

Tianjin Normal University 60th Anniversary

“The Role of Higher Education Internationalization in Promoting University’s Development”

President Robert H. Huntington

Heidelberg University

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Congratulations and thank you, President Yubao Gao, for convening this wonderful forum and including all of us in celebrating another big milestone for Tianjin Normal University. Good afternoon to all members of the Tianjin Normal University faculty and staff, and to all distinguished guests.

On behalf of my esteemed colleagues here with me, Dr. Beth Schwartz, our Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, and Dr. Brian Haley, our Professor of Education and History and recipient of the Swinehart Family Endowed Chair in Education, we bring sincere and joyful greetings from the students, faculty, staff and trustees of Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio, USA. Heidelberg is thrilled to help celebrate Tianjin Normal University’s 60th Anniversary! It is also exciting to participate in signing the Memorandum of Multilateral Cooperation with TNU (as we say very respectfully) and its eight partner universities. We are grateful to be included in this tremendous honor.

Our great learning collaboration with Tianjin Normal University began 33 summers ago when TNU professors came to our campus to teach the Chinese language, culture and history to our students and community each year. In exchange, Heidelberg faculty members (and later students too) began traveling to China in the summer months to teach the English language to students and educators at this University. Our enduring friendship and shared work has grown stronger and more meaningful over time. Our four faculty members and four student assistants had an outstanding experience teaching English on your campus this summer.

Like our other guest universities, we were invited to give a speech on “The Role of Higher Education Internationalization in Promoting University’s Development.” That is excellent. I will share brief comments on three aspects of this important topic, namely, the need to fulfill the core university mission, the imperative of mutual international exchange, and the opportunity for the advancement of humanity.

Core University Mission

I believe that all of us would agree that our institutions exist to educate our students in preparation for their careers and lives, to pursue research and scholarship that contributes to shared knowledge in all academic disciplines and human pursuits, and to provide public goods and services for the people, communities, cities, countries and the world around us. We develop our respective universities by improving the education and opportunities for our students, by supporting more meaningful research and scholarship, and by expanding the high quality public goods and services to others. Internationalization contributes on all three fronts.

As our shared world becomes more globalized, we are challenged by rapidly rising nationalized perspectives. We should recognize, therefore, that the internationalization of education helps to fulfill the core mission of each institution and all of higher education.

The HU (as we abbreviate too) core mission is to prepare our students to lead a *life of purpose with distinction* and this purpose is guided by our vision that 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.*” Whether by studying and serving abroad, or by hosting your students on our campus, we want our students to grow globally through international learning opportunities. We promote our University’s development through the development of our students.

At the same time, all of us must press ahead in a similar manner to build vibrant places of research and scholarship. We must also strengthen the ways that we serve the communities around us. One excellent example is that Heidelberg and Tianjin Normal University both run laboratories dedicated to water resources and the environment. We are the home of the National Center for Water Quality Research. TNU has their great expertise too. Both of our endeavors are distinctive and contribute to fulfilling the core university mission aimed at students, research and community. More shared academic study of water at both of our schools would promote further collaborative development of our institutions.

Mutual International Exchange

This educational internationalization also helps to bridge the divisions between our countries and among our cultures. Mutual international exchanges between American and Chinese universities, and those among all international colleges and universities, bring us closer together through better understanding and appreciation of each other.

At Heidelberg, we are most honored to have hosted about 40 appointed academic scholars from Tianjin Normal University on our Ohio campus since this special relationship started more than three decades ago.

We welcomed TNU Visiting Scholars, Professor Chenhui (Ada) Zhang and Professor Xueying (Janice) Wu to our campus less than three weeks ago. They both look happy to be wearing their new Heidelberg H pins! We are so pleased that they will teach Chinese language, culture and history to our students for the entire 2018-2019 academic year. I know already that they will make us a better university. Our development is enhanced through their engagement with us. We also want them to immerse themselves in the full life of our campus and in the many wonderful activities and events across the greater community of Tiffin, Ohio. We want them to have fun too! Coming from the beautiful city of Tianjin, China, however, I hope that Professors Zhang and Wu are not overwhelmed by our large city. We have nearly 19,000 inhabitants.

It is my strong hope that the more than 120 Heidelberg faculty, staff, students and family members who have visited Tianjin Normal University as part of the Summer Exchange Program over the past 33 years have similarly contributed to your students and educators. Like this summer, our teaching teams always return to their American campus enriched, enlightened and engaged. They are grateful for the exciting experiences on your campus and for the opportunities to see your wonderful city and country. We want them to contribute to TNU's development through this educational internationalization as well.

One of the first Heidelberg faculty members to participate in the Tianjin Normal University exchange program returned home in 1986 and praised the high spirit of "achievement, self-discipline and hard work" that he observed here. He called upon his American colleagues to "instill these values in our students." That professor was inspired by the core values of his Chinese colleagues. To borrow a favorite line from my colleague and friend, Professor Brian Haley, "Brilliant!"

Through our mutual international exchange efforts to nurture the great TNU and HU partnership, we have opened doors to share our teaching, our research, our learning, our cultures, and our human experiences. It is imperative that we continue to do so.

Advancement of Humanity

I believe that the development of our respective universities through international exchanges and partnerships lifts up all of higher education and thereby humanity. 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 help bring the world together rather than let it slide apart.

Heidelberg University is honored to be among the 100-plus universities that has developed a close relationship 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 in the United States and across the world, our solid connection is advancing humanity.

The development of each of our individual universities depends on helping to develop other universities at the same time. We all rise together when higher education rises in each country. We must always remain vigilantly creative to continue our progress toward globalizing our campuses and producing graduates with a well-informed global perspective. Global perspectives, intercultural competencies, and our interconnectedness are more important than ever if we want to advance humanity instead of letting it drift backwards.

As we celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Tianjin Normal University's founding together, your friends at Heidelberg University want to help you succeed in educating and training your students. We need your help at improving the education of our students too. We have treasured our partnership over the past 33 years and look forward to many more years.

President Gao, please accept my humble and sincere gratitude for this opportunity to share my views on promoting university development through higher education internationalization. It is a privilege for my Heidelberg colleagues and me to be here. We are delighted to sign your Memorandum of Multilateral Cooperation to promote more international exchange between our universities and among our countries. Let us all advance humanity together.

I wish everyone at Tianjin Normal University tremendous success and prosperity for the next 60 years and far into the future!

Thank you very much.