Our tenth anniversary in China: No patting of the back allowed!

There is a Chinese proverb that describes our current trip to China to celebrate FIU’s tenth year in partnership with the Tianjin University of Commerce: *You cannot propel yourself forward by patting yourself on the back.* This current trip aptly captures the meaning of this saying.

Prior to our Tianjin graduation on Sunday, May 18, 2014, we have been blessed with a visit, unlike earlier sojourns, to one of the world’s leading economic powers – Beijing. Two members of our Board of Trustees are with us to represent the university and community at our tenth anniversary commemoration in Tianjin. Trustee Claudia Puig and Trustee Gerald Grant Jr. ’78, MBA ’89 (with their respective spouses) are experiencing for the first time the magnitude, scale and energy of China. Special thanks to alumnus Derek Capo of NextStep China for the instructive trip to the iconic Great Wall for our two new travelers.

While in Beijing, we convened our first China Advisory Council (CAC), which includes Capo; Dr. Yan Guohua of the Beijing Foreign Studies University; Ambassador Carmenza Jaramillo of the Colombian Embassy in China; alumnus and FIU Foundation board member Adalio Sanchez of IBM; and Shuigen Xiao of Internet2. At this meeting, we exchanged views on the opportunities and challenges of expanding our China initiatives, and heard from FIU Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management Dean Mike Hampton and FIU Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Peng Lu. The CAC will convene at least twice a year to review FIU China initiatives and to explore options for deepening student exchange and research opportunities involving FIU-based students and faculty.

![Trustee Gerald Grant Jr. ’78, MBA ’89 (left) and Trustee Claudia Puig (right) holding an FIU banner at the Great Wall.](image)
The FIU delegation also met with U.S. Embassy officials, as well as leaders from two well-known institutions of higher education — the Beijing Forestry University and the Beijing Foreign Studies University. Both institutions have leading national and international programs that align with FIU priorities and capabilities. Both universities share FIU’s global outlook and sense of urgency to deepen collaborative research and student exchange. Likely cooperative agreements will follow from discussions held during this trip.

We expect to build on the Beijing-based collaboration of our College of Architecture +The Arts and College of Engineering and Computing with Tsinghua University. The partnership was established last year to build a solar-powered house that placed fifth overall (among 20 entrants) in the inaugural Solar Decathlon China competition held August 2-10, 2013 in Datong, China. This collaboration set a new standard for student and faculty collaboration in a FIU-China project.

So even on the first day of our tenth anniversary gathering in Tianjin, we are actively working toward a hopeful future with possibilities to construct a stronger and more diverse collaboration with the country that is predicted to be the world’s economic power in just a few short decades.

More will follow from China in the next few days as we culminate our visit with FIU’s graduation and anniversary celebration this Sunday!