China, Oregon exchange education, economic ideas

Both abundant with pine trees and blessed with windows to the ocean, Oregon and the sub-tropical Chinese province of Fujian are more than just geographical near-mirror images of each other.

Fujian and Oregon are sister cities, a relationship resolved by last year's Oregon legislature, and reaffirmed and developed by an Oregon delegation's pilgrimage to Fujian earlier this Spring. Fujian officials and the Oregon group spent two weeks together, seeking out opportunities for cooperative economic ventures and discussing educational and cultural exchanges — but mostly just checking each other out.

"It was more of a friendship mission expressing good faith," says Jacquie Bonner, a delegation member and director of the University's Educational Opportunities Program.

Bonner and delegation members Lane County Commissioner Jerry Rust and Sen. William Fry, D-Eugene, shared that mission with the University in a slide show a few weeks ago.

Bonner and Rust say Oregon is fortunate to have Fujian as its sister because the province of 25 million people has been directed by China's government to accelerate economically.

And education in Fujian is projected to accelerate at a similar pace.

For instance, both Fuzhou and Xiamen Universities have been directed to double their enrollments by 1990, demanding both an expansion of their curriculum and of their professors' knowledge, Bonner says.

And Fujian is looking to Oregon colleges and universities to help them expand.

While economic improvement is Fujian's primary goal, both Rust and Bonner say educational exchanges will probably be the first interchange to materialize between Fujian and Oregon — Fujian views their economic development as being dependent on education.

"Fuzhou (University and Teacher's College) is ready right now to receive our students," Bonner says.

Bonner says Fujian's Hwachiau University is also offering free tuition, room, board and air fare to native Chinese who have left their homeland to study.

"They're ready to receive any overseas Chinese students for a free ride," she says.

Friendship isn't hampered by the language barrier as demonstrated by this American journalist and his small curious companion.

Bonner was impressed by Fujian's professors and buildings.

"We went to see a high school — it looked like one of our small university campuses," she says.

China's overall commitment to liberalizing its foreign relations is such that Bejing has authorized Tiang You, director of Fujian's office of foreign affairs, to autonomously enter into contractual trade agreements. You, who helped establish the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., wants to send officials from his office to colleges and universities in Oregon, Bonner says.

"They want to take some courses to better understand the Oregon legislature and in business administration, with the idea that sometime soon they plan to open (in Oregon) a business-trade office," Bonner says.

Bonner says Fujian's educational needs include programs in forestry, agriculture, civil and mechanical engineering.

Culture, law, economics, politics and language are also areas for educational exchange, especially since Fujian's economic future will prospectively be connected to Oregon's. English is already China's second language.

"I'm just astounded at the number of people learning English," Bonner says.

Fujian has already established educational exchanges in Oregon and elsewhere.

Its Xiamen University has exchanges with Canada, Japan and Australia. Lewis & Clark has an exchange program set up with Gweilin Teacher's College, and PSU has laid their own groundwork.

"PSU is ready to develop a strong program because of their interest in international trade," Bonner says.

In preparation for the University program, Bonner is helping draw up a proposal for Chancellor Bud Davis.

**Story by Brooks Dareff
Photos courtesy of Jerry Rust**

Kids are kids no matter where they're born. This group in Fujian resembles the children at the University day care centers.