

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

While it may seem obvious that every graduation Commencement is about the same – relieved and semi-exhausted students process into a hall, are told they are great (and can conquer the world), and then receive the anticlimactic authorization to declare themselves college graduates – the truth is that every commencement ultimately carries with it a distinct personality.



Our graduates getting ready to receive their degrees.

No doubt, today had its own twists: a Mother's Day Commencement! Memorable declarations by the host university president and the class valedictorian! The graduation of a record number of students in our Marriott School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. The obligatory class picture, complete with the ritual graduation mortar-board toss at the end. And a memorable post-ceremony lunch with some of Tianjin's top leadership to celebrate the cooperation between our two communities. Today is Mother's Day in China, as it is in the United States. So after declaring Happy Mother's Day in my best Mandarin, we graduated 241 students at Tianjin University of Commerce, where our partnership has opened the door for an unprecedented cooperation with that progressive institution of higher education in what amounts to Beijing's bustling port city—modestly populated with about 11 million residents.

Our partnership with the Tianjin University of Commerce is now in its eighth year. On the campus of this university, we are blessed with a major education facility that is only now beginning to fulfill its potential. FIU has a growing education capability in China where a combined (TUC-FIU) enrollment of 1,100 students receive a Worlds Ahead education in the high-demand profession of hospitality management. But for TUC's leader, the partnership is more than just an opportunity to place students in good jobs: the commencement thoughts of TUC's visionary President Liu Shuhan still echo in my

mind: “Internationalization is the only way for Tianjin Commerce University to realize modernization. An open-door policy and international relations will promote structural reform.”

Our leading class scholar — Hong Xiaowen (“Melody”) — offered a well-spoken valedictory address reflecting on the highs and lows of the four-year, shared experience with her classmates. She reminded her peers and the rest of us that today was “the day we step into another university, which is called society,” warning us all that “tougher tests” remained ahead in the future lives of graduates. Her message closed with the near-universal aspiration that “every graduate should dream big, seize the day, live... life to the fullest, and...make it to the top.”

Whether all of our graduating students will “make it to the top” remains to be seen. What we do know is that almost all of today’s graduates have a certain near future: For those who are not going on to internships or full-time jobs in China, graduate school awaits. For FIU alone, we know that about 60 of our graduating seniors are moving to South Florida to get advanced degrees in hospitality. As one proudly announced when she was posing with me for the obligatory photo, “See you in Miami!” So nearly 25 percent want more from FIU and are willing to pay full cost to continue their educations at our Biscayne Bay Campus at the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. Just knowing this fills me with pride and urgency: pride in seeing that others from a faraway place and a different culture believe in the value of our FIU. And urgency in doing right by them, their families and the thousands of other students who are entrusting their educations and future with us.

Every day those of us associated with FIU have the singular privilege of helping make the world a better place, regardless of whether we are in Miami, or Miami Gardens or, indeed, in Tianjin, China. This was what our founders hoped for, but they had no idea that we would have a significant foothold beyond the narrow confines of Miami-Dade County — much less in China. So, thanks to our faculty and professional staff, both here in Tianjin and in Miami, for making Mother’s Day and Commencement so special for so many — including me!