This is President Rosenberg’s sixth annual blog chronicling the TUC-FIU partnership, the annual China Commencement and our students in the China program. To read his second blog post, click here.

In the six years I have served as president, I have made six trips to China to represent our university at our commencement for the Marriott-Tianjin China Program. Each trip is different because of the changing partnership agenda of our institution and the ongoing changes in China.

Saturday, May 9, brings our commencement ceremonies and the happy graduates and their families. Sunday, we travel to Hainan province to kick-off an international scholarly conference on tropical botany that we are co-sponsoring with Hainan University. Monday, we return to Shandong Province where we have already initiated a partnership with Qingdao University to offer Spanish and Latin American studies.
Fresh on the heels of our graduations earlier this week at Modesto A. Maidique Campus, the quick exit to get to China is emblematic of the urgency we have to ensure a Worlds Ahead student experience. Our relations with China are not just about international extension. They are very much about providing all our students with a relevant and quality mix of opportunities in and out of the classroom that ensures they are ready for the complexities of the 21st century.

China is now a major force in global affairs. The country’s economy continues to expand; it is estimated it will have a GDP approaching $120 trillion by 2040. This GDP will dwarf that of the United States and Europe. The country is a major consumer of resources — and reportedly has poured more cement in the last three years to modernize than was poured throughout the last century in the United States (New York Times, March 18, 2015). Its population continues to morph — from rural to urban; from less educated to more educated; from younger to older.

Its expansive economy is now reaching deep into the domestic formations of countries far and wide. In Nicaragua, Chinese foreign investment is hovering over a new canal project that will impact the course of the region’s history. Even in the United States, Chinese foreign investment is now spreading to one of the last bastions of American culture — the country club. In Myrtle Beach, Chinese investors have purchased nearly 27 of the resort’s 80 golf courses.

What does this mean for us? It means that we must do a better job of giving our students opportunities to learn about Chinese culture and norms. We must find a way to host more Chinese students at FIU, where our students will make lifelong friendships that can be pivotal elements in 21st century cooperation — the kind needed to keep our planet sustainable. It means that we must find better ways to get our students to China — to see and feel firsthand how the Chinese people think; how they collaborate with each other; and how their political system and economy work.

So follow us during the next few days as we move up and down eastern China to ensure that we can have a 21st century set of relations with the peoples and institutions of this rapidly changing country.