



Students complete construction of Lehigh's Chinese Bridge, April 2011.

COURTESY OF ANDREW MAIER III / LEHIGH UNIVERSITY CHINESE BRIDGE PROJECT



Portion of the Chinese scroll painting *Along the River During Qingming Festival*.

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THE CHINESE BRIDGE PROJECT

In 2009, Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, launched an initiative to advance interdisciplinary education and Chinese studies on campus and to reinforce the university's relationship with China, which dates back to the nineteenth century. The Chinese Bridge Project was shaped by faculty in many fields—from history, literature, language, media and religious studies to civil and environmental engineering, structural engineering and architecture. The project's theme of bridges (metaphorical, virtual and physical), was inspired by the Rainbow Bridge depicted in the famous twelfth-century Song dynasty scroll *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*.

As part of the project, undergraduates in engineering, architecture and computer science studied Chinese language and culture. They joined Asian studies majors for seven weeks in China, where they collaborated with Chinese students to build wooden bridge models. A capstone studio session and seminar at Lehigh led to design and construction on campus of a pedestrian bridge that incorporated Chinese and Western design principles. The project was documented by teams of students participating in a Digital Bridges course, and was tied to related research on the lives and accomplishments of Chinese students who have attended Lehigh since 1879.

In April 2011 Lehigh organized campuswide *Qingming* festivities to mark the bridge's completion. The university also celebrated new course offerings in Chinese language, literature, civilization and history that helped secure approval of a Chinese major. In the project's next phase, work will focus on a Chinese-style pavilion. ■