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## Fearless: Yaou Liu

Yaou Liu  
*Gettysburg College*

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## Fearless: Yaou Liu

### **Abstract**

Humbly and passionately serving the campus community as a true “servant leader” for the past three-and-a-half years, actively engaging in dialogues and initiatives to promote awareness about social injustices, and constantly striving to learn more, act more, and teach more, Yaou Liu '14, is a fearless role model for the campus community, showing in everything she does a restless passion to see the injustices in the world righted, awareness increased, and the future changed for the better. She is an inspiring, courageous student who has enriched the lives of many both on campus and in the greater Gettysburg community, using her leadership skills to express what she believes, and lead others to understanding. Her time here at Gettysburg has changed her, but she, too, has changed Gettysburg. [*excerpt*]

### **Keywords**

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, social injustice, Tiananmen Square, China, ethnicity

### **Disciplines**

Civic and Community Engagement | Community-Based Learning | Inequality and Stratification | Peace and Conflict Studies | Sociology

### **Comments**

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](http://www.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

# SURGE

**[ VERB ] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward**

## FEARLESS: YAOU LIU

December 6, 2013

Humbly and passionately serving the campus community as a true “servant leader” for the past three-and-a-half years, actively engaging in dialogues and initiatives to promote awareness about social injustices, and constantly striving to learn more, act more, and teach more, Yaou Liu

'14, is a fearless role model for the campus community, showing in everything she does a restless passion to see the injustices in the world righted, awareness increased, and the future changed for the better. She is an inspiring, courageous student who has enriched the lives of many both on campus and in the greater Gettysburg community, using her leadership skills to express what she believes, and lead others to understanding. Her time here at Gettysburg has changed her, but she, too, has changed Gettysburg.

Yaou came to Gettysburg almost four years ago as an international student from China, newly interested in the field of social justice after learning about the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing in 1989 for the first time. She came to college with questions and the insatiable drive to understand why injustices happened and how they could be combatted and changed—which led her straight to the door of the CPS office.

Her freshman year, Yaou did a lot of volunteering programs through CPS to get more involved and quickly found a community. She applied to be a Program Coordinator (PC) and Heston Intern after her freshman year, but wasn't accepted until she applied again her sophomore year. “I knew I wanted to do things with CPS, so I knew I'd apply again the next year. I didn't get in the first time because I was still a ‘baby’—I didn't understand all of the systematic issues that were causing the social justice issues in society yet. I had still just been volunteering to volunteer, instead of actively volunteering with an understanding of the bigger issues involved.”

Yaou's understanding of the greater systemic issues involved in the complicated social web of American society developed exponentially when she served as a Heston Summer Intern in Gettysburg the summer after her sophomore year. As an intern, Yaou worked in the community serving free meals to children, working in an education program, having fun as a camp counselor, teaching Chinese lessons to her students, and even coordinating GIV day for the incoming first-year class. “Heston was an awesome experience because of the level of involvement I had in the community and the relationships I developed with them. It opened my eyes to the needs in Adams County and made me a more informed citizen.”





Capitalizing on the things she'd learned about social justice and leadership as an intern, when Yaou became a PC, she brought many of the things she'd learned into her organizing of the campus Immersion Projects. "Immersion Projects is a program run by CPS that sends students to volunteer in the community and abroad where they can focus on certain social issues," says Yaou.

"The philosophy behind it is the idea of turning these students from volunteers into active citizens. When somebody is just volunteering, their mindset is 'Well, I just want to help people.' And they have good intentions, but they're not really helping people because they don't know the causes, the systemic issues involved. Immersion Projects try to get students to grapple with the larger issues and ask 'How can we deal with this? Why do these issues exist? How can we change them?'"

Not only does Yaou help college students to understand greater social issues through her work as a PC, she also puts her ideas of being an active participant in society into effect as an education student, helping younger minds to grow and develop senses of awareness and engagement.

"When I was little, I wanted to be a teacher because, you know, when you're a little kid you don't understand that you have more options. When I came to Gettysburg looking for something to pursue, I thought I wanted to do something with history. But then I took an education class my sophomore year just to try it out." The class Yaou took focused on issues of immigration and culture in education and was taught by Professor Miyazawa. They discussed issues of immigration, ESL teaching, and assimilation, all of which fascinated Yaou. "I thought it was so cool, liked studying those issues so much, and found out that I was actually really good at them. So, I continued to take education classes and it rekindled my earlier passion about getting involved in education."

Currently, Yaou works as the PLA for Professor Miyazawa's FYS where there are both education and community service components to the course. "The class is really a mash-up of globalization studies, education, and community service," says Yaou. "I take college students out to Vida Charter School and we work with the students to help them learn about writing and develop their global awareness." Through this program, Vida school students have been able to form relationships and communicate with students in near Fukushima, Japan, so that they can learn about each other's cultures and ways of life first hand, despite being on opposite ends of the world.

Yaou's understanding of global and community social justice issues has developed over the past four years from a simple mindset of wanting to volunteer because it's a nice thing to do, into a true passion for identifying, acknowledging, and addressing the root causes of injustices in society. Her awareness of systemic issues has led her to bring other students closer to understanding, inspiring them to seek out opportunities to not only serve the community, but better it. Doubtlessly fearless, Yaou is a remarkable, brave, active leader at Gettysburg College and has surely affected the lives of many in the community, and helped to encourage new leaders on campus.

*Kathryn Bucolo '14*  
*Fearless Coordinator*

<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/12/06/fearless-yaou-liu/>