

# "My study life at NWAUFU"

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Arriving at Northwest A&F University (NWAUFU) for a PhD program during the COVID-19 pandemic felt like a dream come true, but it also brought challenges. After enduring quarantine, the excitement of being on campus was tempered by new virus restrictions that delayed academic activities and limited interaction with classmates and professors. This created a sense of isolation and homesickness. In December, a meeting with my professor was initially a moment of hope, but it turned into a frustrating experience due to the language barrier, which caused me to withdraw from social interactions.

Classes resumed in February, with my first being Chinese language. Learning a new language was difficult, especially as an adult used to English. I struggled with pronunciation, and my classmates often laughed, but I chose to find humor in it. One of my favorite classes was an overview of China, where I explored the country's socio-economic and political landscape. I admired China's development and actively engaged in discussions. A Chinese cultural course, which included field trips to historical sites, also stood out as a highlight.



Fig. 1 Chinese Language



Fig. 2 Chinese Culture Class



Fig. 3 After presentation of Overview of China



Fig. 4 During Overview of China Class

However, major challenges arose with my academic coursework. Due to the low number of international students, my major classes which were supposed to be taught in English, waited until 2024, when more students arrived. This delay was frustrating, as I was eager to learn from the scientific resources available in China. I regularly visited the College of Animal Science, requesting that English-taught courses be organized, but it took time for this to be realized.

In my lab, I was the only foreign student until September 2023, and the language barrier made it difficult to communicate with my lab mates. Despite having ideas to contribute, I often remained silent, which led to misunderstandings about my personality. My lab mates assumed I was shy, though in reality, I am naturally outgoing. The language barrier humbled me, but over time, we adapted to communicating partly in English and partly in Chinese, making the lab experience more enjoyable. I learned that patience was key to overcoming these challenges

Academically, I remained committed. I regularly attended lab meetings and presented my research, even when I felt out of place due to the language barrier. The greatest challenge came during my proposal presentation, where I faced a panel of unfamiliar professors. Despite my nervousness, I managed to perform well.

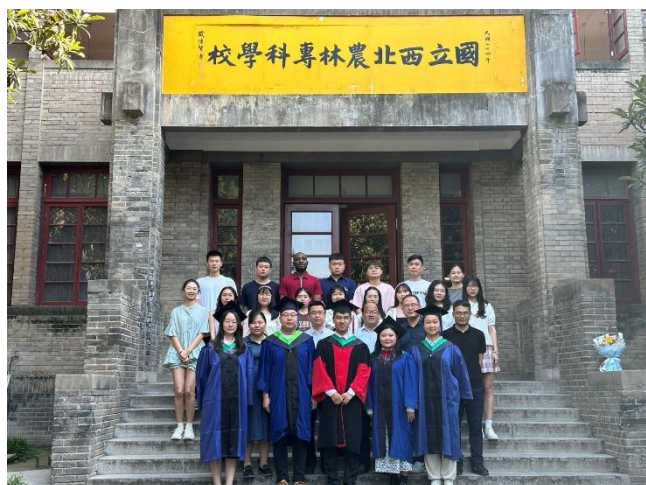


Fig. 5 Graduation of students from my lab



Fig. 6 Dinner with my labmates



Fig. 7-1 My Proposal Defense



Fig. 7-2 My Proposal Defense



Fig. 8 On-farm research with Lab mates

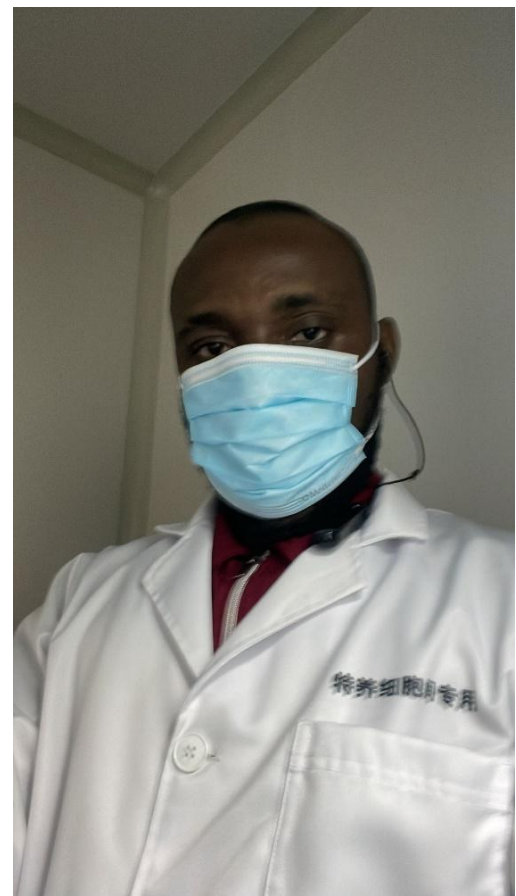


Fig. 9 in the laboratory

The College of International Education organized various social activities to support international students. I participated in sports, cultural events, and excursions. In September 2023, I volunteered to welcome new students, and during the 2023 Cultural Festival, I played dual roles as a host and a model representing my country. I also served as a model in 2024 and actively joined most of the college's excursions to tourist areas, as seen in the pictures below.



Fig. 10 CIE Excursion to Hengqu College



Fig. 11 CIE Excursion to China Bronze Ware Museum



Fig. 12 CIE Excursion to Museum of the Terra-cotta Warriors



Fig. 13 Yangling marathon. 2023



Fig. 14 Representing CIE in the 2023 Northwest A and F University sporting event



Fig. 15 The 2024 Cultural Festival

Fig. 16 Host of the 2023 Cultural Festival



Fig. 17 Posing with the school representatives on their visit to International students on Chinese new year celebration



Fig. 18 At the 3<sup>rd</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> Yangling International Agri-science Forum



Fig. 19 At the Workshop on China-Horn of Africa Agricultural Corporation

Socially, I found it hard to adjust to the local students' reserved nature, as I came from a culture where personal interactions were more frequent. I also struggled with the academic environment, where my lab mates' long study hours made me feel inadequate. Additionally, adapting to the cold winter and learning to eat with chopsticks were significant challenges, but I eventually embraced these experiences as part of my adventure.

Overall, my time at NWFU has been a transformative journey. The academic rigor, cultural immersion, and personal growth I've experienced have shaped me in unexpected ways. Despite the initial difficulties, I've gradually settled into this new reality, learning to balance my academic life with my social and personal challenges.