Over the past two weeks we have been very busy. In between studying for our upcoming exams, we have managed to travel across Chinese provinces, have promoted Australia and Australian culture at various events, and have participated in the Chinese pop-culture trend of karaoke (or KTV) where people go to sing their hearts out to such timeless classics as Bon Jovi, Queen and countless Chinese heartbreakers. Our Chinese friends were keen to show us their favourite pastime and those who went really enjoyed it.

On the weekend, people travelled to three different corners of China. Michael, Candice and Jordan travelled to the beach-side city of Qingdao to soak up some autumn sun, explore the beaches, wander the beautiful German-style alleyways of the city and taste the famous Chinese branded beer, ‘Tsing Tao’. At the same time, Cara travelled across the country to Shanghai to attend a Chinese friend’s birthday. While Kirby met her family in Xi’an, who had come to visit her and explore the country that she has been living in for three months. Kirby was lucky enough to be visited by her mother, her grandmother, one younger brother and her younger sister. Kirby spent some time with them in Beijing, showed them around our local area in Tianjin and also took them to see the famous Terracotta Warriors in Xi’an. Her family then headed off to Shanghai and then back to Australia where we are all soon to join them as our time here flies by. We all benefitted from their visit as some sorely missed Australian treats made it across the Pacific.

In the last two weeks we have also given three presentations; one at our own university (Tianjin Normal University New Campus), one at Binhai Experimental High School, and another at Nankai University, Binhai Campus. The presentations attempted to really engage the audience in Australian culture and life. Vegemite tasting, footy demonstrations and the teaching of Australian songs were apart of this and were received with great enthusiasm. The Nankai University presentation further included a photography competition that we all participated in by displaying images from both Australia and our travels in China. Our very talented

Written by the 2011 UMAP YAAD Team
students took out 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for their videos, photography and multimedia works. We all felt very privileged having been made guests of honour at all these events.

This week, we also celebrated the festival of Halloween. Toilet paper, stuffing and face-paint created our hand-made ghoulish costumes for the night as we ventured to the devilishly decorated ex-pat restaurant Helen’s. Our hand-made costumes wowed the crowd and won 3 from the 5 prizes for the night!

We’ve continued working on our Chinese Guanxi, networking with various people we meet along our travels. A local Tianjin woman who runs a English school, bankers, journalists, enterprising young students, large organisation CEOs and popular television presenters are just some of the interesting people we have been lucky enough to become acquainted with. Next weekend some of us will be attending the Australia China Alumni Association (ACAA) awards night where we will have the opportunity to meet with some important professionals in the field.

This week we will have a reporter from Tianjin International Television Network will interview us about our stay in China. They will also accompany us to our last English Corner, where they are hosting a party for us, which will include performances and lots of fun activities before our farewell. We have had a great time at English Corner, making new friends who are enthusiastic about learning English and about different cultures. We have also learnt a lot from those friends who we have met here, about Chinese culture and learning English in China. We will be sad to end our visits to English Corner, but it won’t be the last we hear from our friends made there.

Our time at Tianjin Normal University is nearly over, but the excitement is far from over. We have a few jam-packed weeks left which we all plan on making the most of.