

“Imagination, Courage, and Trust

Tenth Anniversary of PKU Shenzhen Graduate School

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Minister Zhang Laiwu, Vice Governor Chen Zhangliang, Mayor Xu Qin, Chairman Zhu Shanlu, President Zhou Qifeng, President Xu Zhihong, President Lin Jianhua, Chancellor Hai Wen, fellow faculty members, staff colleagues, Beida students, and friends of Peking University.

Ten years ago, the Peking University Shenzhen Graduate School was begun. It was an act of imagination, and it was an act of courage, undertaken jointly by the leaders of the city of Shenzhen and the leaders of Peking University, in a spirit of mutual trust.

It is not easy for us, here, today, to imagine what it must have been like for those leaders, ten years ago. We are seated here in a beautiful building, on a beautiful campus. When we look around us we see the most talented students in China, studying with the most accomplished professors in the world.

But ten years ago there was nothing here. No campus, no facilities, no people.

The leaders of the city had to have the imagination to see, in their own minds, how Shenzhen could be transformed if it established a second home, here, for China's very best universities – something that had never been done before. They had to recognize how higher education can change a city by bringing in a special kind of talent. They had to see how University Town could dramatically change the image of Shenzhen around the world.

And the leaders of the university had to have the imagination to see, in their own minds, how Peking University could be transformed by

opening a true branch campus, far away from Beijing. They had to see how such a campus can be a place for a kind of bold experimentation that is otherwise impossible within a large, established structure – otherwise impossible even within Peking University. They had to see how giving Beida a second heart would make it stronger, how giving Beida a second face would make it even more beautiful.

Imagination, however, was not enough. These leaders also needed courage. I have been reading a wonderful book, *The Mystery of Courage*, by the scholar William Miller, in which he explores with great subtlety our complex feelings about what it means to overcome fear. When they decided to open this campus, the leaders of Shenzhen and the leaders of Peking University had to overcome a set of fears that make bold action extremely difficult.

Shenzhen was and is prosperous, but when its leaders decided to open this campus they were choosing to invest enormous amounts of money and energy that could have been devoted to housing or job creation. Beida was and is a symbol of excellence, but when its leaders decided to open this campus they were gambling with its reputation.

In creating this graduate campus, those leaders knew they were taking risks. They overcome objections from others. They overcame the natural fear that they would be remembered as people who made a terrible mistake.

Where did they find the courage to go forward? Partly they drew it from their imagination. In their minds they could see such exciting possibilities that they were pulled to choose the hopeful path.

But partly these leaders drew courage from trust. The leaders of Beida had trust in the leaders of the city – trust that they would keep their commitments, that they would be true partners, and that they would continue to make the investments that true quality requires. And the leaders of Shenzhen had trust in the university – trust that Beida would not treat this campus as a second-class outpost but would instead commit itself fully to the Shenzhen campus as a new shining star in the Beida Universe, a star that glows with a brilliance comparable to Beijing.

The example of those leaders from ten years ago points the way for the future. Because today, just as much as ten years ago, we still need imagination, we still need courage, and we still need trust.

If the leaders of the city or the university stopped dreaming, this campus would freeze in its tracks. If they lost the courage to take intelligent risks, bureaucrats would prevent progress. If they lost trust in each other, innovation would become impossible.

But once again we are fortunate to have tremendous leadership – in the city of Shenzhen and in Peking University. I have complete confidence in the future of this remarkable campus. I believe that this special community remains the symbol of imagination, courage, and trust for all of China. Thanks to the Peking University Shenzhen Graduate School, leaders from around the world now think of Shenzhen not only as an economic center but also as an intellectual center. Thanks to the Peking University Shenzhen Graduate School, Beida is home to a new engine for educational innovation – for the creation of interdisciplinary, international research and teaching at the frontiers of academic inquiry.

And so, ten years from now, we will gather again to celebrate another decade of progress. We will celebrate an effort that will have become a center of innovation not only for Shenzhen, for Peking University, and for China, but a center of innovation for the entire world. And we will again celebrate the special partnership between a great city and a great university that will have made it all possible.