

June 12, 2014 — Delivered via Skype

## **Speech by Southeast Technical President James Johnson Quzhou College of Technology: Mechanical Engineering Graduation**

It is with great excitement, anticipation and honor that I am allowed to address this gathering of the 2014 Mechanical Engineering graduates of the Quzhou College of Technology. Graduates, as I address you I need to thank President Jiang Aimin and the Quzhou College of Technology community.

We have continued to develop our association over the last two years through exchanges of faculty from our respective colleges and are working towards expanding this collaboration to include student exchanges.

One of the major goals of this developing relationship is to gain a better understanding of each of our respective cultures through faculty, staff and students interactions. This cultural understanding is an absolutely necessary skill set for all of us working in this vast global environment.

This fall we will continue the engagement with another visit of Quzhou Scholars to Southeast Technical. My hope is that soon after their visit to Minnesota we can start to plan 2015 spring and summer exchanges with students.

Our automotive technology instructors, Tom Brandt and Niel Christensen, have been overwhelmed by the generosity of Quzhou College of Technology's staff, faculty, students and your government's hospitality.

I continue to believe and support the direction we are heading in this relationship and can see the many opportunities for our two learning communities to thrive. Our faculty and staff will not only lead and support the upcoming student exchanges in the future but will also benefit greatly by the new methods of teaching and learning they are exposed to as they visit your College.

Words cannot express how much we have appreciated the generosity shown by students, staff and faculty of Quzhou College of Technology towards myself, our visiting scholars and others over the last few years.

As we pursue the ability to work together in the development of transfer and collaborative programs into the future and with the finalizing of the ground work during Tom Brandt and Niel Christensen's stay, I am confident the framework for additional program collaborations can use this model.

The shared learning that has taken place by Tom Brandt, Niel Christensen and their peers in the Quzhou College of Technology automotive programs will certainly allow both colleges to quickly move forward in implementation of a transfer agreement as designed in the October 13, 2013 Memorandum of Understanding.

If you have gone to Southeast Technical's website over the last few months you would see that I am retiring from my President's role on June 30th of this month. I am completing 33 years of service with Southeast Technical serving 19 of those years as President.

I would also like to say that I am leaving this college in the hands of a great leader in Dr. Dorothy Duran. Dr. Duran will start her career with Southeast Technical on July 1, 2014. She has a great knowledge of technical and career education and an extensive background in higher education, I also know she is

excited to continue the support of our growing relationship with Quzhou College of Technology and the Sister City initiative with Red Wing.

In closing, I would like to impart just a few words of encouragement and maybe even a little wisdom to all of you graduates. The interesting part of this encouragement and wisdom is it will work anyplace in this vast world we live in and is the same message I imparted to Southeast Technical graduates in May of this year.

So, here is my message to all of you: You all have received, through hard work and dedication, an exemplary education in a variety of occupational skill sets. These skills are now going to be the foundation for your career long into the future.

The skills sets you have mastered are what employers demand and require of their workforce in order to be competitive in a world economy. So, in reality the hard work and sacrifices you have gone through and coupled with that same dedication to your success from your instructors has helped to make you all “world class” workers who can help China thrive and grow into the future.

The other key player in your success has been the families that have supported and sacrificed for you to allow this opportunity; never forget their sacrifices in support of you.

I will close my address to you today with this piece of wisdom, which I feel reaches globally. How many of you have heard of Disneyland? You know that Walt Disney is the man whose vision created Disneyland, but Walt had an older brother that was also a very wise man, but certainly not as well-known as Confucius, never-the-less here is a piece of his wisdom that I have felt is worth passing on to all of the Southeast Technical graduates of the 19 years I have served as President.

“Do not be a coaster in life,because if you are coasting you are going downhill.” Think about that... “If you coast you are going downhill...” You need to stay engaged in your life and career to be a success. Be a life-long learner, and do not be a coaster...as coasting will not allow you to be successful in your life’s work....embrace life-long learning to assure yourself of a successful career.

Thank you for allowing me to take a few minutes to talk with you today on such a grand day of academic achievement for you all. I am honored and humbled.