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Timely, Relevant and Accurate Information About Distance Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

"Armed might is worthless if we lack the brain power to build a world of peace." - Lyndon Baines Johnson

How a University in Western Kansas Went Global: Fort Hays State University's Chinese-American Bachelor of General Studies Program

by George Lorenzo
Editor and Publisher

The running theme of the currently popular "The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century," by Thomas L. Friedman, is that we live in a fast-growing technology-enabled world that is empowering individuals and small groups to more easily collaborate on global business opportunities. These collaborations are occurring on a flourishing playing field that is level (flat).

Friedman sets the stage for describing his world-is-flat mentality in the first chapter, calling this new era "Globalization 3.0" and then posing the following question: "Where do I fit into the global competition and opportunities of the day, and how can I, on my own, collaborate with others globally?"

Fort Hays State University (FHSU) found an answer to the "where" part of Friedman's question in China. The answer to the "how" part of the question is described in this article and throughout this issue of *Educational Pathways*.

"The purpose of opening a foreign-owned university in China was to introduce advanced American education management principles, to teach courses utilizing an American education model, to use updated textbooks and more highly qualified faculty, and to conduct the business of the university using American business practices."

– Shawn Chen, founder and CEO of SIAS International University
Xinzheng City, Henan, China

Western Kansas Meets China

FHSU is a perfect example of how the world really is, indeed, flat. FHSU is located in Hays, Kansas, in the almost-flatlands western part of the state, where three counties have death rates higher than birth rates; plus, it lives in an environment of reduced state education budgets. For these two reasons alone, back in the early 1990s, FHSU started to take a more serious, proactive look into how it could expand its distance education programs both domestically and globally (see "Connecting the Dots" on page 3).

Today, through a series of fortuitous events, and its overall ability to combine flexibility and innova-

tion at the institutional level, FHSU is providing several thousand students living in China, and growing, with an American-conferred bachelor of general studies (BGS) degree, with five concentrations, that is part face-to-face and part distance learning. FHSU, which offers the BGS degree through its Virtual College, is currently managing this program in partnership with four Chinese institutions: SIAS International University in Xinzheng City, Henan; the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing; Shenyang Normal University in Shenyang, Liaoning; and Tak Ming College in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Canada. The addition of

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the American degree creates a dual degree opportunity, with the FHSU BGS complementing the Chinese degree that these students earn.

First Solely American-Owned University in China

The first Chinese-FHSU partnership, which became the catalyzing program for future partnerships, was with SIAS International University, which is the first solely American-owned university in China, launched in 1998 by Chinese-American entrepreneur Shawn Chen (see interview with Chen on page 8).

Around the same time as the SIAS launch, Cindy Elliott was hired as Dean of the FHSU Virtual College to help internationalize its newly established programs. Today the Virtual College offers more than 300 courses, 600 sections and 12 fully virtual programs. Elliott's work with the Chinese universities and other partnerships, such as FHSU's admittance into the U.S. Navy College Program Distance Learning Partnership, has helped her move on to Assistant Provost for Strategic Partnerships and Dean of Distance Learning. In addition, she has been instrumental in the establishment of a new university Office of Strategic Partnerships.

Through mutual friend Peter Vander Haeghen, a now-retired educator with a background in international higher education partnerships and distance-learning instructional design, Chen was introduced to Elliott. Chen was looking for a four-year, regionally accredited American institution that could offer affordable technology-enhanced courses for credit internationally. Elliott agreed that FHSU could fit the bill, in principle, over a phone call, as Chen was heading to China out of the Los Angeles airport. The short of this story is that Chen, through his

strong business relationships with the Chinese government, submitted the FHSU name to the Ministry of Education, and, under further consultation with Elliott and the FHSU president and provost, FHSU was ultimately approved as the first American institution to be granted approval to offer a bachelor's degree in mainland China. The FHSU BGS Virtual College program was launched at SIAS in the fall of 2000, at that time with one concentration in business management.

About SIAS

SIAS is Chen's dream to westernize Chinese education. Chen was born and raised in Chongqing, Sichuan, China and immigrated to the United States in 1982. During the 1980s, Chen started a joint venture called the Chongqing Olive Cosmetic Co., which became one of the largest cosmetic factories in China, ranked second largest in 1996 behind Procter and Gamble Co. He also has a joint venture called Maxim Steel Door Co., which is one of the largest steel door manufacturers in China.

Chen started to explore the possibility of building SIAS in 1996. He says the time was ripe because the Chinese government's closed-door policies - residual from Tiananmen Square in 1989 - were quickly fading away in favor of the further development of Chinese-foreign education partnerships and collaborations. Education opportunities were also emerging in the provinces of China faster than in the major urban areas. The Communist Party seemed to be allowing more educational innovation away from the country's center of power. In simple terms, the Chinese government's evolving change of heart, combined with China's rapid economic growth over the past decade, has resulted in a very strong demand for more educated

professionals in China.

"The purpose of opening a foreign-owned university in China," says Chen, "was to introduce advanced American education management principles, to teach courses utilizing an American education model, to use updated textbooks and more highly qualified faculty, and to conduct the business of the university using American business practices."

Rapid Growth

Chen has achieved what he set out to do. When SIAS first opened its doors in 1998, it started with 260 students. Today there are 13,000 SIAS students attending classes at this American-owned university with a physical campus that was designed by Peter Weiss, associate professor in Auburn University's College of Architecture, Design and Construction. Chen says he built SIAS in Xinzheng City, Henan because the Henan province has the highest population in China, with 100 million people. The Henan capital city of Zhengzhou, which is about 23 miles north of Xinzheng City, has a population of 7 million people, more than half of which are rural residents. In addition, Henan province is centrally located within 800 miles of about half the population of all of China, and within one to two-hour air travel to major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. Coincidentally, Henan is also the sister Chinese province to the state of Kansas.

Building a Global Culture

The SIAS campus currently has 40 buildings, with six more under construction. The main administration building, called Washington Hall, has an East-meets-West architectural design, with one side of the building resembling the Gate of the Forbidden City of Tiananmen Square and the other side of the

building resembling the U.S. Capitol. Other areas of the campus have European-style motifs. There is even a replica of an entire European street, with buildings and ambiance representative of France, Germany, Spain and Italy, where students live in apartments on the upper floors and can work with businesses on the ground floors. "SIAS is a symbol of globalization," says Chen, adding that the people of Henan province have very little, if any, experience related to what the Western world is really like. "We are building the campus environment to also educate people. If we don't build a cultural environment, they will not gain the experience of international customs."

FHSU fits well into the East-meets-West theme in more ways than one. In addition to offering its degree program to Chinese students, FHSU is also teaching SIAS how to administer its campus the American way on an institutional level.

How the Program Works

The FHSU BGS program at SIAS started with 40 students in the fall of 2000 and reached 1,200 students by the spring 2005 semester. Currently, more than 200 students have graduated from the FHSU-SIAS program.

In China, students are either "planned" or "unplanned" students. Planned students are those who pass the Chinese national entrance exam (an average of 30 to 40 percent of prospective college entrants pass) that ultimately allows them to enroll in a Chinese public or private higher education program and earn a Chinese-government-sanctioned degree. Unplanned students are the unfortunate ones who did not pass the national entrance exam and, if they want to earn a four-year degree, are

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Connecting the Dots . . .

To paraphrase Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computers, it's impossible to connect the dots looking forward, but it is very clear to connect the dots looking backwards. This statement holds true for FHSU in terms of how its institutional infrastructure was developed over the last 14 years in order to adequately prepare for the expansion of its bachelor of general studies (BGS) program into China.

A Tall Task

When Cindy Elliott was hired in 1998 (see cover story), FHSU President Edward H. Hammond announced that his vision for the future included a spike in FHSU's Virtual College enrollments (from 600 students in 1998 to 5,000 students by 2002 when the university turned 100 years old) and a slight decline in on-campus enrollments (from 5,600 in 1998 to 5,000 in 2002). "I thought I was being set up for failure," says Elliott. "I knew we could not get those kinds of numbers in our Virtual College from Western Kansas, so we began to strategically think about what partners we could work with."

Moving the College of Arts and Sciences Forward

The infrastructure-building at FHSU, however, was setting Elliott up for success (today the Virtual College has 5,000 students and the on-campus population is near 5,000), going back to 1991 when Larry Gould was Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Gould, who in 1998 was appointed FHSU's Provost after spending 17 years at the university, and then Assistant Dean Lou Caplan, spearheaded the growth of what was, at that time, an under-utilized BGS program by building in pre-produced and locally-developed telecourses, thereby offering the program in a distance education modality. "It was pretty clear to me at that time that distance education was certainly the Third Wave in terms of where education in the U.S. was going," says Gould. "The College of Arts and Sciences experienced tremendous growth, and by 1998 it was the leading college in the university delivering distance education courses."

Support Building

In 1993, the infrastructure building took another step forward with the creation of FHSU's Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning Technology (CTELT) (www.fhsu.edu/ctelt). CTELТ is where faculty get the instructional design and delivery support they need for both synchronous and asynchronous distance education courses. "Having CTELТ in place early on has helped position us for success domestically and in the international realm," says Gould.

Faculty Satisfaction

Basically, the early 90s at FHSU reveal an emerging culture that was accepting of distance education. At the same time, the formula for faculty compensation for teaching distance education courses was also being revamped. Faculty pay for overload courses has increased from \$600 per course since the early 90s to between \$2,200 and \$3,000 per course today, and up to \$5,300 per course in the College of Business and Leadership. "We have reached a point and time where the overloads provided to our faculty have become not only an expectation but almost a necessity to a point where people are not taking jobs at other institutions," Gould says.

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typically left with three educational options: physically attend an institution in a foreign country, try to get accepted into a private institution in China where they can earn a certificate of completion, or attend a Chinese vocational post-secondary institution. The FHSU program is basically an alternative option for earning a four-year degree, whereby the best of both worlds are offered to both planned and unplanned students. Both earn a highly valued regionally accredited degree from FHSU, with the planned students also earning a Chinese-sanctioned degree, and the unplanned students also earning a Chinese certificate of completion. Both planned and unplanned students study the same curriculum at SIAS. About 50 percent of the students enrolled in the FHSU program are planned students.

Chen says that “many families beg to come to our school; they kneel down and cry,” because the ratio of planned students is so small relative to the number of young students who want higher education. Plus the Chinese higher education infrastructure is already stretched to its limits, with not nearly enough facilities and manpower to educate its population.

Delivery Model

In order to get a degree from SIAS, students must earn 170 credits. In order to get a degree from FHSU, students must earn 124 credits, 94 transferred in from SIAS courses, and 30 that must be from FHSU courses. The delivery model for the FHSU courses combines face-to-face and technology-enhanced instruction and studies with collaborations between FHSU faculty and cooperating faculty in China.

For the BGS degree, students must complete a minimum of 10 courses, modeled after FHSU Virtual College courses, during their

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– Cindy Elliott, FHSU Assistant Provost for Strategic Partnerships and Dean of Distance Learning

sophomore, junior and senior years. Two courses are taught face-to-face (English Comp 1 and English Comp 2) by American FHSU adjuncts who move to China. The other eight courses are FHSU pre-produced or locally-developed telecourses delivered with lectures burned onto DVDs or recorded onto videotapes. Additional course content is provided through the FHSU Blackboard course management system (CMS). Each course is assigned a cooperating teacher who is typically an American or American-educated faculty instructor hired by SIAS. The cooperating teacher helps facilitate and manage the course face-to-face on the SIAS campus. The cooperating teacher works with a lead teacher at FHSU, who communicates with SIAS students - put into teams - via the CMS, posting assignments, exams, and discussion board questions, and basically conducting the course in both asynchronous, and sometimes synchronous, modes of delivery.

Many of the students don’t have personal computers, so they do a great deal of their coursework on campus in mediated classrooms that have large video screens, overhead projectors and computers with Internet access.

An interesting side note is that, next month, FHSU is installing a Blackboard server in China. “Our numbers have grown to the point where it will be more efficient to

have the course content on a server in China,” says Elliott. “I am told we are the first American institution to ship a Blackboard server to China.”

Coursework

FHSU courses in the BGS degree with a concentration in business management are taken in the following sequence:

Sophomore year:
Principles of Culture
Listening to Music
American Cinema
Marketing Principles*

Junior year:
English Comp 1
Management Principles*
English Comp 2
Business Law*

Senior year:
Managerial Finance*
Survey of Art

* Courses in the “business management” BGS concentration. Courses without an asterisk are taken to complete the general education requirement of the degree program. The 21-hour concentration also consists of the following courses offered by SIAS: Accounting, Microeconomics and Macroeconomics.

Chinese students can concentrate in four other BGS areas of studies: International Finance, Business English or English as a Second Language, Information Network-

ing, or Legal Studies. (The Legal Studies concentration is available only at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.) All these concentrations can be achieved in a variety of ways, depending on the courses students decide to enroll in at FHSU and the Chinese partner institutions. For example, SIAS has an extensive computer science department that offers information technology courses that can articulate into an information networking concentration.

A Prestigious American Degree

“The BGS degree is perceived differently than a degree earned completely and solely at a Chinese institution,” says Elliott. “Students now have a bachelor’s degree from an American institution, and they are graduating with improved skills in English, improved computer skills, and with knowledge of American business practices.”

All of the 210 graduates of the program thus far have either gone on to graduate school or found rewarding careers with government agencies, multi-national corporations or as entrepreneurs. According to the National Bureau of Statistics in China, in 2004 there were almost 1.9 million college graduates. As noted in a January 2005 article in the *People’s Daily Online*, about one quarter of these graduates will be unable to find work.

Tuition and Finances

Along with its successful graduates, the reputation and value of the SIAS-FHSU degree continues to increase. When the program first started, tuition was \$75 per credit hour (not including fees), which was well below the \$100 threshold commonly held by public Chinese institutions. This fall 2005, the program will command \$130 per

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Connecting the Dots . . .

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Other Factors

Gould points to a number of additional factors that, early on, helped push FHSU into the international realm, such as:

- Adopting a mission-centered and market-smart strategy based on Bob Zemsky’s research.
- Developing support operations and risk-taking entrepreneurship based on the predictions professed in “Transforming Higher Education: A Vision for Learning in the 21st Century” by Michael G. Dolence and Donald M. Norris, published by the Society for College and University Planning in 1995.
- Taking a “go-slow-to-go-fast” approach to global expansion efforts. In other words, building ongoing effective international partnerships is an iterative process that takes time.
- Understanding and closely following how global events and developments have and are impacting international initiatives.
- Having a business model and academic model that makes sense and is not impulsive. These models, combined, “have to remain consistent with your educational offerings and your institutional purpose,” says Gould. “If you try to begin an initiative that is inconsistent with your mission and vision to simply earn revenue, or try to make the project a completely independent operation, it won’t work - not if you are a traditional institution of higher education.”
- Agility and flexibility also come into play. For instance, FHSU, in cooperation with its academic officers, suspended the TOEFL requirement for the first 40 students in the SIAS program to get things started. “If we had not done this, the program would have never gotten off the ground,” says Gould. “Since this was a distance education environment, we felt we could bear any language weaknesses a little longer than what you might find in a face-to-face classroom.”

Elliott explains that FHSU was also nimble enough to take a risk to get the SIAS partnership off the ground. “There were a lot of hoops to go through,” she says, “including, in addition to the approval by the Chinese government and the blessing of the Kansas Board of Regents, an element of trust also came into play, especially when dealing with such a remote and far-away place as the Henan province.” All of FHSU’s faculty credentials, course syllabi, textbooks, etc. had to be initially pre-reviewed by Chinese government officials and educators and all were accepted without question.

Bringing it All Together

Gould adds that he was emotionally moved when he attended the first SIAS graduating ceremony in 2002, which was modeled after a typical U.S. university commencement, which Elliott helped design. “When I drove up to the SIAS campus and saw the American flag and Chinese flag side by side, tears just about came to my eyes. As a former international relations instructor, never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that I would be part of two universities that had partnered - one from Communist China and the other from the U.S. - to deliver education to this part of the world.” The dots were connected.

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“You’ve got to find what you love,” Jobs says,” *Stanford Report*, June 14, 2005.

<http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2005/june15/jobs-061505.html>

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credit hour (not including fees). While this is considered to be on the high-end of tuition and fees in China, the reputation and value of the program is incentive enough for Chinese students and their families to make the necessary financial sacrifices to attend. "Financially it is a struggle for them (just like for many in the U.S.), but we are attracting students that have the English capabilities and the finances," says Elliott. "In China, the entire family - the two parents and the four grandparents - support the child's education. We have some students that come from very poor families, and we have some from more affluent families."

(Editor's Note: According to a September 2004 article in the Beijing Review, one fifth of all higher education students are struggling financially, and the proportion of poor students who cannot afford tuition is rising. To help these students, a national student aid program was created by the Chinese government in 1999, resulting in more than 830,000 needy students having received loans totaling \$630 million as of June 2004.)

Learning How to Operate Like a U.S. Institution

On the administrative side, as an institution, SIAS, as well as the three other Chinese institutions now partnering with FHSU (the aforementioned University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, Shenyang Normal University, and Tak Ming College), are learning how to incorporate American grade point averages, academic probation and suspension policies, exam procedures, drop-add procedures, transcription recording procedures, and more into their higher education environments. "We have brought a

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– Larry Gould, FHSU Provost

lot of curriculum and policy innovation to these Chinese schools, and that is what they requested," says Elliott. "In addition to providing them with an opportunity for new student recruitment, they have seen this as an opportunity to reform their curriculum and practices." In effect, FHSU has brought a toolkit of higher education practices to China through its strategic partnership arrangements.

Dedicated Faculty and Staff

Elliott says that the faculty who have been teaching in this face-to-face/distance education teaching and learning environment have to be congratulated for evolving a successful educational model that combines the best of both worlds. FHSU Provost Larry Gould explains that, overall, the multi-faceted operations that keep these partnerships moving forward are also driven and maintained by a dedicated FHSU staff that must communicate regularly with Chinese administrators. "I can't even begin to name or reward all the people in our registrar's office, the people in student fiscal affairs, the people in academic advising, and all of our classified people who make these strategic partnerships work," Gould says. "When it comes to working with transcripts, Assistant Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies, Lou Caplan, is almost essential to making the entire program work. The Chinese are learning a great deal about the administration of higher education

from a capable and dedicated FHSU staff."

Moving Transcripts

For example, American-style transcripts and recording processes are not the same as Chinese transcripts and recording processes, making the analysis of the 94 Chinese credits that are accepted into the FHSU degree program a challenging and sometimes tedious task. Gould adds, however, that advances in communication technologies and connectivity between FHSU and its Chinese partners have made the process of moving transcript-related information back and forth much smoother. Nonetheless, "we are about to send a member of our registrar staff along with Cindy Elliott over to China this fall to teach the Chinese administrators how we do transcripts over here. Operations and execution of policy can be carried out at even greater levels of efficiency if we actually send our people over there."

In Total

Taking all four Chinese-FHSU partnerships, as a whole, has brought up the total number of enrollments to 2,000 Chinese students earning FHSU BGS degrees, with an anticipated increase of 400 Chinese students by fall 2005.

The University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) in Beijing is a Chinese national institution with about 10,000 students. UIBE has a separate

school called the Zhuoyue School (excellency school) where the FHSU BGS program is being offered exactly as it is offered by SIAS. Started in 2003, the program enrolls about 800 students.

Shenyang Normal University (SNU), located adjacent to North Korea in the Liaoning province, is a well-established teacher's college with about 37,000 students. It has a College of International Business that FHSU has partnered with to provide the BGS degree. Elliott recently visited SNU (she has been to China eight times in the last four years) for the ground breaking of a new state-of-the-art building, with ample connectivity and educational technologies that will house the FHSU-SNU program. The program started with 200 in the fall of 2004 and will be adding another 200 students in fall 2005.

Tak Ming College is the smallest partnership with about 60 students enrolled in an FHSU BGS program at its Taiwan campuses. Tak Ming, however, continues to send increas-

ing numbers of its most qualified students (e.g. in music) to take face-to-face courses at FHSU in Hays, Kansas, adding to overall efforts to internationalize the campus and curriculum.

In Conclusion

In addition to these Chinese partnerships for the BGS degree program offering, FHSU is in the process of entering into similar agreements with a university in Turkey and one in Cyprus. The ultimate effect of this international strategic partnering is that almost half of the approximately 5,000 students currently registered in FHSU's Virtual College are Chinese students living in China - a true exemplar of how the world has flattened.

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Teaching English Writing Skills to the Native Chinese

In order to be accepted into any of the FHSU-Chinese BGS programs, students must achieve a score of 500 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. Passing this exam, however, does not necessarily mean that these Chinese students - who must take FHSU's English Comp 1 and 2 during their junior year - can write English similar to that of a native-English-speaking student with college-level writing skills.

The majority of the students in the BGS programs are struggling to reach college-level English writing proficiency. This is not to denigrate the ability of Chinese students, says FHSU Dean of the College Arts and Sciences Paul Faber. "They are doing something that most of us

would find impossible to ever do in Chinese."

Cultural and Academic Issues

Some of the challenges that have been identified are related to both cultural and academic issues. For instance, English composition courses typically require students to write essays about controversial topics. In the U.S., having students write about alcoholism as a familial problem, for example, would not pose any problems, but in China such a writing topic would cause great stress. Thus, in short, cultural sensitivity issues had to be identified before writing assignments were put into syllabi.

Secondly, although these Chinese students have taken English

courses before entering college - some as early as elementary school - the academic preparation that these students receive is not the same as what students get in the U.S. Pre-college English studies in China often consist mostly of vocabulary, grammar, reading and rote memorization. One parent of a Chinese student, for instance, boasted that his child had memorized 100 English essays. Such memory-oriented study is often drawn upon when these students write class-assigned essays, bringing up the obvious plagiarism and lack-of-originality issues, which FHSU has addressed in a variety of ways.

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Teaching English

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Educational Needs and Differences

According to FHSU English Department Chair Cheryl Duffy - who was recently in China to review how well Chinese students were adopting English writing skills - students entering the BGS programs were not introduced to such concepts as how to compose a proper thesis statement, organize essays and research papers, and use transitions for coherence. Additionally, "Western writing is different from Eastern writing. We are much more direct; whereas, Chinese writing tends to be more circuitous and not as thesis-statement-driven as our Western essays."

Solutions

Since her visit to China, the order of the day for Duffy has been to get the English writing competencies of these Chinese students up to speed. "We have to ensure that students are prepared before we even see them in Comp 1," she says. "Our main goal for this coming year is to get our partner schools to look at what they are doing to prepare students for the BGS program in the freshman and sophomore years and the writing demands they are going to face in their junior year."

To help meet that goal, SIAS recently introduced a sophomore-

level English Comp course, with a class limit of 25 students, that "introduces all those concepts that we tend to assume students here in the U.S. have already had exposure to before they get to Comp 1," says Duffy. Students in this course use the textbook "A College English Writing Course: From Essay to Research Paper and Practical Writing," written by Rebecca Neufeld and published by Henan University Press. The other partner institutions are also looking into developing similar course work for their BGS students.

Also, for the junior-level Comp 1 and 2 courses, students this year will be introduced to a new textbook, "College Writing Skills with Readings," published by McGraw-Hill in the U.S., but newly published in China. Additionally, a new handbook, titled "Keys for Writers," by Ann Raimis, published by Houghton Mifflin, is being introduced into the Comp courses. Raimis is a noted figure in English as a second language (ESL) instruction, says Duffy.

Training Teachers

In the meantime, each summer FHSU trains newly hired adjunct faculty that move to China to teach English Comp 1 and 2 in the BGS programs. FHSU also trains cooperative teachers, hired by the partner schools, for the other BGS

courses. The training is an intense two to three days in length, covering such topics as how to maintain standards while accommodating ESL learners, how to incorporate program goals and expectations, and how to use Blackboard. Additionally, faculty who taught during previous semesters in China attend the training session to share their knowledge and experiences. A Blackboard discussion forum is also maintained where both veteran and new faculty can continuously share their insights.

Last summer 10 adjunct English Comp 1 and 2 faculty were hired (minimum requirement is a master's degree in English or a related discipline). Some were retired English professors; others were fresh out of graduate school; all were native-English speakers. About half were hired from interviews conducted at a Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) conference that Duffy and Cindy Elliott attended, so these adjuncts also had TESOL professional development backgrounds.

"We had 10 faculty and probably 10 different reasons for teaching in China," says Duffy. The retired teacher, for instance, "just wanted a way to use her expertise and background and also get a chance to see the world."

Interview with Shawn Chen, Founder and CEO of SIAS International University

As noted on the SIAS web site, Shawn Chen, Chinese-American founder and CEO of SIAS International University, is "an American success story in the area of international industrial manufacturing, including diversified investments in a conglomeration of hotels and restaurants in the Los Angeles region. . . . Chen's objective is to use an academic environment to promote friendships, improve living stan-

dards, and raise the education levels for the people of China." *Educational Pathways* had an opportunity to talk with Chen. Not surprisingly, he was getting ready to go back to China when we interviewed him about the present and future of Chinese-foreign education cooperation.

EdPath: Do you see many other foreign business people or other U.S. institutions building colleges and

universities in China?

Chen: There are a lot of new private schools being established, and not that many are foreign. U.S. higher education likes to export programs, and U.S. business people like to come to China, but none really address the higher education issues. The large companies, like Microsoft and IBM, have their own research and training schools, but they don't really

Interview with Shawn Chen

support public higher education. But there are governments and big businesses worldwide that want to use an educated labor force from China, and they do want to provide resources and help establish universities in China. U.S. universities, however, don't seem to address this issue of helping to develop the Chinese labor force of the future, and I feel that is a shortsighted vision for the U.S.

EdPath: Do you think the reason for this shortsightedness is due to the lack of understanding of how China operates on both the governmental and business levels?

Chen: Some can't find the right partners. Before I started SIAS I was a businessman who started other ventures in China. I have commuted back and forth since the latter part of the 80s. I have seen China grow with my own eyes every year, and I have helped American businesses. I know how to deal with the politics. It has made a big difference. I have offered my help and said if you establish 100 universities like SIAS in China, it will not be enough.

EdPath: How would you characterize the Chinese government's rules and regulations concerning foreign partnerships?

Chen: China does publish a lot of policy to promote education, and law is law. But how you do business is totally business. The sense of law and legal issues among local officials is different. You have to deal with local ways of doing business, especially when you are doing construction.

EdPath: Why did you build an institution in a lesser-known suburban area of China instead of inside a major city like Beijing and Shanghai?

Chen: It is very expensive to build a new university in a big city. So, you go into a suburb, then a small town, then a local village. For us, we built it, and we are very big for a small town, and everybody loves what we did. You can tap into a massive Chinese population. The U.S. can tap into these smaller markets that have an excellent level of economic growth and standards.

EdPath: What's your recipe for success?

Chen: I always say that to operate an education entity in China you need an educator and an entrepreneurial person. You need someone who has the expertise on how to run higher education. I studied education all my life, and I also did a lot of business. You need those two spirits.

EdPath: How do you see the future of Chinese-foreign education relationships coming together?

Chen: The future is that the world is flat. There are global companies and global individuals. Anywhere you go, you will face risk, and you cannot be stopped by that. The U.S. can do tremendously because the U.S. has the strongest and most sophisticated education system in the world. If the U.S. does not utilize its strengths to tap into the international market, it will make a big mistake for its future. Compared to Australia, England and Germany, the U.S., proportionally, is doing much less.

EdPath: Are you seeing the flow of Chinese students going abroad to the U.S. changing?

Chen: Yes. Getting a visa to the U.S. has become difficult since 911. Plus, England, Australia and New Zealand, for instance, are very

aggressive about recruiting Chinese students. The majority of students are going in a different direction than the U.S. for their visas. Even though in England the tuition is much higher, people still go there because of the opportunity.

EdPath: Currently the media says that the Chinese public higher education infrastructure is bursting at the seams, unable to keep up with its growth, experiencing a growing lack of resources and a lessening of quality education. What does that mean for the near future of higher education in China?

Chen: I agree with the media's view. China has gone through heavy educational expansion since 1998, which certainly caused quality problems. Because of public criticism, China's educational ministry stopped expansion of more students this year, with the goal of adjusting higher education quality. This means less high school graduates will be admitted to Chinese colleges and universities. But it also means there is more of an opportunity for foreign institutions to attract and recruit Chinese students. It will take about five years for China to adjust its higher education quality to get back to the levels they were starting to achieve since 1998 until today. In the whole Henan province, which has a population of 100 million people, SIAS is the only big education provider partnering with an institution from the U.S. There are one or two others universities from the U.S., but the majority are from Australia, England, New Zealand and Singapore. The landscape is changing. That is why I want to help Chinese higher education, by bringing American educational know-how to China.

Notes on China (with Links)

Below is a compendium of statistics, observations, and comments from a wide variety of sources - including personal communications, research reports, and articles from various media sources - concerning the new Chinese business and economic, political and educational landscape (also see Endnotes on Page 12 for a list of important links).

Advice for Educators

Any educational venture with China must be looked at from a business perspective, and faculty should focus on academic quality issues and be included in the academic developmental process right from the beginning. Find a business partner that is well financed, has government connections, has a willingness to wait long term for a return on investment, and has a keen interest in benefiting Chinese society.¹

Be prepared to fight for market share along with institutions from Europe and Australia. To be successful takes strong promotional efforts, requiring substantial investments in advertising and sales, as well as in building an educational product that meets Chinese market demands.²

There is a tongue-and-cheek saying that signing a contract in China is only the first step in the negotiation process. This is a very different business climate.³

China is able to support higher education for only a small portion of its population, but it is also building universities at an astronomical rate of speed. Finding partnerships with universities, using their facilities, as well as building additional campuses, can be accomplished under the right circumstances.⁴

Mentoring Chinese institutions, with a focus on improving and/or westernizing its domestic higher education system and programs, could be a good strategy for U.S. higher education institutions.⁵

“Both Chinese higher education and foreign higher education partners are embarking on a period of unprecedented expansion and innovation. The development of mass higher education and transnational provision in emerging economies will play out on no bigger stage than China.”⁶

Chinese Politics

Expect stronger economic competition, and more military stresses and conflicts between the U.S. and China. The U.S. media and political leadership need to educate the American public about the Chinese in a way

that builds cultural and economic bridges, not by stressing narrow-minded, myopic defense-oriented perspectives. U.S. institutions can play a major role in such bridge building and ultimately help to bring about world peace.⁷

The relatively new “Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools,” is a must-read for any educational institution thinking about moving into China. These regulations were decreed on March 1, 2003 and became effective on September 1, 2003. Since then, Chinese-foreign educational partnerships have increased dramatically.⁸

China is following in the footsteps of Singapore and Malaysia in that those governments have encouraged foreign higher education partnerships over the past 20 years and have been less supportive of large numbers of its student populations going abroad for their education.⁹

“The single thing that is most characteristic of China at the moment is simply that it is changing so fast that it is almost impossible to keep track of what is underway . . . The most successful Chinese have learned to adapt. They work along and in the margins of this change; they invent new rules even as they peer at and prod their new social order to try to figure out just who fits where.”¹⁰

In 1982, 20% of Chinese provincial leaders had attended college. In 2003, 98% of Chinese provincial leaders had attended college. Also, “provincial leaders with educational experience overseas - as degree holders or visiting scholars - have emerged in almost every province-level administration in the country.”¹¹

Chinese-Foreign Educational Partnerships

A higher proportion (not a higher overall number) of United Kingdom and Australian universities, when compared to U.S. universities, have developed significant educational relationships with Chinese institutions in China. The vast majority of these relationships are completely face-to-face programs, and many are increasingly being enhanced by educational technologies. However, two fully online programs worth noting that have a U.S. link are an MBA and a MS in Information Technology offered by the University of Liverpool, whose technology partner was a firm out of the Netherlands, called K.I.T. e-learning, which was acquired by the Online Education Division of Laureate Education, Inc., based in Baltimore, MD.¹²

Three other newly established, private, foreign-owned institutions operating in China include Les Roches Jin Jiang International Hotel Management College, which is also part of the Laureate network; EasyCall International, an associate of the Boustead Group, out of Singapore; and the University of Nottingham in Ningbo, which is out of the UK. There are an estimated 700 private foreign-owned colleges and universities that have been approved by the Chinese government. These institutions fall under a variety of management and ownership models, including those that are majority or partially owned and operated by foreigners.¹³

Tuition

Private education is priced above what many families can afford, “with some school fees topping RMB 30,000 (about \$3,625 U.S. dollars) per academic year. However, economic progress has demonstrated that a significant number of families are willing to finance education options that provide a unique advantage for their children. This market is expected to increase rapidly as education quality and facilities are factored into the decision-making process.”¹⁴

Miscellaneous

U.S. institutions are realizing a decline in Chinese students studying abroad due to U.S. visa restrictions and an increase of Chinese students studying in other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Australia.¹⁵

Sixty-seven Chinese higher education institutions have been funded by the government to develop online learning. These institutions are called “network-education colleges” (NECs). “NECs are granted considerable autonomy over curriculum development and recruitment.”¹⁶

In 2002, Peking University installed the first wireless campus in China.¹⁷

China has achieved a 9% average annual economic growth rate for more than 25 years, which is unprec-

edented in recorded history. During this same period of time, 300 million people have escaped poverty, and the average Chinese person’s income has quadrupled.¹⁸

By 2010, China will yield more Ph.Ds than the U.S. The quality of many of these Ph.Ds, however, is a growing concern.¹⁹

China produces four times the number of engineers that are produced in the U.S.²⁰

The number of private cars in Beijing has risen by 140 percent, since 1997, to 1.3 million.²¹

The top ten places of origin with international students in the U.S. are India (79,736, up 7%), China (61,765, down 5%), Korean (52,484, up 2%), Japan (40,835, down 11%), Canada (27,017, up 2%), Taiwan (26,178, down 7%), Mexico (13,329, up 4%), Turkey (11,398, down 2%), Thailand (8,937, down 11%), and Indonesia (8,880, down 15%). Tuition dollars and cost of living expenses generated by international students in the U.S. totals about \$12 billion. Sixty-seven percent of all international students are funded by family and personal sources; another 8% receive assistance from their home country governments or universities.²²

In 2003, 52% of Chinese university candidates were accepted in colleges and universities, up from 2.4% in 1981. The total enrollment for public colleges and universities in China went from 6.43 million in 1998 to 12.14 million in 2001.²³

“More aspiring presidents of Chinese universities hold master’s or Ph.D’s than in the past, and most current presidents have had the opportunity to visit or study in the West. These new presidents have more experience in higher education and a global perspective that helps them better understand China’s goals and problems.”²⁴

Please see Endnotes on following page

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Endnotes *continued from previous page*

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