

## **Address to Shanghai's Economic Summit, May 12, 2005**

*Chancellor John J. Ryan*

Since I arrived here, I've been in awe of your great country... the beautifully diverse Chinese landscape, in awe of its architecture, its culture and even the calm demeanor and measured pace I see here as people carry out their daily duties, in this, the most populous nation in the history of civilization.

Neither of our given languages has a word to describe the gratitude I feel today.

It's a feeling of gratitude that is vastly understated by both the English word "honored" and its Chinese brother, Rongxing. [*RONG-SHING*].

### SLIDE PRESENTATION (OMITTED)

The images and statistics I've just presented to you are a necessary prelude to everything else I will speak about today. I did not travel to this great country to simply provide you with flattering information about the State University of New York. I came here to convince you that SUNY's unique qualities – in several key areas of specialized education, technology and research – demand a meaningful, forward-looking and productive partnership with the one country whose own system of higher education constitutes a diametrical fit with endless opportunities for advancement.

I have come to China to make that case to you as plainly as I can. It is my firm belief that if I am successful in this first endeavor, all future endeavors will be shared endeavors, and shared successes, that will exceed all expectations.

While I am in China, I will do everything in my power to consummate such a partnership – not simply in words, in photographs or even on documents that merely state our intentions.

The international expression "actions speak louder than words" is actually derived from several Chinese proverbs that mean the same thing. In that spirit, I hope to leave here with a tangible blueprint for an economic and academic partnership with China that is tangible, productive and ultimately groundbreaking.

I also hope you understand that my firmness in purpose comes – not from some arrogant notion that China should be eager to be affiliated with New York. It is actually the other way around. The eagerness is ours. Our firmness comes from the awe for China I spoke of earlier, from our admiration for its people and its culture, and from the realization that this great land is replete with deep reservoirs of ingenuity and intellect.

This is not the forum for a political discussion. Unfortunate, a brief one needs to take place anyway – for two reasons. The first is medical. There is a band of tissue in the

human head which separates the cerebellum from the vocal cords. Essentially, it is a “judgment filter” that prevents people from bringing up touchy subjects in public even though what is being said is factual and no one disputes it.

New Yorkers do not have that filter. If we did, I might avoid pointing out that the governments of the United States and China simply do not play well together – never have. There is no way to build an academic partnership between the State of New York and the provincial and municipal authorities in China without at least acknowledging the perennial communication issues between Washington and Peking.

It is also important to acknowledge, in advance, that such a proposition will be called naïve by groups that have few people but many decibels.

They will point out that partnerships begin at the top of the pecking order, not in the middle. They will say that before you can have a partnership you need a relationship, and they will go on to say that China and the United States have neither -- that we are nothing more than distant cousins who like to chide one another to the rest of the global family.

Some will say that China has contravened International Covenants that guarantee people the freedom to engage in scientific research and free from intervention. America provides such Constitutional freedoms as well, although we have stipulations that forbid things like spying and acquiring plutonium. And, yes, in the process of preventing such deadly breaches of covenants both of our countries have made honest mistakes.

As for the more philosophical and ideological claim, it is a rarity for success to start at the top; many times, that’s where the credit goes. But the seeds for success are rarely planted by Kings who would not dirty their hands for fear of failure.

The important word to remember here is “irrelevant.” We are not bureaucrats and mandarins from state departments, looking to solve centuries-old etiquette issues. We are officials of great university systems, seeking to build strong academic ties between the State University of New York and the many distinguished universities throughout China. Period.

Regarding the partnership itself, the current whisper is that China is suffering from a deteriorating climate for academic research. If it is untrue, as I believe it is, a partnership between us is about two decades overdue. If it IS true, such a partnership is still two decades overdue, but probably longer. No level of cynicism can override what is irrefutable. Scholarly exchanges have modernized China greatly, while improving its relationships with countries around the globe.

It is from there that we can march forward, confident in spirit and united in purpose.

In many ways, we would be foolish not to. Right now, the academic communities in China and the U.S. are holding different pieces to the same puzzles, and we either don’t realize it, or don’t have the vehicle to share those pieces with one another.

It doesn't matter whether you're looking at the academic, scientific and economic landscapes of our countries from a Chinese or American perspective; from both angles, you can't help but notice what has essentially become an International intellectual wasteland filled with gaping holes of untapped potential.

Separately, our countries have brilliant scholars, professors and students who've made great strides in every conceivable category one might place under the heading of "human Progress." So it is understandable that we have settled for that level of excellence. It's understandable until you consider that there are several level above excellent that no one is striving for.

Furthermore, it is advances in education, research, science -- and, consequently, economics -- that drive political and foreign policy, not the other way around. And yes, I am optimistic enough to suggest that a strategic partnership between SUNY and China is capable of eliciting an outcome of that magnitude.

I want to be clear about one thing: This whole concept of forging an academic or even economic affiliation between China and SUNY is nothing new. We've been working together for years, but never under the umbrella of an official, sanctioned or organized structure.

SUNY's world-renowned Fashion Institute of Technology has been working with Zhejiang Science and Technology University in Hangzhou for five years. It all began when the Zhejiang provincial government came up with the idea of creating an innovative international fashion design institute at ZSTU. Both academically and economically, it was a wise decision by the provincial government.

After all, Hangzhou thrives on the production of textiles and apparel. What better location for China's new fashion design institute than the city where fashion materials are produced? What better place to learn about the uses, performance and durability of these materials than the city where the experts on those subjects work and live?

It was in Hangzhou, of course, in 1972 with beautiful West Lake as the backdrop, that Chairman Mao and President Nixon consummated one of the most important and memorable handshakes in human history. As the President's son-in-law, Trustee Cox was there on that historic day and to this day he is one of SUNY's biggest proponents in working towards a partnership with China.

In Hangzhou, the pieces for success were there, except one: Who could the provincial government rely on to actually put the pieces together? Well, their vision was to model the new fashion institute after the most prestigious Fashion Institutes in the world. Their first request went to officials at the State University of New York, which operates the Fashion Institute of America.

FIT agreed to give their full support to the creation of China's Fashion and Design Institute, and today are about 700 students enrolled in Bachelor's degree programs in

Fashion Design, Fashion Merchandising and Apparel Manufacturing..

But FIT is still actively involved with the direction and growth of the Institute. Under a simple agreement signed five years ago, FIT sends its latest research, its ideas for new curriculum and its professors to Hangzhou. And each year, ZSTU sends its ideas and its professors to New York City.

It's a partnership that has worked brilliantly and one that will continue... because, at the request of Zhejiang officials, FIT is ready to sign another agreement to extend their partnership with the university for another five years.

This partnership, like the many other similar partnerships between SUNY and Chinese institutions, is based on a simple concept: one group has the bus, the other group has the fuel, and they're both heading in the same direction. They can walk separately and get there in a few minutes. Or they can combine their resources and get there as fast as they choose to.

As the basis for a broader academic partnership between us, this example of joint academic cooperation may sound tiny to everyone other than the professors and students taking part in it. Only they can fully appreciate the magnitude of where their work may lead,

And, in fact, any single example I use will seem similarly minor – but only on a scale that is designed to weigh one thing at a time, instead of the combined impact of a hundred things.

For example, FIT is also in the process of finalizing an agreement with Donghua University in Shanghai to create a similar Institute to the one in Zhejiang. The core curriculum will be in the areas of Fashion Merchandising, Communications Design and Computer Animation, and Interactive Media. And many of lectures will be actually be delivered by the faculty of FIT.

Again, economically and academically, it is a perfect formula for success. Donghua was formally known as China Textile University. It is recognized annually by the Chinese government as one of the country's 20 outstanding Universities. And the fashion and design components of the new Institute will once again be modeled after SUNY's Fashion Institute of Technology....

I can tell you that, as renowned as FIT is throughout the world, we were nonetheless flattered that a university like Shanghai – which is known as the “Paris of the East” – would turn to New York for fashion advice. It is ironic, but altogether fitting, if you'll excuse the unintended double pun.

I do not have a shortage of equally successful partnerships between SUNY and China to speak of; it is the shortage of time I'm concerned about. Earlier this month, FIT received an official visit from a delegation from the Beijing Clothing and Textiles Institute. As

you may know, it's one of oldest and most renowned textile universities in China. The government of the City of Beijing had instructed the delegation to establish a collaborative relationship with FIT. Why? Well, they heard about the successes in Shanghai and Zhejiang and, not surprisingly, they wanted a similar success story in Beijing by August of 2006.

Now this latest example is only a few weeks old... but once again, at the request of government officials in China, FIT is preparing to help create yet another fashion institute in China

I want you to keep this in mind. The Fashion Institute of Technology is just one of 64 colleges or universities in the SUNY system. And it is one of the smallest.

#### LIST OF OTHER JOINT DISCIPLINES [OMITTED]

There is so much room for joint progress between us, and I have barely scratched the surface with the examples I've mentioned.

To attempt to describe possibilities that are unfathomable is to vastly understate their promise.

That is why I choose to use the Fashion Institute of Technology as a prime example of what China and SUNY can achieve with one another.

Once our respective experts in that field were presented with the opportunity to work with one another, it didn't take long for them to conclude that a thousand buses and an ocean of fuel can only move forward when they are travel as one.

By agreeing to pool their resources, they are already on a fast track towards their mutual destination. When they reach that destination, they will make history in the fashion industry, which is their universe.

Only in our minds can we imagine the impact of reaching the same destination in the field of energy, medicine or technology.

It is not simply possible; it is probable -- but only to the extent that we have the courage and the foresight to walk hand and hand in that direction.

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