



# KEAN

November 16, 2018

Zakiya Smith Ellis, Ed.D.  
Secretary of Higher Education  
State of New Jersey  
P.O. Box 542  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0542

Dear Secretary Smith Ellis:

Thank you for your recent visit to Kean University. It was an honor to see you, Deputy Commissioner Gonzalez and Mr. Hilliard, and I was inspired by our discussions and shared values of providing the best opportunities for our students to succeed. I was touched by your interest in our programming on learning support, STEM and leveling the playing field for women and minorities in the traditionally exclusive fields of architecture, design and health sciences. I hope we can arrange additional opportunities for you to visit Liberty Hall, and especially some of our students who have been to Wenzhou-Kean University. There is truly no better way to understand why we do this than to see our amazing and diverse group of students that are kick starting their future as global citizens thanks to Wenzhou-Kean. Please take a look, and hear from our students. <https://youtu.be/itkc2gR1iNg>

“Given the diversity of youth in the United States and the undergraduate population in our colleges and universities, we must find new ways to introduce the world to all students and make comfortable the international exchange of ideas and experiences”  
(See George Sanchez. “Intensive Study Abroad for First-Generation College Students.” *Peer Review* 14. Summer 2012: pp. 14-17)

Kean University saw in New Jersey’s sister province relationship with Zhejiang, an opportunity to do just that. I would like to take the opportunity to share some background regarding New Jersey’s ground breaking international education initiative, Wenzhou-Kean University in Zhejiang Province, China. First, it should be noted that New Jersey is and long has been a bold pioneer in

advancing positive and productive partnerships in China. It is a proud distinction to be the only state in the nation to have a public university campus in China, and there are only two other private institutions with full American campuses there, NYU Shanghai and Duke Kunshan. Kean University is in distinguished company in China, and we owe a debt of thanks to our state leaders throughout the past two decades who paved the path and helped push us forward.

This partnership began in 1981 under Governor Brendan Byrne, with the signing of a friendship and co-operation agreement between Zhejiang Province and the State of New Jersey. In 1998 Union County Freeholders including a current Wenzhou-Kean Board member, Alexander Mirabella established a “Sister Cities” relationship between Wenzhou and Union County, our home county in New Jersey. The relationship with Wenzhou that commenced in 1981, continued with the visit of then Party Secretary Xi Jinping to Governor Jon Corzine in 2006, and the 2011 celebration at Kean University of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New Jersey and Zhejiang relationship, attended by Governor Chris Christie, most of his cabinet and many members of the business and educational community of New Jersey. This celebration led to concluding an agreement that would establish Wenzhou-Kean University as a physical location in the Ouhai district of Wenzhou. Our Chinese partners provided 500 acres of land, \$2 billion RMB in construction financing and all the infrastructure required to operate a major university.

In 1981, Governor Byrne had the foresight to recognize the value of developing cooperative relations with what would become America’s largest trading partner in the world. With respect and gratitude, Union County and Kean University followed suit and built on what the Governor started. The educational partnership and resulting Wenzhou-Kean University has been the laud of international circles. Former United States Consul General for Shanghai in 2012, Robert Griffith describes,

*The educational initiatives such as the one joining Wenzhou University and Kean University can have the same kind of life changing impact on our bilateral relations for the next generation as the Nixon trip did for the generation that is leading our two countries today.<sup>1</sup>*

While we made the decision to directly employ the faculty at Kean University for the initial phase of Wenzhou-Kean’s development, having successful assessment results for the first five years, the logical next step is to improve efficiency by transitioning to the local employment model used by our sister institutions in China. This in no way means that Kean USA loses its ability to ensure its standards are upheld. In fact, the earliest stages of development contemplated both needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Wenzhou-Kean Groundbreaking Ceremony 2012

Six years prior to Wenzhou-Kean admitting its first student, Article 11-02 of the 2006 Cooperation Agreement prescribed as follows: <sup>2</sup>

*The policies relating to the issues such as recruitment, dismissal, salaries and wages, welfare benefits, labor protection, labor insurance, bonuses, discipline, award and penalty for the staff of [Wenzhou-Kean] shall be proposed by the Provost and Vice President of Operation and the President of [Wenzhou-Kean] to the Board of Directors for approval.*

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was Wenzhou-Kean, physically or conceptually. Negotiations and planning continued for four years as an idea grew closer to a reality. In 2010, a Supplementary Agreement <sup>3</sup> was adopted which strengthened the ongoing role of Kean USA. For example, Article 2-1 states:

*The Academic Vice-Chancellor and Provost of WKU shall take the responsibilities and duties of academic affairs such as curriculum design and update, program development, teaching and research management etc., and ensuring that WKU maintains the academic standards of KU. The Provost, as chief academic officer, **must** report to the President of KU in all academic matters and work cooperatively with academic units at KU to ensure program quality, academic management consistency and enforcement and accreditation standards of Middle states Commission for Higher Education (MSCHE).<sup>4</sup>[emphases added]*

During 2012 and 2013, longtime friend of New Jersey and supporter of American higher education in China, Xi Jinping was elected President of China; Wenzhou-Kean was established as a legal entity in China and provisionally approved as a Kean University Additional Location by the MSCHE. <sup>5</sup> The first Wenzhou-Kean cohort was admitted utilizing borrowed space from our initial partner Wenzhou University; and Kean University Board Chair Ada Morell, United States Consul General Robert Griffiths and I broke ground on the first public American University Campus in China, Wenzhou-Kean.

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<sup>2</sup> Cooperation Agreement On The Establishment And Operation Of Kean University, Wenzhou Between Wenzhou University And Kean University, USA, May 8, 2006. (Attachment 1)

<sup>3</sup> Supplementary Agreement to the Cooperation Agreement On the Establishment and Operation of Wenzhou-Kean University Between Wenzhou University and Kean University, December 23, 2010. (Attachment 2)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> March 5, 2013.

Following the provisional approval from the MSCHE, a Wenzhou-Kean site visit review was scheduled with former MSCHE Commissioner and Vice Chair, education guru Michael Middaugh. That review was a success and on November 21, 2013, the MSCHE took action to affirm inclusion of Wenzhou-Kean as a Kean University Additional Location.

Since then we jointly created a Board of Directors. This Board serves as the governing body of the Chinese degree granting entity that is Wenzhou-Kean and as an advisory board to the Kean USA Board of Trustees with respect to its Additional Location in China. The Board is comprised of members appointed by the our Chinese partners in Wenzhou, members appointed by Kean USA Board of Trustees and two student members elected by the student body.<sup>6</sup> Membership on this Board represents education, business and government leaders from both countries in service to a truly international joint venture.<sup>7</sup> The Chairman, Mr. Wang “Frank” Beijio is an alumnus of Kean USA and the Vice Chair is longtime friend and supporter of Kean’s mission, Ms. Anne Evans Estabrook. Included in these appointed members is a standing member of the Kean USA board held first by Mr. Eugene Enlow, and currently by Mr. John Kean Jr. This seat particularly serves to assist the President in regularly reporting to the Kean USA Board of Trustees on the work of their Wenzhou-Kean Advisory Board.

The Wenzhou-Kean Board adopted Articles of Association, which they periodically review and update.<sup>8</sup> These Articles ensure that neither party can act on any major issue without cooperation from the other. Significant matters require a super majority of all voting directors, and even a mere quorum cannot be achieved by any one side. The Wenzhou-Kean Board receives reports on academics, student affairs, finances, planning, administration and other pertinent matters. The Board receives and reviews both the institutional budget<sup>9</sup> and audit<sup>10</sup> annually.

While the partnership was initiated with an existing Chinese institution, Wenzhou University, once Wenzhou-Kean was formally established as a legal entity in 2012, all agreements for the operation of the institution were made directly with Wenzhou-Kean, and Wenzhou University ceased to serve in this capacity. It remains as a supportive local educational partner with representation on the Wenzhou-Kean Board. Equally supportive if not more so, has been the offices of the United States Consul General to Shanghai. As directed by the State Department, Kean seeks counsel and provides updates to the Consulate office. In 2012, Robert Griffiths, former U.S. Counsel General to Shanghai wrote to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie about

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<sup>6</sup> Wenzhou-Kean University Board Membership, November 16, 2018 (Attachment 3)

<sup>7</sup> Wenzhou-Kean University Board Membership (Attachment 3)

<sup>8</sup> Articles of Association of Wenzhou-Kean University, 2016 (Attachment 4)

<sup>9</sup> Wenzhou-Kean University Budget of Fiscal Year 2018 (Attachment 5)

<sup>10</sup> Wenzhou-Kean University Auditors’ Report 2017 (Attachment 6)

Wenzhou-Kean, “[p]romoting cooperation and good will among China and the United States of America through education can only benefit both countries.”<sup>11</sup> The subsequent Consul General Brian Gibel was equally helpful and supportive, and spoke at multiple Wenzhou-Kean events. He even had the distinction of serving as one of the Wenzhou-Kean Commencement speakers as has New Jersey Commissioner of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet.

Wenzhou-Kean is a truly American university, founded on the principles of academic freedom we hold sacred, while receiving full and continual support of our partners in China. The success of our partnership is predicated on several main principles which Kean USA demands and ensures. Kean University has full control over all academic affairs regardless of the administrative employment and payroll structure. The curriculum at Wenzhou-Kean is developed by Kean USA with financial support from Wenzhou-Kean. The Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs overseeing the American degree programs reports directly to the Provost at Kean USA. In 2016 the Wenzhou-Kean Board of Directors created the position of Executive Vice Chancellor of Wenzhou-Kean jointly reporting to the President of Kean USA and the Chairman of the Wenzhou-Kean Board. The Registrar, Librarian, Associate Deans all have dual reporting structures up to the Executive Vice Chancellor and the Academic Vice Chancellor who serve at the pleasure of the Kean USA President and Provost respectfully. Kean USA also employs an Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs assigned to Wenzhou-Kean.

Wenzhou-Kean students, faculty and staff have free and unfettered, 24/7 access to the Internet and all of the Kean USA online library resources. The Wenzhou-Kean community accesses the internet through a virtual private VPN network that operates via satellite to a portal in nearby Newark and into our VPN on campus. It assures a seamless connection and access to our library, databases and all of the resources attainable online, including traditional and social media sources, search engines, and all other information and entertainment. Moreover the faculty order their course materials through the Kean USA employed Librarian.

***Absolutely none of these Kean USA mandates will change. Our Chinese partners know our expectations. They know our deal breakers. They respect us. We respect them, and these are the terms under which we choose to be there in service to our students and our institutional health.***

The goals of Wenzhou-Kean are many, but the greatest are three: (1) to provide access to a global educational experience to a Kean student population that has traditionally been boxed out by economic disadvantage; (2) to provide Chinese students with an immersive experience that results in future leaders possessing a deep respect, understanding and appreciation for American

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<sup>11</sup> Letter from United States Consul General to Shanghai, Robert Griffiths to Governor Chris Christie dated March 30, 2012. (Attachment 7)

culture and values; (3) to diversify Kean University's revenue sources enabling the continuation of New Jersey's most affordable comprehensive university without increased burden on New Jersey taxpayers. While clearly not required as has been demonstrated by our sister institutions in China, in the initial phase we made a decision to lay a strong foundation of Kean University methods until Wenzhou-Kean developed as planned. During that phase the costs borne by Kean USA were compensated back from Wenzhou-Kean through a reimbursement process.<sup>12 13</sup>

Now with projected yearly growth through 2020, and guided by a master plan developed by the pre-eminent American architect Michael Graves, the campus is growing. The faculty and staff are growing along with it, attracting highly acclaimed individuals from the U.S., China and throughout the world. It is a global educational partnership that will equip students with a broader understanding and cultural sensitivities necessary to operate in our global economy consistent with our mission. Wenzhou-Kean has developed into a truly international campus. The faculty demographics serve to prove it. We currently have 102 faculty at WKU. Nine are from New Jersey (*3 which have elected to be members of the KFT Union*). Another 49 come from different places throughout the United States, and 44 come from various countries around the world. With this growth, it is time for a transition to a more efficient process. To achieve this, we took several steps.

First, we collected on our earlier agreement for curriculum development, resulting in a \$1.5 million dollar investment from Wenzhou-Kean for modernization and innovation of Kean University curriculum in service to all our students: Union, Ocean and Wenzhou.<sup>14</sup> Next we established a new financial structure whereby Wenzhou-Kean provides nine percent of its tuition revenue to Kean USA.<sup>15</sup> Then we executed an agreement for the faculty transition, continuing to ensure academic control from Kean USA as we proceed to work with the administration and faculty there to complete the process for the next academic year.<sup>16</sup>

In short, Kean USA will continue to manage the academics. Kean USA will set and verify the criteria for faculty hiring, which for the successful candidate, will result in the Kean USA President

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<sup>12</sup> Expense Reimbursement Agreement between Wenzhou-Kean University and Kean University, October 22, 2014, September 12, 2016 and April 19, 2017 (Attachment 8).

<sup>13</sup> Supplementary Agreement to the Reimbursement Agreement between Wenzhou-Kean University and Kean University, February 28, 2017 (Attachment 9).

<sup>14</sup> Agreement on Curriculum Development and Program Update Fee for AY 2015/2016 through AY 2017/2018 between Kean University and Wenzhou-Kean University, May 29, 2018 (Attachment 10).

<sup>15</sup> Agreement of Reimbursement and Payment Between Kean University and Wenzhou-Kean University, October 17, 2018 (Attachment 11)

<sup>16</sup> Agreement on Faculty Transition/Recruitment Between Kean University and Wenzhou-Kean University October 17, 2018 (Attachment 12).

sending forth the faculty nomination to the Wenzhou-Kean Board. The Wenzhou-Kean employees will be offered a comparable salary and benefit package to what they currently have, including the unique housing and travel allowance only offered at our Wenzhou campus.

Opportunity without access is a hollow promise. At a time when state financial support for public universities was shrinking and competition for students was increasing, we identified an opportunity to diversify Kean's revenue sources while creating new and affordable global opportunities for all our students who traditionally had limited access to studying abroad. This diversity of resources has enabled us to hold tuition increases below three percent for five years in a row, and was noted by Moody's rating agency as a "credit strength".<sup>17</sup>

Innovation has historically been the key to success for New Jersey and New Jersey institutions. Governor Murphy has chosen to focus a great deal on advancement through innovation. Kean University's work in China is consistent with that focus, and the relationship is beneficial to this state, as has been confirmed by the actions of four prior governors coming from both major parties.

Finally, education and cultural exchanges with more of our young people enhances our chance for a brighter and peaceful tomorrow. In a letter to President Farahi from Zhejiang's then Foreign Affairs Director-general, Ruan Zhongxun, Director Ruan stated his hopes that

*Wenzhou Kean University will serve not only as an essential platform of friendly exchange between New Jersey and Zhejiang, but also as a bridge of communication between our two countries.*<sup>18</sup>

We look forward to growing our campuses in China and New Jersey and seeing a continual stream of students traveling between the campuses to their own benefit as well as the benefit of our collective future. This semester we have 90 Wenzhou-Kean students studying at Kean USA, and we have hosted 705 WKU students since the first exchange year in 2015. This not only serves to further our reputation as a truly international campus here at home, but also means substantial revenue. To date Wenzhou-Kean students have generated more than \$7.5 million dollars paid to Kean USA with no drain to the institutional, state or federal financial aid system.

I want to reassert that Kean's commitment to our WKU students and faculty is stronger than ever and we look forward to working with our Chinese partners on the next chapter of WKU's growth

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<sup>17</sup> Moody's Credit Opinion on Kean University, August 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Ruan to Farahi, January 16, 2013 (Attachment 13).

as a truly international university. I would like to invite you and your deputy to join me and members of the Wenzhou-Kean Advisory Board in China for our June 2019 Commencement ceremonies, at which time we may also visit our two sister institutions and learn more about their experience as well. I would also love the opportunity to arrange for you to meet with Kean USA students who have been to Wenzhou-Kean.

I thank you for the opportunity to continue a productive, open and supportive dialogue in our mutual service to our students. Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawood Farahi', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dawood Farahi, Ph.D.  
President

Enclosures

Cc Kean University Board of Trustees  
Wenzhou-Kean Advisory Board