

Tianjin Normal University 55th Anniversary
“The Invitation of Globalization for the Modern University”
President Robert H. Huntington
Heidelberg University
7 September 2013

President Prof. Dr. Gao Yubao, members of the Tianjin Normal University faculty and staff, and distinguished guests, good afternoon. On behalf of our Academic Provost who has traveled here with me, Dr. David Weininger, we bring heartfelt greetings to you from our faculty colleagues, the staff, the trustees, and the students of our school, Heidelberg University, in Tiffin, Ohio, USA. It is a great honor for both Dave and me to have been invited to be with our friends at Tianjin Normal University today as you celebrate your 55th Anniversary. This is a milestone for which you can be extremely proud. Congratulations!

Twenty-seven years ago, our former president, William C. Cassell, sought to enrich the international learning experience for our students by inviting visiting Tianjin Normal University professors to our campus to share the culture, history and language of their native land. In exchange, Heidelberg faculty members would travel to China in the summer months to teach English language to educators at Tianjin Normal University (or “TNU” as we say respectfully). Thus began an enduring friendship between our two universities that has grown stronger and more meaningful over time. We just completed our 28th summer on your great campus. Our four faculty members and four student assistants had an outstanding experience teaching English to your students.

My dear friends, our two universities have been collaborating together and exchanging great learning across our institutions for half of your existence. We are proud to stand here in this beautiful room with all of you!

In his letter of invitation, I was asked by President Gao to give a talk on “The Challenges of Globalization for the Modern University” at this forum. President Gao is clearly an excellent teacher. All of us are being “invited” by globalization to grasp the opportunities presented to our universities. Therefore, my remarks are about *The Invitation of Globalization for the Modern University*.

My three main points will be that globalization has accelerated and amplified the invitation for our universities to work passionately toward a truly *shared global vision*, create more *distinctive educational programs*, and engage directly in the *advancement of humanity*. In short, I believe that we are being invited to embrace a common mission in a shared enterprise.

Shared Global Vision

One of the first Heidelberg faculty members to participate in the Tianjin Normal University exchange program remarked after his experience in 1986: “I saw the people of China value highly the concepts of achievement, self-discipline and hard work. I now feel more than ever that it is up to American educators, such as us, to instill these values in our students – the leaders of tomorrow.” That individual returned to the United States inspired by the core values of his Chinese colleagues. They now had a shared vision.

That is the central challenge and opportunity for the modern university in the face of globalization. We need to continuously enable and inspire the mutual exchange of all human cultures in order to accelerate the shared learning among all peoples. We need to lead harder and faster to help bring the world more together than farther apart. Ultimately, we need to imagine “One World, One Classroom” in order to see a *shared global vision* for education.

Through our mutual efforts to nurture this great partnership, we have opened doors to share our cultures, our teaching, our research, and our human experiences. At Heidelberg, we are most honored to have hosted 30 appointed academic scholars from Tianjin Normal University since our relationship started.

Just three weeks ago, we welcomed Chinese Visiting Scholars, Professor Liu Jianmei and Professor Sun Jing to our campus. We are so pleased that they will call Heidelberg their home for the entire 2013-2014 academic year, beginning with the fall semester that just started last week. They will teach Chinese language and culture to our students.

Liu (Jennifer) and Sun, like the many scholars who preceded them, will become wonderful members of our faculty, ever willing to immerse themselves not only in the life of our campus but in the thread of the greater community of Tiffin. Their predecessors volunteered in the local schools, at the public library, in local nursing homes and helping to feed less fortunate residents. By the way, our home town of Tiffin, Ohio is somewhat smaller than Tianjin. We have about 20,000 inhabitants.

During the last academic year, Heidelberg welcomed 15 students from Tianjin Normal University. As they work toward their graduate degrees in Education, they have proven to be disciplined students who contribute in the classroom and in the community. We are enthusiastic about hosting many more graduate students on our campus in the coming years, not only in the School of Education but also in our School of Business. Please help us contribute to the education of more Chinese students from Tianjin Normal University. Your students make us a better institution by sharing their global vision for education. We are so honored to host them.

It is my sincere hope that the more than 100 Heidelberg faculty, staff, students and family members who have visited Tianjin Normal University as part of the Summer Exchange Program contributed equally to the Chinese students whom they have encountered. Each of them has returned to our campus enriched, enlightened and engaged. They are deeply grateful for their experiences on your campus, in your beautiful city, and across your wonderful country. Thank you.

Distinctive Educational Programs

Indeed, they are not alone. As our world becomes increasingly global-centric, we recognize that international education is the primary vehicle by which we can collectively bridge the divides among our cultures and languages, and open the door to new opportunities for our students – the leaders of tomorrow. The partnerships between American and Chinese universities, like those among all international colleges and universities, bring us closer together. They take us to a richer understanding and appreciation of each other. These relationships clarify the need for us to create *distinctive educational programs* for our students and for ourselves. This is my second main point today.

This imperative is directly reflected in Heidelberg University's mission and vision, which states in part, *"Both the undergraduate and graduate curriculums will effectively integrate liberal arts and professional preparation across disciplines to prepare our students to be global citizens who communicate effectively, think critically and serve thoughtfully."* We are committed to being a more diverse community and thus a more distinctive place of learning. We share this "open-to-the-world" view with our friends at Tianjin Normal University.

You may not know that Tianjin Normal University and Heidelberg University share several other characteristics, beyond our exchange partnership. Both institutions place great value on the pursuit of academic excellence. It is the key driver of our strategic planning. Both institutions have strong curricular programs in the training of future educators. Our School of Education is nationally accredited. Both of us run laboratories dedicated to water environment and water resources. We are the home of the National Center for Water Quality Research. Both of us want to strengthen the total educational opportunity for our students. We would like our students to study at your university. These points underscore another central challenge of globalization for the modern university. We need to remain focused on offering distinctive learning opportunities that add meaningful value to our students.

The facilities that house strong learning must be distinctive too. We applaud the impressive, exciting, modern architectural features of your new campus. Great work! Although on a smaller scale, we have been in the same mindset of improving our campus too. In the past four years, Heidelberg has completed seven major renovated or new facilities. I fully understand that the projects you have undertaken over the past decade to not only move your campus but to build an entirely new one requires great vision, firm commitment, proper patience, and strong perseverance. In the end, your beautiful new campus will certainly enhance the learning experiences for your students. May it be a great source of pride for all of you in the many years ahead.

All of us must press ahead in a similar manner to build vibrant places of teaching and research. We must create distinctive educational programs in distinctive educational places that we can share and embrace together.

Advancement of Humanity

These reflections bring me to my third main point about the *advancement of humanity*. Heidelberg University is honored to be among the 100-plus universities that has perpetuated a close exchange with Tianjin Normal University. We have in common much more than friendship and exchange. At a time when some would argue that there is a decreasing commitment to international education among some U.S. colleges and universities, our connection is solid and thriving.

According to the American Council on Education, on the one hand, half of the institutions surveyed have woven international education into their strategic priorities. Statistics show a healthy increase in the number of students from abroad pursuing their higher education in the United States. That is excellent.

However, the Council's data mark a drop in the number of American colleges and universities that require coursework on issues and perspectives from other countries. Just 37% of us now require undergraduates to study a language other than English. Ten years ago, that percentage stood at 53%. This is a disconcerting trend. Equally troubling is a report from the Institute of International Education that reveals that just 14% of students who earn bachelor's degrees at American institutions in 2012 studied abroad during their undergraduate years. We must get creative to reverse these trends if we hope to continue our progress toward globalizing our campuses and producing graduates with a well-informed global perspective.

In that regard, China is doing something right. The Institute of International Education's "Open Doors" report reveals that international enrollments at colleges and universities in the U.S. are experiencing double-digit growth, primarily from an influx of Chinese students who choose to study at American institutions. Just two years ago, more than three-quarters of a million (764,495) international students were pursuing higher education in the U.S. China was the place of origin for a full 25% of those students (194,029). That was a 23% increase over the previous year.

China also leads the way among the nations sending talented scholars to U.S. universities. Among the 32,000 international scholars in America, about 28% hail from Chinese universities. These facts are impressive indicators of your great awareness of the important role international education plays in understanding the world and to appreciating the differences and similarities of its peoples.

Global perspectives, intercultural competencies and our interconnectedness are more important than ever if we want to advance humanity instead of take it backwards. The administration of President Barack Obama has advocated for deeper educational ties to China and to other countries. It is time that we renew our own shared commitment to creating stronger global learning on our respective campuses. Let us advance humanity together.

As you celebrate the 55th Anniversary of Tianjin Normal University's founding, your friends at Heidelberg University want to help you succeed in educating and training your students to become leaders of tomorrow. We need your help at improving the education of our students too. We have treasured our partnership over the past 27 years and look forward to its continuation. Together, we strive toward a greater understanding of each other's cultures and a deeper appreciation for the historical, geographical, economic, political and environmental similarities and differences among us.

Please accept my sincere gratitude for this opportunity to be with you today, President Gao, and to share my views on the importance of international higher education. It has been a great honor to represent my colleagues at Heidelberg University on this momentous and celebratory occasion for your institution.

I wish everyone at Tianjin Normal University tremendous success and prosperity in the future!

I hope that all of us in the business of education accept the "invitation of globalization" and go forward together!

Thank you very much.