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Malaysia Trip Alumni Reception Sunway College

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Western Michigan University
Alumni Reception
Sunway Resort Hotel
June 15, 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen, Cherished Alumni, and Distinguished Guests:

Twenty-five years ago, Chancellor Jeffrey Cheah [**Chee-ah**] had a dream to establish an institution of higher learning that would address the needs of all Malaysians and students throughout the world.

His drive, energy, and limitless vision, built an institution that has brought over 2,500 students to Western Michigan University through a partnership that is admired and copied in many nations. These students, now alumni in our audience, embody the success of an innovation in international education—*twinning or a two-plus-two degree program*—which is Chancellor Cheah’s contribution to the globalization of higher education.

“Twinning,” as it was called in the 1980’s:

- was invented in Malaysia, pioneered in operation by our two schools,
- was adopted as part of a national plan to transform Malaysia into a center for higher education in Southeast Asia, and
- has been replicated from Kenya to Indonesia.

Let me list a few milestones of this achievement:

- In 1986 –Dean Norman Greenberg and Bill Woods from our campus traveled here at the invitation of Chancellor Cheah to construct a partnership between Sunway College and Western Michigan University.

- In 1987, the first intake of sixty-seven students was enrolled.
- As planned, in 1989, the first cohort of students transferred to WMU.
- In 1991, the first Sunway students walked across the stage at Miller Auditorium to accept their diplomas from former President, Dr. Diether H. Haenicke.
- By 1992 the Sunway/WMU program had grown to 350 students.
- In 1993, the Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir (*ma hot tear*) officially opened the new campus in Bandar Sunway.
- In 1994, Chancellor Cheah and his lovely and talented wife Puan Sri **[paw
shree]** Dr. Susan Cheah traveled to Kalamazoo where Jeffrey was presented a Ph.D. in recognition of his efforts in the field of higher education.
- By the tenth anniversary in 1997, Sunway had grown to be the largest private college in Malaysia, and WMU had become the top destination for Malaysian students in the United States -- enrolling over 700 students.
- In 2004 Sunway began offering its own degrees as Sunway University College and
- in 2010 Sunway was recognized as a full-fledged university.

What an impressive history Sunway University has had – and how proud we are at Western Michigan University to have been a partner in a quarter century of *trailblazing education*.

Today Western Michigan University welcomes children and grandchildren of our Malaysian alumni who continue to set a high academic standard – a reflection of the superb preparation provided by the faculty here at Sunway.

Of course, not all Malaysian students followed the path of twinning or the American transfer degree program to come to our campus. So, tonight we celebrate all of our Malaysian and international students—students, who through determination and courage, traveled halfway around the world to our campus. Today we are proud to enroll students from over ninety countries. We have a long history of welcoming international students beginning in 1910, over a century ago when a young woman from Winnipeg, Manitoba, journeyed by rail and steamship to Kalamazoo to complete her education. International students continue to make wonderful contributions to our University and the Kalamazoo community. For that I am deeply grateful.

It is an honor and a great pleasure for my wife Linda and me to visit Malaysia to be with you. Tonight we are gathered at a notable event in the history of our University – a night to honor our Malaysian and other international alumni, and a night to honor the founder of Sunway University, Chancellor Tan Sri Dato’ Seri **[Ton-shree Dot-o Sur-ee]** Dr. Jeffrey Cheah, and Sunway University’s Silver Jubilee.

May I ask Chancellor Cheah to join me?

Presentation of plaque - *READ PLAQUE INSCRIPTION*

This plaque is presented in deepest appreciation and sincere admiration for the vision and leadership of

CHANCELLOR TAN SRI DATO' SERI DR. JEFFREY CHEAH

during the past twenty-five years of partnership, friendship, and achievement
between

SUNWAY UNIVERSITY

and

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

FURTHER: We extend our deepest gratitude for founding an institution of higher learning that pioneered twinning, has prepared and brought thousands of highly qualified Malaysian students and international students from other countries to the Western Michigan University campus who are proud alumni of our two institutions.

IN ADDITION: Western Michigan University is grateful to have worked with the talented faculty, inspired administration and staff, and the people of Malaysia to assist Sunway College in providing

TRAILBLAZING EDUCATION.

MOST SINCERELY,

DR. JOHN M. DUNN

PRESIDENT

Remarks by Jeffrey Cheah:

****NOTE – SUNWAY HAS HAD MANY OTHER PARTNERS FROM THE U.K., AUSTRALIA, AND CANADA, SO THOUSANDS OF SUNWAY STUDENTS HAVE ATTENDED OTHER SCHOOLS. WMU IS SUNWAY’S ONLY AMERICAN PARTNER.**

WMU is an original partner but only a small part of the success story on the ground in Malaysia. In the U.S., Sunway/WMU is the most successful twinning partnership attempted. Many, many, U.S. competitors tried their luck in Kuala Lumpur e.g. University of Kentucky, University of Tennessee, Oklahoma State, etc. without success.

The reason I mention Dean Norman Greenberg and me by name is that Jeffrey always asked about the original team by name. In Chinese culture the longevity of agreements (generations and references to the future) and the original partners is important. If it comes up, **Norman Greenberg** is retired, about 90, still travels with his wife, Dr. Gilda Greenberg, most recently on a cruise to Antarctica. They reside in North Carolina. A third member of the party was **Gerald Schwimmen**, WMU’s controller, but he retired shortly after the agreement was signed and was “lost” to memory.

***Elizabeth Lee**, Senior Executive Director, has been the single greatest friend of WMU’s at Sunway University. She has treated faculty and staff of WMU with unceasing generosity over many years. If, somehow, she could be singled out for thanks or praise by Dr. Dunn it would be a very meaningful gesture. Although*

Jeffrey has visited WMU to receive his honorary doctorate, Elizabeth (her husband is Ming, both are Cambridge University graduates) has never been to Kalamazoo. Dr. Dunn should encourage her to visit. We could have quite a meeting/banquet of the WMU faculty who have been touched by Elizabeth. She is impressive in every way and as highly competent as anyone with whom I've worked.

Good Luck – Bill (Woods)