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Hello teachers of Chinese,

My name is Benjamin Ridgway and I teach Chinese language and literature in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and the MA in Chinese Studies (MACS) program at Valparaiso University. I am happy to announce that this spring semester, the MACS program and Confucius Institute of Valparaiso University will be holding the Second Annual Illinois-Indiana High School Chinese Speech Contest on Sunday, April 11, 2010 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. We would like to invite you and your students to come to Valparaiso University's campus to participate in this contest. We will also host a lunch and dinner provided for all participating teachers and students.

Our goal in holding this speech contest is two-fold. First, we want to give high school students studying Chinese a chance to display their Chinese language skills in a good-spirited competition and to encourage them to continue and strengthen their Chinese language studies further at the college level. Second, we hope to expand and strengthen the ties between teachers and students of Chinese within the greater Great Lakes region to introduce some of the Chinese language study resources that VU has to offer to students and teacher alike.

The competition will be organized along the following format. Students will be grouped and judged according to two levels. Students with one or two years of high school Chinese language study will be considered at "Level I" and asked to prepare conversational dialogues in groups of two or three on topic relating to everyday life. These dialogues can be up to 10-15 minutes in length and based on the kind of everyday life topics as are found in the Integrated Chinese, Level One textbook, including such things as "greetings," "family," "hobbies," "visiting friends," and "making appointments." Study of this particular textbook is not necessary, but its lessons can provide a model or guide to good possible topics related to everyday life. Students with more than two years of high school Chinese language study will be considered at "Level II." These students will be asked to prepare an individual speech of 15-20 minutes in length on the topic of "我在美国学中文." This later speech topic is meant to be broad enough to include a range of subject matter that the students can relate to at the beginning of their Chinese studies: why they are interested in Chinese, how and when did they start to study Chinese, trips to Chinese speaking communities they may have made, what kind of activities they participate in during Chinese classes, what they enjoy most about studying Chinese, and what they want to do with Chinese in the future. Students and teachers can feel free to come up with individual speech titles within this larger topic. Students' performance will be judged by a panel made up of three Chinese language teachers and distinguished Chinese speakers in the area community. The competition will be followed by an awards ceremony with prizes!

In addition, the MACS program and the Confucius Institute can provide further assistance with preparing students for the speech contest by sending Confucius

Institute language tutors to your high school. Transportation to the speech contest event will be available in the following two forms:

1) If a school brings up to 5 students or more and drive their own vehicles, Valparaiso University's Chinese and Japanese Studies program can help pay up to \$100 to support travel expenses (55 cents per mile).

2) For larger groups, if a school travels by yellow school bus, VU's CJS program can help pay up to \$300 to support travel expenses per school.

Please feel free to copy and distribute the enclosed flier to your students. Please also fill in the information on the registration form and mail it to the address listed on that form by no later than March 1, 2010. We look forward to your student's participation in this special event and to getting to know your Chinese language program better!

Sincerely,

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