

Building Human Bridges Between China and the Rest of the World

Meeting With Wen Jiabao

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Premier Wen, and distinguished leaders.

I am humbled to have been invited to speak with you today. I hope that you might find my personal experiences helpful to your own thinking.

When I was a college student, one experience changed my life. I attended an American university, but during my junior year I went to France. My classes that year had me study French art and French literature with my French classmates. I lived with a French family, and every night we ate French food together.

During that transnational experience, I kept my American soul, but I also acquired a second, French soul. I learned why Americans and French people sometimes misunderstand each other, and I learned how to help them work together to overcome misunderstanding.

My year in France led me to see universities as the soil in which young talent can be cultivated and empowered to become bridges across cultural borders. Throughout my professional career, my work has been shaped by that view of universities.

As Dean of the University of Michigan Law School and as President of Cornell University, I worked to help make those schools more transnational. And those efforts led directly to my current work in China.

In 2001, Peking University opened a branch campus in Shenzhen that teaches students at the post-graduate and professional level. In 2007, the

leaders of Beida, who had gotten to know me while I was President of Cornell, asked me to help them create on that Shenzhen campus the world's first School of Transnational Law. The invitation offered me an opportunity to take my work on transnational education to an entirely new level, and I accepted.

Our school, which we call "STL," is designed to help both our Chinese students and our foreign professors to become more effective bridge people.

Our students are like Harry Potter – young people with almost magical levels of ability. To help them become effective bridges, we must do two things. We must deepen their base in China by teaching them how Chinese legal rules and legal institutions fit within Chinese culture and Chinese society. And we must teach them how people from other cultures think about law, so that they can be effective when they work on the international stage.

A key to STL's success has been our ability to recruit outstanding foreign professors. During the school's four years of activity, we have brought senior professors from Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, NYU, the London School of Economics, and the European University Institute to teach our students.

Coming to STL has changed those professors. Each one has gone home with a highly favorable view of China and its people. Each one has asked to come back and teach our Harry Potters again.

I have changed as well. My American soul and my French soul have now been joined by a Chinese soul. My Chinese soul would like to help show the world how universities here are teaching students and faculty to be bridges between China and the rest of the world.

I do hope the national government will continue to expand its support for foreign experts in China, and might even consider developing a special new visa for foreign experts. Through such steps, I believe China will do even more to bring new talent from around the world to China, where they can pursue their Chinese dream.