



GLOBAL STUDENTS CONFERENCE SHANGHAI

5th to 9th JULY 2023



Navigating the Modern World! REVIEW

The Conference gave students an opportunity to come together from across the globe to voice their opinions and build cross-cultural bridges. As the world contends with numerous overlapping crises, the capacity of individuals and societies to deal with geopolitical turbulence has rarely been so critical. To thrive in the 21st Century we need to understand the challenges coming our way and the Conference looked to develop the skills needed to 'Navigate the Modern World'.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- WLSA Mobile Phone Competition
- Visit to SAIC Motor Corporation Research Division
- Participation in a Global Crisis Scenario Roleplay
- Cultural tours of modern and traditional Shanghai
- Discussion Workshops and Debates
- Cross-Cultural Interaction
- Addresses by Keynote Speakers

THEMES ADDRESSED

- Navigating the New World Order
- Culture and Identity in the Modern World
- Sustainability
- Youth Leadership
- Survival Skills for the 21st Century
- Growth Mindset
- AI and Ethics

WLSA's Global Student Conference 2023 took place in July in Shanghai and had the theme of "Navigating the Modern World". This was a welcome and successful return to 'live' programming post-COVID-19. The conference aimed to draw in students from across the globe and give them an opportunity to come together and engage in dynamic scholarly exchange and build cross-cultural bridges.

Cosmopolitan Shanghai, where East meets West, is a truly global city and proved a perfect setting for a Conference aimed at 'global citizens'. Understanding China is key to understanding the 21st Century and delegates drew inspiration from Shanghai's extraordinary architecture and cultural heritage, while also its strategic position gave perspective and encouraged global cultural dialogue.

To thrive in the 21st Century we need to understand the challenges coming our way and look to develop the skills needed to navigate the modern world. As the world contends with numerous overlapping crises, the capacity of individuals and societies to deal with geopolitical turbulence has rarely been so critical. Thus, the aim of the conference was to address these concerns and challenges; while also extending academic horizons and fostering a more universal concern. The conference was a success in showcasing global diversity and reach; welcoming 80 students from across the WLSA network and beyond, and ranging across six continents. Schools represented were Groton (USA); Eton College and Marlborough College (UK); Westville Boys High School, Westville Girls High School, and St Benedict School (RSA); Korean International School (Korea); WLSA Shanghai Academy and Beijing School. No. 4 (China); and Marden Caritas and Yuen Yuen Institute (Hong Kong). There was also remote participation from Welham Girls School in India. Delegates comprised the following nationalities:

Australia, China, Colombia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, India, Namibia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, USA, Zimbabwe.

“The World Leading Schools Student Conference is where the future leaders of the world come together to learn, collaborate, and network. Students have the opportunity to unleash their brilliance and join the brightest minds from across the globe to innovate, collaborate, and shape the future together.”

Adam Mangana – Founder of Optima Ed

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The Conference aimed to provide students with diverse and enriching academic and cultural experiences, that sought to broaden horizons and encourage intellectual curiosity. It offered a wide range of activities, sessions and excursions that allowed students to explore, collaborate and share their unique perspectives and experiences.

ACADEMIC AND ENRICHMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- **TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION:** We had the privilege of being hosted at the SAIC Motor Corporation’s research division. At China’s largest car manufacturer, we gained insights into cutting edge technologies and designs. We were addressed by Martin Kropp, SAIC’s Design Director, saw brand-new car designs and we also witnessed an actual collision test. What truly left a lasting impression was SAIC Motor’s ingenious utilization of neuroscience to track and assess users’ reactions as part of their new car designs.
- **CAPSTONE PRESENTATIONS:** Each delegate had the opportunity to present on themes related to ‘Navigating the Modern World’. The topics featured included leadership; social media; global inequality; global order; climate justice and the importance of networking.
- **NEGOTIATION SKILLS:** Conflict resolution and negotiation skills are essential in today’s complex world and are essential for effective communication and problem-solving. Students had sessions to enhance their negotiation skills and all participated in a bespoke roleplay on a global crisis scenario.
- **PERSPECTIVES:** The WLSA Mobile Phone Photography Competition, gave delegates the opportunity to capture and share their unique perspectives on Shanghai, focusing on various themes such as Ancient and Modern; Architecture; Sustainability; Movement and Cultural Diversity. The delegates participation was enthusiastic and the end results were impressive. This initiative will hopefully be an ongoing feature in future WLSA Student Programming.



COLLEGE ADMISSIONS NETWORK: CAN played a significant role in providing guidance to students in navigating their Higher Education choices and opportunities. **Panel discussions** with admissions deans from leading US universities, offered valuable guidance and served to demystify the process and offered valuable guidance on issues such as ‘Building Your College List’; insights into the ‘Selective College Admissions Process’; and ‘Hot Topics’. This was followed by a **COLLEGE FAIR** where the delegates had the opportunity to interact with the representatives – and this session also included representatives from Fudan University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Peking University. For the CAN Session, we were also joined by 200 students from across Shanghai. The **CAN Representatives** included: **Kelly Walter** (Boston University); **Dr. Doug Christiansen** (Vanderbilt University); **Shawn Felton** (Cornell University); **Dr Yvonne Romero da Silva** (Rice University); **Michelle Trimpe** (University of Chicago); and **Jennifer Fondiller** (Barnard College).



CAN Panel discuss with Sean Felton (Cornell University), Dr Yvonne Romero da Silva (Rice University) and Jennifer Fondiller (Barnard College).

“Having worked with students from some of the most highly selective educational institutes in the world for over 20 years, I can authentically say that the group of students Adam and I interacted with at the WLSA Global Student Conference were among the most genuinely engaging, creative, compassionate, respectful, curious and inspiring. The intercultural camaraderie they exhibited, and the level of leadership that they displayed was astounding.” **Patrick Schuermann – Founder of the Peabody Institute for Educational Leadership, Vanderbilt University**

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

THE GLOBAL SESSIONS saw addresses from keynote speakers and pre-recorded interviews with various contributors, which challenged the participants to engage with global issues and differing experiences and perspectives, and set up the ensuing **Workshop Discussions**, proved to be lively affairs as students exchanged their perspectives and views. The Global Sessions focused on:

- What challenges are we facing in the 21st Century?
- What skills are needed in the 21st Century?
- Lessons in Leadership for the 21st Century?
- Cross-Cultural Intelligence
- Risk, Adaptability and Sustainability
- Leadership in the Age of Spatial Computing

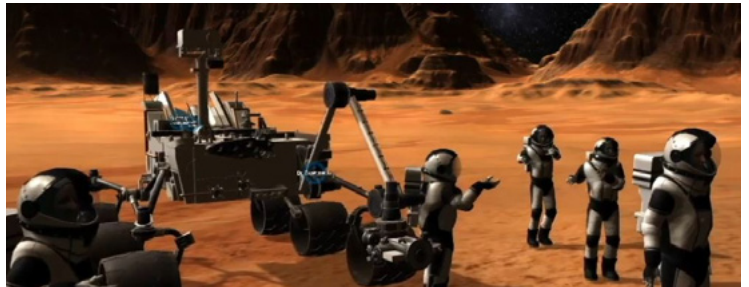


ADDRESSES BY KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- **Prof Jack Jia** (Executive Director of WLSA) ‘Welcome and WLSA’s Mission and Activities’.
- **Owen Moelwyn-Hughes** (WLSA’s Director of Global Student Affairs) ‘Navigating the Modern World’ and ‘The Art of Negotiating’.
- **Prof Patrick Schuermann** (Founder Peabody Institute for Educational Leadership, Vanderbilt University) and **Adam Mangana** (Founder and CEO of Optima Ed) ‘Leadership in the Age of Spatial Computing: How to Connect?’
- **Shannon Jin** (Groton School, USA) and **Starry Zhu** (Middlesex School, USA) on ‘Navigating Different Cultural Perspectives in a Shifting World’
- **Tanya Bower** (St Benedict School, RSA) on ‘Finding Your Voice’.

CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDED:

Tim Butcher (author of Blood River and The Trigger)
Elisabeth Braw (AEI) | **James Stuart** (Pavocat)
Ant Steel (Artist and founder of Keep it Street)
Emma Slade aka Ani Pema Deki (Open your Heart to Bhutan) | **Gen Jasbir Signh Lidder** (former UN Deputy Special Representative to Sudan and before that UNMIS Force Commander) | **Richard Fenning** (former CEO of Control Risk) | **Malcolm Gray** (Cambridge’s Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) and Aspen Global Leadership Fellow)
Prof Kerry Brown (Professor of Chinese Studies and Director of the Lau China Institute at King’s College, London) | **Graham Wallington** (CEO Wild.Earth.tv).



The talk on ‘Leading in the World of Spatial Computing’ by Adam Mangana and Patrick Schuerman saw the students use Virtual Reality to interact in a lunar learning environment.

THE WORKSHOP SESSIONS looked to build on the themes covered in the Global Sessions and allowed each student the opportunity to voice their opinions and engage in informed debate. These were valuable opportunities for team building, cross-cultural exchange, and allowing student leadership and voice to come to the fore. Additional topics addressed in the Workshops were ‘Youth’ and ‘Gender’ in Leadership. The students also used these sessions to present their ‘Capstone Presentations’ and engage in the ‘Negotiation Skills’ Roleplay. These sessions also allowed students to reflect on their experiences and share their take-away lessons and also how their perceptions had been challenged; and how they might look to take on new leadership challenges.

Students from WLSA’s Cross Cultural Leadership Programme featured prominently in the Global Students Conference and all participants had the opportunity of presenting their Capstone Projects, and topics featured included:

- What does it take to be a good leader?
- Does social media make your life better or worse?
- What is more desirable when looking to end a conflict - achieving peace or justice?
- Has globalization increased global inequality?
- How important is networking and the power of networks in today’s world?
- How might the next generation of leaders address the issue of climate justice?

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

- **Cultural Experience:** Immersive tours led by 'Wild China' allowed the students to explore Shanghai's modern and traditional elements; including iconic locations like the Bund and People's Square; seeing the futuristic skyline from on top of the Shanghai Tower, a boat trip on the Huang river and in the 'old town' we visited the historic Yuyuan Gardens, and ended our tour in the markets of the 'Temple of the City Gods'.
- **Cultural Festival:** This was a vibrant and entertaining occasion for delegations to showcase their cultural heritage through performances, fostering team-building and cultural exchange. Highlights included the Chinese delegation singing traditional songs and then rapping; the Korean students giving a masterclass in K-Pop; the students from Hong Kong performing traditional dances but also with an explanation of their history and unique cuisine; a student from Columbia gave a presentation focused on a map made out of Colombia's main export – coffee; the UK's students created a medley ranging from Shakespearean sonnets to a rousing rendition of the hymn Jerusalem; and the South African students stole the show with their singing and 'gum-boot dancing' as part of a carefully choreographed show which focused on South Africa's diversity and fraught historical legacy.
- **Active Zone:** Provided physical activities such as basketball, soccer, badminton, table tennis and TaiChi; and allowed the students to balance their activities.
- **Calligraphy and Chinese Painting:** On the creative side all the delegates were able to learn the art of Calligraphy and Chinese Painting, two traditional Chinese art forms that are both beautiful and challenging. These activities provided a break from the academic rigors of the conference and encouraged delegates to express themselves in new ways.



LEGACY The WLSA Global Students Conference was in so many respects a tour de force, and for that, we must thank our hosts WSA Shanghai the teachers who brought their students to the conference; and the keynote speakers and contributors for giving so generously of their expertise, experience and insights. Most of all our thanks and commendations go to the students who animated the Conference with their willingness to engage, enthusiasm, cooperation and confidence to voice their views and take on leadership roles. All participants have much to reflect on and hopefully find ways to act on; not least on the essential skills and the different attributes of leadership needed to 'survive' and 'thrive' in the 21st Century. WLSA will also be looking to follow up on the 2023 Global Student Conference, especially in terms of developing the ability to interrogate the world we live in and develop 21st Century skills:

- WLSA will be running a series of online student events which will focus on and develop the theme of 'Navigating the Modern World'. In October an online conference is planned looking to examine the role of Culture in Global Order.
- These events will allow continued participation of Conference delegates and also extend opportunities to new students.
- The themes from the Conference will be incorporated into the next edition of the 'Cross-Cultural Leadership Programme'.
- Having seen a successful return to live student programming - planning for the next Global Students Conference is already underway.

IN CONCLUSION The WLSA Global Students Conference was a resounding success and will hopefully leave a lasting impact on its participants. The Conference proved a unique opportunity to showcase a richness of global diversity, with delegates representing different countries, cultures, ethnicities, religions, gender and socio-economic backgrounds. This unique blend of perspectives and experiences created an enriching environment for cross-cultural interaction, collaboration and participation, and leadership while engaging with the issues which are shaping the 21st Century. One of the stand out features of the conference was on the emphasis on leadership development. Students were given numerous opportunities to step up and take on leadership roles during the various sessions and activities. Witnessing the enthusiasm and passion with which these young leaders tackled critical global issues was truly inspiring. We hope that the 2023 WLSA Global Students Conference was a fantastic learning experience for all delegates and has helped build confidence and the ability to take on leadership challenges of the 21st Century and navigate them with boldness, agility and a shared sense of humanity.

Owen Moelwyn-Hughes (WLSA's Director of Global Student Affairs)