

### International graduate heads for University of Michigan



For Francis Chiang, a young international student from China now leaving Glen Oaks Community College for the architecture school at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, life in Michigan has been one of “firsts” in everything from seeing forest animals first-hand to walking in the snow on lake ice.

Chiang (real name Chi ieong Chiang) begins classes soon at University of Michigan with a \$32,000 per year scholarship from Macau, his home city in southeastern China. Chiang graduated in May 2009 with an Associate of General Studies degree. He was one of just 10 individuals among 100 to qualify for the special scholarship. Chiang plans to attend the Truman College of Architecture at University of Michigan and pursue a major in Urban Planning. Macao is a former Portuguese

colony on a rocky peninsula of the Canton Province that is surrounded by the ocean. Located just east of Hong Kong, Macao is the world’s largest center for gambling.

Chiang comes from an area with half-a-million tightly-packed people living in sky rise buildings that surround his 15<sup>th</sup> floor family home. “When I look outside of our home all I see are other buildings. So it was quite a change for me to come to the United States as a Sturgis High School student and see squirrels, deer and other animals near the roads, and large houses with big gardens,” said Chiang. He is the son of an import/export business executive father and nurse mother. The past few years Chiang has lived with the Judy Disney family in Sturgis. While studying at Glen Oaks Community College, Chiang was active Student Government and also Phi Theta Kappa, the academic fraternal organization. “I chose to attend Glen Oaks because I wanted the opportunities for friendships and study that a smaller rural college would bring. I’ve enjoyed getting to know so many people and I loved the ‘easy going’ attitude I found,” said Chiang.

One aspect of rural St. Joseph County life that surprised Chiang was the Amish people, “I was shocked to see how they live without many of the conveniences people often take for granted. When my parents visited from China for a couple of weeks they were also surprised by the Amish lifestyle.” His parents got a chance to see some Michigan attractions, including Mackinaw Island, the Soo Locks in the Upper Peninsula, and especially the University of Michigan campus. As inhabitants of an often hot and humid part of the world, Chiang told them about seeing snow for the first time, ice fishing on local lakes, cross country skiing and hunting for deer. “I had never seen this many animals except at a zoo. It is interesting to see wild deer, raccoons, birds and other animals. When I first came to Sturgis I feared the animals might bite me, really, since I had lived only in the big city,” Chiang explained.

Chiang will begin his University of Michigan classes as a junior with a B-plus average. He said the support of faculty and staff at Glen Oaks was very helpful. Counselor Cheryl Hayden helped plan his class schedule and all the classes transferred to the university. Professors like Dr. Lester Keith, Michael Northrop, and Karen Grunert helped Chiang with his portfolio in seeking the scholarship. He plans to live on the Ann Arbor campus, probably in the university’s international dormitory.

“I have always been interested in architecture. My home city will require unique urban planning ideas for our small environment. There are so many people driving automobiles that parking is a particular problem. I would like to help bring more public transportation planning to my area,” Chiang said.