OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Monday, February 15, 2010

The China Connection: SBA student aims to build bridges with Asia's booming economy

By Kevin Knapp, OU Staff Writer

Daniel Szubielski

Four years ago, Daniel Szubielski's budding interest in doing business in China made him something of a curiosity to his friends.

The U.S. economy was, at the time, in high gear, with no end in sight. Why, they wondered, would anyone be interested in a poorly understood emerging market in a far-away communist state?

Today, Szubielski is looking less like an oddball and more like a wizard to his former detractors. Indeed, with China now one of the most dynamic economies on the planet, the OU finance major has proved himself to be an astute businessman.

His foresight in immersing himself both in business classes and Chinese language and culture classes has put him far ahead of the curve from many of his contemporaries who are only now grasping the potential of the Chinese market.

"I'm quite happy to prove my skeptics wrong," says the senior from Shelby Township, Mich. "I could see there would be opportunity for those willing to work at understanding both the market and the culture, which are vastly different than those of the Western world. But you really have to do your homework -- which is why I came to OU."

Szubielski started at OU in 2006, primarily because of the availability of Chinese language courses he could take to complement his business classes. Knowing the language and cultural nuances, he believed, would give him a competitive advantage in moving into the new world of Chinese capitalism.

"In the Chinese culture, a business relationship is built on trust and personal relationships," he explains. "The commitment goes a lot farther than just a business contract. It requires time and patience."

Szubielski's hunch has now put him in an excellent position to succeed. Today, he is the co-founder of Drawbridge Capital Partners LLC, a firm that provides consulting and investment services to businesses that wish to expand into China and other emerging Asian markets.

He is also the president of OU's new China Business Association and is co-president of the China Association. Szubielski says he is keen to help other business students develop an insight and appreciation for an economy that he calls "the growth engine of the world."

Still, even as his sights are set firmly on the eastern horizon, Szubielski says has the best interests of his bruised-and battered home state in his heart.

"I'm a Michigan native, and I do not want to see my state fail," he says. "We're in a bad situation now, but we actually have a lot to offer China. My view is that, rather than focusing on the decline of the U.S. auto industry, we should be leveraging our expertise as automotive experts and promoting our skills and services to Chinese firms who are just now ramping up their industry."

He adds that he hopes his consulting firm can help Michigan companies make the transition to moving into vibrant emerging markets.

While continuing to work toward the completion of his degree this year, Szubielski still makes time to return to China every few months, if only to witness its phenomenal transformation.

"It's changing so fast that it's hard to keep pace with what is going on," he exclaims. "People remark how fast the pace of life is in New York City -- which it is, compared to the Midwest. But in China, it's changing so fast that, if you go away for a few months and come back, the skyline has already changed. It's just mind boggling."

SUMMARY
Four years ago, Daniel Szubielski's budding interest in doing business in China made him something of a curiosity to his friends.

The U.S. economy was, at the time, in high gear, with no end in sight. Why, they wondered, would anyone be interested in a poorly understood emerging market in a far-away communist state?

Today, Szubielski is looking less like an oddball and more like a wizard to his former detractors. Indeed, with China now one of the most dynamic economies on the planet, the OU finance major has proved himself to be an astute businessman.

Created by Corey Brandenburg (cebrande@oakland.edu) on Monday, February 1, 2010
Modified by Linda Bowers (bowers2@oakland.edu) on Monday, February 15, 2010
Article Start Date: Monday, February 1, 2010