



Dean David DeGrootte, left, observes the operation of a flexible assembly system in one of the labs at Shanghai University of Engineering Science in early January 2007.

Establishing relationships with China

by Dean David K. DeGrootte, Ph.D.

Last May, Dr. Roy Saigo, St. Cloud State University's president, and others from SCSU traveled to China to meet for the first time with administrators from the Shanghai University of Engineering Science (SUES).

Together they explored the possibility of establishing a mutually beneficial relationship between the two schools. Many U.S. universities are establishing such relationships, since China is a huge market. In fact, SUES already has 24 such relationships. So the challenge was for SCSU to offer something unique.

Thanks to a lot of groundwork accomplished in advance by Dr. Warren Yu, who chairs our Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering (MME) department and is from Shanghai, that something is our Master's in Engineering Management (MEM) program.

We thought MEM would be an important opportunity for SUES graduates, given the major expansion of manufacturing in China. Apparently, the president of SUES agreed, because President Saigo and his delegation returned from China with an exchange agreement to be fleshed out and signed later.

In early January, I had the privilege of following up on this initiative. Warren Yu and I flew to Shanghai. Over a four-day period, we met with SUES officials, toured the campus, visited with students and toured the General Motors plant, where 400 cars are manufactured each day for the Chinese market. We also enjoyed a small taste of Shanghai's culture: a performance by Chinese acrobats, a tour of a historical city, and, of course, Chinese food — which is very different from what we think of as Chinese food.

Our intent was to invite SUES faculty to SCSU to gain an understanding and connection with our College of Science and Engineering and College of Business — to come for a semester or even a month, learn about our programs and maybe teach a class about manufacturing and/or business in China.

We're planning for Warren Yu and MME professor Ben Baliga to visit SUES this summer, which will help solidify the agreement. We've also submitted a study-abroad proposal for Spring 2008, so that our students

— hopefully, in conjunction with College of Business — can study there for two or three weeks.

In my opinion we were able to establish the necessary personal relationships with administration, faculty, and students to begin the implementation of these hopes and aspirations.

So the challenge was for SCSU to offer something unique ... that something is our Master's in Engineering Management (MEM) program.



DeGrootte, left, and Warren Yu, chair of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, visit a suburban town of Shanghai near Shanghai University of Engineering Science in early January 2007.