

Networking the Kiwi way in China



Above: Ding Ding, Leon Walker, Sabrina Li, Hunter McGregor, Cynthia Feng at their alumni event in Shanghai. The event was hosted by New Zealand's Consul-General Guergana Guermanoff (BA,Hons '94) at her residence.

In a world that increasingly communicates online, the University of Otago's China Alumni Network is trying to create more opportunities for alumni to connect face-to-face.

Shanghai-based Hunter McGregor (BCom, '01) and six other Otago Alumni Network board members are hoping to make get-togethers for alumni of the University of Otago - as well as other New Zealand universities - a regular event in the sprawling port city of 24 million.

"People are connecting so much online that the chance to get together in person can be a welcome change," says the Central Otago-native who moved to China in 2007 and operates import and export business, Rata Forest Ltd.

That is not to say the network is not using social media – popular Chinese app WeChat, in particular – to promote their events for Otago alumni.

"Organising gatherings for Chinese alumni is a little different than it might be elsewhere," Hunter explains. "The Chinese are more about special events and food, and we are trying to have the gatherings in the late afternoon or early evening, so as not to take up someone's whole evening."

The network also aims to have smaller but more frequent gatherings for alumni, a welcome change in the fast-paced, cosmopolitan Shanghai. Already the network has hosted a meet-and-greet in a popular Shanghai coffee shop and are planning a group cooking lesson as well as events featuring guest speakers in the near future, ultimately aiming to have an event once a month.

The network welcomes not only University of Otago alumni but any student who studied at a New Zealand post-secondary institution. Indeed, anyone interested in New Zealand.

"Once Chinese students have come home, they like to mix with others who have studied abroad, so we think it makes sense to welcome everyone," says Hunter. "And by arranging smaller, informal gatherings on a regular basis, as opposed to just a big event once a year, we hope we can get more people out to network and socialise. It is more relaxed, which is the Kiwi way."

Joining the China Alumni Network (WeChat ID [Otago_Alumni](#)) is a great way to connect with Otago alumni and friends.

Other useful sites are:

Chinese Alumni Association: <http://cنالumni.otago.ac.nz/>
Weibo: www.weibo.com/otagonz
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/groups/79350/profile
Check out the Otago Alumni Networks

