

**From:** [Evans, James](#)  
**To:** [AllEmployees;](#)  
**Subject:** President"s Notebook Spring 2010  
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## **PRESIDENT'S NOTEBOOK NO. 11 Spring 2010**

Since I have received so many questions about the recent business trip to China, this edition of the Notebook is devoted to describing the trip, my impressions, and the initiatives that resulted.

### ***Trip to China: Overview and Highlights***

This spring Ryan Guffey and I were formally invited to visit Wenshan University for two purposes: (1) review our present agreement with that institution; (2) be honored guest participants in Wenshan University's ceremony to recognize its advancement from a 3-year normal school (i.e., teachers college) to a four-year university. We were to arrive on March 26, sightsee and adjust to the major time change on March 27, participate in various meetings with faculty, administration, board, and students between the 28<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup>, and assume our role as honored guests on the staging area of the dedication ceremony on March 30. We were to return to the States on March 31. All plans materialized as expected on that timeline.

The entire itinerary was flawlessly organized and supervised by Lindenwood's beloved alumnus, Martin Ma, Dean of English Education at Wenshan. Martin was our first visiting professor from Wenshan and the first LU instructor to offer Mandarin Chinese. In addition to teaching, he graduated from Lindenwood with his MA in Education in 2008. I also learned a secret about Martin on this trip: While at Lindenwood he became known for spontaneously bursting into his renditions of Elvis Presley's hits. I can now attest from firsthand experience that he is pretty talented!

One of our most significant objectives in this sojourn was to introduce many more Wenshan students to the excellent opportunities at Lindenwood. The university officials were most accommodating. In fact, they set up a presentation session that allowed us to address more than 500 students and invite them to get the "Lindenwood EDGE" (see below) by either engaging in study abroad on our campus – as a part of their undergraduate curriculum – or pursuing graduate degrees at LU after completing their Wenshan degrees.

We also met with Wenshan President Hau Nanming and other university officers in a well structured session to go over our present relationship with their university and hear their ideas for expanding and enhancing the relationship between their school and ours. The results of those talks are presented later in this *Notebook*.

### **The First Night in Kunming: Dinner with Peter and Lauren**

Martin Ma and a driver had met us at the Kunming airport and transported us to the Grand Park Hotel, where we would ultimately spend three nights during the sojourn. Almost immediately upon our arrival at the hotel, Martin introduced us to Peter and Lauren, with whom we dined that evening. They are American missionaries who work to promote education among Chinese

youth. They knew about Lindenwood as a result of their friendship with one of Lindenwood's former Asian-region recruiters, Don Ruthenberg. We appreciated not only hearing about their various experiences as Christians in a predominantly Buddhist environment but also the warm, pleasant manner in which they made us feel more comfortable as first-time visitors in a foreign land.

### **Impressions of Southern China**

Wenshan University is located in the city for which it was named, an urban/suburban federation consisting of about three million residents and located a few miles north of North Vietnam. The physical climate is tropical and the social climate remarkably upbeat. The city is part of the Yunnan Province, a large subdivision of the country situated in China's southwestern section. On the first leg of our mission, we spent a day and a half in the capital of the Yunnan Province, Kunming, a municipality with approximately seven million residents.

### **China Landscape**

Because most of China appears to be a neat, contiguous space on innumerable maps of the World, it is easy to overlook the vastness of the country. Just jet-hopping from the legendary Hong Kong on China's southern coast to Kunming, which appears to be just a moderate distance away, takes more than a couple of hours at a midair speed of 400 mph.

Since we westerners see mostly news clips of China's densely populated cities, the first-time visitor is also struck by the seemingly endless rural expanses and the stark beauty of the mountainous regions that surround and dwarf the bustling cities, which can be compared to mere dots in the overall scheme. The South China countryside is as fascinating as it is beautiful. I was particularly taken with its sprawling, colossal natural rock formations

(for example, the Stone Forest near Kunming) and endless mountain ranges.

### *Stone Forest near Kunming*



### **Agrarian Land**

You might expect the rife mountains of China to interfere with efforts by the rural residents to raise crops necessary to feed the nation's population of 1.3 + billion. However, China's more than 4,000-year history has afforded its peoples (and the plural is used deliberately) plentiful opportunities to learn how to make the most of what they are given. China's farmers and villagers raise crops on their mountains. Indeed, in portions of southern China, most of the mountainsides are predominantly red in the spring of the year because the rich soil has been tilled and is ready for planting. Of course, lowlands between the slopes are also farmed and are particularly well suited to water-loving crops such as rice. China's farmers and government agencies continually try new measures to control soil erosion, which is an ongoing problem for those who work the hillside rows.

### **Work Ethic**

Whether plying their trades for the airlines, in the city, or in rural areas, the Chinese I observed were perseverant workers. Much construction work still relies heavily upon human sinew and sweat. There is a sense of destiny dominating the performance of jobs. A construction crew preparing to lay the foundation of a large building just across the street from the Grand Park Hotel, where we were staying, worked about 20 hours a day (with two shifts – I think). Large, deep pits were being dug to receive steel and concrete for piers that would sustain a skyscraper. The drilling machine consisted of a man with a shovel, lowered seemingly 20 or more feet into the pit, and a solidly muscled woman who turned a manual crank to raise dozens upon dozens of buckets of earth and rock for hours on end. Still and nonetheless, there was the countenance, as well as the resolute motion, of destiny.

### **Highway System**

Often I have read in the popular media that no other nation even comes close to having a highway system like the one we residents of the U.S. enjoy and often take for granted. If the southern China experience is representative of what one might find in most other developed countries, the media's favorable assessment of our roads is on the mark. A five-hour van ride from Wenshan to Kunming was both revealing and harrowing. The available routes were two-lane and berm-less nearly the entire distance – many winding around and over mountains – and vehicle speed laws appeared to be the only regulations that were enforced. Drivers must be very skilled because traffic jams are a fact of highway travel, and frustrated vehicle operators occasionally opt to take a serious risk. Eighteen-wheeled trucks are wont to attempt passing lines of vehicles on up-slopes. At least twice our van faced a Mack truck steaming toward us in our lane as we surmounted the top of a hill. Ironically we avoided death only by coming to a dead stop on both occasions. Get off the road? You've got to be kidding. Remember, there were no berms, only a mountainside and a precipice hanging over an

abyss to the immediate right.

Fortunately, especially after two near-death experiences within about half an hour, we did find a rest stop with facilities. Being the spoiled American that I am, however, I was taken aback when we encountered a toll taker near the restroom entrances. Fortunately, our good colleague Martin was loaded with Yuan bills, and he generously covered our fares.

### **Social Climate and Daily Life**

There is a conspicuous interdependence among the Chinese, a social and aggregative oneness that nicely balances our ideal of rugged individualism. Our stereotype of China's obsession with honor and dignity appears to be substantiated by the behaviors observed. I rather liked what I saw in the civilian population because the transcendent commitment to the collective good strikes me as a characteristic of an advanced level of social evolution. Whereas I often speak of the importance of being others-centered, South China's everyday people seem to simply live that ethic.

If there is a striking similarity between the culture of South China and that of Panama City, which Ryan and I (as well as Ray Scupin) visited last summer, it is in the intelligent use of the automobile horn. In both settings, drivers employed their horns with precision and nuance as an essential but highly developed navigational skill, and not for aggressive purposes. Indeed, I noted that, in urban areas, driving as social commerce substitutes for the bevy of government-imposed strictures that guide vehicle operators in the U. S.

### **Other Observations**

*The Flight Over* Total air-travel time from St. Louis to Kunming, including hops to Los Angeles and Hong Kong, required about 21 hours, against a

headwind. With a beneficent tailwind on the return flight, time in the sky on the way back to St. Louis summed to about 17 hours. The longest flight segment, between California and Hong Kong, took 15 hours going there and 11 hours coming back. Cathay Pacific Airlines provided transportation across the ocean in Boeing 777 jets, and those flights generally were very pleasant. Staffed mostly by Asians and governed by a conspicuous dedication to the passengers as human beings, the Cathay experience resurrected very distant memories of the days when air transit was kinder and saner. I would gladly fly with Cathay again. (On a perhaps interesting sidenote, security measures at Asian airports were much less draconian than in the U.S.)

*Sparkle* Both the Cathay airplanes and the hotels at which we stayed were immaculate. In general, the Chinese we observed appeared to take exceptional pride in keeping their physical spaces neat and spotless. I think this pattern is but another manifestation of the pervasive others-centered ethic cited earlier.

*Cuisine* In the parts of South China we visited, much of the food was lavishly spiced, and coffee was a relative rarity. Although the food was generally tasty, the typical American GI tract is not in the proper condition to function well on a steady diet of the more heavily seasoned dishes we encountered. Recovery in our homeland took me the better part of one week. The greater challenge, however, was doing without coffee most of the time on most days – to the point that I would shed tears of joy upon sighting a KFC or McDonalds in the urban areas.

## ***The Wenshan Experience***

### **Facts about Wenshan University**

Wenshan University was founded in the 1950s as a normal school (Wenshan Teachers College) and was reaffirmed by the government of the Province of Yunnan in 1984. Recently the school transitioned from being Wenshan Teachers College to its status as Wenshan University in recognition of the fact that it offers many majors, especially in the sciences, that are not necessarily designed to prepare teachers. It now has 10 academic departments with 26 major areas of study and offers bachelor's degrees. The university has more than 1400 acres of space, with 700 of those acres having been developed to date and another 300+ presently under development. It serves more than 10,000 students in a given year. Wenshan University is a beautiful and exciting campus to visit, one at which most people would enjoy studying.

### **“Bird Rock” at the Wenshan Campus**

Located near the center of the developed campus, on the patio leading into the main administrative building, is a very large (about 10 feet tall) rock that could be imagined to resemble a gigantic amorphous bird at rest. Indeed the citizens of Wenshan University refer to the structure as the Bird Rock. The stone has been adorned with various murals and painted symbols, including the image of a bird in flight. Vice-president Xiong explained that the artistic representation of the airborne creature has two meanings: It symbolizes the students of Wenshan, who develop and learn to fly and then do so as mature, independent graduates; it also signifies the all important freedom of expression that the university teaches and promotes.

Did Mr. Xiong's poignant interpretation respond affirmatively to psychologist Martin Seligman's haunting query: Are some positive values universal?

### **Mr. Hau's Comments about His Son's Experience at LU**



President Hau spontaneously offered compliments to Lindenwood regarding the many positive experiences his son, Hau Yu, had here as an undergraduate majoring in Studio Art with an emphasis in Graphic and Computer Art. Yu was not only extremely pleased with his Lindenwood professors but had only kudos for both our facilities and the level of acceptance and support he received on our campus.

Congratulations to all of our faculty members, staff members, and students who contribute to a rewarding developmental environment for our foreign students. As you can surmise from the ever-growing number of internationals at our St. Charles campus, word-of-mouth about us is powerfully upbeat overseas. Let's continue to be a higher education destination for the world.

### **Lunch with an American Family (Brent and Melanie)**

Brent and Melanie are a young American couple residing in the City of Wenshan. He serves as a missionary, advisor, and, effectively, a social worker who assists the farmers on the outskirts of the city in matters of more effective farming and general health practices. She has been a student at Wenshan but spends much of her time presently raising their very young children. A local Chinese woman and her child share the neat, comfortable apartment with them.

Brent and Melanie generously provided us with an excellent lunch and interesting conversation one afternoon. They were as happy to have a chance to interact with some fellow Americans as we were to learn about their interesting experiences as Wenshan residents and their good work in behalf of the Chinese. The lasagna, salad, and brownies were a welcome change of cuisine.

This American family represents some of the best of human nature, and I am very proud of the selfless service they are providing to those in need in a distant land.

### **Meetings, Meetings, Meetings**

As expected we were scheduled for a well-planned sequence of meetings – some social and others strictly business – with Wenshawn administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Each session was a learning experience, with the more formal ones being elegantly appointed with freshly prepared, delicious tea and traditionally attired personnel to keep our cups full and hot and our physical beings comfortable.

I was most impressed with the science and computer laboratories we observed on our tour. The Botany laboratory exhibited several ongoing experiments, many aimed at the production and improvement of medicinal plants. When I asked how many of Wenshan's students were majoring in some area of science, he replied about 3,000!

The only meeting that had the feel of hard business was an hour and a half conference during which President Hau proposed some new programs and enhancements of existing arrangements with Lindenwood. Ryan Guffey and I had discussed what we had in mind the day before. Much to our delight, Mr. Hau's ideas virtually replicated the improvements we were prepared to suggest. The major clauses in the recently signed accord follow.

### **Enhanced Agreement with Wenshan University**

The initiatives we will be pursuing in partnership with Wenshan University include the following:

*Study abroad* We hope to provide for Wenshan students and LU students (1) short courses in J-Term or Summer, for college credit, with

content open to determination by the professors and departments sponsoring the academic experiences; (2) Semester-long or year-long exchange programs for full college credit, mainly in foreign language and culture and the teaching of foreign language. In all cases, a standard cost and feature package would be predetermined.

*Degree-completion* This 3+2 program will be for Wenshan students who will finish their bachelor's degrees at LU, perhaps in English Language Instruction within the framework of a contract degree.

*Visiting professor program* We plan to continue and augment the present Visiting Professor program, with the possibility of increasing the number of Mandarin Chinese instructors from one to two. Additional, higher-level classes in Mandarin Chinese will be made available to Lindenwood students, upon the arrival of a second Chinese instructor. That change, in turn, will eventually present the possibility of a major or minor in Mandarin Chinese at Lindenwood.

*Visiting professor program II* There will be opportunities for selected Lindenwood teacher education graduates to teach English at Wenshan for a year or two to develop higher-level proficiency in Mandarin Chinese instruction.

*Summer cultural exchanges* Fine and performing arts students from either Wenshan or Lindenwood could exhibit their work during special summer intercultural art sessions on the partner's campus.

*Scheduled leadership visits* Officials from Wenshan and Lindenwood will visit the partner's campus on a two-phase four-year cycle, whereby there will be face-to-face exchanges between the universities every two years, with the meeting location alternating.

### **The Dedication Ceremony**

As mentioned at the start of this edition of the *Notebook*, a major purpose of our traveling to China this spring was to represent Lindenwood at Wenshan

University's ceremony to recognize its advancement from a 3-year normal school (i.e., teachers college) to a four-year university. Indeed, the historical dedication took place in a spectacular way on March 30, in front of a crowd of what appeared to be at least 10,000 people. The grand marching music ushered in uniformed retinues in carmine red garb to convey the significance and solemnity of the occasion to the hundreds of VIPs from around the world. Many guests, including those of us from Lindenwood, were explicitly cited and recognized by all present. (We were surprised and flattered that Lindenwood was the only American university acknowledged at the ceremony.) Speakers gave a history of Wenshan and praised central figures in the school's long history. Toward the end of the festivity, an official from the government of the People's Republic formally pronounced Wenshan a state university, advancing it from its historical status as a "normal school." What a day to remember!

As you might already see, Wenshan is not only a sister school in a contractual/business sense but also in many other ways. Its programmatic innovation and ambitious expansion initiatives parallel the kinds of exciting undertakings that have come to characterize the Lindenwood culture.

### ***The Lindenwood EDGE***

"Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary . . ."  
(from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*)

In a prior section of this missive I referred vaguely to *The Lindenwood EDGE*, and I want to explain what that is because the concept is central to Lindenwood's "branding" initiative – that is, crucial to conveying who we are with both accuracy and distinction.

My quotation of Poe is appropriate, for the *EDGE* emerged at 3:00 a.m. on March 29 while I pondered the challenge of how we might more effectively present the University's unique strengths to the public in the midst of today's sandstorm of postsecondary marketing thrusts. It ties in with the China trip because my sleeplessness was caused partly by the literally bruising resistance of an exceptionally firm hotel bed in Wenshan. I would very much appreciate your thoughts about how we might use and improve this approach to presenting our image:

# The Lindenwood

## *EDGE*

*Having the Lindenwood **EDGE** means to be . . .*

### *Educated*

- Informed by the liberal arts and sciences
- Prepared for a modern career
- Engaged in lifelong learning

### *Disciplined*

- Principled and values-based
- Self-starting
- Others-centered

### *Global*

- Inter-culturally informed
- Open-minded
- Internationally connected

### *Effective*

- Compellingly expressive

- Workplace proficient
- Leadership destined

*Get the edge on life. Get the Lindenwood **EDGE** !*

## ***LU Gets New Colors***

Historically, Lindenwood's official colors have been yellow and white. In keeping with recent trends and practices, the Lindenwood Board of Directors has changed our school colors to Vegas gold (such as the gold lettering above) and black. Have a great summer!

