

*Welcome to President Mark B. Rosenberg's blog chronicling his 2012 visit to China. Below is the President's second entry.*

Universities invariably assemble talented students who have skills beyond their ability to study and learn competencies and skills that will prepare them for the world of work. Such was clearly the case this afternoon on the campus of the Tianjin University of Commerce in the same hall where we will graduate our students tomorrow. On this eve of graduation, our FIU-Tianjin graduating seniors invited their underclass peers and our delegation to gather with them to enjoy a series of acts demonstrating their inestimable musical and dance talents! Nearly fifty students displayed their performance abilities in eleven different acts.

This commendable first-ever (in China) student-led talent show before a packed house of fellow students, presented a mix of global performance styles: from a traditional rock group complete with a lead singer bedecked in sunglasses, to a convincing pair of faux-angry rap singers pushing out cadenced ghetto lyrics about --what else--"survival of the fittest," from a traditional Chinese ballet laced with a sexual tension performed by two young female graduates, to the "American Show"-- excerpts from great speeches read in the words and voice of Martin Luther King, Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama (their images alternatively projected in the background) by a young student who could have otherwise majored in rhetoric and communication. Perhaps the high point-unexpectedly- was a duo of violinist (Wang Yu) and human beat box (Luo Chao), who performed to the delight of a packed audience of fellow students. Luo had the uncanny ability to develop a sonorous synchopade of beats through his throat and mouth that used amplification to create the sense of a trio of musicians punching out a last frantic jam of improvised New Orleans jazz right off Bourbon Street.

A finale of nearly 27 graduates bedecked in their graduating robes initiated a traditional choral song, only to drop their robes mid-stanza to end the energized afternoon with a rock-opera dance routine and song-fest that revealed the universal bimodality of young students--who alternate between contemplation and frenetic motion. A perfect metaphor for why so many of us stay close to traditional students in the higher education world--they combine a naive optimism with youthful energy and purpose that refreshes and gives hope, no matter their culture or continent of habitation!

This Tianjin talent display is a first for our China campus! It may be a new FIU tradition that will bring us all together to celebrate and bond around a globalized FIU experience--an unforgettable Worlds Ahead opportunity that will never be forgotten! Now its on to our Sunday graduation.