

“Hands across the Water”

*By Sue K. Hammersmith, President
Metropolitan State University*

Madame Chairperson Su, President Ku, University leaders, honored elected officials, and members of the faculty:

Thank you for your gracious invitation to visit your great university, China University of Technology, in person. I have heard many impressive accounts of your university since I became President of Metropolitan State University in 2008. I am very grateful for this opportunity to meet my esteemed colleagues here. Your University is a valued partner to Metropolitan State University and to the State of Minnesota in the U.S.A.

I bring greetings from Metropolitan State University's executive leadership team, faculty, staff, and students. In addition, it is my pleasure to extend best wishes and greetings from Dr. James H. McCormick, Chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system include 32 institutions on 54 campuses across the state of Minnesota. We serve 250,000 students each year. Over 33,000 students are graduated annually. Annually, we also serve 150,000 employees from 6,000 businesses in customized training and continuing education programs.

On behalf of Metropolitan State University and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, I extend our warm congratulations to the administration, faculty, and students of the China University of Technology on the 44th anniversary of the founding of your very fine university.¹

Thank you for your warm welcome and hospitality. My husband, Dr. Allyn Uniacke, and I are thoroughly enjoying our time in Taiwan and on campus. We are grateful for the opportunity to meet so many new friends. Your gracious hospitality and welcome demonstrates one of the four pillars of the founding spirit of China University of Technology, that of “Generosity.” So again, thank you.

Looking ahead to this important visit, I was deeply impressed by the many important characteristics ways our two universities share in common. For example, we are both located in vibrant urban settings. We embrace and engage our urban environments as part of our missions. Urban businesses look to us to add value to their core operations, their competitive edge, and their human capital. Urban learners come to us for outstanding professional and liberal arts educations. They see us as the doors of opportunity, leading to productive and fulfilling lives and preparing them for successful careers and lifelong learning.

Our two institutions are relatively young, as universities go—they were founded within six years of each other. Both were founded by wise, charismatic leaders. Both Universities have experienced rapid growth and change as their scope and reputation have expanded. As a result,

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both of our Universities value the attributes of adaptability, flexibility, currency, and engagement. Both are now highly respected, comprehensive, urban universities.

Our Universities share a strategic commitment to high quality in academic programs and in all University functions. Metropolitan State University is dedicated to continuous quality improvement, and we are impressed by the many indications we have seen of China University of Technology's comprehensive commitment to the highest levels of quality. We know this is a lasting commitment, and it is a major factor in the success of our collaboration.

As a visitor to Taiwan, I see many reflections of the strategic investments your nation has made since the end of World War II. The Republic of China has made significant investments in education and in the Republic's human resources. And Taiwan has come to be recognized, around the world, as an economic miracle.

In Minnesota, over the past 50 years, we also have made major investments in education. Just as Taiwan will be on the cover of TIME Magazine this week, Minnesota's governor was on the cover of TIME in 1973. The caption was, "Minnesota—A State That Works." The story was about what they then called the "Minnesota Miracle." The Minnesota Miracle referred to the robust business climate and social amenities that had resulted from decades of investments in education. And now, Minnesota's state economy is among the top 10 in the nation. Our educational outcomes are among the top five in the nation. I see important parallels between the recent histories of Minnesota and Taiwan. Our shared experiences make us natural partners.

All of the economic miracles that have happened since 1950 have resulted not from technology or natural resources but from an investment in human resources, in education. And Taiwan is one of those miracles.

China University of Technology is an important component in that economic miracle, and we are proud and grateful to be your American partner. I am so pleased to have had the opportunity to be able to learn about China University of Technology first-hand. Only a few of you have had the chance to visit my University. Therefore, I would like to tell you about some distinctive characteristics and accomplishments of Metropolitan State University. I hope this will help you get to know your partner better.

The region we serve, the Minneapolis-St. Paul Twin Cities region, is among our nation's top regions that are homes to Fortune 500 companies. Our neighbors include many well-known corporations, such as 3M, General Mills, Honeywell, UniSys, Imation, and Medtronic. This vibrant business climate is a wonderful setting in which to teach business management, and some of these firms are important partners of the University.

The Twin Cities region also is home to many Asian communities and has a mutual affinity and affection for Asian peoples. Only last week, we hosted the leadership team of the Asian Pacific Cultural Center of Minnesota, on our campus, to present their request to legislators for state funds for an important building project. We look forward to the construction, two blocks from our St. Paul campus, of a new home for Minnesota's Asian Pacific Cultural Center. It will be an important center of Asian cultural education and celebration for all of Minnesota. The Center will strengthen important international linkages with Minnesota.

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Last year, Taiwan was the 16th largest market in the world for products from our area—our exports to Taiwan exceeded \$320M. Our imports from Taiwan were nearly \$400M. We are proud that our regions are such strong trade partners.

You already know some of our alumni, including Mr. Winston Liu. Mr. Liu's prominence as a business leader and public servant is well known. He has also been a strong supporter of the connections between China University of Technology and Metropolitan State University, through the Hsinchu Business Management Association. Two more recent MBA graduates are Patty Lai and Jacky Meng, both of whom are now successful sales managers.

A number of powerful forces have been driving change in higher education in recent years. A major factor is the unprecedented interconnectedness of our world. All nations, all economies, and, potentially, all people are now connected through telecommunication technologies, international media, international business and finance, multi-national corporate structures, broad access to international travel, and certainly international study.

This phenomenon of interconnectedness was driven home by Thomas Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*. Events in one place can affect others around the world immediately and powerfully. We can scarcely talk about something being "around the world" anymore. We are all interconnected.

This has an immense impact on American universities. When our students graduate, they enter a global economy and an international community. Both their opportunities and their competition are global. There is one global economy and one global talent pool. Our students must be equipped to compete and to thrive in that environment. As a result, our commitment to international study has been dramatically strengthened in recent years. American university students benefit immensely from meeting international students and international faculty members both abroad and on their own campuses in the U.S.

On January 20th, we held a wonderful celebration at Metropolitan State University. We celebrated the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States. It is of immense importance for American society that we have a global President. A man of African and American descent, who spent his childhood and adolescent years among Pacific Islanders and Asians.

It is not surprising that President Obama has made a strong public commitment to increasing American higher education's collaborations with international partners. In June 2009, President Obama said that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century. Recently, in an address in Cairo, Egypt, President Obama pledged that his administration will expand international exchange programs and will increase scholarships, like the one that brought his own father to America. President Obama also said:

"I believe that America holds within her the truth that, regardless of race, religion, or station in life, all of us share common aspirations—to live in peace and security; to get an education and to work with dignity; to love our families, our communities, and our God. These things we share. This is the hope of all humanity."

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Your President Ma shares this belief in the value of international education. Earlier this month, he pledged to increase both the number of international students coming to study in Taiwan and the number of Taiwanese students who will study abroad. We applaud this commitment.

We share President Obama's commitment to education and productive work in a climate of peace and security. We welcome their commitment to enhance the nation's support of international education and international cooperation. It is good education and it is good business.

Creating international partnerships is a strategic priority for Metropolitan State University. I am deeply gratified by the strong relationship that we have enjoyed with China University of Technology. I am now the third Metropolitan State University President who has shaken hands at commencement ceremonies with graduates of our shared program. Over 100 China University of Technology students have completed graduate degrees from Metropolitan State University. We look forward to achieving further milestones through our joint programs.

It is impossible to pick up an American newspaper or business magazine without reading about the global importance of Asia, especially in the world economy. The strength and vigor of the Taiwanese economy is a repeated theme—strengths in education, technology, and international commerce.

Therefore, our partnership with China University of Technology is an enormous asset to Metropolitan State University and to the State of Minnesota, because it involves us in such a vibrant economic setting. Our partnership brings to our program students who will clearly have a wide field of endeavor when they return home from America.

I celebrate our "sister university" relationship. On the basis of our successful collaboration on the Master's of Business Administration program, I am very supportive of our additional conversations, conversations about expanding our partnership into new areas of study. I think it would be valuable for us to explore how to expand our faculty exchanges, and to explore student exchange experiences. It would be wonderful for Minnesota students to experience learning in Taiwan and at China University of Technology. In addition, I see real potential in exploring a joint Business Administration program at the baccalaureate level. Given our success in the field of business, I want to learn where we might have mutual interest in collaborating in other areas of study.

As we spend more time together, both in person and in connection across our "flat earth," I am sure that we will find other potential areas for collaboration that we will want to explore together.

I hope that I have been able to give you a clearer image of the University that is your partner in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region of Minnesota. I also hope that I have been able to convey how highly we prize our relationship and partnership with China University of Technology.

I am grateful for the advantages that have come to both of our universities through our collaboration. I am pleased with the benefits our work has brought to the students we have

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shared. These successes, and the many natural affinities we share, give me great eagerness to explore other ways in which we can deepen our working relationship for our mutual benefit and service to the larger communities we serve.

Again, I want to express my deep gratitude for the incomparable Taiwanese hospitality that we have enjoyed. My husband and I look forward to seeing more of your beautiful country. We hope that, not too far in the future, we shall have an opportunity to reciprocate.

Thank you very much for your kind attention. If there is interest, I would be happy to respond to any questions or comments you might have. Thank you.