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## **A Comparative Study of Piano Programs at University-Level Institutions in China and the United States**

*Yuan Jiang*  
*South China Normal University, China*

### **Abstract**

As we work and study in our increasingly globalized society, there is a growing trend of Chinese piano students choosing to pursue their higher education in the United States. Elite music institutions in America are also seeking and recruiting a large number of Chinese pianists. The purpose of this study was to promote a greater understanding of Chinese and American piano programs in higher education through examining 20 selected university-level institutions. To accomplish this goal, (1) the researcher collected data from the representative university-level institutions in both countries regarding their piano-related degree offerings, audition requirements, curriculum requirements, and core course offerings for the piano programs; (2) the researcher also conducted an online survey to gather information regarding current faculty members' and students' perceptions of their piano programs. A total number of 34 student participants and 7 faculty participants in the U.S. along with 119 student participants and 11 faculty participants in China completed the questionnaires. Results indicated that both the Chinese and the U.S. institutions had a similar structure in their curricula, the balance of required credits in each area was noticeably different. Although results indicated that overall, there is no significant differences between the students' level of satisfaction of the core courses in their piano programs, students in the U.S. were significantly more satisfied with the applied lessons and the degree recital in their programs. It is encouraging that a large percentage of the students believed they received excellent advice regarding practice strategies and artistry in their applied lessons in both countries. According to the comparative results, the factors that attract Chinese students to study in the U.S. can be attributed to the following aspects: 1) students plan to seek the most advanced degree—doctoral degree in piano performance; 2) students may have less stress related to studying for standardized tests during the application process; 3) students may be able to complete the program and obtain the master's degree in a shorter period of time; 4) the design of the programs/curriculums may allow students to receive more personal attention and more professional development; 5) students may become more independent and can receive better quality of applied lessons and degree recital preparation; and 6) they may gain more performance opportunities and receive a comprehensive view of the subject matter.