



FLORIDA  
INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY

BLOG – From China

May 6, 2011

*Welcome to President Mark B. Rosenberg's blog chronicling his 2011 visit to China. The president is sharing commentary and photos from his trip, so be sure to check back in the days ahead to learn more about FIU's Marriott Tianjin China Program and the students, faculty and administrators who make it a success. Click [here](#) to check out his entry from May 5th.*

What a sweet day in Beijing — our second on our way to graduate 200 students in Tianjin this Sunday, May 8. A Chinese proverb best sums up today's experience: The loftiest towers rise from the ground.

Two necessary keys to a great public university are quality programs and well-educated graduates. These alone, however, are not sufficient. Satisfied graduates who turn into loyal alumni are critical to the long-term success of FIU. So the FIU delegation dedicated today to furthering our alumni base. We estimate that there are at least 650 alumni residing in China. We started to build our China-based alumni association with a wonderful reception last year in Beijing — see our [You Tube videos of this 2010 event](#).



Today we began the day in Beijing with a working breakfast with dedicated graduates and near-graduates who are either Chinese or working here in China. In attendance were Alec Fang, who holds two degrees from FIU; Lin Gao, who was an exchange student from China at FIU in 2007; FIU faculty member Yunfei Li, who holds her master's in hospitality management from FIU; Chang Liu, a doctoral student in biomedical engineering at our College of Engineering and Computing; and Derek Capo, an FIU business school graduate who founded an educational exchange company in Beijing following a year of studying Mandarin here.

Alec is the president of the Beijing-based FIU group. He issued a challenge by declaring that his goal was to create the largest FIU alumni association grouping of any associated with FIU. His swagger was clearly an FIU "Worlds Ahead" approach. Throughout the breakfast we focused on initiatives that would help create a robust FIU alumni network here in China and the communications plan that would need to be developed to accomplish such a goal. The working group seemed to land on the notion that we should soon hold a World Congress for FIU alumni—perhaps right here in China. In essence this gathering would showcase FIU graduates and promote networking among FIU alumni.

Later in the day, the FIU Alumni Association hosted nearly 190 FIU graduates who gathered in the ballroom of the JW Marriott Beijing. The session was opened by Bill Draughon, executive director of the Alumni Association. He was followed by Alec, who gave an impassioned speech about the importance of establishing a strong alumni chapter. I then showed several videos, including a retrospective on the institution and, of course, the FIU 2020. My presentation was spliced with "We are...FIU" cheers, and then we took countless pictures to commemorate the packed dinner.

I was tickled to encounter a Chinese couple who had married within the past few months. They qualify as "FIU lovebirds"—in fact they met at an FIU class in Hospitality at FIU in 2006. Peter Ng recalls that he thought his wife to be—Qing Lu, was "Korean." "She admits that she thought he was "Phillipino"! Until he noticed that she "turned on her computer in Chinese." The rest is history!

The generation of Chinese graduates attending this wonderful gathering is now largely fully employed—and with great hope and energy. No doubt most will be successful—the booming Chinese economy has been good to the majority FIU-trained engineers and hospitality managers in attendance. FIU will be in capable hands as these individuals become "lofty towers" in their respective professions. Today we connected in a meaningful way with our determined cadre of Chinese alums celebrating their FIU connections. In FIU, they know that they have a true lifeline for a lifetime.

A sweet day and a sweet future for our institution, with these and many other dedicated alums!