

First of all, I would like to tell you how overjoyed I am to see so many friends, old and new, Chinese and American, joining us in this celebration for the opening of the Confucius Institute at Valparaiso University. This reminds me what Confucius said more than two thousand years ago, "Isn't it delightful to have friends from afar?" It is a joy! As the first director of CIVU, my first message to you is that we love friends, we want to make more friends, and we want to be a place where new friendships are formed.

I would also like to use this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation for our friends who have helped with the establishment of CIVU. I am grateful to Chinese Consulate in Chicago, Zhejiang University of Technology, the Office of Chinese Language Council International of Education Ministry of China and all our Chinese friends, for your generous support to CIVU, but I am even more grateful to Valparaiso University, the community of Valpo and all our American friends, for your visionary courage, and open-mindedness not only to accept, but to embrace whole heartedly an institute from a very different country and a very different culture. Sometimes I cannot help but feel that because of the support of both our Chinese and American friends, CIVU is like a fortunate child with two culturally different but equally loving parents, and it is such a great honor to be entrusted by the both parents to take care of this precious child!

Not only myself, but my whole family feel deeply honored that I am named as the first Director of CIVU. In China, Confucianism is also known as the way of Confucius and Mencius, and my family are direct descendents of Mencius, the man who is considered the true transmitter of Confucius' teachings and called "The Second Sage" by the Chinese. My Confucian family tradition taught me "Do not impose upon others what you do not desire yourself."; "help others establish what you wish to establish yourself, helps others achieve something you wish to achieve yourself"; and "Harmony is the most valuable of all things". I found these teachings extremely helpful when interacting with my American students, colleagues and friends. The reason is simple – Americans also value these traits. My 15 years of experience teaching at Valparaiso University deepened my understanding of American people and culture, as well as my own Chinese background and values. For me, nothing is more interesting, or more valuable than to help advance the mutual understanding and mutual appreciation of these two great peoples and these two great cultures. This is my calling, and this is the mission of CIVU.

Valparaiso University has a long and very strong tradition in Chinese studies and exchange programs with China. Under the direct guidance of dean Rowland from the Graduate Studies and Continuing Education program, and Director Zhi Minling of the China Center, CIVU will continue this tradition of excellence of reaching out and exchange to a broader audience.

With this support the CIVU will be three things: a classroom, a window, and a bridge. As a classroom we will teach the skills of language, art, music, and many other things; as a window we will expose people to the different facets of Chinese culture and history; and as a bridge, we will facilitate two-way personal exchange between Northwest Indiana and China. These exchanges will include workshops and tours for both Chinese and American teachers, and trade missions and forums for small and medium size businesses.

Because CIVU will be functioning in this community, we will need your help, as Confucius said, “When walking in the company of other men, there must be one I can learn something from...” Not only are we open to suggestions, but we want to hear back from the community.

Before I conclude my speech, I would like to honor the three real founders of CIVU, Dean Rowland, Dr. Lin, and Ms. Song Jie. Without their hard work, we would have never been able to gather here today for this joyous occasion. Would you please stand up (pause, applaud).

I would again like to thank all of you for coming and showing your support for CIVU today, and I look forward to serving you as Director of the Confucius Institute at Valparaiso University.