

The University of Toronto: A Natural Bridge to Asia Pacific in the 21st century

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In today's Taiwan, it faces a large number of difficult and complex challenges, such as economy, energy, environment, and so on. To mitigate such challenges, one needs to go beyond the normal process of intellectual pursuit. Hence, in the complex world of the 21st century, research universities must not only serve the purpose of educating intellectually sound global workforce, it should also have impact on fundamental social and global decision making processes. To this end, having robust powerful organizations like the Munk School in a great university, in my opinion, is no longer a luxury, but a necessity.”

Preamble

The University of Toronto was somewhere in my psyche in the past four decades.

I first learned about its existence when I was applying for graduate studies back in the late 1960's. In reading various graduate brochures, two came to my attention and both are integral parts of higher education landscape of Canada. They are the University of Toronto and McMaster University. Because of my interest then in nuclear science, I was more attracted to McMaster University because of its 1.5 MW reactor on campus!

Fast forward, after I completed my doctorate from the University of Minnesota and was about to be married, I learned that my future brother-in-law completed his undergraduate at Queens University in Kingston, some two hundred and fifty kilometres northeast of Toronto, and his doctorate in chemistry in the University of Waterloo, which is one hundred kilometres southwest of Toronto.

In the past several decades, as I became a practicing scientist, I was made acutely aware of the intellectual reputation of the University of Toronto. For example, even in my narrow field of research, there were three excellent colleagues in the University of Toronto: **A. E. Litherland**, a world class experimentalist and **David Rowe** and **Sam S.M. Wong**, both world renowned nuclear theorists. Unfortunately, I never had the honor of meeting Litherland, but I did have many interactions with Rowe and Wong, although University of Toronto was never the venue for our interactions.

Finally, as someone who is also broadly interested in science, especially science with a Chinese flavor, I learned that the co-Nobel laureate of chemistry in 1986 of Yuan T. Lee is **John Charles Polanyi**, who is from the University of Toronto.

Hence, not until my recent direct visit to the University of Toronto, it appears that my professional and personal connection simply revolve around the University of Toronto, but never with and in it.



President David Naylor and Dr. Harvey Weingarten

That is why when I received the invitation from **David Naylor** the President of the University of Toronto (*I am grateful to **Harvey Weingarten**, CEO of Higher*

Education Quality Council of Ontario who was gracious enough to introduce me to David in March of this year,) to visit on September 8 – 10 of 2011, which happened to be a magnificent fall day, I went with enormous excitement and glee!

My visit had a surgical mission: to explore possible meaningful interactions not only between our two universities, but also between University of Toronto and Taiwan's powerful high technology industries, such as Quanta (on cloud computing) and Delta Electronics (on green technologies.) It is no surprise that some of the best universities of North America have caught the attention of the fast rising and powerful high-tech industries of Taiwan. To this end, as the senior manager of one of Taiwan's best universities, it is my duty and opportunity to encourage such interactions which could result in win-win-win scenario. Of course, I must give special thanks to **Peter Lewis**, Associate Vice President of Research (and an outstanding neuroscientist) who served as my hour-to-hour host!

As can be seen from the elaborate program attached at the end of this report, it is clear that I was given a panoramic view and substantial meetings with various leaders. For example, I met with

- Dean of Engineering and Applied Science **Christina Amon**,
- Director of Canadian Institute for Advanced Research Cosmology & Gravity Program **Dick Bond**,
- Chair of Computer Science **Sven Dickinson**,
- Vice Dean of Arts and Sciences **Peter Martin**, and last but not least
- **Farid Najm** and **Ted Sargent**, Chair and Associate Chair of Electrical Engineering respectively.

Everyone came to the meeting very well prepared. They introduced to me in depth as to how they think collaborations between National Tsing Hua University and Taiwan's industries could be initiated. I mentioned to everyone that Hsinchu is a particular exciting place in Taiwan. Not only is it the main economic engine for Taiwan to transit from agriculture to silicon economy, it is also the venue for clusters of outstanding universities (within 80 kms radius) and nearly all the major national laboratories, such as the National Synchrotron Radiation Research Center.

As I said, this was the second time I met David. I remember writing about him after our first meeting as follows:

“...I was impressed with the way David discussed higher education in Ontario. As the leader of Ontario's flag-ship university, he could have assumed an absolute

arrogant ambiance, thinking that University of Toronto could exist in isolation from everything else. In fact, I sensed that David saw it, with intellectual understanding, as his mission to create sustainable collaboration with other outstanding universities so that a powerful cluster for Ontario can be formed. Having such a cluster will undoubtedly have a profound impact for the region. ...”

Seeing him up front with his colleagues, I am even more impressed this time.

Something about Ontario, Toronto and the University of Toronto

Although I was familiar with Toronto as a city, I decided to do a bit more homework before my visit.

First, Ontario is BIG! In fact, HUGE! Having lived in Texas for some seven years, there was and still is a cliché that “Texas is big.” And it is, when Texas is compared with all other states in the lower 48. According to Wikipedia, Ontario land size is 1,076,395 km² (415,598 sq mi) and Texas is (surprisingly) 700,000 km² (268,581 sq mi.) After seeing this difference, the only thing I can think of is

“Eat your heart out, Texas!”

Second, just walking around Toronto, one cannot help but to notice the high percentage of people with Asian complexion. So, I decided to find out what is the number of Torontonians who are Asians. And the following is what I discovered from my Google search:

There are 298,372 South Asians or 12.0 per cent of the total Toronto population; there are 283,075 Chinese or 11.4 per cent and there are 102,555 Filipinos or 4.1 per cent.

It suddenly dawned on me that with over 700 thousand Asians calling themselves Torontonian, the threshold must be reached, or passed for this city to evolve into a mindset that not only it is a great North American city, it is also a great Asian city. Push this mindset further, the University of Toronto could be viewed not only as a **GREAT NORTH AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**, it is also a **GREAT ASIAN UNIVERSITY**! Toronto in general and University of Toronto in particular could and probably should have a serious Asian intellectual and economic strategy!

The University of Toronto, which sits in the heart of the city of Toronto, is a massive university. It has some 7000 faculty and staff members and 45,000 students (13,000 are graduate students.) With 18 colleges, the university has nearly all disciplines under the sun.

In the beginning of the 21st century, when I became aware of and interested in the structure of the Association of American Universities (AAU,) the so-called elite

university club of North America, I was astounded that in 1926, University of Toronto and McGill University were inducted into it. Today, these are still the only two non-US universities in the organization. As far as I could tell from grapevine, both have been active institutional members in nearly a century, and both stood shoulder-to-shoulder to many of the best US research universities.

Giving the speech at the Munk School of Global Affairs and meeting its energetic director Janice Stein.

As soon as I arrived, I was scheduled to deliver a speech at the Munk School of Global Affairs on “*Globalization or Internationalization: Challenges for Asia Pacific Universities in the 21st Century.*”



Photo with Janice just before my speech

Like the London School of Economics and Political Science, Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Munk School is undoubtedly another renowned university-based center on “public policies.” Janice, who is not only a great intellect with enormous charm, is also a nationally known commentator who could speak eloquently and in depth on a multitude of global issues to the media. In this role, she reminded me of David Gergen in the United States (*or should I say David Gergen reminded me of Janice Stein now that I know her!*) I was startled by the fact that the introducer of my speech was David Naylor and the chair of the session was Janice. This indeed was not just a great honor for me personally, but also for National Tsing Hua University which I represent.

I was pleasantly surprised that in the audience were not just individuals with policies interest *per se*, there were also distinguished scholars from other corners of the university. For example, in the audience were

Peter Liu, a renowned heart and stroke specialist who will also be the chair of the 12th World Conference on Emerging Technology and Services on

campus of the University of Toronto (*a showcase platform for Taiwan's science and technology communities in North America,*) and

Dick Peltier, a world renowned planetary scientist who recently with Bill Gates won the coveted Bower Award of the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. Having an audience with a broad range of interest certainly palpably manifested the strong interest of various communities within the University of Toronto about Asia Pacific in general, Asia Pacific higher education in particular.

As in all great universities, the institution reputation is measured by its intellectual power it possesses in a time continuous manner. In this aspect, the University of Toronto is certainly well endowed!

In today's Taiwan, it faces a large number of difficult and complex challenges, such as economy, energy, environment, and so on. To mitigate such challenges, one needs to go beyond the normal process of intellectual pursue. Hence, in the complex world of the 21st century, research universities must not only serve the purpose of educating intellectually sound global workforce, it should also have impact on fundamental social and global decision making processes. To this end, having robust powerful organizations like the Munk School in a great university, in my opinion, is no longer a luxury, but a necessity.



Photo with Peter Martin and Dick Peltier

Epilogue

As far as Asia is concerned, I was especially impressed in a passage in the website of the University of Toronto Magazine which states that

*“..And then, of course, there are India and China. China is the world’s fastest-growing major economy, and India is not far behind. Accordingly, Asia will continue to be a major focus of the Munk School’s activities. While the United States turns inward to deal with an economy hobbled by war and recession, the rise of China and India suggests that this will be “Asia’s century,” says political scientist **Joseph Wong**, director of the school’s Asian Institute. “However, there remains great uncertainty about what we mean by that; indeed, this is a serious debate in China and India as well.” And so, Munk School students will be called on to investigate the as-yet unknown ways in which Asia will deal with political, environmental and economic pressures in the coming years....”*

From this passage, it is clear that Asia is blinking brightly on the radar screen of the University of Toronto. I am sure that before long, if not already, the it will produce a comprehensive Asia strategy for Ontario and Toronto. To this end, I think Asia Pacific universities, especially the research ones, should bear the responsibilities to work closely with the faculty of the University of Toronto to reach this win-win goal.

And of course with this strategy, the University of Toronto will be a natural bridge for North America and Asia!

Visit of National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan
Prof. Da Hsuan Feng, Senior
Vice President of Global Strategies, Program and Evaluation
Date: Sept. 8-10, 2011

Program
Thursday, September 8, 2011

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|-------------------|---|
| 12:00 p.m. | Arrival in Toronto
<i>Note: Transportation Arranged</i> |
| 2:00 p.m. | Meeting with the University of Toronto, Office of Research

<i>Prof. Paul Young, Vice President, Research</i>
<i>Prof. Peter Lewis, Associate Vice President, Research</i>

Room 202N, 1 Devonshire Place, Munk School of Global Affairs

<i>Please note start time is dependent on his arrival time from the airport.</i> |
| 3:00 p.m. | Lecture at the Asian Institute |
| 3:05 p.m. | Introduction by: Prof. David Naylor, President, University of Toronto

<i>Note: Prof. David Naylor will depart once the introduction is completed.</i> |

“Globalization or Internationalization: Challenges for Asia Pacific Universities in the 21st Century”

ABSTRACT: *Asia Pacific in the past several decades has undergone incredible economic and political transformation. Today, in the 21st century, in this scenario, universities in the region, which until a few decades were not blinking on the global radar screen, are faced with new challenges. In this talk, I will describe some of these challenges I believe universities in the region need to overcome, and what underlying principle universities must adhere to in order not to go astray.*

Chair: Prof. Janice Stein, Director, Munk School of Global Affairs

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|------------------|--|
| 4:20 p.m. | Wrap Up & Closing Remarks |
| 4:30 p.m. | End of Event & Departure of Prof. Feng to Hotel |
| 7:00 p.m. | Dinner |

Location: President Naylor’s residence

Program
Friday, September 9, 2011

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| 9:00 a.m.– 9:30 a.m. | Overview of University of Toronto and Research Excellence
<i>Prof. Peter Lewis, Associate Vice President Research</i>

<i>Room 229, Simcoe Hall, 27 King’s College Circle</i> |
| 9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. | Meeting with Faculty of Arts & Science
<i>Prof. Peter Martin, Vice Dean, Research and Graduate Programs</i>
<i>Dr. M.P. Stevens, Director, International Programs & Partnerships</i>

<i>Room 229, Simcoe Hall, 27 King’s College Circle</i> |
| 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | Meeting with Prof. Dick Peltier, Department of Physics
<i>Scientific Director, Sci Net</i>

<i>Room 229, Simcoe Hall, 27 King’s College Circle</i> |
| 12:15 p.m.– 1:45 p.m. | Lunch |
| 2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. | Meeting with Department of Computer Science
<i>Prof. Sven Dickinson, Chair</i> |

Prof. Gerald Penn, Associate Chair, Research
Prof. Aaron Hertzmann, Associate Chair, Graduate Studies

Room 3304, Sanford Fleming, 10 King's College Road

3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Meeting with MaRS

Don Duval, VP Business Services

101 College St.

Accompanied by: Vinitha Gengatharan

4:45 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Meeting with Electrical and Computer Engineering

Prof. Farid Najm, Chair

Prof. Ted Sargent, Associate Chair, Research

Room 229, Simcoe Hall, 27 King's College Circle

Saturday September 10, 2011

10:00 a.m.

Breakfast with Prof. David Naylor