



Thursday, May 30, 2002

OU delegates complete China trip

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

The Oakland University delegation of Oakland County's **Automation Alley** recently completed a series of global outreach meetings and events with Chinese government officials, business leaders and educators.

The purpose of the trip, as consistent with OU's mission to create global partnerships in education, was to encourage opportunities with Chinese University faculty and students and prepare them for academic and professional challenges to work in or with international communities.

OU Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Virinder Moudgil, School of Education and Human Services Dean Mary Otto, Associate Professor of Anthropology Richard Stamps and Executive Events Consultant Joy James Williams met with leaders of various universities throughout China, including the Foreign Affairs College, Beijing Institute of Technology, Tsinghua University and Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

"The focus of our trip was how the business community, government and education can all come together to create a specific kind of opportunity," Otto said. "I think our visit increased the view the Chinese have of us as educational leaders and as representatives of Automation Alley. The visits not only gave us a chance to learn about educational opportunities but also to learn about China's economic development and better understand the context of working in another country."

During his university visits, Moudgil signed letters of intent with university officials from the Beijing Institute of Technology to explore the possibilities of collaborating on an MBA program and a more comprehensive agreement with the Foreign Affairs College to establish an exchange of scholars. Otto said there are tentative plans to bring a faculty member from the Foreign Affairs College to become a resident faculty member in OU's Political Science Department as soon as this fall. OU's goal is to reciprocate in the near future, though no faculty have been selected as yet. Plans also were made for OU's Department of Mechanical Engineering and Shanghai Jiao Tong University to co-host an international conference.

"Our visits to the universities were spectacular," Otto said. "We were very well received at the Foreign Affairs College and had a great deal of success there. Some of our students are presently studying there, so we have a very good relationship with them. It's very exciting to have a signed agreement with the Beijing Institute of Technology. Tsinghua University is one of the leading institutions in China, and they clearly demonstrated a lot of interest in what we are trying to accomplish. And we talked with representatives from Shanghai Jiao Tong primarily on engineering and the biomedical sciences. They have a great deal of interest in working with us."

OU's contingent also learned a great deal about China's present economic development by visiting several technology parks.

"We could see that the universities in China are very involved in the development of technology parks," Otto said. "Somewhere in the mid-1980's the Chinese began to reinvent and rediscover themselves. Much of what they're doing is new. In many places, they are trying to create new communities, such as cities centered around technology parks. Certainly their country is much older than ours, but the more modern comprehensive university is becoming a new model for them, which is manifested in part by their economic development.

"We met with a lot of people in the business community, and OU is in a great position to provide support to those businesses."

OU's next steps, Otto said, are to follow-up with the university officials with whom they met, plan formal programs and move through the governance process, and to remain in contact with the businesses they contacted and involved with **Automation Alley**.

"Our trip was a great opportunity to place OU within the context of our business community," Otto said. "Our involvement with Automation Alley gave us some different perspectives that will help us in our educational mission. I think this visit really increased the visibility of OU in both Shanghai and Beijing – the result of which is that working with OU is even more appealing than it was before."

SUMMARY

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