

UD delegation visits China

Editor's Note: Deputy Provost Havidán Rodríguez reports about a recent visit to China.

9:43 a.m., Oct. 19, 2009----A delegation from the University of Delaware traveled to Beijing, China, in an effort to continue to expand and strengthen the University's strategic partnerships in the region. The UD delegation consisted of Tom Apple, provost; Havidán Rodríguez, deputy provost; Michael Chajes, dean of the College of Engineering; and George Watson, interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

During their stay in Beijing, the UD delegation visited Tsinghua University and Beijing Normal University.

"We are delighted to continue our development of research and academic collaborations with some of the best institutions of higher education in China. We have had extensive and excellent interactions with both Tsinghua and Beijing Normal University over the past few years," Apple said.

Tsinghua University

Tsinghua University traces its origins to 1911. This comprehensive university consists of 14 schools, 56 departments and over 40 research institutes, including 12 state key laboratories and one national laboratory. Although engineering has been the primary focus at Tsinghua University, academic offerings have been significantly expanded to include medicine, sciences, law, liberal arts, education and management, among others. With an enrollment of about 27,000 students (almost evenly split between graduate and undergraduate students), Tsinghua is one of the most prominent, and highly selective, institutions of higher education in China.

While at Tsinghua, the UD delegation had the opportunity to meet with Prof. Yuan Si, provost and vice president, and interacted with faculty and staff in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Architecture, the Department of Mechanical Engineering and the School of Sciences, as well as the International Office.

Tsinghua University and the University of Delaware signed a general agreement in 2008; an MOU was also signed by the departments of mechanical engineering at each institution. Prof. Bingqing (B.Q.) Wei at UD has been spearheading the ongoing research collaborations with Tsinghua University's department of mechanical engineering.

Dean Chajes indicated that he is very pleased with the partnerships and ongoing collaborations between these two programs. "Our expectations are that these partnerships will continue to flourish and expand to include other research collaborations, including student and faculty exchange programs," Chajes indicated.

Vimalin Rujivacharakul, a faculty member in UD's Department of Art History, has had ongoing collaborations with Tsinghua's School of Architecture since 2001. These collaborations have resulted in significant funding from UD's Center for International Studies to support Dr. Rujivacharakul's ongoing research collaborations at Tsinghua. In December, Dr. Rujivacharakul and a group of UD students will visit Tsinghua University to participate in a conference on *Methods on Research and Teaching of Architectural History*. Also, Dr. J. Ritchie Garrison, director of the Winterthur Program, has initiated collaborations with Tsinghua University focusing on vernacular architecture in China.

A delegation from Tsinghua University visited UD in 2009 and was hosted by the Center for Historic Architecture and Design (CHAD), along with the departments of Art History and Art Conservation.



Tsinghua University



At Tsinghua University, the UD delegation meets with Prof. Yuan Si, provost and vice president of Tsinghua University (third from the right).

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Beijing Normal University (BNU)

BNU is a comprehensive research intensive institution of higher education in China. According to the Chinese University Rankings, BNU is ranked among the very best undergraduate programs in the country in education, Chinese language and literature, choreography, history, geographical information systems, environmental science, education technology, and psychology. BNU ranks number eight among about 3,000 institutions of higher education in China. BNU has a total student enrollment of about 20,000 students of which about 9,500 are in graduate programs. Founded in 1902, BNU has quickly expanded its academic programs to include 55 bachelor's, 157 master's and 95 doctoral programs; BNU also has four key national laboratories.

The UD delegation met with Vice President Ling Sun and a number of other colleagues to discuss the extensive and ongoing collaborative initiatives between these two institutions over the past 10 years. BNU has offered tuition-waiver scholarships to the University of Delaware, which allowed UD students to study at BNU during the Fall 2008 and Spring 2009. BNU has also been host to a number of UD study abroad programs and has hosted UD's Governor's School for Excellence in China in 2007 and 2008, led by Profs. Jianguo Chen and Maria Tu of UD's Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

The UD delegation was informed by Xiao Kai, coordinator for American programs in the Office of International Exchange and Cooperation, that UD has been the only U.S. institution that has had 10 consecutive years of uninterrupted collaborations with BNU in the area of study abroad programs.

Under the leadership of Dr. Tibor Toth, UD's School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy and the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research (CADSR) have had significant collaborations with their counterparts in the School of Social Development and Public Policy at BNU. This fall, Dr. Toth is hosting two advanced Ph.D. students from BNU, and it is anticipated that during the spring of 2010, several UD students will be studying at BNU as a result of this collaborative partnership.

Interim Dean Watson was enthusiastic about the productive and ongoing collaborations of a number of departments in the College of Arts and Sciences with Tsinghua University and Beijing Normal University. "As we move along the Path to Prominence™, it's important that we continue to engage our students and professors in collaborative initiatives with institutions of higher education around the world. I'm pleased that our academic and research partnerships with institutions such as Tsinghua and BNU are expanding and are growing stronger. These partnerships will have important benefits for research and educational programs at UD and for our partner institutions as well," Watson said.

UD's delegation wishes to express its most sincere appreciation to the staff at the Center for International Studies (CFIS) for organizing and coordinating its visits to Tsinghua and BNU.

Article and photos courtesy of Havidán Rodríguez