

University strengthens links with China

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The University of Birmingham's expanding links with China have been given a major boost thanks to a range of new initiatives, including the launch of 18 PhD scholarships honouring a prominent Chinese alumnus.

A University delegation, including the Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Eastwood, has recently returned from a tour of China having seen several major projects come to fruition.

The visit also marked the opening of the University's administrative offices in China. With the first Chinese students having arrived from Shanghai to study at Birmingham more than 100 years ago, the University continues to attract record numbers from China today. As the country develops its capacity and reach in education and research, so the University is enhancing its presence. After launching a representative office in Shanghai in 2008, a second has been opened, in Beijing.

Commenting on the move, Professor Eastwood said: 'From a base of operations in two of China's major cities, Birmingham will be able to understand the needs and aspirations of Chinese institutions, maintain partnerships with peer institutions and other local agencies, support our alumni, and provide services to those students who wish to come and study with us in the United Kingdom.'

Another key development is the inauguration of 18 scholarships for Chinese nationals to undertake PhD study at the University.

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.

Dr. Edward Harcourt, Director of International Relations, said the scholarships recognised the contribution of these students to the University's development and its current diverse and stimulating atmosphere. 'They affirm that the University of Birmingham is serious about its commitment to long-term partnership with China,' he added.

Meanwhile, delegates celebrated the signing of an agreement on a joint research institute in Intelligent Computation with the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC). During the first University of Birmingham degree ceremony to be conducted in China, the President of USTC, Jianguo Hou, was awarded an honorary degree.

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