It's impossible to condense the experiences we've all had together into a single thought, but a word that undeniably defined my experience is illuminative. As a group, we are the physical juxtaposition of culture that has not been present since pre-pandemic. From the first orientation, it has been slow steps of immersion: first learning about what to expect, preparing based on our predefined notions, and finally adapting based on our first-hand experiences. It was always the little things that took getting used to, from brief, daily interactions at restaurants to adjusting to the variations of school life in China. From the large class sizes in Atlanta to learning amongst only a few peers, there was a newfound interdependence that became our new reality. Although it must be said that everyone had a unique insight into their encounters with school in China, the overarching essence of our study abroad remains homogenous.

We have all gathered in a place where technology has taken a front seat in modernizing life as we know it. From face ID to Mei Tuan, life here has been structured and sustained by the endless bounds of technology. Sprawling cities, large malls, and fascinatingly designed buildings have also been a staple of daily life. And all we have gotten is just a tiny taste. Construction is prevalent in all bounds of society and it is a guarantee that even in five years our experiences can be reinvigorated with another trip. Alongside technology, culture has been the other cornerstone of the world. From ancient architecture and tradition to James’ creative and informative presentation on Taoist Metaphysics, external learning has been right around the corner at every step of the journey. We are finally nearing the light at the end of the tunnel, but it would be an understatement to say that this program has been anything less than life-defining. The world as a whole can be seen in a new, brilliant light, a color contrasting all our previous notions.

谢谢大家