New Year Greetings from Shanghai – Blog from Martin Riordan

Welcome to the 2015 Lunar New Year in Shanghai!

This Blog for Chinese New Year via the TDA newsletter, will hopefully pass as my best wishes to all TAFE Directors and Institute top teams friends, VET sector colleagues, and my good colleagues at TDA, for the 2015 Year of the Sheep (my year !!).

My host for this postgraduate study leave in China is Dr Yu Tao, President of the Shanghai Second Polytechnic University.

Dr Yu Tao and the local Party Secretary, Song Baoru, have been great to watch, and in superb spirits. This past week I took part in their full campus dinner for those polytechnic university’s students who had chosen to remain at the outer Pudong campus during the 10-day New Year period. It was an amazingly moving night – timed to coincide with the opening night of Lunar Year celebrations, called the Kitchen God Festival.

Yu Tao and Song Baoru were joined by Jia Wei, Deputy Director of the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, ensuring every student received Hong Bao – traditional New Year gifts for friends or family – and with the canteen transformed with red lantern decorations, they combined informal speeches with hilarious picture-based lucky-door prizes for students, closing with country folk songs.
Gou Jin Jie, SSPU International Exchange Office with Mary Digges, hosted the international student table.

A number of new semester international students had also arrived.

Our gracious support at SSPU is the International Coordinator, Guo Jin Jie, who hosted the international table, including my partner, Mary Digges. Nationalities included Finland, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia, while a large group of German students were to arrive later – all part of a 25 year exchange agreement between Germany and SSPU Shanghai.
Interestingly, it has been the popularity of a long-term 14-year ‘twinning’ partnership SSPU enjoys with TAFE Queensland that has attracted many of these visiting students; diploma programs in English at SSPU have included business, event and hospitality management diploma courses – both for China students and many of the international students also studying Mandarin. It is great that this has continued, and along with William Angliss’ Office in the Shanghai CBD, managing specialist hospitality partnerships in Shanghai and nearby provinces, these showcase 91 wider TAFE partnerships now operating in China colleges. NB: There is no escape. Mary and I both are enrolling for Mandarin language course when spring semester begins on 1 March!!

Shanghai is a truly remarkable international city. You can be wowed by the statistics; it’s the world’s largest city at 24 million, in the world’s most populous time zone, and China’s largest city.

Since hosting World Expo, the staggering achievements in infrastructure actually make commuting incredibly possible. My trip is to the final Jinhai Road station on Line 12, which is nearby the campus and was the latest metro line opened in the city. The Line 12 commute takes just 30 minutes from city centre to outer Pudong (east side of the city) – with bilingual signage and announcements. Fare @ RMB5 =AUD$1.03....not bad!

Many Shanghai metro stations are ablaze in colour, and our station has featured zodiac star signs across the ceiling – with shooting stars to match!
Extravaganza Lunar New Year lighting everywhere; our metro station ceiling lights up featuring each star sign.
The Bund Shanghai readies for Lunar New Year 2015.

After arriving late last year, we’ve braved a really cold winter spell – including several days of bad smog (US and Municipal readings on Apps keeps you posted) – but it’s quite a buzz to have two New Years’ (our 01 January, and Chinese in February), so the Lunar Spring Festival will surely be a firecracker sensation on The Bund, and to meet expectations, warmer weather is pleasing everyone this past week.

All these festivities, mixed with my own PhD research and early drafting for the thesis, keeps me more than enthralled. Thanks too for all the good wishes from Australia across the sector, since moving here.

Happy New Year to all.

Best regards,

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