

DRBU Welcomes Entering BA and MA Students

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辛瑩中譯



DHARMA REALM NEWS | 法界音

“It’s great to be with a diverse group of like-minded students, with instructors who truly care about teaching one to learn, and in an environment that is structured for individuals to succeed through group effort. All my expectations of the program have been exceeded,” Trevor Yoho, an entering BA student, reflected.

August marks the beginning of a new academic year at Dharma Realm Buddhist University, and this year, DRBU welcomed a spirited batch of new students. A young man trained as a chef in French cuisine was on his way to Yosemite when he visited DRBU. He realized then that Yosemite would have to wait for another day; instead he enrolled as a BA student. One woman, a licensed CPA, resisted the caution of well-meaning friends and put her career on hold to attend the fall semester. A former US Marine found out about the DRBU program through his friends in Buffalo, New York. The light and energy here is tappable and no more evident than right on the front porch of the University Building, where the entire DRBU community has gathered for the start of Orientation. A glance around reveals the diversity of the students and faculty. Daughters and sons, mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers have come to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, home of Dharma Realm Buddhist University—all students together.

“The atmosphere at Orientation and around the campus among the staff and students has been wonderful. Everyone has been very helpful and welcoming, leaving no trace of positive energy wanting,” David Daniels, first-year BA student, observed.

「這真是太棒了，能遇到一羣背景相異卻志同道合的同學，老師們真正關懷學生的學習，環境的安排足以讓我們羣策羣力、學有所成，一切都超出我原先對這個學程的期望。」大學部新生特雷維·尤厚說。

法界佛教大學新的學年度於八月展開，今年迎接一羣精神抖擻的新生。一位原本是法國料理大廚的年輕人，在前往優勝美地國家公園的途中，順道參觀法大。這一看，就讓他決定以後再去優勝美地，留在法大註冊入學。一名持有會計師執照的女同學，不理會朋友們善意的提醒，決定暫停她的事業，來法大上秋季班。還有一位前美國海軍陸戰隊隊員，透過在紐約水牛城的朋友得知法大。這裏的光明與能量彷彿可以觸摸，最明顯的莫過於法大建築物的前廊，所有成員在此集合展開迎新。眼光環顧週遭，便可看出學生與教職員的多元背景。有為人子女、為人父母，乃至祖父母，都來到法大的家萬佛聖城。在這裏，大家都是學生。

「迎新活動、校園環境，還有教職員和學生之間的種種氣氛都非常棒。每個人都很願意幫助別人，也很熱誠迎人，充滿了正面的能量。」大學部一年級新生大衛·丹尼爾思如是觀察。

Maureen McIver, a MA student, shared, “I appreciate all the care and preparation that went into making our entry to DRBU such a welcoming experience. Some highlights include hearing each person talk a little about their reasons for coming, the general laughter, and kindness evident everywhere....”

After Orientation, the cohorts enthusiastically delved into the rigorous DRBU liberal arts curriculum. DRBU classes are conducted with a sense of shared inquiry—a group of participant-observers collaboratively engaging in critical inquiry and self-reflection. Through primary texts, students examine the universal human inclination toward liberation and the complex interconnections between the individual, the social, and the natural aspects of existence.

In the words of MA student Dharma Master Jin Shan, the first week at DRBU “was exciting and inspiring. I appreciate so many people’s efforts to make it successful. Going back to school after being out of school for a long time makes me feel, in my heart, 30 years younger.”

“It has been a week of wonder: Sanskrit syllables floating in the air, studying the *Sixth Patriarch Sutra* about the Buddha-Nature and delighting in the wisdom of Socrates,” noted DM Jin Rou, a first-year MA student.

The DRBU curriculum introduces students to the Buddha through The Life of the Buddha. The first-year Buddhist Classics class entails a close reading of *The Sutra of 42 Sections* and sections from the Pali Canon. In Sanskrit class, students learn the grammatical components of the language through the *Universal Door Chapter* of the *Lotus Sutra*. One seminal text in the master’s program is The *Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. The Sutra presents a powerful and resounding vision of the totalistic, unbounded human potential for liberation—that wisdom lies dormant yet fully complete within each sentient being:

You should now believe that the knowledge and vision of the Buddha is just your own mind; there is no other Buddha.... Why don't you immediately see, right within your own mind, the true reality of your original nature?

In an environment that encourages students to reanimate classical texts and creatively bring them into a modern context, DRBU inspires new ideas and insights, fostering a living dialogue between the students and the texts. DRBU students emerge from the program as active, reflective, and responsible citizens of the world.

At Orientation, entering BA student Anne Nguyen captured the prevailing sentiment among the incoming class, “I am so honored to be a student at DRBU. My heart almost jumped out when I was called to the stage to sign the new student book. It marks a new and special journey in my life.” ❀

碩士班學生莫琳·麥克蕾佛也分享她的感受：「很感謝所有的關心與準備，讓我們感受到進入法大是一種備受歡迎的經驗。最精采的包括聆聽每個人談他們來此的因緣、令眾人哄堂大笑，以及每個地方都能明顯感受到的慈悲……。」

各項迎新活動之後，同學們起勁投入豐富的文科課程。法大的上課方式是大家共同提問，亦即一羣參與者與觀察者一起投入批判式的問題與內省。透過研讀經典原文，使學生檢視人類尋求解脫的共同特性，以及個人、社會與自然之間的複雜關聯性。

碩士班學生近山師指出：「法大開學第一週令人興奮，也很具啟發性。感恩這麼多人共同努力，得以成就此事。離開學校多年又重返校園，讓我覺得心理上年輕了30歲。」

「這個星期很奇妙：空中飄浮著梵文音韻，我們跟六祖對談佛性，蘇格拉底的智慧為我們帶來愉悅。」第一年碩士生近柔師這麼說。

課程包括佛的本生故事，介紹學生認識佛陀。第一年佛教經典課程深入研究《四十二章經》以及巴利文經典中的部份經文。梵文課上，學生藉著《法華經》裏的〈普門品〉學習梵文文法。《六祖法寶壇經》是碩士班研讀的基本經文之一，這部經典以灼然有力的見地，揭示人類獲得究竟解脫的無限圓滿潛能這種智慧雖然隱而不顯，但每個有情眾生都本自具足：

「汝今當信，佛知見者，只汝自心，更無別佛……何不從自心中，頓見真如本性？」

法大鼓勵學生賦予經典原文新生命，發揮創意將經文運用於現代生活。法大啟發新的想法與見解，讓學生跟經文生動地溝通交流。法大學程培養出來的學生將成為積極、內省、負責的世界公民。

大學部新生阮恩在迎新活動中，感受到新生們的共同心情。她說：「成為法大學生，我深感榮幸。當被叫到臺上，在新生簽到簿上簽名時，我的心臟都快跳出來了。這是我人生中一段嶄新而特殊的旅程。」 ❀