


**To:** Nancy Marlin  
Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs

**From:** Massoud Saghafi   
Professor of International Marketing

**Date:** July 12, 1999

**Subject:** Report on my visit to two Chinese universities

**Greetings Dr. Marlin.** Below, please find a brief report of the relation-building part of my visit to China during the July 1-7, 1999. As I proposed in my grant proposal, I visited two Chinese Universities, both leading institutions of higher education in China. The first was the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) located in Beijing. The second was the Northeastern University (NU) located in Shenyang, a large, industrial city north of Beijing. I expressed SDSU's interest to build long-term, strategic undergraduate student exchange relationship and internship arrangements with them.

This report is prepared for internal use only. I hope to verbally brief the SDSU faculty-staff members who will be ultimately involved in the negotiation and administration phases of our exchange programs with these two Chinese universities. I would like to provide them with additional confidential information that is based on my personal judgement, observation and of-the-record conversations with academics and professionals in China. This information, that I prefer not to put in writing, may prove useful for our students in preparing them for their China semester and to our negotiators to understand the power structure in these two universities.

I was invited to visit a third university in China (Shanghai) but time and budget constraints did not allow me to do that in this trip. In the future, given time and funding availability, I will be glad to continue my work in China.

Good luck and thank you for giving me the opportunity to take this first step in developing a long-term relationship between these two high quality Chinese universities and SDSU.

**Cc:** Dr. Alan Sweedler  
Ms. Teresa Donahue

There are four types of institutions of higher education in China. The first type contains all the "national" universities run by national ministries. These are the highest quality universities. The second type are regional institutions run by provincial governments (similar to UC or CSU systems). The third and not highly thought of, are the local schools (similar to our community colleges). Finally, there are a limited number of private institutions, mostly at the training and certificate levels that are relatively unknown and attract older, part-time students who work for the government or the private sector and need to acquire new skills (similar to the National University of the University of Phoenix). Both universities (I was told) are national and in the top level of quality in China. Entry into the national Chinese universities is done through national testing.

**Thursday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999: Left San Diego at 8:05 AM**

**Friday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1999: Arrived in Beijing, China at 7:40PM**

## **University of International Business and Economics (UIBE), Beijing, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999.**

**Lunch meeting with Dr. Lin Guijun, Dean and Professor, School of International Trade and Economics, University of International Business and Economics, Beijing, China; 11:30AM-1:30PM, Saturday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, Beijing.**

This university specializes in International education and is quite appropriate for our IB majors. UIBE is located in the third (out of four) loops around the center of Beijing and is about 30 minutes from the heart of the capital city.

A copy of the SDSU catalog and other accompanying documents (contracts, information about the city of San Diego, current student exchange programs at SDSU, etc.) were given to Dr. Lin. This university is under the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and is positioned to be a first-class school in the post-WTO China. According to UIBE sources, many of the top level officials in the foreign trade sector of the Chinese government are UIBE graduates and the school benefits from its strong alumni that is growing rapidly and moving up in the Chinese government hierarchy.

In my discussion with Dr. Lin, I emphasized our interest to develop exchange programs, first at the undergraduate level and later, at the graduate-MBA and faculty exchange programs. I expressed our wish to begin exchanging students as soon as possible, preferably, as of Spring2000 semester. This university has already developed relations with Harvard, Wharton, UC-Berkley, UCLA and a host of other universities in the United States, Japan, Korea and many other nations.

UIBE currently has students from a large host of countries but prefer to increase its American student body. UIBE is willing to work with us on the tuition waiver issue but there may still be a need for our students to pay for the housing and food and some minor fees (similar to our situation at SDSU).

**Meeting with Mr. XianGmin He, Dean and Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Students and Mr. Jeff Guo, Program Manager, Center for Chinese Business and Cultural Studies, Department of Foreign Students, UIBE, 2:30-4:30PM, UIBE Campus, Beijing.**

Mr. He had already been in contact with Teresa Donahue (MEXUS Program Director) and was aware of our programs. A copy of the packet prepared by Ms. Donahue was given to Mr. He. This office is similar to our foreign students' office and its primary task is to manage the international students' affairs studying at UIBE and to administer the exchange programs with foreign universities.

Both Mr. He and Mr. Guo have been to the United States (Mr. Guo as an exchange "young professor" spent one semester in Minnesota) and speak fluent English. They are very receptive to the idea of student exchange programs with SDSU and even though UIBE has already built relations with several American universities, none appears to be as extensive and long-term as is our cooperative offer. Most of their current exchanges are in "groups" of students being sent from US or other nations to study Chinese or Chinese culture for one month-one semester and may not be for actual courses for credit. We are in a good time-space to begin serious negotiations to develop a long-term relationship (that was the theme I emphasized greatly) with UIBE.

**Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1999: Left Beijing at 4:00 PM**

**Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1999: Arrived in Shenyang at 5:30PM**

**Northeastern University NU), Shenyang, July 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 1999.**

This university is under the Chinese ministry of education and is a one hour flight north of Beijing in a heavy industry area (GM joint venture and steel companies are located in Shenyang). The university is structured closer to a comprehensive US school and offers degrees in sciences, business, humanities, arts, engineering and other disciplines. The university is built in a multiple-structure complex and is closed to the general public. It has a more "traditional" school feel to it than the UIBE in Beijing. There is a US consulate office in Shenyang.

The school has approximately 15000-20,000 students and about 120 international students from 30 or so countries. NU has developed relation with the University of Southern California, VPI&SU and Appalachian State University among others, in the united States. Most foreign students who attend NU are again, in groups of 10-40 and learn the Chinese language and culture in one month to one semester time frame. The school needs a Chinese language test prior to entry.

I negotiated a verbal agreement with NU to provide us with a copy of the test to be administered to SDSU students prior to their departure for China. SDSU students who pass the test can take regular courses with their Chinese counterparts and those who do not, will take Chinese language courses in addition to regular courses at NU. This issue needs to be discussed further in detail with both UIBE and NU.

**Meeting with Mr. Yingxue Gao, Director, Foreign Affairs Department, Northeastern University, Sheyang, 12:00—1:30PM, July 4<sup>th</sup>.**

Mr. Gao is the key contact at NU with regards to our exchange program on the administration side. He has been to the United States and speaks fluent English. He is well experienced in handling of the foreign students. He is very interested in developing close relation with SDSU and is willing to accept our students as soon as we are ready to send them there (in a group of 10+ if we like to have a separate program for them and one or two if we want them integrated with the Chinese students). He also suggested that in exchange, it might be easier for them to send a "young" faculty as early as next Spring rather than sending undergraduates due to the problems mentioned above.

**Dinner Meeting with Mr. Xiong Xiaomei, Vice Dean and Associate Professor, College of Business Administration, Northeastern University, 5:30-7:30PM, Monday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, On the campus of the Northeastern University.**

**Dinner meeting with Mr. Duan Yuehu, Dean of Studies and Professor, Northeastern University, 5:30-7:30PM, Tuesday, July 5<sup>th</sup>.**

A copy of the SDSU undergraduate catalog, contracts, and all accompanying documents were provided to the school officials for their review. Brochures and available course listings (in Chinese) were received in return that will be turned in to Teresa Donahue for here files.

The above meetings were quite useful in introducing SDSU and our IB program to the high-level academics at NU. The one difficulty was their English proficiency and my Chinese proficiency (or lack of!). Hence, the entire conversation had to be conducted through an interpreters that reduced the effectiveness of the exchange of views. Both academicians however, were quite impressed with SDSU's IB program and expressed their full academic support for student exchanges with SDSU.

## **Evaluation**

I believe there is a strong interest on the part of both universities to develop a long-term relationship with SDSU. The following issues need to be addressed.

- 1. Proof of financial solvency.** Although the approximately \$5300 required as living expenses in the United States may be a problem, it can be resolved since there is a great deal of interest among Chinese and a large cadre of Chinese students who like to study in USA for at least one semester. One possibility Mr. He mentioned is "home-stay" for their students when they arrive here.
- 2. Visa for Chinese students.** This appears to be the single most important concern for Mr. He and Dr. Lin. US Visa acquisition appears to be a difficult task for the Chinese. The solution that UIBE proposed (and one that has been used before with

other US institutions) is that SDSU will send undergraduate students to UIBE and in exchange, UIBE will send their “young” professors to SDSU. These are newly hired instructors who have just received their bachelor’s degrees, typically from the same institution (or in rare instances, their master’s degrees) and are groomed to teach at the undergraduate level at UIBE. These students will take master’s level courses at SDSU while our students will complete their undergraduate courses at UIBE.

3. **Course schedules and timing.** UIBE at this time awaits its course catalog however, based on my conversation, the courses offered there are relatively similar to those of SDSU and can be compared. The only difficulty is their spring semester schedule that begins after the Chinese New Year in the beginning of March and ends in July. Their Fall semester however, coincides with ours at SDSU. Hence, Fall may be a more appropriate exchange period for our students *especially* those who plan to take summer courses at SDSU.
4. **Chinese language proficiency of SDSU students.** The Chinese were concerned about the proficiency of our students in speaking, reading and writing Chinese. There appears to be a “TOEFL-type” test to determine Chinese proficiency. I discussed the matter with my Chinese counterparts. It is possible for SDSU to negotiate with the Chinese universities to receive the test from China every year, administer the test at SDSU and separate the students who can take regular courses in China from those who should take a mixed Chinese-language in and regular courses in China.
5. **Student housing.** The other issue of concern is the housing for our students in Beijing. The university housing standards in Beijing are different from the standards at SDSU particularly in terms of amenities provided.

I am very positive on the outlook of a seamless yet long-term relationship building between SDSU-IB and NU in a relatively short period of time. I believe that at least one more round of in-person discussion or many more emails and phone calls are required before the final document is signed. The interest however, is indubitably there and I could feel it from the conversations that I had with academics and administrators of both universities.

**And Next?** I will be sending “thank you” notes to all of my hosts in China next week and will indicate to them that SDSU will contact them soon to follow up on the student exchange issue. **Please let me know if that is indeed your intention.**

**Thank you.**