to learn how to extract relevant information from lengthy government documents. The last challenge comes from my interviews with legal practitioners, for it took me some time to explore the most effective way to lead the conversation for my research purpose. Hence the whole research process trained my ability to manage an individual research project all along, and I now feel more confident about future opportunities that need a combination of different research methods. For some of my interviewees (legal scholars in particular) it has been truly intriguing to have serious academic conversations with me, since they have been colleagues of my mother and thus family friends over years. Such experience of role adjustment has been quite eye-opening for me as I truly became aware of the transition between different identities of a person, which does not directly relate to my research yet broadens my horizon.

**Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.**

Under the influence of my mother, a law professor, I have loosely followed the progress the latest Chinese judicial reform before this project and somehow felt the impacts it has brought to many legal practitioners. This project allows me to see how the once distant policy-making at national level could significantly change the life of people around me, which furthers my interest in political science I now intend to major in at Notre Dame. I also intend to explore the Chinese legal profession through this research project with a focus on individual career experience, for I currently consider law school and a legal career as the most likely choice after my graduation. In addition to experience of the legal profession, the limitation of my research due to time and location encourages me to look for future opportunities, e.g. a senior thesis, to more thoroughly explore the topic of legal system.

**What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?**

The most unexpected yet also most helpful part of my research is my short-term intern at Zhong Lun Law Firm, which prepared me with more insights of the legal profession. Working alongside lawyers and assisting them to handle several projects was an irreplaceable experience from which I understand the operation "rules" of the profession better. Hence I would suggest that if the research subject involves career patterns of a specific profession, an internship could play an important role in adding the practical content to the research project. For students who also plan interview as one major research method, I would also advise that appointments cannot be made too early – I have missed some precious chance simply due to schedule issues. Indeed the professionals could be incredibly busy.

