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OU hosts China's U.S. ambassador

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Representative of Oakland University's commitment to a globally based educational mission, the university hosted China's highest U.S.-based government official during the 10th annual Ambassador Woodcock Legacy Seminar April 8 at Meadow Brook Hall.

Yang Jiechi, ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United States, spoke to OU students, faculty, staff, community leaders and businessmen of Sino-U.S. relations and global trade between the countries. His appearance also was a tribute to **Leonard Woodcock** (1911-2001), former president of the United Auto Workers Union and first U.S. ambassador to China.

"Ambassador Yang's visit to Oakland was very unique and important. Not only is Yang the most powerful voice for China in our country, he also was right in the middle of the sensitive negotiations 25 years ago that established diplomatic relations between the United States and China. Woodcock also was very involved in those negotiations, and the two men grew to love and respect each other," said Associate Professor of Anthropology Richard Stamps, an expert on the people and cultures of China. "Woodcock fought for the rights of the common man and proved himself to American workers. In his later years, he went above and beyond that by promoting a global vision. He used his personal skills and abilities to build a bridge between the United States and China, and I'm certain Ambassador Yang came to Oakland partly to pay his respect to him."

Yang's speech centered on his country's recent rapid rise in the global marketplace. China is now the world's fourth-largest trading nation and importer. He also spoke of China's attempts to develop economically and socially, and the ways in which U.S.-China relations are being expanded.

"There are many different viewpoints to China's rise in the world," Yang said. "We believe that the world has changed, and this could be a win-win situation for all."

Yang also addressed concerns among Americans toward what he described as an unfavorable trade balance between China and the United States.

"Trade has been a strong pillar of our relationship," Yang said. "People seem to have more questions and doubts about the trade imbalance. There is a total trade deficit of \$8 billion, so there is a trade imbalance, but the United States has a profit imbalance way in its favor. The profit margin for a pair of Nike shoes in China is between \$2 to \$3, but the profit in the United States is between \$30 to \$40."

Yang added that the purchase of expensive American goods, such as automobiles, has created high-paying jobs in the United States, and he hoped to see more Chinese businessmen invest in the United States. He also responded to a question from the audience on the importance of educational exchanges between the two countries.

"It's important that the American academic circle adopt a more broad view of the world," Yang said. "America is not doing enough on East Asia studies. Learning languages is very important, and there are not enough American students learning Chinese. China is generally lagging behind in science and technology, but we are progressing in engineering and producing more engineers now than the United States. There are more than 80,000 Chinese currently studying in the United States, and I hope this relationship can be extended."

With regard to Oakland's global educational vision, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Virinder Moudgil spoke of his 2002 visit to China as part of Oakland County's **Automation Alley** delegation, during which he met with Chinese government officials, business leaders and educators. As another example of OU's strong ties with China, he cited the university's relationship with the Foreign Affairs University in Beijing, where Associate Professor of Political Science Pat Piskulich currently is working as part of a six-month faculty exchange program.

"Oakland recently committed to a new general education program, and global education is one of its critical components," Moudgil said. "We want our students to appreciate foreign cultures, and we encourage foreign travel. With China's great history and tradition and our democracy, we are natural partners. To extend this relationship, we have put a component into the curriculum that is a fundamental principle of educating our students."

Other Woodcock seminar speakers included Michael Michalak (CAS '74), minister/counselor of economics at the American Embassy in Tokyo and the third highest-ranking U.S. official in Japan, and Mustafa Mohatarem, chief economist at General Motors Corporation. Speakers during the portion devoted to China business and trade were from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Butzel Long, Dickinson Wright, Fifth-Third Bank, the Foreign Affairs University in Beijing and the Wireless Source.

The Ambassador Leonard Woodcock Legacy was established at Oakland University in 1990 with the dedication of the Woodcock East Asia Reading Room in **Kresge Library** and the Woodcock Collections of Chinese art and scholarly research materials. The first Woodcock Legacy Seminar was presented in 1993, beginning a decade-long tradition of high-quality public service programming for the governmental and business sectors. Designed to provide timely and relevant information to professionals and practitioners involved in China trade and international business development, the Woodcock seminars have earned a reputation for excellence.

SUMMARY

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