

This is President Rosenberg's seventh annual blog chronicling the TUC-FIU partnership, the annual China Commencement and our students in China. To read his second blog post, click [here](#).

Our FIU is a forward-facing institution that believes deeply in its students. The Chinese presence at FIU is consequential and impactful. We have nearly 900 students from China enrolled in our South Florida campuses and in Tianjin thanks to the presence there of our Marriott Tianjin China Program.

Given our pride in this FIU extension in Asia, and given the fact that we build futures, I thought I should share with you three such FIU-related students from China whom I know and admire for their loyalty, their hard work, and their determination to succeed.

Our partnerships in China and our rising visibility there have fostered so many good things for students and their families from China who choose to attend FIU. As our small delegation heads there for our graduation of undergraduates in our Marriott Tianjin China Program, I want to go beyond the numbers and tell you the stories of three Chinese students whom I have been honored to meet since I have become president.

I met **Kun Bao** at his wife's cozy corner restaurant across from the Engineering Center. **Margaret Fan '10 '12** was our class valedictorian at our Tianjin campus in 2010. And then there is **Sisi Meng**, who attended an FIU Alumni Association meeting in Beijing several years ago, and today is completing her doctoral studies in our Department of Economics.

Kun is from Nanpi, a small town in Hebei province. Right around the time he began attending classes at Hebei University of Technology, FIU signed an agreement with that institution. After completing two years of academic study at Hebei University of Technology, he was given the option to attend any one of three universities in the United States. Kun felt that FIU had a larger research group and more reasonable tuition fees, so he opted to attend FIU.

After graduating from the 2+2 program, Kun spent one year working as the team leader of the FIU-Tsinghua Solar Decathlon team as it prepared to compete in the Solar Decathlon competition in China in 2013. After that, he began his doctoral program at FIU.



I met Kun Bao when I visited his wife's restaurant.

Miami has been good personally and professionally for Kun. He met his wife Yanan Cai, who is a two-time FIU Panther, in Miami. Yanan earned her bachelor's degree in hospitality and tourism management in 2010 from our Marriott Tianjin China Program and a master's in finance in 2011. She had a job offer in China when she graduated from FIU, but she wanted to stay with Kun, so she opened a Chinese restaurant - Chinese Guy - not far from FIU's Engineering Campus where Kun conducts his research in the ElectroMagnetics Lab of Stavros Georgakopoulos.

Kun says the best thing that's happened to him while at FIU has been his participation in the Solar Decathlon. In 2013, he was part of the team that represented FIU and built its solar house in Datong, China, with Tsinghua University. Kun says the team shared its ideas with other teams from around the world.

Margaret Fan is a native of Shandong Province. She first heard about FIU approximately 10 years ago through a family friend who helped bring FIU's hospitality management program to Tianjin. She earned her undergraduate degree in hospitality and tourism management in 2010 in Tianjin. She was planning on staying in China and working at a hotel after graduation, but she says her FIU professors, including Susan Gladstone and Nancy Scanlon, encouraged her to come to Miami to obtain her master's degree in hospitality management. After visiting the area and attending the Food Network's South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Margaret made the leap and went on to complete her master's in 2012.



Margaret said the encouragement of her FIU professors was key to her decision to come to Miami to earn her master's degree.

Margaret says she has "so many" special memories of her time at FIU. Chief among them was her presidency of the Chinese Student and Scholar Association. It was during her tenure as president that the club participated for the first time in FIU's Homecoming parade.

Today Margaret is RCL's Asian Pacific training administration manager. This is a fast-growing market for all cruise ships. Soon she will be responsible for operating all of RCL's training centers around the world. (The training centers offer 12-week courses to prepare graduates for employment as an RCL hospitality crew member.) Most recently, she helped open centers in Tianjin, China, and Lombok, Indonesia.

For Margaret, FIU and RCL are forever linked. It was during her Hospitality Strategic Management class that she first met individuals from RCL. Margaret and her team had created a presentation about RCL. Professor Sandro Formica "challenged" students in the class to invite representatives of the companies profiled to the final presentations. And from there, you know the rest of the story.



Sisi said she dedicates her academic accomplishments to her "lovely parents".

Sisi Meng was born and raised in Beijing, where she lived until 2010. Uncertain of what she wanted to do when she finished high school, a friend of her parents suggested she consider studying economics because economics deals with people making decisions about their lives. Fascinated, she enrolled in an economics program at Capital University of Economics and Business in Beijing. Deciding to pursue a more advanced degree in the United States, Sisi began her master's program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2010.

In March 2011, a devastating tsunami struck Japan. Around that time, Sisi was required to submit a research proposal in her chosen field. With the tsunami still dominating world headlines, she wrote her proposal on the effects of natural disasters on long-term economic growth. From there, she developed a great interest in the field of climate change and the economic impacts of natural hazards. While searching online for programs that conducted research related to climate change and hazard mitigation, she discovered FIU's International Hurricane Research Center. Friends who had been to Miami told her it was a "fantastic city with lots of fun" and a good lifestyle.

Sisi says the best thing about her FIU experience has been the many resources and opportunities that are offered to facilitate student learning and help students achieve their goals. She has also participated in the graduate certificate program in Geographic Information System (GIS) and spent a great deal of time in the GIS lab. She has learned much from FIU's writing center. And, of course, she has gotten the chance to work with many excellent faculty members.

When they first arrived in Miami, Sisi and her mother showed up at my office one August afternoon, hot and flushed from the heat. They had walked to the university from a host's apartment, some two miles from the university. I was so happy to see them both, I gave them FIU stuffed Panther dolls and FIU t-shirts as souvenirs to start Sisi's sojourn.

In June, Sisi will defend her dissertation! She plans on graduating by the end of the summer and has accepted an offer to be a visiting assistant professor in economics at University of Colorado-Denver, the first phase of her life's dream now almost complete.

These three exemplars give testimony to the power and determination of our students. Each is on a success vector that multiplies the investment made in them to be giving contributors to social and economic well-being. We are so excited about their future and that is in part what gives us motivation, impetus and determination to come back tomorrow to work with those still-enrolled students who offer so much promise for our community, locally and globally!