

ZENG Xiao

BSc Hons Finance, Accounting and Management

### **UNNC Alumna of the Year 2017**

How easy is it to turn the other cheek to the problems and poverty of others? For many, it is too easy – but tonight we celebrate the achievement of a remarkable young woman – someone who has used her skills, intelligence and expertise to make a real difference to those in need, and help transform the lives of some of the poorest in our society.

Zeng Xiao graduated from UNNC in 2016 with a degree in Finance and Management. As a student, she displayed compassion, talent and leadership, monitoring the SU President election and contributing to financial transparency as leader of the Integrity Department. Through the UNNC Young Volunteer Association, she experienced life as a volunteer teacher in Hunan province, leaving inspired to find innovative solutions to the challenges children there face. She then spent time in Nairobi, helping to develop the “Out of Slum” project. Here Zeng worked with 8 volunteers to forge new relationships between local residents and students through the sale of postcards and goods - helping create a small library of 600 books for local people to enjoy.

She then joined iJoin Consultants, supporting China’s first food bank. Through hard work and careful research, she worked to connect more than 100 people in need with support from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, while also helping to improve food circulation. After graduation, Zeng followed her passion for social enterprise and joined Serve for China, an organisation which aims to develop future leaders and improve the lives of those living in our under-developed regions. Building on her earlier experiences, with vision and dedication, Zeng helped establish a remarkable project called ‘Chilli and Corn’ in Molao village, one of the poorest in Hunan province where 90% of the men in Molao are forced to leave to find work.

Zeng and her colleagues have changed the fortunes of this community, supporting 16 women to become entrepreneurs through an agricultural cooperative, producing a tasty product called ‘Chilli and Corn’. With 70% of the profit coming back to the village, people’s lives are being transformed. Last December, Zeng worked with the women to develop a special Spring Festival edition, attracting the attention of the China Interactive Media Group Honghuang and a recent grant of 300 thousand RMB to build a factory. The project has had over 100,000 views on Weibo

and Wechat, and is helping raise much-needed awareness for those who lack a voice.

Ladies and gentlemen, the application of natural talent, combined with an unquenchable passion, huge resolve, social responsibility and an exceptional work ethic make Zeng a truly inspiring role model for all young people and a worthy and deserving recipient of our UNNC Alumna of the Year 2017.