

Notes and Contact Details for Evening MBA Beijing Trip
June 25 – June 29 2007

I have greatly enjoyed my travels with all of you – your collective energy and enthusiasm are what made the week a success. The following notes were being sent daily to our MBA office (Linda) in Grainger. She and Deborah greatly appreciated the updates!

Many thanks to all! Will Murphy

Monday

Hi from Beijing! It is 5.40am on Tuesday and I thought a bit of an update from Beijing would be appropriate. We had some flight delays - first, in Chicago for about 2 hrs. Then, with storms in Beijing we were rerouted to a city about a 45 minute flight to the southwest of the city. We had an interesting several hours while waiting for Chinese airport personnel to decide they should refuel a plane that did not belong at their airport! In the end, we were off, arriving in Beijing and checking into our hotel at about 12.30am. Monday was a fantastic day. The US Embassy guy, Bill Brekke, has been in China since 1981 and there are few in the world who could speak with such an insider view of China as he was able to do. Everyone thought it was terrific. Our next speakers (Dupont followed by AstraZeneca) each flew up from Shanghai just for our sessions. Each had unique industry perspectives and views on challenges facing their respective sectors (B2B and health care/pharma).



As well, there were great questions coming from our fatigued but very involved students. Note for future efforts - the briefing documents set the stage perfectly for these sessions. ie, questions are purposeful and the speakers are able to add to a knowledge base rather than talking at an unprepared group. The evening banquet was everyone's first exposure to a typical Beijing fare. Lots of experimentation, including the challenge of chopsticks for more than a few :-). I think everyone has taken advantage of our proximity to cultural attractions - long walks are already the norm. We are soon off to KC - at 7.20am! Will

Tuesday

Another day, another unique adventure... At breakfast I learned that several students had found a karaoke (sic) bar the night before - and had overcome comm problems with the barkeeper upon learning that despite no shared speaking language, the barkeeper could read and write English quite well. They seemed to have had a blast with their newfound communication tool! Many others had taken off for walks following our banquet, with some venturing the mile or so walk to see the walls of the forbidden city. Meanwhile, for others the 13 hr time change has failed to dampen their joy of exercise, with at least a couple taking 5am runs already (btw, one effect of 13 hr time changes is that you tend to wake up at about 4 or 5am anyway, with continued sleep nearly impossible for most people). We were off early today, with KC sending a representative to our hotel to accompany us to the special economic zone where KC has offices and a production facility. We arrived and immediately headed into a conference room for a morning of talks.



KC had 3 speakers arranged for the morning, with discussions ranging from KCs global position to a focus on their China strategy. One member of the team focused on Huggies brand in China - with an emphasis on the premium sector that KC targets. Another talked about the issue of sustainability and how KC China strives to be a great corporate citizen in China. Still another touched on supply chain issues. We followed this with a plant tour. Probably a bit too much classroom time given fatigue from the night before, but the KC team committed themselves to making our visit as great an experience as they could! Then, on the way back to the hotel, it was off to a famous restaurant (earlier visited by Barbara Bush) and then to the hotel to get into walking clothes (at 105 F the high today, this meant shorts and T Shirts!). We went on to the amazing Temple of Heaven, a beautiful, calming, setting with an extraordinary historic significance. We had a student feeling poorly and, taking no chances, Sachin whisked him off to be seen by a Dr. (they spent the rest of the day at the facility, with all tests showing no evidence of danger and a late return to the hotel - tomorrow he goes back for a quick followup). Everyone else continued to tour and we followed this with a stop at the Pearl Market, a chaotic, almost overwhelming shopping experience with vendors calling out from all sides, products of all types from winter coats, to shoes, to fine jewelry, to mens and womens clothing (to name a few categories our students had in their bags on the way out!).



For first time negotiators with the Chinese, I'd say that everyone won (including the Chinese vendors!). Excepting the fact that fatigue is showing on many faces, everyone is looking forward to the outing tomorrow, with the Great Wall and a tour of the Olympic Center (with a senior governor of the Beijing Olympics giving us a talk). There is rain in the forecast - I am crossing my fingers that it misses the Great Wall in the am. Will

Wednesday

We have just returned from a fantastic banquet. It was arranged that we would enjoy our dinner with the 5 tables closest to a performance of Changing Face Opera, music with Chinese instruments, Opera from various traditions, and more during our two hour banquet.



The day started early, with a 7am departure for the Great Wall. We had two hours of walking the wall, with plenty of time for rest (many chose the "steep route"!).



No matter how many photos/scenes you see of the wall, only by walking on it and seeing it disappear over the next mountain, do you truly feel the significance of the Great Wall.



We headed next to a traditional Chinese lunch, followed by a stop at the hotel for a quick shower and change of attire. We had the pleasure of being hosted by a senior member of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the 29th Olympiad. He had just flown in from Hong Kong the same day and he talked with us for about an hour about the games, readiness of Beijing, and fielded questions from our students. He then presented us with a beautiful gift.



Tomorrow I take them to Tsinghua University (small groups will take walking tours with university students), followed by a talk at the highly rated CEIBS Uni (perhaps highest in Asia for Exec Ed and highest in China for MBAs). CEIBS is arranging that we have lunch with their exec MBAs. Following that, it is off to NovoNordisk.. Yes, another full day ahead! BTW, the students on-the-show with you are Andrew and Wendy (they are noted on Jean Feraca's program site). With your involvement (a perfect situation, especially if lines get cut to Beijing and have to be reconnected for any of the time), I will not be present (ie, you, Andrew, and Wendy will handle the show!). Will

Another exciting note is that our students are formally on the agenda with Here on Earth – it will be shown at 3pm Wednesday. Yes, live with Jean Feraca! We have students who actually volunteered to get up for the 4am - 5am radio show!
Will

Thursday

Hard to believe, but we are already at the end of the day again. This am we headed to Tsinghua University, known as the MIT of China. My contacts at a neighboring university were able to arrange terrific support for our visit, including 5 student guides and still another as a coordinator.

We arrived at about 9am and began a walk-through visit of campus. Final exams were underway and there was a great deal of lively activity going on around campus as well (including a community dancing activity, artists painting at a lilly pond, and bikes everywhere as one would expect). The campus of approx 30,000 students is beautifully laid out with waterways, green spaces, and buildings that are clearly the pride and joy of the students.



After group photos and gifts given to our guides, we were off for our next uni visit, CEIBS. China Europe Int'l Business School has been the uni that I have worked with for about 10 years. When I contacted them months ago about visiting, they were supportive – they not only offered to have us visit, they also provided a presentation and treated our entire group to lunch. As their director of exec ed said to me, "we want to give a banquet for you and your students as a way to thank you for all of your support over the years." BTW, CEIBS is ranked #1 in Asia and in the top 100 by the Financial Times. At CEIBS, the presentation was informative. Meanwhile, they let their exec diploma students out of class early, sent them over to a nearby restaurant. With 2 or 3 CEIBS student sitting at each table awaiting our arrival, our students spent the next hour chatting with these executives – many students mentioned that this was a highlight of the CEIBS visit!

Next, we were off to Novo Nordisk.



A fantastic presentation followed. An hour quickly passed, with Ron Christie, President of the China effort, giving us a passionate talk about the excitement of China, it's challenges, and opportunities - and the situation facing pharma competitors. His talk complimented our earlier talk with Astra Zeneca quite well. We next had an HR manager talking with us about her perspective on talent management. The entire session was yet another highlight of the week (hmm, is it possible to have multiple daily highlights?!).

Will

Friday

Here it is, Friday evening. A number of students have said they can't believe the week is almost over.

We've just returned from a 10 course dinner at one of the most known restaurants in Beijing, with a specialty of Peking/Beijing Duck. For two hours everyone enjoyed subtle tastes of many dishes. The conversation in the room seemed to never lag - I'd say the class has reached a new level of integration and closeness, with friendships deepened.



Earlier today we drove down to Tianjin, a major port city about 100 Kms to the southeast. The drive gave us a chance to see life outside Beijing. As we approached the city, an official representing TEDA (Tianjin Economic Development Area) met us and provided a guided tour of the city and economic area. His hour-long tour culminated in a visit to an exhibition hall where the entire city built to scale consumed the first floor.



Our host continued to explain the city - by the time he had finished, there was a shared understanding of the importance of Tianjin and the scale of things to come (for instance, he mentioned the recent signing of a TEDA deal with Airbus with assembly operations soon to come).

Next, it was the Novo Nordisk plant in TEDA, with a talk by a Danish Expat in charge of the facility. He talked about the business, operations, and aspirations of the China effort. After answering several questions, he set us off on a look at the facility.

Then, we were on our way back to Beijing, with Kraft our destination. At Kraft, we were set to speak with the head of HR but we were surprised to have the pleasure of 30 minutes with the President of Kraft China. An expat himself, the talk was enthusiastic and insightful. He fielded questions well-beyond his original plan, finally saying goodbye to a rousing applause (along with receiving the last of our major gifts - thanks again to Linda for providing these!). Our next speaker was again engaging, with our visit extending long beyond the original intent. We finished with receiving samples from a range of Kraft treats designed for China taste preferences (that also tasted just fine to our students!).



With the day now at an end, we look forward to a morning of cultural sightseeing, beginning with the world-known Tian An Men square and stepping just a short distance away to the Forbidden City. We have 3 tour guides for our visit. The morning will be perfect - so long as we miss the rain (btw, every day has risked rain - but we have not had a single minute of rain dampen our efforts in any way!). The rest of the day is free - we already have students planning to hop on subways, emerging at random to see-what-they-see. Others will head back to the markets - with confidence born of a week in Beijing, our negotiators are ready to plunge into the endeavor.

Saturday

With rain threatening, we headed to our bus for Tian An Men square. We had 3 tour guides and each offered insights that simply would not have been possible by simply strolling the grounds. Next, it was off to the Forbidden City. Our tour leader and I had gone ahead to buy the entry tickets and, after gathering the entire group, we entered. There is really no way to understand the scale of the Forbidden City until you step inside.



The rain continued to hold off – but only for a short time. Then, a light drizzle began. Fortunately, we were at a point in the visit that put us near another world-famous landmark – Starbucks. Yes, Starbucks within the Forbidden City! Several students took advantage of the familiar refreshment (well, actually I think it was a morning energizer!). As we again set off to continue our tour, the rain picked up tempo. Soon, we were in quite a storm. Fortunately, we had already been walking the City for most of the tour and we were nearing the gate of our departure. Some members of the group decided that they were already soaked through and that a walk back

to the hotel would be 'no problem' – so, off they went. Most decided to take the bus. In a short time, we no longer expected any more arrivals so it was back to the hotel for a change of clothes.

The rain persisted for most of the day – but our students were not going to let a little rain stop their final day in Beijing. In short order, it seemed that everyone was off for a final day of discovery and adventure.

BTW, throughout our journey I have been quite impressed with the steadiness of enthusiasm and uplifting spirit. Also, this class clearly enjoys one another and respect for one another is apparent (even in the sometimes steady ribbing going on!). I'd say our first-time international trip has been a splendid success, although only when we hear back from our students will we know if my perspective is shared by all ☺

Sunday we are off. So, this will be my final note on our trip. I hope you have continued to enjoy hearing about our journey.

Will