BLOG from Buenos Dias, China

May 13, 2015

This is President Rosenberg’s sixth annual blog chronicling the TUC-FIU partnership, the annual China Commencement and our students in the China program. This is his third blog post of this trip. Click on the appropriate link to read his other blog posts: Road map for 2015, Graduation Day Tianjin 2015, and Hainan diary.

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

I was met at Qingdao University by 75 first-year students — all studying in the FIU Spanish program that was initiated in December 2014.

Students in this port city have chosen to major in Spanish and are part of an innovative cooperative program that will enable them to earn undergraduate degrees from both FIU and QU!

I have written earlier about Qingdao. Simply, it is a beautiful, well-kept city that combines stunning modern architecture with wide boulevards, many with impressive ocean views. The university itself has three campuses, two of which we visited during this trip.

During the visit, which was hosted by QU Chairman of the Board Linhua Xia and Yunbo (Leny) Wang, interim dean of International Colleges at the university, we explored new avenues of cooperating, including initiatives to solidify QU’s international education programs.

I also offered a brief lecture in Spanish and English to the welcoming students about Miami’s connection with Latin America and the diversity of cultures, histories and social norms that can be found in the Americas.
Special acknowledgement to our Department of Modern Languages and our impressive, dedicated cadre of teachers whom I met at QU. No doubt the program will make inroads in foreign language and area studies instruction in this port city that desires to be a major point of contact for Latin American trade and commerce.

During the visit, I had the opportunity as well to meet with city officials who pointed to the city’s 30 percent rise in GDP in the last five years and who proudly promoted their efforts to expand the city’s international relations. Vice Chairman Cheng Youxin was one of my hosts for this portion of the visit. He is the happy father of FIU faculty member Shaoming Cheng and the doting grandfather of three grandchildren in Miami.

As I left the city to return to Beijing prior to exiting the country, I continue to be impressed with the efforts that our FIU colleagues are making throughout eastern China to deepen our collaborations in that area. There is a huge upside to our enhanced relations with China — most importantly, the exposure that our students get to the peoples and norms of this important country.

This exposure is uneven. Some academic units have significant faculty-to-faculty collaborations with Chinese counterparts. Some have notable concentrations of Chinese undergraduate and graduate students studying in their respective units. Some academic units on the other hand need to consider a deeper working relationship with China as a means to prepare our students better for the challenges ahead as the country clearly emerges as a world leader in virtually all arenas of economic and social life. We have already seen firsthand the power of the arts with the impactful exhibitions by Chinese artists held at the Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Art during this past 12 months.

No doubt the debate will continue about the “how” of China’s emergence as a world power. Will its economy continue to grow — even at the reduced rate of 7 percent? Can job creation continue apace to absorb the new entrants into the market economy? Can the political system adjust to the rising expectations of the emerging middle class?

What does not need to be debated, however, is the urgency of greater awareness and connections to this modernizing country and its proud and hard-working people. FIU’s initiatives with Chinese universities give us a small but consequential opportunity to help prepare our students for the Worlds Ahead challenges that are right before them. China will be a part of that reality for our children and grandchildren. Getting ready for this now is the only responsible thing to do!