

Like a Golden Ticket

Zexing (Raymond) Luo '11 describes his journey from China to Defiance College to Yahoo!

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From high school in China to college in Ohio and Indiana to a highly-sought position with Yahoo in Silicon Valley, Zexing Luo's personal odyssey has been filled with hard work and perseverance. And his chosen career path of digital forensic science introduced him to, in his own words, "the coolest major I had ever heard of."

Zexing Luo – known on the DC campus as Raymond – first learned of Defiance College through a family friend, Daniel Chao, a DC alumnus who worked for many years for the United Nations.

Chao traveled to China with former president Gerald Wood when Raymond was in his sophomore year in high school in the city of Qingdao (probably best known in the U.S. for its Tsingtao beer).

Chao introduced Raymond to President Wood during a visit to Qingdao, and the two talked about the young man's college plans and how much he knew about America. Raymond recalls, "After the meeting, Mr. Chao told me that President Wood was surprised that during the conversation I kept speaking English and did not ask Mr. Chao for translation, even though my English was very broken back then, but I wasn't afraid to try."

At the end of the meeting, President Wood invited Raymond to come to DC after high school. "His invitation was like a golden ticket," says Raymond, "because high school students in China have very little control of what academic field they can pursue and what school they can attend. Going to a school in America and studying whatever I liked sounded like an awesome idea."

Raymond's meeting with the president convinced him that Defiance College was the right place for him, so he did not apply to other schools.

One of the first things Raymond needed to do after arriving at Defiance College was to select a major. "I picked digital forensic science as my major, mostly because I thought it was the coolest major I had ever heard of, and I was very interested in computers during high school. So, I didn't hesitate picking DFS as my major."

His studies in digital forensic science introduced him to many real-world experiences. "I still tell people stories about me and the DFS major at DC," he says. As a DFS student, Raymond took part in a cold case investigation with the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office in Detroit. He interned with the Defiance County Sheriff's Office and earned certification by the SANS Institute as a digital forensics analyst. "Thanks to the unique major and academics DC offers, I was able to enjoy a very unique college experience in a foreign country," he adds.

In addition to his academic training, Raymond appreciated the environment of "very pure American culture" in which he was immersed at Defiance College. "I was highly motivated by such an environment to absorb large amounts of American culture and language," he says.

"DC gave me a lot of memories, and I'd say the most

memorable moment was when I accepted my diploma from President Gordon. My family, professors, and the entire class of 2011 enjoyed that moment with me. It was the greatest achievement for me in my life at that moment."

Raymond credits his ability to hone his English language skills and adjust to and absorb American culture to his experiences at Defiance. "Thanks to DC, by the time I was enrolled at Purdue University for graduate school, I had little trouble making friends with everyone in the new environment."

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With a recommendation from DC faculty member Dr. Gregg Gunsch, Raymond applied to and was accepted in the Master in



Zexing Luo with Yahoo! CEO Marissa Mayer.

Information Security program at Purdue. “Some of my teachers at Purdue know Professor Gunsch personally,” says Raymond. Dr. Marcus Rogers leads the Cyber Forensics and Security Program at Purdue, while Dr. Melissa Dark is a well-known researcher in technology and information security policy. He also studied under Dr. Eugene Spafford, well-known in the security community and someone who travels to Capitol Hill and lectures politicians about information security.

After earning his master’s degree, Raymond was quickly hired for a position in New Jersey. Soon after, he decided he should keep looking for alternative opportunities, and that is when he found his current job with Yahoo in California.

His title is platform production engineer, and he’s responsible for keeping Yahoo’s service working as designed “so our 800 million users around the world can enjoy Yahoo’s service 24/7,” he says. “You can see we have a lot of weight on our shoulders, but I definitely enjoy what I do, and I’m proud of what I do.”

With the constantly growing world of technology, Raymond envisions in the next few years things like cloud and wearable technology continuing to integrate with people’s lives and bring benefits all can appreciate. “I would like to contribute to such a process as a part of Yahoo,” he adds.



Luo with his parents at Defiance College commencement.

Realizing the impact Defiance College and the digital forensic science program have had on his life, Raymond hopes more students will consider DC as their college destination. “Over the time I have spent in the United States, DC has played a major role in shaping the person I am today, and there is no doubt I could not have reached the position I am in today without my four years at Defiance College.

“There is much to look forward to, and I cannot wait to see more DC students reach their dream.”