



# Woodenfish Foundation | 2015

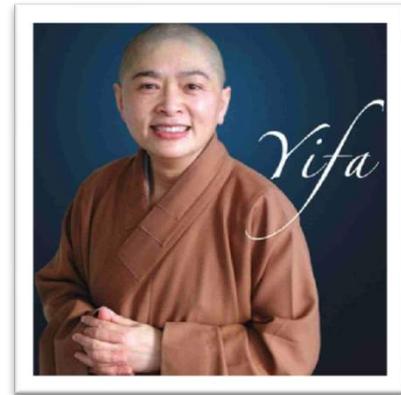


**Woodenfish Foundation**  
**2015 Annual Report**

## Message from Woodenfish Founder and Board Chair, Venerable Dr. Yifa

Dear Friends,

At the close of 2015, we celebrate the remarkable growth and sustained support of Woodenfish since we launched the first Humanistic Buddhist Monastic Life Program (HBMLP) in the summer of 2002. Each year, we renew our commitment to fostering the next generation of global scholars versed in the historical, philosophical and religious traditions of China, and develop compassionate and ethically minded young leaders across every field and industry. Even while China experienced an economic downturn this past summer, and as in any year there are no guarantees for future success, Woodenfish continues to thrive thanks to our wide network of supporters. I am so grateful for everyone's continued support! We now have over 1,000 program alumni; in 2015 alone, we introduced over 90 students from over 25 countries and 46 Chinese youth to the transformative experience of Woodenfish programs.



We have also in 2015 grown our programming to include leadership and cultural education for lay Buddhists and Buddhist monastics. World CitiZens youth camp in August 2015 was the first time that we offered programming for Chinese youth. Student and parent feedback was overwhelmingly positive, as we are able to make the complexity of Buddhist teachings accessible and relevant to today's youth. Character education and the development of compassionate, ethical leaders in future generations is one of the most important contributions we can make to the global society of today and tomorrow. Woodenfish is so much more than the sum of its parts, and it is joyful to run into alumni on the streets of New York or at a conference in Beijing and take stock of where we have been and look forward to where we may go.

The generosity of individual supporters makes Woodenfish work possible and we are very grateful for your support. We look forward to building upon our work to extend our impact and ensure that we are doing all that we can to create a more compassionate, globally savvy, and enlightened world.

Thanks for reading and hope to see you soon. Omitoufo.



Venerable Dr. Yifa  
Founder and Chair, Board of Directors

## Our Vision

### Building a More Compassionate World

We envision a world in which the actions of individuals and communities around the world cultivate peace, compassion, preservation of human dignity and sustainable living.

## Our Mission

### Making Ancient Wisdom Relevant and Life-Transforming



Woodenfish Foundation aims to establish a global network of ethical and compassionate professionals, scholars, and leaders. Woodenfish cultivates ongoing exploration of one's inner life, and inspires meaningful engagement with the pressing global issues of modern times.

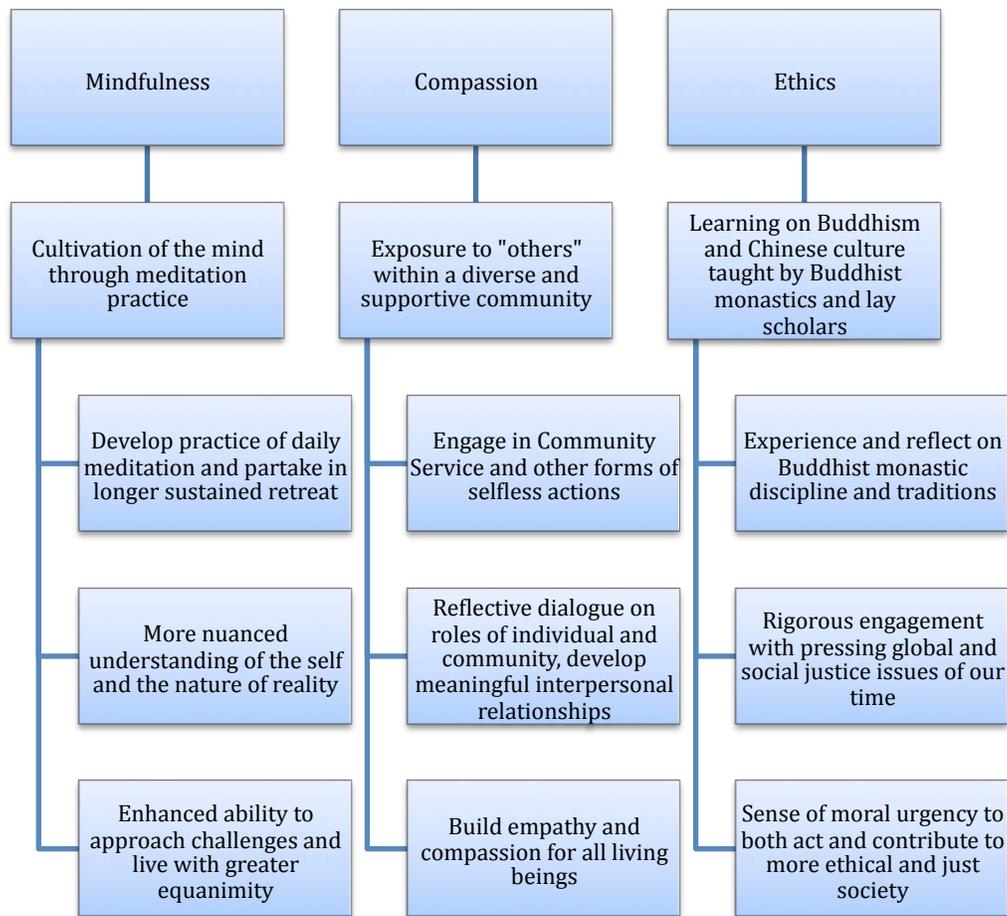
As of one of the few Buddhist organizations with operations in New York, NY USA and Beijing, P.R. China, we are uniquely positioned to further meaningful dialogue

and mutual understanding within what may be considered the most significant bilateral relationship of the 21st century.



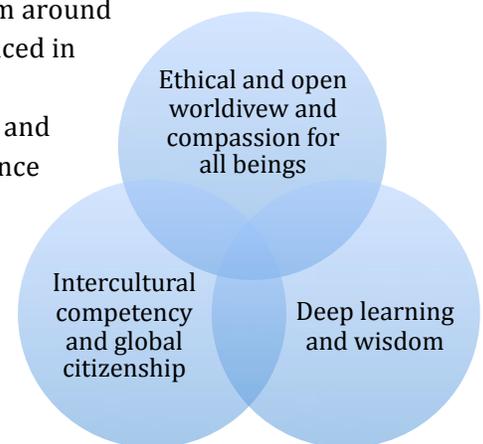
## Our Approach: Cultivate Mindfulness, Compassion and Ethics

In order to fulfill our mission, we approach our program development strategy in three ways, accounting for the fact that we believe that in order to achieve our vision, individuals and communities must cultivate mindfulness, compassion, and ethics.



Guided by the three pillars of mindfulness, compassion, and ethics, Woodenfish has developed three varieties of programs:

- 1) Experiential and immersive opportunities for students from around the world to personally experience Buddhism as it is practiced in modern day China.
- 2) Educational and leadership training for Buddhist monastic and lay communities, within China and internationally, to enhance dialogue and understanding with international and interfaith global community of practitioners and scholars
- 3) Holistic educational opportunities for Chinese youth to learn outside of traditional classrooms, gain valuable skills and a better understanding of the world they are growing up in.



## Humanistic Buddhist Monastic Life Program (HBMLP)

Since 2002, Woodenfish's flagship Humanistic Buddhist Monastic Life Program has offered students from around the world firsthand exposure to the daily life, practice and theory of Buddhism within a traditional Buddhist monastic setting. Whether seasoned practitioners or completely new to Buddhism, all students are engaged through monastic discipline and philosophical inquiry to turn their attention inwards in pursuit of authentic realization. On top of this, many must learn to adapt to both a foreign country as well as a highly structured, religious setting. These two kinds of challenges are ample fertilizer to help HBMLP students grow in awareness of themselves and other cultures, inspiring moral insight and a global outlook. The 2015 Session of the Woodenfish Foundation's Humanistic Buddhist Monastic Life Program (HBMLP) was held from July 1st to July 28th.

This was the 14th year of HBMLP and our 3rd year operating in mainland China- is it any wonder that with so much accumulated experience we would have an exceptionally fruitful month?

Three temples in northern China graciously opened their doors to our group of lay students (plus one Korean monastic) and gave them the opportunity to experience Chinese culture, practice meditation, and survey the history and philosophies of Buddhism while immersed in a monastery setting. With an enrollment of 70 students from over 20 countries and 60 different higher education institutions, this was our biggest year in and around Beijing! Three temples hosted HBMLP this year. The lay communities of these sites did their utmost to accommodate our large group and make everyone feel at home. These diligent volunteers who support the temples and their monastics, in addition to working in concert with program staff to ensure a smooth-running HBMLP, demonstrated the vitality of Chinese Buddhism in their day-to-day lives.



We were truly fortunate to spend July at the following sites:

- Longfu Temple in Langfang City, Hebei Province (河北廊坊隆福寺(2 weeks))
- Doushuai Temple near Baoding City, Hebei Province (河北保定兜率寺) (1 week)
- Pushou Temple in Mt. Wutai, Shanxi Province (山西五台山普寿寺) (1 week)

Surrounded by the five peaks of Mt. Wutai, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Pushou Temple is the largest nunnery in China. It is also home to a Buddhist college specializing in Vinaya. It was here that the silent retreat was conducted, culminating in a pilgrimage to nearby Dailuo Terrace (黛螺顶).

## Buddhism in China: Connecting with the Source

Starting in 2009, "Buddhism in China—Connecting with the Source" is an English-language program designed for scholars with a focus or interest in Buddhist Studies held at different historically and culturally important Chinese Buddhist sites each year. BIC provides academics with on-the-ground knowledge of Buddhist history and culture while also forming new avenues for research and international cooperation. Previous programs have included a Platform Sutra Seminar in Nanhua Temple led by Peter Gregory (Smith College), a Guanyin Seminar on Mt. Putuo by Chün-fang Yü (Columbia University) and a Bhikkhuni Vinaya Seminar by Ann Heirman (Ghent University) at Sichuan Nuns College. In the summer 2014 we invited renowned scholar Professor Daniel B. Stevenson on Tiantai Study to lead a seminar at Mt. Tiantai.



The 2015 session of the Woodenfish Foundation's "Buddhism in China—Connecting with the Source" (BIC) seminar took place from June 7th to June 17th in Gansu Province. Professor and scholar [Mark Blum](http://ieas.berkeley.edu/faculty/blum.html)

(<http://ieas.berkeley.edu/faculty/blum.html>; UC Berkeley) conducted this year's seminar on the Nirvana Sutra with over 40 students from countries including the United States, China, Canada, France, Israel, Japan, and Sri Lanka. Attendees were mostly graduate students specializing in East Asian Studies, Buddhist Studies and Religious Studies from 17 schools such as Harvard, Princeton, Columbia, UC Berkeley, Smith College, Tel Aviv University and Kansai University.

This year's program consisted of two sections. The first was a five-day course on the Nirvana Sutra held near Kumarajiva Temple in Wuwei, Gansu, the city where the Nirvana Sutra was first translated into Chinese during the 5th century (formerly Liangzhou). The second section was an extended tour of important sites in and around the oasis town of Dunhuang, Gansu, home of the archeologically and artistically significant Mogao Caves.



## Engaging Chinese Youth Through World CitiZens Youth Camp

The World CitiZen Youth Summer Camp was inaugurated in the Summer of 2015 by Ven. Yifa as a way to encourage Chinese children and teenagers to connect with global culture through the lens of Humanistic Buddhism and traditional Chinese thought. Global culture can be defined as a sense of belonging to not just one nation, but to a greater worldwide community that transcends boundaries and embraces the common values of peace, human welfare and education. This global culture is introduced through a curriculum that blends different traditions, Eastern and Western, with the assumption that they emanate from the same core intention, namely the betterment of life on Earth.

From another perspective, the World CitiZen Youth Summer Camp seeks to cultivate four qualities in its students that we see as characteristic of "world citizens": awareness (自觉), inclusivity (包容), diligence (进取)



and tranquility (自在). A world citizen is aware of themselves, who they are, what they can be and their place in the bigger picture; in their awareness, they find what it is about themselves they share in common with people all around the world: hopes and dreams, worries and fears, and everything that makes us human, leading to an inclusive mindset; diligence arises in those who realize that the goal of creating a constructive global culture requires constant attention and energy; world citizens feel calm and tranquil upon realizing that they belong to a planet full of vast possibilities and people with similar goals.

At final count, 46 students, ages ranging from 7 to 17. All students were from China. Parents paid on a sliding scale, while another portion of students were given needs-based scholarships. For this reason, we had the opportunity to befriend students from all walks of life. Some came from Buddhist families, others were learning about Buddhism for the first time. Their diversity of outlook and varying degrees of acceptance created an atmosphere of exploration and energy that diffused into every activity at the camp.

### World CitiZen 2015 Classes

The course and activity offering for this year's camp included:

#### 1. Chinese Classics in English

Students were challenged to understand familiar literature and ideas through a new language. Instructors gave lessons in Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism, with an emphasis on core values and ethical conduct.

## 2. Eastern and Western Etiquette

Temple dining etiquette was taught to students as a form of cultivation. Instructors introduced students to various forms of greeting and politeness from around the world

## 3. America/European/Latin American Culture

Classes focusing on interesting aspects of cultures foreign to Chinese students. Activities included music, arts and crafts, games and dance.

## 4. Chan Meditation

Seated and moving meditation taught by instructors and Ven. Yifa

## 5. Creative Arts

Painting, drawing, rosary-making, art meditation

## 6. Self-Empowerment

Students were taught the basics of anti-bullying and kidnapping prevention to exercise their bodies and build self-confidence.



## 7. First Aid

Students learned basics of first aid tools and care.

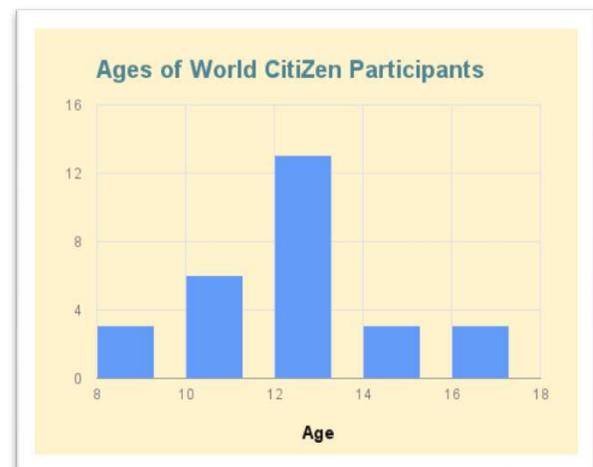
## 8. Farming Chan

Students, instructors and monastics took to the fields to pick vegetables and do weeding.

## 9. Talent Show

Students were divided into groups, assigned an instructor supervisor and had to work as a team to prepare a short performance to give at the end of the camp for their friends and families.

The 2015 World CitiZens Youth Camp was a new Woodenfish program targeting the youngest demographic yet. Thanks to an energetic international staff, it was a success, and we will look to grow programs targeted at Chinese youth in 2016.



A young girl with long black hair, wearing a white t-shirt, is sitting at a wooden desk in a classroom. Her hands are clasped together in a prayer-like gesture. She has a calm, focused expression. In the background, other students are seated at desks, but they are out of focus. A semi-transparent grey box with a dashed border is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

Chinese families and youth search for meaning amid uncertain economic times, and find peace by cultivating mindfulness and a more compassionate and confident self



Woodenfish offered full program scholarships to 90 participants from 25 countries, and provided 15 full-travel scholarships and stipends



HBMLP participants spend the equivalent of a college semester course in engaging lectures and discussions on Chinese Buddhism and may earn college credit

## Buddhist Education & Leadership Training

In addition to our core work with global emerging scholars and leaders to receive Buddhist monastic training and education, we are now engaged in the exciting work to facilitate opportunities for true exchange and learning opportunities for domestic Chinese. Woodenfish has created an extensive network over the past two decades, and we are able to leverage our network within the Buddhist practitioner and scholar communities throughout the world to create more opportunities for interfaith and intercultural dialogue and meaningful exchange.

Woodenfish acts as a platform to strengthen and sustain peaceful relationships and enhance mutual understanding between Buddhist communities in China and the United States.



In 2015, Venerable Yifa led two delegations of Chinese Buddhists to the United States. In May 2015, a group of lay Buddhist professionals visited to present, dialogue, and learn from American counterparts and partake in various educational programs at top educational institutions including Princeton and Harvard Universities. In November, Venerable Yifa led a group of monastics from Hangzhou's [Lingyin Temple](#) on a visit to UC Berkeley to participate in an international Buddhist music conference.

In addition to international trips, Venerable Yifa leads a group of native Chinese Buddhists in learning about and practicing Buddhist teachings. This group meets bi-monthly and engages in learning Buddhist teachings as well as dialoguing on important issues to the global community and how Buddhist teachings may help us deal with them in modern life.

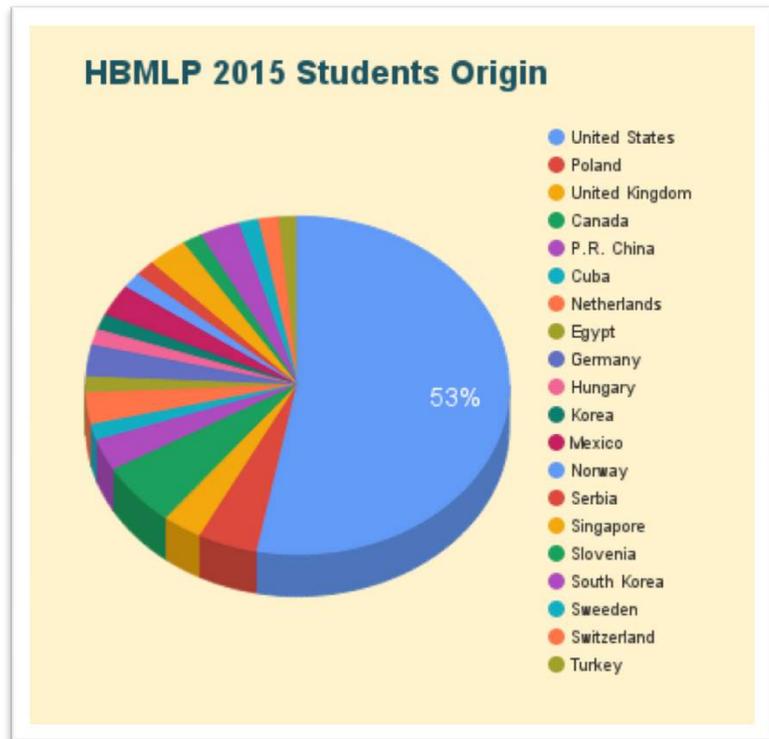
Woodenfish believes that religious leadership, ongoing interfaith, international, and intercultural dialogue are necessary components to creating and sustaining a more peaceful world.



## Program Impacts

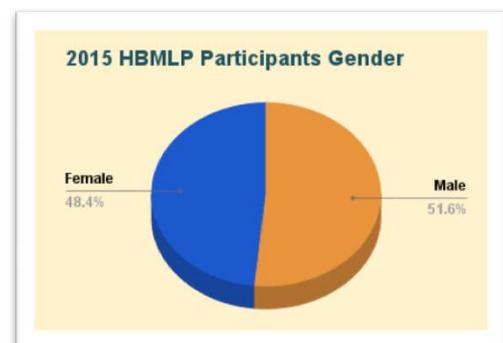
Since our inception and first program in 2002, Woodenfish has prioritized providing access to educational opportunities and the opportunity to study East Asian Buddhism, Chinese culture, language, and customs. Our programs create opportunities for authentic immersion and a launch pad for emerging scholars and leaders to have a first-hand, direct experience in modern China. The two charts on this page show our commitment to ensuring we have a diverse group of students participating in Woodenfish programs as well as gender balance.

We are dedicated to providing full program scholarships to ALL accepted participants.



In 2015, through our China in-country fundraising efforts, we provided 15 \$5,000 scholarships to include program and travel fees to undergraduate and graduate students from Harvard University, Yale University, and Princeton University.

The impact of Woodenfish is immediately internalized by program participants, and ripples well beyond the 1,000+ alumni. It is difficult to measure long-term effects of educational programs or [‘study abroad’ programs](#), as [a number of studies](#) have [attempted](#) to do. The outcomes of educational immersion programs are often qualitative rather than quantitative and intangible, the current status of alumni provide evidence that Woodenfish has often catalyzed participants to continue studies of East Asia, Buddhism. There is little better solution to promoting world peace than fostering meaningful human-to-human connections and mutual understanding based in compassionate and authentic learning and dialogue.



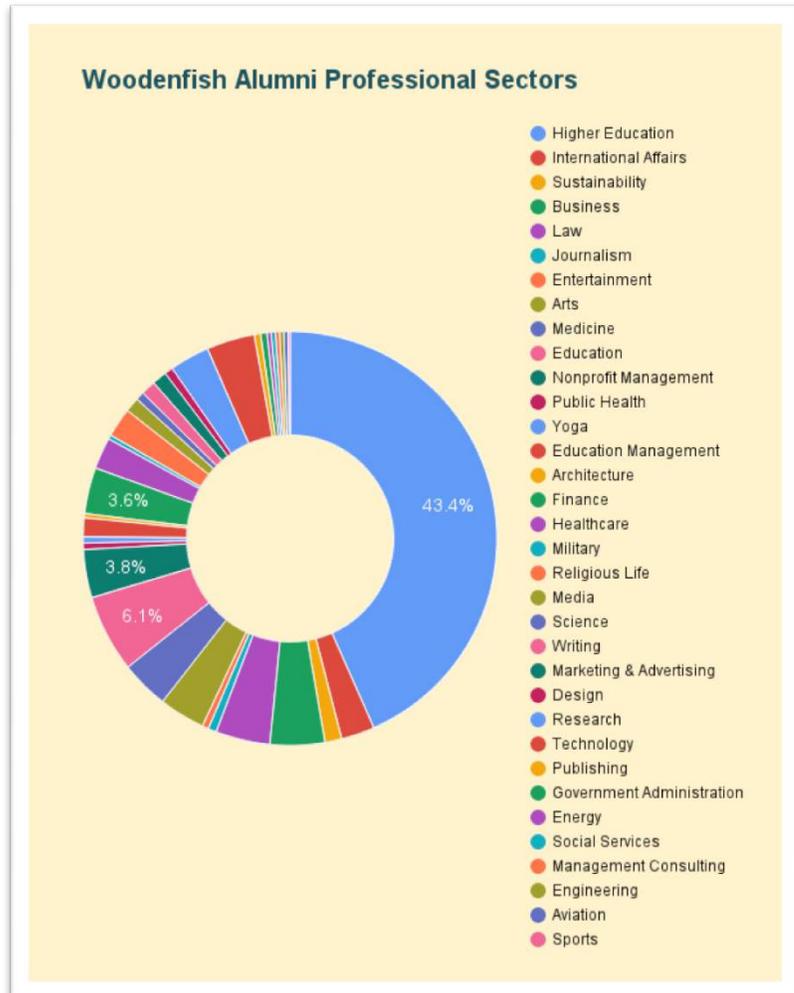
While we have maintained records of all previous years’ alumni, 2015 was the first year Woodenfish was able to aggregate data to get a better sense of where Woodenfish alumni have gone and where they are today. With the assistance of [LinkedIn](#) and other social media channels, we have worked to track where alumni are today in order to develop a sense of the cumulative impact of our programs. Woodenfish attracts and enrolls quite capable,

meritorious individuals as well as acting as a catalyst for their further growth and development across an extremely wide variety of careers. Of the most pronounced findings, Woodenfish program alumni are overwhelmingly involved in Higher Education, either as undergraduates, graduate students, PhD students, scholars, or professors at higher education institutions around the world. This high percentage can be in part explained by the fact that recent years' program alumni may have participated while in university, and are in the process of completing their degree.

However, cohorts from every year since 2002 contribute to the association with Higher Education. Of the over 400 alumni in higher education, 73 are currently pursuing a PhD and 110 are professors and instructors at higher education institutions.

To see an interactive version of the chart to the right, please visit our [website](#). Other sectors that are well represented include law, medicine, education and education management, technology, business, finance, research, and nonprofit management.

The map below shows where Woodenfish alumni now live throughout the world.



## From Cultivating Individual Mindfulness to a Multiplied Impact on Emerging Scholars & World Peace

Woodenfish operates at an important nexus, contributing to positive Sino-American relations and offering meaningful opportunities for cultivation of mindfulness and individual’s ethical and global outlook. While our programs are often centered on what may be considered “historical” or ancient wisdom, cultural-learning and acquisition, appreciation of historical and religious traditions, and grappling with the reconciliation and incorporation of Western and Eastern values and conceptions of the good life are part and parcel of what Woodenfish programs tackle head on. As Woodenfish alumni have demonstrated, beyond their experience with Woodenfish, the impact of the program continues to multiply as alumni go on to become more actively engaged, compassionate citizens of whatever communities they are engaged in.



### October Beijing Conference

Venerable Yifa invited scholars from Princeton University, Stephen Teiser and Oxford University, Professor Emeritus Richard Gombrich, who made his first trip to China, to speak at the conference. This conference was webcast throughout China, and reached 150,000 Chinese viewers. This type of visibility further serves to extend Woodenfish reach within China.



### Financial Highlights

Much of Woodenfish Foundation funding comes from individual donors within China. We aim to be a lean and program-driven organization. With a significant infusion of funding in 2015 from extremely generous donors in China, our partner organization within China for the most part received those funds and allocated them to fund HBMLP, Buddhism in China, as well as Global CitiZens.

### Statement of Activities

#### OPERATING REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS..... \$175,877.45

PROGRAM SERVICE FEES.....	\$28,800.00
TOTAL REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT.....	\$204,677.45
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	
GENERAL OPERATING COSTS.....	\$2,044.10
PROGRAMS AND GENERAL MANAGEMENT.....	\$46,841.45
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES.....	\$48,885.55
<b>CHANGES IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS.....</b>	<b>\$155,791.90</b>

### Financial Strategy

We have to date received 100% of our funds from generous individual supporters from around the world, and primarily in China and the United States. In order to continue to ensure a sustainable future for Woodenfish, we will continue to seek to diversify our funding sources. Much of our revenue for funding programming expenditures occurs within China, and is therefore not represented by the Woodenfish Foundation balance sheet within the United States. However, as we look to increase our programming in the United States, and charge a sliding scale of fees for Chinese youth programs, we will not only rely on donations, but also continue to offer the majority of our programs at nearly full-scholarship.

### Volunteer with Woodenfish and Make a Difference

We are a growing non-profit, and require a wide variety of skills sets to ensure our continued, sustained growth. If you would like to get involved, we would greatly appreciate adding your skill set to our organization, please contact us at [wfusa@woodenfish.org](mailto:wfusa@woodenfish.org).

### Looking Forward to the Future of Woodenfish

As we look forward to the work of Woodenfish in 2016, it is exciting to report that we will expand our program offerings as well as continue our mainstay programs:

**Finance:** We expect to meet our funding goals to be able to fund the existing programs including program scholarships for HBMLP and a large international conference for scholars in Dunhuang, China.

**Programs:** We are expanding our programming to include youth cultural programs with civic engagement, community service, UN culture, a women's group focused on dialoguing in international arenas while at the UN Women's Commission, Dunhuang Transmission and Translation Conference, Humanistic Buddhist Monastic Life Program and World CitiZens.

**Notable Upcoming Events:** The 2016 Dunhuang Transmission and Translation Conference will convene over forty international scholars in honor of scholars in honor of Master Hsing Yun, who will be 90 years old in 2016; in honor of Stanley Weinstein, Emeritus Professor at Yale; in honor of Lew Lancaster, Emeritus Professor At Berkeley, their great contribution to Buddhism.

## 2015 Woodenfish Staff and Teachers

Venerable Dr. Yifa , Chief Executive Officer

Julia Gooding, Chief Operating Officer

Jordan Galler, Programs Director

Guttorm Gunderson, HBMLP & BIC Programs Coordinator

Dr. Mark Blum, BIC Instructor

Peter Romaskiewicz, HBMLP Core Instructor

Karl-Stéphan Bouthillette, HBMLP Core Instructor

*HBMLP Program Staff*

Kim Dembrosky

Melisa Fernando Polo

William (Cory) Hardaker

Ryan Richard

Sean Conway

## Board of Directors

Emily Clawson, Board Member

Ben Herzberger, Board Member

Michael Paone , Secretary of Board

Kaiyuan Wang, Treasurer of Board

Fawn Wang, Board Member

Huang Xing, Board Member

Venerable Dr. Yifa, Chair of Board

Visit us online!

<http://www.woodenfish.org>

