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University strengthens bond with China in Guangzhou Centre launch

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The University of Birmingham is to open a collaborative centre later this summer in Guangzhou, China, with the People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality.

The University of Birmingham Guangzhou Centre will help identify, design and co-ordinate the delivery of joint research projects in Guangzhou, the province of Guangdong and the broader Pearl River Delta region. Additionally the Centre will support knowledge transfer and engagement with business interests in the region, act as a base for research staff, and be a catalyst for the development of greater expertise on China within the University.

Initial collaborative research themes which have been identified for the Centre are: Energy; Communications and Language; Advanced Manufacturing; Biotechnology; Medicine and Healthcare; Computer Science and Software; Urbanisation; and Continuing Professional Development. These themes were selected on the basis of the research expertise of Birmingham, the economic and social benefits to Guangzhou and how they match with the work of partner institutions.

The Birmingham Guangzhou Centre will be well-placed to study the economic and urban development of Guangzhou and the wider Guangdong region, and engage both the policy and private sectors in ways that could bring considerable mutual benefits.

During a visit to Birmingham this week the Vice Mayor of Guangzhou, Gong Erzhen, is signing a memorandum of cooperation relating to the Birmingham Guangzhou Centre with Professor David Eastwood, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham. Heading a delegation of over 110 officials, business and education leaders from Guangzhou, Vice Mayor Gong Erzhen is hosting 'New Guangzhou: New Business Opportunities' - a major conference and exhibition at the ICC in Birmingham today (Friday 1 July 2011). The University is co-organising the conference and presenting a further programme of events for the delegation at its Edgbaston campus in the afternoon.

Commenting on the creation of the Centre, Professor David Eastwood, said: "Building on a decade of engagement with partners in Guangzhou, I believe that as we strengthen our presence through the Birmingham Centre that future prospects for deep and lasting collaborations, bringing benefits to the citizens of Guangzhou and beyond, are bright. We at Birmingham are committed to making Guangzhou our signature engagement in China."

Vice Mayor Gong Erzhen said: "Guangzhou attaches great importance to friendship and cooperation with the UK. We have established sister city ties with Birmingham and Bristol and are delighted to be working with the University of Birmingham to launch a collaborative centre in Guangzhou. In 2010, the foreign trade volume between Guangzhou and the UK reached $1.4 billion USD. Guangzhou presents new business opportunities for cooperation and development. Guangzhou will remain open and cooperative and push forward cooperation with all parts of the world from this new starting point."

Guangzhou, the capital city of the Guangdong Province in the Pearl River Delta region of southern China, and a sister city of Birmingham, is the location of one of the most successful British academic engagements in China - the Guangzhou Biobank Cohort Study. This highly acclaimed project between the University of Birmingham, the University of Hong Kong, the Guangzhou Occupational Diseases Prevention and Treatment Centre provides a groundbreaking platform for collaborative research into the effects of genetic and environmental influences on health and chronic disease development.

Furthermore, the University of Birmingham's College of Social Sciences has run summer programmes in Birmingham for senior officials from across Guangzhou municipal government agencies since 2006. The Birmingham Guangzhou Centre will build on these existing engagements and enable further academic collaborations in a wider range of areas.

Another key development in the University's strengthening links in China is the awarding of the inaugural group of Li Siguang scholarships for Chinese nationals to undertake PhD study at Birmingham. Funded in partnership with the China Scholarship Council, the scholarships are named in honour of scientist Li Siguang, a prominent Birmingham alumnus who went on to become China's Minister for Geology and President of the Chinese Society for Science and Technology. He was a key figure in the discovery and exploitation of China's fuel reserves and internationally is one of those whose work has laid the bedrock for the study of plate dynamics. The first group of ten Li Siguang scholars will arrive in Birmingham in October 2011.

Notes to Editors

The University of Birmingham:

• The University of Birmingham is a truly vibrant, global community and an internationally-renowned institution. Its work brings people from across the world to Birmingham, including researchers and teachers and more than 4,000 international students from nearly 150 different countries.

• The University is home to approximately 28,000 students. With more than 7,500 postgraduate students from across the world, Birmingham is one of the most popular universities for postgraduate study in the UK.

• The University of Birmingham is one of the most engaged British universities with China and is ranked in the top three in the UK for the number of joint publications with Chinese collaborators.

• The University opened liaison offices in Shanghai in 2008 and Beijing in 2010.

• Guangzhou, which has been a sister city of Birmingham since 2006, has a history of collaborating with the University of Birmingham in a range of different areas, most notably health and social sciences.

• The University has a bold strategy to develop its global reputation by enhancing its international presence and collaborations. In addition to Guangzhou, Birmingham has strategic partnerships with another sister city, Chicago, and in India, Brazil and Australia.

• For further information, please visit: **www.birmingham.ac.uk (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/)**

Guangzhou and the People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality:

• Situated at the heart of the Pearl River Delta with a history of 2,225 years, Guangzhou has long been an economic powerhouse of China. It has become the third largest mainland city after Beijing and Shanghai, the hub for one third of all of China's international trade, and the lead in transportation, education, scientific research and culture in South China.

• The conference in Birmingham is one of a series of high profile events being held in Beijing, Shanghai and St Petersburg this year in order to promote new business opportunities in Guangzhou.

• For further information on the 'New Guangzhou: New Business Opportunities' conference and exhibition taking place from 9:30am to 2pm today (Friday 1 July 2011), please visit: **www.newguangzhouinbirmingham.com (http://www.newguangzhouinbirmingham.com/)**

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