

# Union forges new partnerships in China

Any business, institution or individual with a global perspective cannot afford to overlook China.

It already ranks as the third-largest trading partner of the United States, surpassing Japan and every other nation except Canada and Mexico.

Against that backdrop, Union University is forging new relationships in a nation where financial power and intellectual influence are expected to grow significantly in the next decades.

"China is trying very hard to become number one in the world in everything," says visiting engineering professor Ilyoul (Walter) Lee, who came to Union from Yanbian University of Science and Technology in Yanji, a city in northeastern China. "China is the manufacturing base for the world, but in the future, it will also be one of the largest markets in the world."

Yanbian and Union signed a partnership agreement in 2004. Lee says it's a timely alliance. Ties are forming so quickly with China that Americans are learning Chinese languages in record numbers.

"There is a Chinese proficiency test you can take in America," Lee said. "About 250,000 people take it every year."

Yanbian ranks among China's top 100 universities, and Lee says nearly all of its graduates go on to good jobs or graduate study. He says one reason for their success is a high rate of multilingualism. The

school is located in Jilin province, very close to the North Korean and Russian borders. Many students who arrive are fluent in other languages, and some acquire new language skills during their studies.

Union faculty could play a role in bolstering English language studies at Yanbian. Discussions are underway that would send Union faculty to the campus to teach English as a Second Language course. A shared Master of Business Administration program between the two universities is also under consideration.



The highly rated engineering program at Yanbian already is becoming an important resource for Union students and faculty. Lee is teaching through May 2006, and additional visiting professors from Yanbian will follow.

Lee, a Korean-American, has graduate degrees from the University of Missouri and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was a church planter in New England, and a Southern Baptist missionary. At Union, he runs electrical engineering labs, and lectures on international

teaching and learning methods, with a special emphasis on the integration of faith and learning.

Lee says he will explore teaching and ministry opportunities in the United States when his time at Union concludes. He hopes to see Union students do the same in China, because he says Americans with knowledge of Chinese language and culture are almost guaranteed a wide selection of employment and travel opportunities.

"We're working to get our students connected there," says Cynthia Jayne, Union's associate provost for international and intercultural studies. "In every discipline, we need students from Union looking at China."

Three Union students have taken Study Abroad courses in China recently. Rachele Haskins studied at Inner Mongolian University in spring 2004. Christina Schulz and Allysha Martin studied at Yanbian earlier this year.

Four Union faculty members took part in the English Language Institute in 2002, and three others were involved in a Consortium for Global Education/Nursing Department Site Visit in 2003.

In addition to the association with Yanbian, Union will be among the most active participants at a higher education conference hosted by Qingdao University in June 2006. The CGE-sponsored event will include discussions on the potential of private universities in China. ☼