



## With FIU Partnership China Looks To WESTERNIZE HOSPITALITY

**TIANJIN, CHINA** Recognizing that a major gap existed between the hospitality training provided to China's students and the level of service expected by the ever-increasing numbers of Western travelers to the country, Chinese government officials in 2003 asked Florida

International University (FIU) to help bridge that gap. FIU's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management agreed to open a satellite program in Tianjin, and it celebrated the commencement of its first 29 graduates this spring.

All 29 graduates of the Marriott Tianjin Program—it took the Marriott name following a US\$1.7 million scholarship endowment from **Marriott International**—were offered jobs with major brands including Sheraton, Hilton and, of course, Marriott. Additionally, more than 600 students have accepted positions with the Beijing Olympic Committee to help manage the 500,000 visitors expected to visit Beijing for this summer's Games.

The Marriott Tianjin Program, based in a new

US\$50 million facility at Tianjin University of Commerce, expects 1,000 students enrolled for the fall semester, including an incoming freshman class of 300. Joe West, dean of the FIU hospitality school, hopes to eventually reach 500 students per class.

FIU officials have been pleasantly surprised at how successful the China program has been thus far. Prior to FIU's involvement, Tianjin hospitality professors rarely had any real-world industry experience, and the China academic tradition involves little interaction between teachers and students. Additionally, most hospitality students used to graduate with little to no prior work experience. Those things changed when FIU took over—and the Chinese government insisted on it. "When we were asked to do our school in China, the Chinese officials were very adamant that we had to do it in the FIU way," West says.

Professors are required to spend a year in the field before returning to the classroom, and they also must pursue executive master's degrees. All classes are taught in English and are taught by Tianjin-based Chinese professors, selected and trained by FIU, as well as visiting professors from FIU's main campus in Miami.

The Marriott Tianjin Program is not China's only hospitality program run by an American university. The Cornell Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management, which offers graduate-level courses and programs, is an alliance between Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration and Nanyang Technological University's Nanyang Business School. ♦

Direct comments to:

adam.kirby@reedbusiness.com

Joe West (r.), dean of the hospitality program at Florida International University, says the partnership with the Chinese government has proven even more successful than hoped. FIU's China program honored its first class of 29 graduates (top) this spring.



**FAST FACTS:** Air traveler frustration led to 41 million fewer trips over the past 12 months, costing the U.S. economy more than US\$26 billion. (TIA)