

## Going Global: Trends in Cross-Border Higher Education for ODL

**Interview with Dr. Don Olcott, Jr., Chief Executive,  
The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education**

**Conducted by WEI Qi & WEI Zhihui**

The following interview will be published in Chinese by the *Journal of Open Education Research* in August 2009. JOER has authorised the English translation to be published by The Observatory for distribution to its members and partner organisations. Copyright is owned by JOER. All rights reserved. © 2009

**Editorial Note:** With the mature development of cross-border higher education in the context of economic globalisation in the 21st century, cross-border education in the form of distance delivery is a relatively new force in the field of international higher education. The emergence of this novel modality of higher education attracts international attention of educational administrators, universities, researchers and learners. It is worth mentioning that cross-border higher distance education is under rapid development in the western countries of Europe and North America, which are also traditional resource countries for cross-border higher education.

In this issue, we are honoured to interview Dr. Don Olcott, Jr., Chief Executive of The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education. Through this interview and from the perspective of Dr. Olcott and his organisation, readers of our journal can learn more about global cross-border distance higher education and the challenges for the future. In the hope of providing reference for traditional host countries of cross-border higher education like China, in their potential transformation from host countries to resource countries.

Dr. Don Olcott, Jr., is the Chief Executive of The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) in London. Dr. Olcott is immediate past Chairman of the Board of Directors for the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) and was president of USDLA from 2006-07. He serves on the Executive Committee of the UK's Council of Validating Universities (CVU), the Board of the University of London's Distance Learning Centre and the External Strategy Group of the Open University. Dr. Olcott is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts (FRSA). Dr. Olcott previously held senior leadership posts at Western Oregon University, VCampus Corporation, the University of Arizona and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

(WICHE). He also held administrative and faculty posts at Oregon State University, the University of Missouri-Columbia, and Western Washington University.

*Dr. Olcott is a member of the editorial boards of the European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning, the American Journal of Distance Education, Distance Education (Australia), Open Learning, the Journal of Continuing Higher Education, India's Open University e-Learning Journal, and the Distance Learning Report. He has published extensively in the areas of leadership, faculty development for distance education, organisational change, and higher education policy. Dr. Olcott has received numerous national and international awards for leadership, research and publications in higher education and distance learning. Dr. Olcott is an internationally known speaker and he has consulted to colleges, universities, and corporations across the United States, Europe, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. He was a 1993 graduate of Harvard University's Institute for the Management of Lifelong Education and a 2005 graduate of UCEA's Executive Leadership Academy at New York University. He received his Bachelors and Masters' degrees from Western Washington University and his doctorate in higher education leadership from Oregon State University.*

**Key words:** distance education; cross boarder higher education; global university

#### **The Journal of Open Education Research (hereafter referred to as JOER):**

Dr. Olcott, thank you for accepting the interview invitation of the Journal of Open Education Research. Could you please give us a brief introduction of yourself and The Observatory of Borderless Higher Education ( OBHE ) for our Chinese readers?

**Dr. Don Olcott, Jr. (hereafter referred to as Don):** It is indeed my pleasure to be asked to share some of my views about open and distance learning with the readers of JOER. I was privileged to be a keynote speaker at the Global Conference on Open and Distance Education in Shanghai last October that was hosted by Shanghai TV University. It was a marvellous experience. I commend the excellent work that Chinese universities and your colleagues are doing in open and distance learning. Thank you for this invitation.

I am currently the Chief Executive of The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE). The Observatory has over 200 member organisations across the globe that are engaged or considering extending their academic and research programmes into other countries. We conduct major research on current issues in borderless higher education and international higher education. We publish major reports, articles, and breaking news articles that focus on global developments. The Observatory also engages in specialised consultancies and sponsoring conferences, seminars, and institutes.

Your readers and colleagues across China may be interested in our **2009 Global Forum on Cross-Border Higher Education**. The Forum will be held from 21-24 October in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Information about the Forum is available via our website at [www.obhe.ac.uk](http://www.obhe.ac.uk). I encourage your readers to consider attending this global forum as well as exploring membership with The Observatory.

I was educated in the US and before assuming my role with The Observatory in 2007,

spent nearly 25 years in US universities and corporations in the areas of continuing and distance education, e-learning, and university outreach. My doctorate is in higher education leadership from Oregon State University. I am a past Chairman of the Board and President of the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) – [www.usdla.org](http://www.usdla.org).

**JOER:** Could you briefly discuss the status of distance education in UK and US ?

**Don:** I was asked the following question during a keynote address about ten years ago: When will we know that distance education has arrived or been successful? My response was when we don't call it distance education anymore. In sum, education is education regardless of how, where, when, or what media higher education is delivered. This is a good lead into my remarks about distance education in the US and UK because the field has advanced considerably over the past ten years.

In the US, nearly every college and university employs some form of distance education to deliver higher education. There are 4,130 colleges and universities in the US (two-year and four-year; private and public, etc.). What this suggests is that the use of information or instructional technologies has become a normative feature of most institutional delivery strategies. Of course, the number of courses and programmes offered in distance formats varies across institutions as well as the type and blend of technologies used.

Similarly, most higher education institutions in the UK employ some type of distance education to serve students at home and in some instances, abroad. The University of Nottingham has campuses in Malaysia and China and uses extensive blended approaches for delivering instruction. The Open University has a long history of integrating technologies into their courses for students in the UK as well as overseas partnerships with Russia and with the Arab Open University just to name two.

Today, the use of technologies or distance education is not a unique feature of higher education. It is normative practice in 2010. The web and internet have changed all societal institutions from banking, travel, and entertainment to education, business and government.

**JOER:** From your perspective at The Observatory, what are your comments on the status quo of global open and distance learning?

**Don:** Indeed, making generalisations about distance education in the UK, US, Europe, Asia, and other regions of the world is a tempting proposition. However, it may be a misdirected approach for assessing opportunities for the future. Most higher education institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have some level of technology capacity and this does not make your institution unique, even in the UK or US.

What makes an institution unique is the quality of their programmes, the prestige of their faculty, the sensitivity of their student support services, the commitment to research and service, and core values that embrace innovation, flexibility, adaptation, and the value of their people. Technology in and of itself, does not create any of these, none, zero, nil. What technology does when blended together with visionary leadership, is expand the landscape for these types of institutions to deliver their programmes, research and services that potentially can have greater success for educating students, assisting communities, strengthening cross-cultural communications, and preparing tomorrow's leaders today.

What other countries and universities can learn from the UK, US, China, Canada, Germany, The Netherlands, Australia, and others is that all of these countries place a high value on these qualitative features of their higher education systems. In other

words, the brand, world standing, and visibility of their academic standards and heritage attract students and faculty who want to be part of that type of institution. Once these attributes have been established and recognised these institutions can deliver their programmes in any media or blended media they desire because the market for their quality and brand has been firmly established.

And this does not suggest that reputation and brand drive institution selection for all students. It does, however, suggest that reputable universities are in an advantageous market position whereby students will take a first look at these institutions even though they ultimately choose another university. The power of brand, reputation and perceptions of quality are equally strong in cross-border higher education.

It's not about the technology . . . it's about the quality and value of your product and service . . . in this instance . . . knowledge, culture, global citizenship, and the composite benefits of the educative process.

**JOER:** Could you please discuss the history and current situation for cross-border higher education, particularly in open and distance learning?

**Don:** The globalisation/internationalisation of higher education has been accelerating in recent years. Up until about ten years ago, most cross-border or transnational higher education consisted primarily of students studying abroad and/or faculty exchanges with foreign universities. As you know, many Chinese students study abroad and then return to China upon graduation even today. Increasingly, however, students are becoming more mobile and we are seeing more students considering foreign study in their region. It will be interesting to see if this 'new regionalism' serves as a catalyst for students to remain in the region over the next few years.

During the past ten years, we have seen more and more nations hosting foreign providers inside their boundaries. Chinese universities have many partnerships with foreign universities that provide programmes in China. This trend has also been growing in other East Asian countries, the Middle East and Gulf States, and to some extent, in India and Europe. The three countries most active in cross-border higher education during this period have been the US, UK, and Australia. This is changing and we are seeing more countries delivering their programmes abroad such as China, Germany, France, and others. The predominance of the 'Big Three,' has been driven by the historical reputation, quality and brand recognition of US, UK, and Australian universities. Nations that host programmes from these countries see this as an investment in drawing upon the quality of the 'Big Three' to assist them in developing their own high quality and sustainable higher education systems.

Interestingly, the growth of open and distance learning at the global level in cross-border higher education has not kept pace with national and regional developments. Today, most cross-border higher education is still delivered primarily in face-to-face formats where the foreign provider has established a branch campus or some related physical presence with a partner university in the host country. Perhaps one reason for this has been that the host nations that are paying a lot of money for these programmes tend to equate quality and credibility with having real people in country to deliver these programmes by foreign providers.

**JOER:** We are interested in your views on higher education around the world. What are recent focus issues of your organisation regarding global higher education, especially in the field of open and distance learning?

**Don:** Despite the progress we have made regarding the quality of open and distance learning in the past twenty years, policymakers and many academics still have concerns about the capacity of technology to deliver higher education of similar standards as face-to-face instruction. The research has conclusively shown that

distance learners perform academically as well as students taking traditional face-to-face instruction. The continuing issue facing global open and distance learning is maintaining quality levels commensurate with campus programmes. It is somewhat ironic that the standard for quality has typically been campus-based classroom instruction. Until the mid-1990s, few if any quality assurance or accrediting agencies even asked the question about the quality of campus-based instruction. This was sacred ground and until the assessment movement gathered momentum globally, no one dared question the pivotal mountaintop sanctity of faculty academic freedom and teaching. It is my view that this quality-standard dichotomy has been unfairly applied to innovative teaching that occurs in open and distance learning. What are some of the issues in the global context? Some of the key questions that are often asked include: How can we provide support services to foreign students and faculty? How will students access library and other research resources? How do we address social, cultural, and language services for non-native speakers of English enrolled in totally online courses? This is an important issue given that most, not all, cross-border programmes are taught in English.

I should mention a major quality resource that was published by UNESCO/OECD in 2005 entitled "*Guidelines for the Quality Provision of Cross Border Higher Education.*" It is available on the UNESCO website at [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org).

This document, while not focused exclusively on global open and distance learning, does provide guidelines that any university considering delivery across international boundaries should review as benchmarking process. These guidelines have also been endorsed by the American Council of Education, the International Association of Universities, and the Association of Colleges and Universities of Canada. National and regional accreditation and quality assurance bodies are increasingly concerned about the issues of quality in cross-border higher education and we will likely see more policy related discussions in the future.

**JOER:** As you mentioned, national and regional accreditation and quality assurance bodies are increasingly concerned about the issues of quality in cross-border higher education and we will likely see more policy related discussions in the future. Could you discuss some of the key issues related to national and regional accreditation and QA in cross-border higher education?

**Don:** Australia is a very good example where the quality assurance function in an integrative function under the auspices of the Australian University Quality Agency (AUQA) with input from other government and higher education agencies. Australia has a significant number of cross-border programmes outside Australia and AUQA monitors these institutions employing the same basic quality standards applied to in-country universities as well as some specific practices regarding operations in other countries.

In the US, however, you have eight major accrediting commissions that monitor all the colleges and universities. The most innovative and receptive accrediting commission to the challenges of monitoring the quality of open and distance learning has been the North Central Accrediting Commission based in Chicago. NCA took the lead a few years ago by accrediting the University of Phoenix. Since then the other accrediting commissions have been more receptive to establishing reasonable and fair quality standards for the delivery of open and distance learning domestically as well as overseas. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is the UK equivalent of the AUQA in Australia responsible for monitoring and approving quality reviews of higher education institutions.

A related indicator of the increasing interest in quality assurance of open and distance

learning has been the emergence of national qualifications frameworks that define qualitative and credential standards for higher education in various countries. We have seen this in South Africa, various European countries as a result of the Bologna Process, and even in selected provinces of Canada such as Ontario and British Columbia.

Quality is ultimately the responsibility of the UNIVERSITY. Government agencies, accreditation commissions, and other quality agencies are just one aspect of the quality continuum. National governments should work closely with their university structures to establish quality parameters for their own institutions but also reasonable and fair regulatory and quality assurance guidelines for foreign providers and partners.

**JOER:** Do you and/or your organisation follow the development of higher education and distance education in China? If any, what's your perception of China's higher education landscape related to borderless higher education?

**Don:** Yes, we are very interested in these developments in China. I might add that the rest of the world is also interested. As I said last October during my speech in Shanghai, the development of higher education access and programmes in China since 1980 has been truly remarkable. My perceptions, however, are mixed about the current landscape.

First, in the late 1990s and early in the new millennium, China was very receptive to building partnerships with foreign universities. My perception is that this has changed during the past three years and that the government is being more selective about the universities that are approved to deliver programmes with partner universities in China.

Secondly, my sense is that open and distance learning is viewed with some caution by the Ministry despite considerable progress made over recent years. The Chinese leaders and academics I have spoken with are not convinced that online programmes are the best way to deliver higher education in China. In some respects I agree with this point of view. If online programmes are being delivered primarily in English, then there are serious issues mentioned earlier about ensuring these programmes are sensitive and responsive to the social, cultural, and language needs of Chinese students. We need considerably more research in these areas before we can assure quality of programmes, at least those delivered in English online to Chinese students.

Given the accelerated use of mobile technologies, social networking tools, and computer access across China among secondary and university aged students, one must ask the question whether Chinese students are ready to embrace open and distance learning. My personal view is yes, and that Chinese students are and have been ready for this transformation. I suspect this will be a delicate debate between government and a younger generation culturally and technologically literate with emerging technologies.

I believe that open and distance learning has unlimited potential to increase higher education access to the citizens of China. It will take major planning and resources, but in the long term – given the numbers of students China needs to educate to build its global economy and workforce – open and distance learning can play a major role that serves the social, political, economic and educational future of China.

**JOER:** We know that you participated and delivered keynote speeches at the Global Forum on ODL and ICDE SCOP Presidents' meeting both hosted last October in Shanghai. In your speeches, you mentioned the concept of "Global Universities" and "cross boarder higher education. Could you discuss these two concepts and provide some background information for us?

**Don:** Cross-border higher education is essentially delivering academic programmes and/or research by one nation into another nation, usually by universities. An example would be a Chinese university delivering a programme to Korea, India, or any other country in the Asian-Pacific region. The delivery systems could be distance technologies, face-to-face instruction, the establishment of a branch campus, or a combination of distance and face-to-face instruction.

The concept of a 'global university' is creating considerable debate. Is an institution that delivers a programme to another country a global university? One might argue that it is, however, one could also argue that a 'global university' is one that has global acceptance as a major contributor to many aspects of the global political, economic, social, cultural and environmental landscape. This might include delivering programmes abroad, faculty exchanges with many foreign universities, conducting global research on topics that have global impacts and consequences, and the capacity of this institution to impact global policymaking and political agendas. This last point is critical because many would argue that if your university doesn't conduct global research it is not in a position to impact global policymaking and political developments. This broad view of a 'global university' is essentially an elitist view of 'high education' that suggests that only large, resource-rich research universities can genuinely be 'global universities'. Personally, I believe that all universities may potentially be able to contribute to the global agenda even if it is only in a small but focused arena.

**JOER:** With your long-term participation and concern in witnessing the process of higher education, what changes must occur for open and distance education to achieve global use in higher education? Could you give us any specific examples of distance higher institutions succeed in cross-border higher education and their secrets of success?

**Don:** Universities that have been successful in the global higher education market have similar attributes. First, they bring a reputable programme, service and/or research expertise to the host country. Secondly, they do their cultural homework with a dose of humility. They spend endless hours training and educating their staff about the cultural, social, political, economic, and societal norms of the host country. Many even hire local staff and faculty in the host country. Do you want foreign providers in China who have no regard for the rich history, culture, and people of your nation? No. Successful partnerships allow both partners to learn about each other in new and diverse ways. Most people that have not visited America only know what they've learned on TV or through other media. It is after they have spent some time there that they learn that there is much more to America than Hollywood, the Super Bowl, Los Angeles and New York. The same is true for guests in China. And foreign universities are, first and foremost, guests in your country. We must extend mutual respect, dignity, and humanity to each other in ways that strengthen our relationships and allow us to build stronger relationships, personal and professional. All of these things are what make successful distance learning organisations sustainable and effective over the long-term.

**JOER:** As you pointed out in your speeches, the development and increasing maturity of the utility of ICTs in education still faces barriers. Many western countries like the US and UK are encountering difficulties when attempting to export their higher education resources. Those countries importing higher education seem resistant to cross-border higher education delivered by distance learning. Why? What do you think are the problems?

**Don:** Although 'English' has emerged as the language of global commerce, it also creates and reinforces many barriers to successful higher education. If a Chinese student as a non-native speaker of English misunderstands a faculty member, then

this will continue in the educative process. We know that even in face-to-face formats, foreign students who are studying in a language that is not their first language may have communication problems understanding the faculty member. This is accentuated in online courses where there is less time for clarification of concepts, constructs, and other learning components. We need more research in this area for Chinese students and other foreign students who take programmes in English as the primary language.

**JOER:** What's progress has been made to resolve the language barrier in pursuit of successful cross-board higher education? Could you give us some more specific information about this issue?

**Don:** The issue is primarily related to resistance in global open and distance learning where the instruction is delivered entirely online through another medium. This is not a cross-border issue by itself. It is an educative issue where students who are not native speakers of English are taking courses via technology in English. And although there is currently a mass migration for students to learn English the challenge of this via technologies has not been adequately researched.

Moreover, this is not just a language issue alone. In most countries, particularly those in East Asia, culture and language are intimately intertwined with social, ethnic, and religious customs, traditions and symbols. Does ENGLISH threaten these important cultural attributes? The fact is that the literature and research base for looking at these in a global, multi-cultural context defined by the use of technology to deliver higher education in ENGLISH is limited.

**JOER:** Many cross-border higher education projects are being conducted in China through co-operation between institutions home and abroad. Technically speaking, there seems no need for foreign higher institutions to co-operate with local ones providing cross-border higher education service. However, facts have proven that it is not feasible for foreign institutions to solely provide distance higher education in China. Therefore, what's your comment on the establishment of partnerships between higher education institutions in distance education?

**Don:** A foreign university would not be allowed to autonomously operate in the US, the UK, or Australia without formal approvals and authorisation. In my view, this is a fair and equitable requirement by any host nation. I would expect and support that other nations should require foreign providers to have a partner organisation in the host country. This is technically the requirement in China for foreign providers wishing to offer credentials such as degrees and diplomas. Perhaps this is one reason that open and distance learning has not been embraced by many countries. Open and distance learning, particularly via online technologies, is difficult to monitor and regulate in terms of which providers are offering programmes in your country. I would suggest that distance learning universities would be prudent to have a partnership university in the foreign country before they begin offering cross-border programmes.

**JOER:** You also mentioned an interesting phenomenon in your speeches in China that potential change in the role of host and source countries in providing higher education. What do you see on the horizon in this area?

**Don:** China is a good example. In recent years, China has been primarily a host country for foreign providers. This is changing and now there are Chinese universities offering programmes abroad. The same is true of India, Europe and the Gulf States. The US is becoming more receptive to hosting foreign providers. Conversely, some countries are restricting entry of foreign providers. France, for example, is increasingly considering stricter immigration and visa requirements for students and certainly for employment in France.

In Europe, the Bologna Process and Lisbon Declaration are promoting greater collaboration between European countries in higher education. The purpose of this process is to make Europe more attractive for foreign students, investors, and partners by creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It is also designed to facilitate student credit transfer among universities in these countries and to standardise credentials for employment evaluation across national jurisdictions.

This is a new form of *global regionalisation*. It is beginning to develop in the Gulf States and in East Asia. One of the unanticipated consequences of the Bologna Process in Europe is that it may have served as a catalyst for other regions of the world to begin building regional consortia to strengthen collaboration across the region. I suspect that this will only grow over the next few years in these regions as well as other regions of the world such as Africa, North America, and the Middle East.

**JOER:** Compared with traditional major source countries, what are the advantages and potential of emerging host countries in providing cross-border higher education? If any, are there any development opportunities for distance learning?

**Don:** The largest market of students for open and distance education for China is China. As the quality of Chinese higher education develops, there will be increasing opportunities for Chinese institutions to delivery programmes and research abroad. The current global financial crisis will inhibit cross-border growth in some regions; however, future-thinking universities will begin planning for new markets for the next three to five years. I would suggest institutions that wish to play on the international stage should begin building those linkages and partnerships now.

**JOER:** As a past-President and Chairman of the Board of the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) and in your role at The Observatory, you definitely have abundant international experience in higher education and distance learning. What is your assessment of the quality of cross boarder higher education delivered via distance education? Is there any difference compared with traditional cross-border higher education provided?

**Don:** Global distance learning, particularly instruction delivered in English to non-native speakers of English, will continue to undergo considerable scrutiny and monitoring by the quality assurance agencies and bodies. Overall, the quality of cross-border higher education, in my view, has been quite good primarily because these partnerships are usually very focused and built around select programmes that the foreign provider has a proven history and reputation.

Conversely, in my view there are more and more institutions that want to deliver global programmes that may not have the reputation and quality history necessary to successfully go global. Host countries should spend extensive preparation and time communicating with the potential partner university about their experience delivering global programmes, their financial status, accreditation, and their reasons for wanting to partner with you. Many institutions are looking for foreign cross-border partnerships to make money to offset reduced government funding in their home country. Do your homework about these institutions.

Finally, from a legal standpoint, be sure to have a contingency plan or exit strategy to remove your institution from the partnership if it is not working. Institutions often wait until problems arise before addressing these issues rather than including them upfront in contracts.

**JOER:** In order to make sure that the quality of cross-border higher education in distance could be more easily recognised and accepted by host countries, what should be the top priorities of institutions and their decision makers?

**Don:** These vary across institutions and certainly among higher education leaders. I would suggest the following should be considered by leaders of the host institution and the foreign provider:

- The number of full-time regular faculty who will teach in the programme is substantial. A foreign provider who uses adjunct, part-time faculty is not making a true commitment to you or your students.
- A clear commitment to student and faculty support services by the foreign provider in the host country.
- A continuous English language programme if English is the language of delivery. Students should be provided language support throughout the programme and this is the responsibility of the foreign provider.
- The foreign provider should have a sound knowledge of the cultural, social, economic, political, legal and educational characteristics of the home country.
- The standards of quality for the programme should meet the requirements of quality assurance agencies and bodies in the foreign provider's country and the host country.
- The host country/partner university should require that a substantial portion of the foreign provider's profits is reinvested in the programme in country.
- The foreign provider should agree to an external evaluation every two years by an outside evaluation team approved by the host university or country.

**JOER:** What are your expectations for the future development of global distance learning in higher education? Could you just describe your vision related to cross-border higher education? And do you have any advice for leaders of higher education institutions in the developing countries like China regarding how to address the challenges of increasing the development of cross-border higher education through distance learning?

**Don:** The future is very bright for global open and distance learning within China and beyond. The key is for providers to work closely with potential partner organisations to ensure that the support services to bridge language, cultural, social, and other norms are addressed throughout the partnerships. Technology has great potential for serving more learners if it is used correctly.

I also will make an observation that I share with the deepest sense of respect and integrity among my colleagues across China. It is unlikely in the short-term that Mandarin will become the common language in other regions of the world for the delivery of higher education. We can argue whether English becoming the global language for commerce and higher education is in the best interests of our respective nations. This, however, is beyond the scope of this commentary. But clearly English is the dominant language for higher education delivery in cross-border higher education for the present. I do not anticipate that this will change in the foreseeable future. Consequently, I would recommend that Chinese universities wishing to enter the cross-border higher education market should be building programmes delivered in English. This would be advantageous to China by maintaining the internal market for delivery of programmes in Mandarin and an external market for delivery in English.

As you may have noted from my remarks, I am an advocate for ensuring that we preserve and protect the social, cultural, and language integrity of the many nations of the world. Chinese institutions that offer programmes in English do not diminish the heritage of these in China. Indeed, it makes China a global player and leader by recognising the realities of an evolving global higher education community and marketplace. If it were my choice, I would require all cross-border programmes to

include a mandatory course on the 'Social, Cultural, and Language Heritage' of the host country and a similar course on the provider country. And, I would require all students and faculty in cross-border programmes to take these courses. Higher education affords us unique opportunities to live and learn together. We should embrace these opportunities in all their manifestations.

**JOER:** Finally, are there cases of success or failure in cross-border higher education, in your view, worth sharing with us?

**Don:** There are many examples of successes and failures in the cross-border marketplace. It is very difficult to make generalisations about successes and failures due to differences in focus, mission, purpose and other characteristics of these ventures. I will offer a few observations for your readers.

- Successful cross-border ventures work for universities that do their homework about the host country and higher education system. These universities research their potential partners in depth. Selecting the right partner(s) is absolutely key to success.
- Successful cross-border universities provide high level student services and support for their students and faculty.
- Most cross-border initiatives fail because the market analyses were inaccurate and the venture was ultimately not scalable or sustainable from a financial standpoint.
- Successful cross-border partnerships are long-term, five years or more. This takes very talented planning, patience and co-operation but the mutual benefits for partners have greater probability of succeeding through this long-term sustainable partnership approach.

I wish each of your readers and their colleagues across China continued success for the future. Again, thank you for the honour and privilege to share my views with the JOER.