

**Remarks by Ambassador Jason C. Yuan
Representative of the Republic of China to the United States
at Park University's Commencement Ceremony**

May 8, 2010

President Droge, Chairman Ruiz, graduating students and families, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you very much for the kind introduction, and for conferring upon me this honorary doctoral degree. I am humbled by your bestowing this upon me, and am proud to accept it from such a distinguished educational institution. And, in accepting my first honorary degree, I hope to live up to the innovative spirit that defines Park University and its graduates.

I'm particularly honored to receive this degree – and to speak to you today – because the Republic of China on Taiwan and Park University share a rich common history. And on a more personal note, being here, allows me to share the honor of a Park degree with some of the most accomplished diplomats who had started here.

Back in 1875, Park College – as it was called then – was founded on the principles of hard work and good education. In fact, students would receive free tuition and board if they also worked on the college farm.

The tradition of hard work and good education established over one hundred years ago continues to thrive here today. As a parent of two college graduates myself, this is something I'm sure all your parents are happy you've had an opportunity to experience. But I bet they're also wondering what happened to the free tuition!

I think it's worth noting that while Park University and its students have benefited from strong traditions, both have also adopted an innovative learning model that has kept this institution at the forefront of higher education.

This is where I think the commonalities between Park University and Taiwan have their roots. Like the leaders and student body of Park University, the people of

Taiwan have for generations placed a high value on work and education. And with these as foundations of our society, the innovations that emerged have made Taiwan, an island a little bit larger than the Maryland State and almost without any significant natural resources, one of the leading economies in the world today.

Another contributor to Park University's enduring success has been its engagement with the world – an attribute that Taiwan also shares. Notably, Park was a true pioneer among American educational institutions in its hosting of international students. I was told that the first foreign scholar to study here came from Japan as early as 1880.

This university's ties to the Republic of China on Taiwan emerged soon after that. In the first decade of the 20th century, a young man named Hollington Tong came from Shanghai to study at Park University. Upon returning to China, the skills he learned here helped him become chief editor of a large English-language newspaper in Shanghai. The skills also gained him the attention of Chiang Kai-Shek, who appointed Hollington Tong as Vice-Minister of Information in 1937. Tong later served as ambassador to both Japan and the United States, critical roles during the early years of our government's new home on Taiwan.

Perhaps it was more than a coincidence that Hollington Tong's career intersected with that of another Park University graduate – and another future diplomat. Dr. T.F. Tsiang also came to Park from the Chinese mainland, and graduated around 1912. He then began what would be an illustrious career in our diplomatic service. And like Hollington Tong, Dr. Tsiang also returned to the United States years later as the Republic of China's ambassador.

You'll be interested to know that the reason we learn the academic history of these two Park alumni ambassadors is due to the diligent work of yet another outstanding diplomat from Taiwan. It was Dr. Lyu Shun Shen who discovered and documented the stories of Ambassador Tong and Ambassador Tsiang when he served as Director General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Kansas from 1991 to 1993. He really brought to life the ties between Park University and Taiwan. Park University later conferred upon him an honorary doctoral degree in 1993. Dr. Shen is now performing an important role as the Deputy Minister of our Foreign Ministry and I am fortunate and delighted to carry forward the ties today.

These ties, however, go far beyond the illustrious alumni or the honorary doctorate that you have bestowed upon me today. They are also about an idea, a shared set of values that this university has stood for, and that Taiwan has been striving for. Hard work and dedication to the betterment of society – these values have given the people of Taiwan opportunities that they otherwise never would have imagined. And by recognizing the contribution of each individual to this greater goal, Taiwan has become a beacon of freedom, democracy and human rights that shines bright in our region of the world.

Our leaders – and the people who inspire them – have worked hard, often through adversity, to safeguard the values that we cherish. Similarly, previous graduates of this university have applied the values and lessons learned here to do great things, whether it be in government, in industry, in academe or in the arts.

And while each of their careers has had a unique course, they all had a common starting point – this day, and right here. With today’s graduation, you will now share that common starting point. A day where you can look back proudly at the hard work you have done and the education you have received. And a day where you can look ahead to the promise of your own futures, knowing that you have a solid and sturdy foundation upon which to build your own unique story.

I do believe that with this degree I have both the opportunity and responsibility to carry on a proud tradition – a tradition of strengthening partnership between Park University and Taiwan, a tradition of nurturing common values between our two great peoples.

I also want to note that Park University has a sister school relationship with Taiwan’s Mingchuan University. Through this program, students and faculty at each institution have the opportunity to learn and teach at the other, with ongoing collaboration provided through online education initiatives.

The success of this program has inspired our National Yangming University to pursue a partnership, too, with Park University, which I hope can be established in the near future. And we will do more. More to deepen and broaden partnerships that provide young people opportunities to learn from each other. More to strengthen the ties between Park University and Taiwan’s educational institutions.

I am fully committed to this goal, both in my role as Taiwan's representative and now as a Park alumnus!

I would like to close by thanking all of you again for this honorary doctorate, and for continuing a long friendship between Park University and Taiwan that dates back a hundred years.

Park has a tradition of producing successful leaders. Now as graduates, it is your chance to go out into the world and carry the name of Park University with you proudly. Congratulations!