

AmCham China

# QUARTERLY

Issue 2  
2025

Executive insights, interviews, and intelligence for business in China

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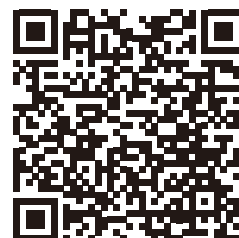
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Photo courtesy of FedEx China

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## AmCham China Leadership

AmCham China's success is rooted in the vision, hard work, and dedication of its members. Through their efforts, these volunteer leaders make it possible to provide the information and intelligence, business services, networking opportunities, and events that benefit all members and the advocacy initiatives that help shape the business environment in China. At AmCham China's national level, the chairman, two vice chairs, and 11 governors comprise the organization's Board of Governors. Additionally, AmCham China's three Chapters each have their own local executive committee to ensure they are responsive to the needs of local AmCham China members.

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# Sustained Advocacy Amid Shifting Currents

As we move into the second half of 2025, AmCham China remains firmly committed to serving as a trusted voice for the American business community and promoting a constructive, stable US-China economic relationship. This past quarter has been a vivid reminder of how essential sustained, high-level engagement is – both in Beijing and in Washington, DC.

A key highlight was our annual **DC Doorknock** in mid-May, where we brought a delegation of China-based executives to the US capital to share on-the-ground insights and strengthen our advocacy with US policymakers. We were joined by leaders from across sectors, including FedEx China President Poh-Yian Koh, a current member of our Board and featured on this issue's cover. Over the course of five days, our delegation met with members of Congress, senior officials from the Departments of Commerce, State, and Treasury, and representatives from think tanks and the White House. These meetings reinforced our central message: that a strong American business presence in China is essential and that our community remains deeply invested in building pragmatic, mutually beneficial economic ties between our two countries.

We've also kept a close eye on the two recent rounds of bilateral trade talks in Europe, as we seek to help our members adapt to rapidly evolving trade dynamics. Our **Flash Survey on Tariffs**, conducted in response to recent developments, captured our members' concerns around rising costs, supply chain adjustments, and policy unpredictability. These findings have been shared with stakeholders on both sides of the Pacific to help inform dialogue and decision-making.

At the same time, we launched the **2025 American Business in China White Paper**, now in its 27th edition. The report includes over 100 cross-sector and industry-specific

recommendations and offers a frank assessment of the investment climate. In recent weeks, we've presented the *White Paper* to both Chinese and US officials, including in a meeting with **Ministry of Finance Vice Minister Liao Min** – a key member of the Chinese delegation at the trade talks in Geneva and London – underscoring our continued commitment to transparent, solutions-focused engagement.

In this issue, you'll also find a special extended feature exploring how **AI is reshaping the future of education** (see pages 32-46) – a timely topic that reflects the broader digital transformation affecting not just our members, but society as a whole.

As Chair, I remain committed to advocating for an operating environment grounded in fairness, predictability, and sustainable growth. I encourage you to read pages 10–14 for a full recap of our DC Doorknock, and pages 24-27 for our *White Paper* highlights.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. Our Chamber's strength lies in the active participation and diverse perspectives of its members, and I look forward to building on that momentum in the months ahead.

Best regards,

**Alvin Liu**

AmCham China Chair

## AmCham China Chairman's Circle

AmCham China Chairman's Circle is a select group of premium membership holders that provide the chamber with exceptional support and leadership. The current Circle members are:







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# AmCham China DC Doorknock 2025

*Each year, AmCham China brings a delegation of China-based executives to Washington, DC to listen, learn, and share on-the-ground perspectives. The week offers a unique opportunity to better understand how US policymaking aligns with the realities of doing business in China. From May 12 to 16, 2025, AmCham China President Michael Hart led the delegation through a packed and productive agenda. In this feature, we take you through a day-by-day breakdown of the 2025 DC Doorknock.*



To kick off the week, on Sunday evening, we hosted the delegates to a welcome dinner and reception. The group was joined by two distinguished guests from **The Cohen Group: Secretary William Cohen** and **Ambassador Craig Allen**. Cohen, who was the US Secretary of Defense from 1997 to 2001, offered reflections on shifting political dynamics in the US, while Allen shared his perspective on recent diplomatic engagements.



On Monday, the week officially began with a breakfast discussion led by **David Finkelstein** from the **Center for Naval Analyses**, hosted at the WilmerHale offices. The session offered timely insights into US strategic thinking, covering shifting priorities under the new administration, challenges in the Indo-Pacific, and the evolving US-China dynamic.



Next, the group met with **David Thomas** and **Richard Harper** of the **US-China Business Council (USCBC)** for a candid conversation on the evolving landscape of US-China economic engagement.

DAY  
01

For lunch, the group visited the **RAND Corporation** for a discussion with **Jude Blanchette**, **Gerard DiPippo**, **Jimmy Goodrich**, **Daniel Markus**, and **John Czin** for a discussion on trade policy, export controls, and geopolitical signaling.



Part of the delegation also met with **Jessica Chen Weiss**, Professor of China Studies at **Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)**, for an exchange on US-China relations and academic perspectives.



DAY  
02



The final meeting of the day was with **Sara Schuman**, **Tim Wineland**, **Andrew Devine**, **Alex Martin**, and **Shelly Zhao** at the Office of the **United States Trade Representative (USTR)**, where the group discussed the implications of the newly released *Joint Statement on the US-China Economic and Trade Meeting in Geneva* and the 90-day tariff suspension by both sides.

Next, the delegation visited the **US-China Economic & Security Review Commission (USCESRC)** offices for a dialogue with **Commissioners Reva Price**, **Cliff Sims**, **Jonathan Stivers**, **Michael Kuiken**, and **Livia Shmavonian**.



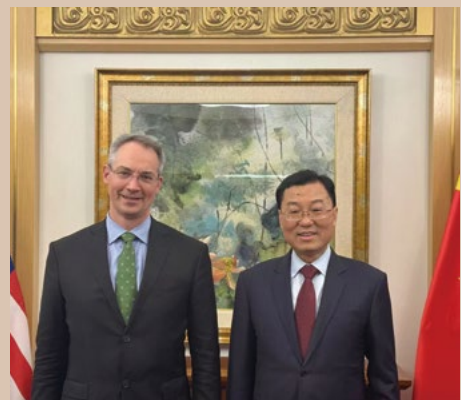
On Day Two, our Chamber delegation joined the first full day of the Annual China Business Conference, co-hosted by AmCham China and the US Chamber of Commerce. The China Business Conference, now in its 15th year, is co-hosted by AmCham China and the US Chamber of Commerce, and is the premier forum in the United States – and one of the premier forums globally – for exchanging ideas on US-China economic and commercial relations, including economic, political, and regulatory developments affecting American business in China





On Wednesday, the delegation returned to the US Chamber of Commerce for the final day of the 15th Annual China Business Conference.

DAY  
03



After the conference, the delegation attended a dinner reception at the residence of the **Chinese Ambassador to the US, Xie Feng**.



**Left:**

AmCham China DC Doorknock delegation. From left to right, Norris Tangen, Dwight Nordstrom, Claire Ma, Bill Zarit, Michael Hart, Jim McGregor, Roberta Lipson, Markel Hubinette, Poh-Yian Koh, Eric Zheng, Les Ross, Choo Pin Ang

Photo courtesy of AmCham China

DAY  
04



On Day Four, the AmCham China delegation took to Capitol Hill for a full day of meetings with members of Congress and their staff. Dividing into two teams, delegates met with 10 Congressional offices across the Senate and House to share ground-level perspectives from US businesses operating in China. Discussions centered on the current operating environment, key challenges facing American firms, and opportunities to deepen bilateral engagement through future Congressional delegations (CODELs) and expanded people-to-people exchanges.

Meetings on Capitol Hill included:



Senator Steve Daines (R-MT)



Senator Andy Kim (D-NJ)



Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA)



Representative Keith Self (R-TX)



Office of Senator Pete Ricketts (R-NE)



Office of Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR)



Office of Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI)



House Select Committee on the CCP (Staff Briefing)

Office of Senator Todd Young (R-IN)

Office of Senator Adam Schiff (D-CA)

## DAY 05

On the final day of the DC Door-knock, the delegation concluded a week of high-level engagement with a series of meetings across government agencies, embassies, and think tanks, deepening understanding of policy perspectives shaping the US-China relationship.

The full delegation met with **Ambassador Lui Tuck Yew** at the Embassy of Singapore. Ambassador Lui offered a regional perspective on China's evolving role and the importance of dialogue across the Asia-Pacific region.



Next, at the US Department of State, delegates met with **Rob Garverick**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Trade Policy and Negotiations, alongside additional senior officials.



Over lunch at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the delegation was hosted by Scott Kennedy, Senior Adviser and Trustee Chair in Chinese Business and Economics, alongside experts and representatives from prominent think tanks and multinational corporations.



In the afternoon, delegates split into two groups for briefings at the US Department of Commerce and the US Department of the Treasury.

At the US Department of Commerce, the delegation met with senior officials responsible for China and Mongolia policy, including Deputy Assistant Secretary **Duncan Willson**, Director **Jenny May**, Desk Officer **Suzanne Platt**, and **Everett Wakai**, Minister Counselor for Commercial Affairs at the US Embassy in Beijing.



At the US Department of the Treasury, the second group of delegates engaged with key officials overseeing trade and East Asia policy, including Deputy Assistant Secretary **Lailee Moghtader**, Directors **Joe Dickson** and **Mirea Grotz**, and International Economist **Tyler Makepeace**.



The final meeting of the Door-knock took place at the National Security Council, where delegates met with Ivan Kanapathy, Senior Director for Asia, alongside colleagues **Bryan Burack** and **Bolton Ford** for a strategic discussion on US-China relations.

Wrapping up a productive week in Washington, the 2025 DC Door-knock provided delegates with invaluable insights into how US policymaking affects the day-to-day realities of doing business in China. In a time of continued bilateral evolution, sustained engagement like this remains more vital than ever.





*Fifteen Years Strong:*

# Highlights from the 2025 China Business Conference

*In an era of strategic uncertainty, the 15th Annual China Business Conference, co-hosted by AmCham China and the US Chamber of Commerce's China Center, convened top voices this past May in Washington, DC, to unpack the economic and national security complexities shaping US-China commercial relations.*

**N**ow in its 15th year, the China Business Conference, co-hosted by AmCham China and the US Chamber of Commerce's China Center, has cemented its role as the premier US-based forum for in-depth discussion on US-China commercial relations. Held annually in Washington, D.C., the Conference provides a critical platform for business leaders, government officials, and policy experts to exchange views on the evolving economic, political, and regulatory environment affecting American businesses in China. As economic and national security interests increasingly overlap, this convening becomes all the more essential for shaping constructive dialogue and forward-looking strategies.

Held from May 13–14, 2025, at the US Chamber of Commerce headquarters, this year's off-the-record event brought together more than 60 speakers across two dynamic days of programming. From supply chain resilience to AI and export controls, the conference addressed a sweeping agenda at the heart of one of the world's most consequential bilateral relationships.

The conference opened with remarks from Jeremie Waterman, President of



**Above:**  
Attendees watch a panel discussion during the 15th Annual China Business Conference

Courtesy of Michael Reynolds & US Chamber of Commerce

the US Chamber's China Center, and Michael Hart, President of AmCham China. Hart then joined Bill Zarit, Senior Counselor at The Cohen Group; Travis Tanner, President of GreenPoint Group; and Eric Zheng, President of AmCham Shanghai, for a panel on "The Changing Operating Landscape in the China Market," moderated by Zarit.

The first day's sessions delved into the structural dynamics of US-China competition, including a fireside chat with Senator Todd Young on innovation policy, and a panel on the "Politics of Building a Military and Economic Fortress" with insights from Kevin Rudd, Australia's Ambassador to the US, and Chris Johnson of the China Strategies Group.

## Tech, Trade, and Risk

Economic realities took center stage in the panel "The State of the PRC Economy and the Impact of the Trade War" featuring Andrew Polk (Trivium China), Logan Wright (Rhodium Group), and Joerg Wuttke (DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group). Later, speakers dissected the evolution of China's industrial ambitions in "Made in China 2025: Looking Back

and Forward," with voices from academia and industry including Barry Naughton (UC San Diego) and Drew Quinn (GE HealthCare).

The intersection of emerging tech and national security was explored in "Responding to the DeepSeek Moment: Competition for AI and Quantum Dominance," and "The Biotech Race: How to Square National Security with Building a Healthier World." The final panel of the day, "Export Controls: Tailoring the Right Yard, Size, and Fence Height," featured legal and policy experts including Sarah O'Hare O'Neal (Microsoft) and Kevin Wolf (Akin Gump).

## Geopolitical Realism and Economic Prudence

Day two began with a panel on "China, Taiwan, and the Geopolitical Landscape for American Business," moderated by Matt Turpin (Hoover Institution) and featuring insights from Zack Cooper (AEI) and Ely Ratner (Marathon Initiative). The theme of de-escalation continued with Jim McGregor, Derek Scissors, and Stephen Vaughn analyzing scenarios to stabilize the bilateral relationship.

A keynote address by Jeffrey Kessler, Under Secretary for Industry and Security at the US Department of Commerce, examined the central role of the Bureau of Industry and Security in shaping the tech rivalry.

Risk scenarios were further explored in "Tit-for-Tat: Escalation Risks and Scenarios," followed by a luncheon discussion on managing geopolitical risk in business, led by Jeremie Waterman with contributions from David Fagan (Covington & Burling), Meg Rithmire (Harvard Business School), and Ellen Lord (The Chertoff Group).

## A Forward-Looking Close

The penultimate panel asked, "Is There a Strategy for 'The West' to Compete Against China Globally?," with insights from Rush Doshi (CFR), Chris Griswold (American Compass), and others. The final session, "The View from the House Select Committee on the CCP," featured Rep. John Moolenaar, offering a legislative perspective on strategic competition.

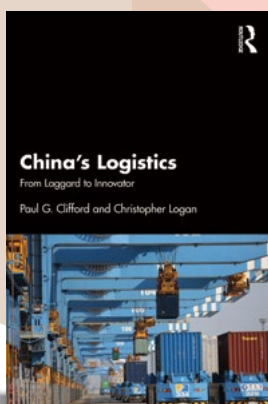
The event concluded with closing remarks and a reception celebrating 15 years of convening thoughtful, high-level dialogue on US-China relations.

As AmCham China continues its advocacy on both sides of the Pacific, the China Business Conference remains a cornerstone of that mission, where substance drives conversation, and relationships shape the future of bilateral engagement. **Q**



*From Bottleneck to Blueprint:*

# Author Paul G. Clifford on China's Logistics Revolution



Despite powering one of the world's most dynamic economies, China's logistics sector has long operated behind the scenes. In this exclusive Q&A, **Dr. Paul G. Clifford**—External Associate at the Lau China Institute, Honorary Fellow at the Foreign Policy Association, and President of Paul G. Clifford & Associates—explains why logistics is the unsung engine of China's global rise. Drawing from decades of on-the-ground experience and research, including his latest book *China's Logistics: From Laggard to Innovator*, Clifford unpacks the strategic reforms, tech-driven leaps, and state-led ambitions reshaping China's supply chain—and what it all means for foreign businesses navigating the market.

*Your latest book, **China's Logistics: From Laggard to Innovator**, highlights a sector that often flies under the radar. Why did you decide to focus on logistics, and why should international businesses pay more attention to it now?*

**Paul G. Clifford:**

China logistics is an underreported topic of critical importance to China's economic performance. It is a gripping and varied narrative that embodies a struggle to catch up and some striking examples of innovation and excellence.

We can learn from the Chinese government's whole-of-nation approach to logistics as well as from the e-commerce logistics firms adopting cutting-edge automation.

*You argue that logistics has been a silent force behind China's economic transformation. What are the top three ways logistics has*

*impacted China's integration into global supply chains?*

**Paul G. Clifford:**

One cannot underestimate the impact of the up-grading of China's transportation infrastructure—be it super-highways, air cargo hubs, or highly automated seaports. This has underpinned China's role as the world's factory. Secondly, the Belt and Road Initiative is essentially a massive logistics play, a key part of which is linking China with Europe through multiple rail lines across the land bridge. Thirdly, I would mention the emergence of a relatively small number of Chinese 3PLs (third-party logistics providers)—state-owned and private—which can offer seamlessly integrated services, albeit mainly serving Chinese manufacturers.

*Can you walk us through a case study or company transformation from your book that best*

*illustrates China's logistics evolution?*

**Paul G. Clifford:**

Let us look at how Sinotrans, an old state-owned firm, overcame the legacy of central planning and became a world-class logistics firm.



**Dr. Paul G. Clifford** is an External Associate at the Lau China Institute, King's College London, an Honorary Fellow at the Foreign Policy Association, and President of strategy advisory firm Paul G. Clifford & Associates.

He is the author of *China's Logistics: From Laggard to Innovator* and *The China Paradox*, and is currently writing a book on China's technology and industry.

Dr. Clifford first lived in China in 1973–74 as an exchange student. He later worked in China as a corporate banker with the First National Bank of Chicago, a strategy consultant with Oliver Wyman, and with Cisco Systems leading strategy for smart cities. He has advised Chinese SOEs, private firms, and multinationals across sectors including logistics, and was elected Executive Director of the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

He has taught at universities in Mexico, the UK, and the US. He earned his Ph.D. from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and also studied at Peking University. He is fluent in Chinese.

Founded around 1950 under the foreign trade ministry, Sinotrans enjoyed 30 years as China's sole provider of cross-border freight forwarding. But by the late 1990s, its domestic monopoly ended, and it faced increasing competition from foreign firms post-WTO accession. Premier Zhu Rongji told firms like Sinotrans bluntly: Reform or be prepared to fade away.

Today, with revenues of US \$16 billion, Sinotrans is China's largest logistics firm. But in 1999, its future looked far from secure. A diagnostic showed that several business lines were in a death spiral. The goal was to recapitalize the firm through a listing on the Hong Kong stock market, which occurred in 2003. The path to that success was complex and painful.

The decision was to place the healthiest parts of the business into a new entity for listing. Chairman Luo Kai-fu argued, correctly and courageously, that the new entity needed to be attractive to investors, advocating a massive reduction in the bloated workforce.

There had to be a rethink of the firm's organizational structure. Though Sinotrans appeared to have a strong nationwide network, it was in fact a collection of autonomous subsidiaries. Ownership of these local companies had to be painstakingly changed to enable centralized control.

The business needed focus. Trucking, shipping, and warehousing were no longer standalone businesses but were retained and invested in only to the extent that they supported the core business of freight forwarding and integrated logistics. Certain sectors, including auto, fast-moving consumer goods, and electronics, were selected for specialization. The workforce, much of which had never gone beyond lower middle school, required radical upgrading. Corporate culture had to become customer-centric, adaptable, and empowering.

Today, Sinotrans has developed its own proprietary IT platform and serves foreign manufacturers in China. It maintains a highly profitable joint venture with DHL, has created containerized rail routes under the Belt and Road Initiative, and has established a global presence through acquisitions in Europe.

However, it has not succeeded in e-commerce, where private players like Cainiao, JD Logistics, and SF Express dominate. This story demonstrates that state-owned firms can be transformed and reborn to meet the sophisticated needs of modern shippers.

***How has China's late but aggressive adoption of logistics tech, like warehouse robotics and AI, affected global competition with firms like FedEx and DHL?***

**Paul G. Clifford:**

Global integrators such as UPS, FedEx, and DHL transitioned into the AI era by continuously upgrading IT systems. Chinese players, as late entrants, leapfrogged over legacy systems to adopt advanced technologies, including warehouse robotics. On Singles' Day (November 11), Chinese firms handle 1 billion e-commerce items compared to UPS's 5.6 billion items annually.

**Right:**

Paul G. Clifford  
speaks at the 2018  
Symposium on China  
Studies in Beijing

Courtesy of Paul G.  
Clifford



*Cainiao, SF Express, and JD Logistics are reshaping logistics expectations. Are any close to becoming truly global players? What hurdles remain?*

**Paul G. Clifford:**

China's logistics firms in the international market mainly serve Chinese clients. None have yet become global players like Kuehne + Nagel or FedEx. Establishing themselves in Europe or North America is challenging due to regulations, branding, and recruitment—issues similar to those foreign firms face in China.

Some, like Sinotrans, have acquired overseas firms; Cainiao has hubs in Liege and Kuala Lumpur and handles 4.5 million items daily. SF, which aims to be China's FedEx, acquired Hong Kong's Kerry Logistics and operates its own fleet and airport in Hubei. But global reach remains elusive.

*As US-China relations evolve, supply chain resilience and “de-risking” are hot topics. How is China adjusting its logistics model to fit this new era of regionalization and decoupling?*

**Paul G. Clifford:**

China is expanding land-bridge rail routes to Europe to mitigate maritime risks. Multinational corporations are de-risking by moving production to Southeast Asia. China is doing the same to reduce exposure to trade sanctions. Logistics firms—Chinese and global—must stay agile.

*Your book discusses the legacy of China's centrally planned economy. In what ways does that legacy still shape logistics practices today, for better or worse?*

**Paul G. Clifford:**

The legacy has been burdensome with poor transportation infrastructure, lack of national integration, and few modern providers. Today's government planning is strategic, not rigid, offering autonomy and creative space to both state-owned and private firms.

*Looking ahead, where do you see the biggest growth opportunities in China's logistics?*

**Paul G. Clifford:**

Domestic logistics may grow faster than the overall economy. However, the market remains bifurcated. Foreign 3PLs will primarily grow by serving global clients in China. Partnerships with strong Chinese firms could offer access to global markets. Investors can also consider stakes in China's e-commerce logistics giants.

*For executives new to China, what's one insight from your book you hope they take with them when thinking about supply chain strategy here?*

**Paul G. Clifford:**

For those outsourcing logistics in China, do not underestimate the complexity, risk, and cost. Be skeptical of 3PLs promising seamless nationwide service—especially in central and western China. **Q**





*Future-Ready Leadership:*

# The Behaviors That Shape What's Next

*In a time of rapid change and rising expectations, effective leadership demands more than just experience—it calls for adaptability, empathy, and a commitment to empowering others. Poh-Yian Koh, President of FedEx China, shares the core behaviors that have guided her journey and offers practical insights for leaders navigating what's next.*

**Poh-Yian Koh** is President of FedEx China and Senior Vice President at FedEx, overseeing operations in this critical market. With more than three decades at the company, she has played a pivotal role in FedEx's expansion in China, leading strategic projects such as the Pudong and Guangzhou Hubs and shaping customs procedures to support the company's growth. Having held leadership roles across Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Beijing, Koh has received numerous accolades, including nine 5-star Awards, FedEx's highest honor. She is deeply committed to diversity and inclusion, having led the Sunflower Project to support individuals with disabilities, and to sustainability across the Asia Pacific, Middle East, and Africa regions. She holds a degree in Industrial Engineering from Ohio State University and an Executive MBA from the Kellogg School of Management.

Courtesy of FedEx China

**W**hat defines leadership in an era of constant transformation? For me, it's about being decisive, resilient, and driven to empower others—leading not from behind a title but by example. Over three decades at FedEx, I've learned that the most effective leaders are not just goal-setters, but change agents who foster trust, elevate others, and deliver results with heart.

## Learning Agility: The Foundation of Growth

I began my FedEx journey as an industrial engineer in Singapore. At the time, I believed technical knowledge was enough. But leadership demanded more. I quickly learned that success comes not from knowing everything—but from staying curious, asking questions, and learning from every experience.

As I moved into larger roles—from regional integration to overseeing massive hub developments in China—I embraced a mindset of continuous growth. I sought feedback, admitted what I didn't know, and surrounded myself with people smarter than me. This humility created space for trust and team innovation. Leaders who learn fast and adapt decisively are the ones who stay ahead.

## Disruptive Leadership

Leading the development of the FedEx Guangzhou Asia Pacific Hub was a pivotal moment that shaped my identity and career. The projects demanded not only technical knowledge but also disruptive leadership with the confidence to lead a group of male-dominated experts through cross-cultural differences, complex government relationships, and constantly changing requirements. I developed boldness, confronted issues, focused strategically on outcomes, engaged stakeholders collaboratively, and exercised contextual leadership. Today, FedEx operates over 220 weekly flights in and out of Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, connecting more than 220 countries and territories.

Success didn't come from following old playbooks. It required tenacity, creative problem-solving, and the courage to disrupt. In logistics—an ever evolving, high-pressure industry—waiting is rarely an option. I learned to act quickly but thoughtfully, balancing urgency with empathy. That's what I call disruptive leadership—it is not about change for the sake of change. It is about increasing value through change by being bold and taking strategic actions that have a lasting impact.

## Empathy Builds Resilient Teams

Growing up as one of 12 children in a traditional Chinese household, compromise was a survival skill. As a young leader, I saw compromise as a sign of weakness. But years of leading global projects taught me otherwise. True strength lies in understanding others, finding common ground, and co-creating solutions to achieve objectives.

Empathy isn't about pleasing everyone—it's about seeing people's needs clearly, listening without judgment, and responding with clarity. Whether managing engineers, couriers, or executive teams, I've found that empathy builds loyalty, drives engagement, and uncovers innovative ideas that numbers alone can't.

In the current fast-changing environment, empathy is essential for fostering a resilient team ready to innovate and transform.





**Above:**  
Poh-Yian at AmCham  
China's Southwest  
Chapter's 2024 Women's  
Day event

Courtesy of AmCham  
China Southwest  
Chapter

"As a leader, how I  
show up matters. My  
energy influences my  
team, and my clarity  
sets the tone for  
tough decisions."

## Culture and Inclusion: Drive Collective Success

At FedEx, we are driven by a simple but powerful principle: People-Ser-vice-Profit. When we take care of our people, they take care of our custom-ers, and the business thrives. That's why we invest in inclusive leadership and foster a "Speak Up" culture, where every voice counts.

We have teams dedicated to addressing concerns raised via our 24/7 mul-tilingual FedEx Alert Line- with action, not delay. That is how trust is built.

## Encourage Others to Rise

In logistics—a traditionally male-dominated field—I've faced my share of raised eyebrows. I remember my early days carrying boxes alongside cou-riers, some of whom doubted I would last a week. Thirty-five years later, I lead one of the largest express delivery networks in China.

Inclusion isn't about lowering the bar—it's about expanding it. In 1997, I noticed a hardworking cleaner from the village who was helping my secretary type a letter. I offered her a job at FedEx and encouraged her to use the com-pany's tuition assistance program for further education. She went on to earn a university degree, becoming a successful leader and building a happy family.





**Above:**  
Poh-Yian Koh speaks at an AmCham China Manufacturing, Sourcing, Supply Chain and Customs Committee event in Beijing

Courtesy of AmCham China

While many female leaders exemplify emotional intelligence, transparency, and high performance, these qualities are not exclusive nor universal. Our open-door policy values strength in all forms, regardless of gender. By mentoring other women, I aim to build a leadership pipeline where talent—not tradition—defines who rises. Today, in FedEx China, 56% of professional and managerial employees are women.

## Work-Life Balance:

In the fast-paced logistics world, balance can feel elusive. But I've learned that self-management is non-negotiable. I experienced this firsthand in 2004, when FedEx sponsored me to pursue an EMBA. At that time, balancing work, study, and family felt nearly impossible. Yet that experience became a turning point.


The EMBA helped me gain access to a diverse network of business leaders and prepare me for a more senior position. I discovered the significance of having a "life compass" and being "intentional" to

live consciously according to my values. It helps me to stay grounded, reflect daily, and maintain a positive mindset even in high-stakes situations.

I'm transparent with my team about this. We're not machines—we are people first. By normalizing conversations about balance, mental health, and priorities outside of work, we create a more human and sustainable workplace. When we lead with intention, we lead others to do the same.

## A Legacy of Empowerment

When I first came to China in 1995, logistics was undergoing a revolution. Today, it still is. From urbanization to digitization, our sector evolves rapidly, and so must we. Of course, I desire FedEx to lead and make the supply chain smarter for everyone.

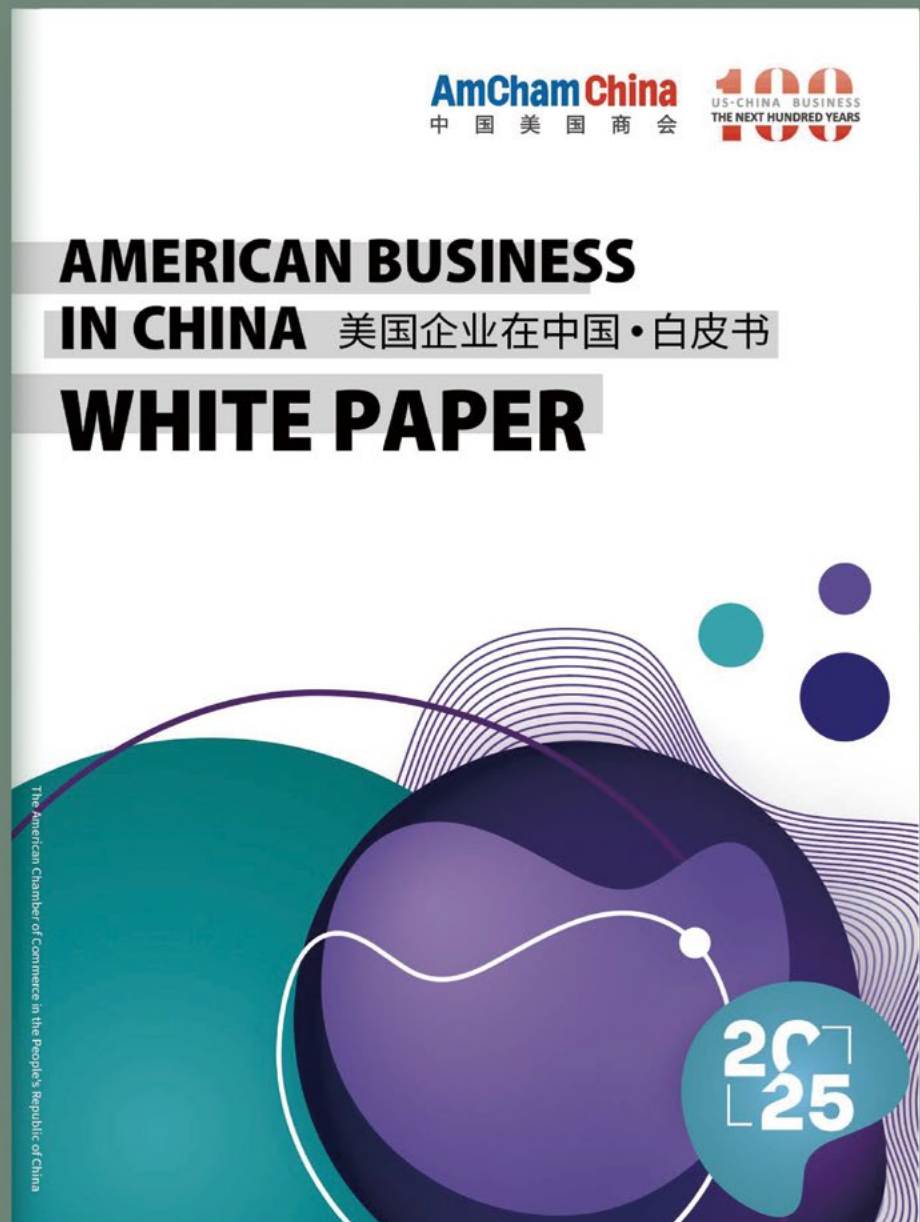
At a leader, our mission goes beyond pickup and delivery. We create opportunity, model inclusion, and lead with heart. That's the legacy I strive to leave: a stronger, more empowered workforce—ready to shape the future, together. 



*Balancing Risk and Resilience:*

# The 2025 AmCham China White Paper

Now in its 27th year, the American Business in China White Paper remains AmCham China's flagship advocacy document. Drawing on the lived experiences of over 100 member-company representatives, the 2025 edition offers a candid, data-driven account of the challenges and opportunities facing American firms in China today. Spanning 37 chapters and over 600 pages, it provides sector-specific insights, regional assessments, and policy recommendations at a time of growing geopolitical tension and structural economic change.



## Business Realities in a Shifting Global Landscape

The operating landscape for American businesses in China is entering a new phase. Heightened geopolitical competition, persistent regulatory complexity, and evolving economic fundamentals have forced companies to reassess risk exposure and recalibrate strategies.

Released in April 2025, AmCham China's *American Business in China White Paper* (*White Paper*) serves as a barometer of this transition—anchored in the lived experience of member companies and their responses to operational challenges across the country. Now in its 27th edition, the *White Paper* reflects a balanced, business-driven perspective on a relationship under pressure but not beyond repair.

The 2025 *White Paper* is structured in four parts: a national business environment overview, a focus on market access and industrial policy, detailed sectoral chapters, and regional analyses. Collectively, these chapters represent the expertise of over 100 AmCham China members and speak to the Chamber's mission of promoting constructive US–China economic engagement.

## Rising Geopolitical Tensions and Their Commercial Fallout

For the fifth year in a row, “rising tensions in US–China relations” was identified as the top business challenge by AmCham China member companies in the Chamber's 2025 Business Climate Survey (BCS). 63% of respondents ranked it above concerns such as regulatory unpredictability or competition from local firms.

The re-escalation of tariffs in April 2025 only deepened commercial unease. While policymakers on both sides of the Pacific emphasize “de-risking” rather than “decoupling,” the distinction often feels academic to companies confronting tightened export controls, ambiguous data regimes, and a politicized trade environment.

Technology-intensive sectors—including semiconductors, life sciences, aerospace, and AI—have been hit particularly hard. In these industries, US and Chinese regulations frequently collide, creating legal ambiguity and compliance risks. The *White Paper* underscores that while national security is a legitimate concern, more narrowly tailored, transparent policies are needed to prevent unintended business disruption.

At the same time, the Chamber is clear: American companies are not seeking deregulation or special treatment. What they want is consistent, fair enforcement and a rules-based environment that

fosters innovation and cross-border collaboration.

## Investment: Recalibrating, Not Retreating

While investment sentiment has cooled, American companies continue to see opportunity in China—particularly in strategic sectors aligned with long-term growth. The *White Paper* reports that 49% of AmCham China members still rank China among their top three global investment destinations, even as only 21% now view it as their top priority market—a significant shift from pre-pandemic levels.

This nuanced view reflects a “China + 1” mindset: companies are not exiting the market but diversifying supply chains and limiting capital exposure amid heightened risk. High-tech and R&D-driven firms continue to expand, with 95% of such companies emphasizing the importance of a stable US–China relationship to their success.

Encouragingly, 46% of companies reported being profitable or very profitable in 2024, and another 36% broke even, underscoring the enduring commercial importance of the Chinese market, even in uncertain times.

## Regulatory Headwinds: Complexity Undermining Confidence

One of the most consistent themes across the *White Paper* is regulatory opacity. Businesses cite inconsistent policy interpretation, lack of consultation during rulemaking, and unpredictable enforcement as critical challenges undermining operational stability.

Data localization rules, the Anti-Espionage Law, and unclear implementation of the Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) were frequently flagged in sector chapters. Many companies feel they lack adequate time or guidance to adapt to new requirements, particularly when local and national policies diverge.

The Chamber makes more than 100 recommendations to address these issues, including:

**Clarifying the scope of sensitive data and national security laws;**

Establishing a formal stakeholder feedback mechanism during policy development;

Creating pilot programs to test cross-border data solutions and allow for corporate adaptation.

At the same time, the *White Paper* recognizes



steps taken by Chinese authorities, including updates to the Negative List for Foreign Investment and the launch of the 2025 Action Plan for Stabilizing Foreign Investment. Still, only one-third of members reported improvement in the regulatory environment; 28% said it had deteriorated.

## Sector Highlights: Challenges, Opportunities, and Pathways Forward

The 21 industry chapters in the *White Paper* provide a granular view of sector-specific experiences. Despite sectoral variation, several common threads emerge:

**ICT and Cybersecurity:** Companies remain concerned about compliance ambiguity under China's cyber laws. The *White Paper* suggests expanding sandbox trials and clarifying cross-border data protocols to enable digital operations.

**Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals:** Regulatory bottlenecks persist, particularly for product registration and pricing mechanisms. However, China's push for healthcare innovation is opening doors for new investment, especially in local R&D hubs.

**Financial Services:** While some liberalization has progressed, foreign players continue to face lengthy approval processes and informal barriers. The Chamber encourages streamlined licensing

and improved interagency coordination.

**Education and Professional Services:** Complex licensing and local restrictions have made market access difficult. The *White Paper* urges a unified national framework to replace patchwork local requirements.

These chapters demonstrate that while sector-specific hurdles differ, the overarching demand is for greater clarity, consistency, and consultation.

## Regional Focus: Subnational Trends and Local Realities

The *White Paper's* regional chapters—covering Shanghai, Tianjin, Northeast China, Southwest China, and Central China—highlight how local policy implementation significantly impacts foreign business operations.

**Shanghai** continues to be a leader in digital governance and financial reform. Companies applauded the city's support for cross-border data pilot zones and fintech innovation but flagged the need for clearer central-local coordination on enforcement.

**Tianjin** offers strong infrastructure and workforce advantages, but bureaucratic inconsistencies and regulatory delays remain a challenge. Companies recommend enhanced interdepartmental communication and a local foreign investment liaison body.

# AmCham China Policy Priorities for 2025

Drawing from member input across all chapters, the *White Paper* outlines three core advocacy themes for this year:

### 1. Stability and Certainty in US-China Economic Relations

To enhance stability and certainty in bilateral relations, both nations should limit trade controls, avoid excessive tariffs, and refrain from over-de-risking, ensuring smoother business operations and minimizing disruptions to the global economy.

### 2. Boost People-to-People Exchanges

To rebuild trust and foster cooperation, both sides should reduce inflammatory rhetoric, increase direct engagement between government and business leaders, and improve transparency around regulations, especially for foreign businesses.

### 3. Support for Foreign Investment with Fair, Transparent Policymaking

To address uncertainty and business concerns regarding China's commitment to opening its market to foreign investors, the Chinese government should implement transparent and consistent policies that create a level playing field for foreign investors, while also clarifying legal frameworks such as the Anti-Espionage Law.

These priorities form the foundation of AmCham China's broader call for a commercially viable, politically sustainable US-China relationship.

**Northeast China** faces structural challenges including aging demographics and sluggish private sector reform. The Chamber advocates for targeted tax incentives, improved visa policies, and talent attraction initiatives to reinvigorate the region.

**Southwest China**, particularly **Chengdu** and **Chongqing**, shows promise in logistics and sustainability. However, local enforcement gaps and unclear approval processes limit momentum. The *White Paper* calls for implementation audits and stakeholder feedback loops.

**Central China** boasts competitive land and labor costs, but regulatory uncertainty—especially around environmental compliance—creates investment hesitancy. Clearer environmental policy guidelines and dispute resolution mechanisms are among key recommendations.

These regional assessments remind readers that China's business climate is deeply shaped by local governance, with room for reform and tailored engagement strategies.

## The Scorecard: Measuring Progress and Accountability

A unique feature of the *White Paper* is its annual Recommendation Scorecard, which evaluates the status of previous policy suggestions. While progress has been noted in areas such as cosmetics regulation and some aspects of financial sector liberalization, most chapters still report “low” or “no” progress on critical issues.

Top concerns with stagnant or insufficient movement include:

Equal treatment in government procurement;

Transparent and timely policy consultation;

Clarification of IP enforcement procedures;

Expanded market access for education and professional services.

*In his foreword, AmCham China Chair Alvin Liu writes:*

“We believe that stable, constructive US–China relations, grounded in transparent policymaking and mutual understanding, are not just vital for business success but critical to global economic stability.”

By tracking progress (or the lack thereof), the Scorecard serves both as a diagnostic tool and an advocacy mechanism. It allows stakeholders to identify persistent challenges and focus future reform efforts accordingly.

The Chamber emphasizes that this process is not intended as criticism, but as a constructive accountability framework. By spotlighting areas where reform has advanced – and where it hasn't — the *White Paper* invites continued dialogue and practical collaboration.

## A Call for Constructive Engagement

Throughout the 2025 *White Paper*, one message is clear: despite growing headwinds, American businesses are not giving up on China, but they are adapting. What companies want is not preferential treatment but a stable, predictable policy environment that rewards long-term commitment and fosters innovation.

This vision underpins the Chamber's broader approach to advocacy. From urging more thoughtful export controls to recommending streamlined visa policies, the *White Paper* argues that dialogue and transparency can mitigate risk and restore trust.

It also cautions against fatalism. Even in sectors most affected by geopolitical

tension, companies see room for practical cooperation. Examples include progress on cosmetics testing protocols, cross-border data pilot programs, and positive local engagement in regions like Shanghai and Chengdu. In short, the *White Paper* is not just a reflection of business concerns, it is a roadmap for future collaboration.

## A Roadmap for Resilient Engagement

At over 600 pages and featuring more than 100 concrete policy recommendations, the 2025 *American Business in China White Paper* is AmCham China's most comprehensive policy document to date. It is both a record of challenges and a testament to continued commitment.

As American companies recalibrate in a complex global landscape, the *White Paper* offers grounded, sector-specific, and actionable insights to support decision-making and advocacy. Whether on regulatory reform, investment climate, or people-to-people ties, it provides a constructive platform for engagement that serves businesses and policymakers on both sides of the Pacific.

For those navigating the uncertain road ahead, the *White Paper* is a compass. It shows where friction remains, where progress is possible, and, most importantly, where shared interest still endures. **Q**



# Still in the Game:

## *Travis Tanner on Why China Remains a Strategic Bet*

*As shifting geopolitical headwinds reshape the US-China business landscape in real time, companies face growing pressure to manage risk while staying competitive. In the latest installment of our ongoing series with AmCham China's Board of Governors, Travis Tanner—Senior Managing Director at Ankura, President of GreenPoint Group (an Ankura company), and AmCham China Vice Chair—shares his perspective on what it takes to stay engaged, why China remains strategically important, and how to navigate a market that's no longer about easy wins, but smart bets.*

***You've lived in China for 13 years and worked on China-related issues for 25+ years. How did you become interested in working on China-related issues, and how do you pursue this interest outside of your professional work?***

### Travis Tanner

I first became interested in China while studying Mandarin as a study abroad student at Jinan University in Guangzhou in 1998. Later, I was privileged to receive the Doak A. Barnett Fellowship to study at Johns Hopkins SAIS in Nanjing and Washington, DC – an experience that completely changed the course of my family's life and forged a lifelong connection to China. My four children have grown up in Beijing and cherish the many lessons they learned here. My wife has taught at international schools in Guangzhou, Nanjing, and Beijing, cultivating deep relationships with hundreds of students and parents.

Outside of my work at GreenPoint, I am passionate about mentoring students. Since 2017, I have had the honor of serving as a Schwarzman Scholars industry mentor for two students each year. It's always inspiring to see their enthusiasm and curiosity about China. Finally, I enjoy cycling in the Beijing mountains, especially slipping out for rides on Monday mornings when my US-based colleagues are still enjoying the weekend.

***This is your first year as Vice Chair of the AmCham China Board of Governors. What specific goals do you hope to champion during your term?***

### Travis Tanner

My aim is to support US businesses as they navigate the China market and anticipate fluctuations in US-China relations to the greatest extent possible. I hope to champion AmCham's vital role in helping companies manage the increasingly complex geopolitical, economic, and political landscape.

With 25 years of experience working on policy and engaging with government officials in both Washington and Beijing, I intend to leverage my diverse relationships in the two capitals to advocate on behalf of US companies at the highest levels.

My specific goals include supporting AmCham Chair Alvin Liu, the Board of Governors, and President Michael Hart as they adeptly guide AmCham China through challenging conditions while maximizing value for our member companies.

Additionally, I plan to visit as many of our Chapters across China as possible. In March, I had the privilege of visiting the Tianjin Chapter to discuss US-China relations with our incredible members, and I look forward to returning to Tianjin and visiting other chapters across the country.

Finally, I hope to continue contributing to the production of the annual White Paper and



Travis Tanner is a Senior Managing Director at Ankura and President of GreenPoint Group (an Ankura company). Drawing on more than 25 years of experience, Travis advises corporate and non-profit clients to develop and expand business opportunities in the China market and navigate policy and regulatory changes. Travis also serves as the Vice Chair of the AmCham China Board of Governors. Previously, Travis served as president of the US-China Strong Foundation, an offshoot of the Obama administration's 100,000 Strong Initiative. He previously served as senior project director at The National Bureau of Asian Research. He is the author, contributing author, or coeditor of numerous publications on the strategic, economic, and political dimensions of the US-China relationship. Travis received a master's degree in international relations from the Johns Hopkins University – SAIS and the Hopkins-Nanjing Center. He is senior advisor to NBR, Tsinghua University Schwarzman College industry mentor, member of the National Committee on US-China Relations and serves as Co-Chair of the AmCham China Policy Committee.

encourage AmCham members to join advocacy opportunities, such as the DC Doorknock, the Government Appreciation Dinner, *White Paper* delivery meetings, regional visits, and other engagement opportunities. These efforts are always more impactful when more voices representing diverse sectors, experiences, and perspectives are involved.

***Given your work advising multinationals and NGOs, what advice do you currently give to clients navigating the complex and uncertain environment in China?***

Travis Tanner

Recently I have counseled clients to:

1. Develop a comprehensive understanding of their operating context, including identifying key decision-makers involved in issues that most impact their company. Engaging these stakeholders appropriately is crucial. To navigate the China market successfully, it's essential to deeply understand the underlying priorities, protocols, and people who drive key decisions.
2. Strengthen internal coordination within the company to address potential disconnects between the headquarters and the local China team regarding geopolitics and risk management. Establishing strong communication channels around critical business issues and coordinating the company's China strategy based on this shared understanding is crucial. Conducting real-world simulations is one practical way to prepare for potential contingencies.
3. Strategically engage their stakeholder ecosystem by demonstrating a genuine commitment to the China market (including with communities, customers, partners and regulators) as well as aligning efforts with the US national interest – while ensuring that efforts in one area do not undermine the

other.

4. Stay agile and proactive in the short-term, while maintaining a clear focus on long-term goals. Though geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions have become the new normal, businesses must look beyond immediate challenges to create conditions for sustainable success. Standing still is not an option for companies aiming to thrive in the China market.

***What would you say is the top challenge for US businesses in the China market?***

Travis Tanner

Currently, the foremost concern for most US companies operating in China is the uncertainty caused by ongoing geopolitical tensions. Recent actions by Washington and Beijing—such as tariffs, export controls, entity list restrictions, and investigations—have made business operations and long-term planning increasingly challenging. However, the more significant obstacle lies in the broader, long-term uncertainty over whether the two nations can stabilize their relationship and maintain that stability. Given the vastly different systems and structural issues driving competition and decision-making—especially around trade, investment, technology, diplomacy, and global influence—forecasting future developments remains difficult.

While companies typically plan investments over 5 to 10-year horizons, the evolving dynamics of US-China relations introduce formidable ambiguity. This uncertainty complicates strategic decision-making and long-term planning. Additional headwinds facing US firms include a slowing domestic Chinese economy, concerns over regulatory transparency, intense domestic competition, and challenges recruiting and retaining talent.

***What would you say is the greatest opportunity for US businesses in the China market?***

**Travis Tanner**

Being in the China market offers US companies a front-row seat to China's innovation ecosystem, which enhances their ability to compete globally. China's innovation ecosystem has become highly sophisticated—not only in sectors like automotive, which is well-covered in the western press—but across a wide range of industries. To stay competitive, US companies need to be active in China, learning from and competing with innovative Chinese companies across various sectors.

Another significant opportunity is China's market size. Despite economic softening, China remains a crucial economy – accounting for roughly 18-20% of the world's GDP. There is simply no substitute for this extensive market in terms of growth potential and strategic importance.

***One media narrative in the West is that China is becoming “uninvestable” – do you think this is true?***

**Travis Tanner**

While there are certainly challenges to investing in China, and the degree of challenges varies by sector, the idea that China has become “uninvestable” is, in my view, misguided. For most large companies, the key question is not whether to invest in China but rather how to do so effectively - how to remain competitive with Chinese and other global companies.

The China market will remain important in the long-run for global companies. As the second largest economy in the world, China's growth rate has outpaced most developed and many developing economies. Over the past decade and a half, China has contributed approximately 35% of global GDP and remains a major driver of worldwide growth. Some projections suggest China will account for over 20% of new global economic activity through 2029, cementing its position as a leading contributor to global growth.

Take Ankura, for example – GreenPoint Group's parent company. While many professional service firms are pausing or reconsidering their investments in China, Ankura is actively expanding its presence in China. This includes increasing headcount and further integrating our Greater China operations with global initiatives. At GreenPoint, we feel fortunate that Ankura recognizes the importance of the China market and is investing accordingly. We believe this approach positions our firm to serve our clients with

excellence for years to come.

***For American executives re-evaluating their China strategy, what would you say is essential for them to understand in 2025?***

**Travis Tanner**

It's all about perspective. Executives must constantly keep in mind that Washington and Beijing interpret the same events and actions through vastly different lenses. For instance, many in Washington view US technology restrictions against China as vital measures to protect national security and ensure that US technology is used in ways that align with US values. In China, on the other hand, these restrictions are viewed as attempts to suppress China's technological, geopolitical, and economic development.

The dynamic of dual and often conflicting perspectives has long shaped US-China relations. In 2025, understanding this dynamic is more crucial than ever, as economics, trade, and business are increasingly subordinated to politics and geopolitics.

***With tariffs and retaliatory measures back in the headlines in 2025, what realistic areas of cooperation do you think still exist between the US and China from a business standpoint?***

**Travis Tanner**

At the moment, nearly every issue seems to be viewed through the lens of “national security” by both sides. One area for future cooperation I would like to highlight is student exchange – an issue that I care deeply about and worked on for several years at the US-China Strong Foundation. However, recent trends of declining American students studying in China, along with new measures that could make securing student visas more difficult, are making even this area one around which it is difficult to foster collaboration.

Regardless of one's views on China's intentions toward the United States, it is critical for US national interest to ensure that the next generation of leaders is equipped to engage effectively with China. Unfortunately, the number of American students studying in China is far from sufficient to achieve this goal. After peaking at around 20,000 students in 2018 the figure plummeted to only around 800 Americans in 2024. This downward trend has profound implications, as future policymakers, defense strategists, business executives, journalists, NGO leaders, and others will be less prepared to manage the US-China relationship.

GreenPoint Group is a part of Ankura Consulting, whose global experts in strategy, conflict, crisis, performance, risk, and transformation provide clients around the world with comprehensive services and end-to-end solutions. With offices in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, Ankura helps clients navigate demanding regulatory environments and manage complex challenges in Greater China and beyond.



It's not too late to reverse this trajectory. I sincerely hope both sides recognize that revitalizing student exchange is in their interests.

***What should policymakers in Washington and Beijing better understand about the real on-the-ground challenges facing US companies in China today?***

**Travis Tanner**

I hope Washington policymakers understand that to compete globally, American companies must have a presence in China and factor this into their strategic decision-making. Without a foothold in China, they risk being outcompeted by European, Japanese, and increasingly by Chinese global competitors.

At the same time, US policymakers should recognize that China is not merely an important manufacturing and supply chain hub for American companies – it is also a vital market. The Chinese market is massive and often represents a significant proportion of US companies' global profits.

Similarly, I hope policymakers in Beijing realize that many US firms are experiencing “promise fatigue,” a sense of disillusionment about whether China will truly follow through on its commitments to create a level playing field for foreign businesses. While Beijing has long expressed intentions to promote fair competition, many US companies feel that the implementation has not matched the rhetoric.

***What motivates you to continue building bridges at a time when the US-China relationship is so fraught? What gives you optimism moving forward?***

**Travis Tanner**

What motivates me is the hope that pragmatism will ultimately prevail, as it has during past periods of ups and downs in the US-China relationship. While the bilateral relationship has experienced lows before, pragmatic approaches have often enabled both sides to find areas of common interest and cooperate effectively, resulting in significant benefits for both countries and the world. For example, the United States and China have collaborated on public health research, disease control, agriculture, space exploration, climate change, clean energy, disaster management, and many other issues – work that has generated valuable benefits for both nations and for the world.

At the end of the day, Americans and Chinese are all human beings with shared interests and common needs. The United States and China



have far more in common than the front pages of newspapers convey. To successfully manage the major challenges facing humanity such as climate change, global health, resource scarcity, poverty, technological risks, and environmental degradation, and to ensure a prosperous future for as many global citizens as possible, it will require strong leadership and cooperation from Washington and Beijing.

Young people inspire me as well. As a student at the Hopkins-Nanjing Center (2001-2002), I was motivated by conversations with American and Chinese classmates who shared a common vision that one day, the US Secretary of State and Chinese Foreign Minister would both be HNC graduates, negotiating on behalf of their respective countries with deep mutual understanding. I hope that current HNC students are actively working toward building that future.

Finally, the very thing that makes the US-China relationship so challenging — our deep interdependence — ironically gives me hope. The Chinese saying “唇齿相依” (lips and teeth depend on each other) perfectly captures this reality. Our economies are so intertwined that cooperation is essential. While it will require persistence, I believe it is in both nations' interests to seek areas of mutual benefit and stability in the bilateral relationship. **Q**

**Top:**

Travis Tanner addresses the audience at AmCham China's 2025 Human Resources Conference

**Courtesy of AmCham China**



***Learning in the Age of AI:***

# How China's International Schools Are Adapting

*Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept; it is a present-day reality that is rapidly reshaping industries around the world. One area where its impact is being closely observed is education. For international schools in China, where diverse curricula and global education standards intersect, the integration of AI brings both exciting opportunities and significant new challenges. In this feature, we spoke with educators, students, and school administrators to learn how they are adapting to – and reimagining learning in the age of AI.*



International education institutions are often regarded as some of the most forward-thinking and high-quality primary and secondary education options available to families. Their emphasis on innovative approaches, cultural diversity, and rigorous curricula has made them the top choice for globally-minded parents. As these schools strive to stay ahead of emerging trends and technologies, they are now turning their attention to one of the most transformative forces in modern education: artificial intelligence.

These strengths are especially critical today, as AI tools, from adaptive learning platforms to generative models like ChatGPT and DeepSeek, become embedded in everyday school life. The pace of change is striking: in just the past two years, many schools have evolved from early-stage experimentation to implementing structured policies, targeted professional development, and even student-centered frameworks for AI ethics.

Yet the integration of AI is not uniform. Schools vary widely in how deeply and strategically they deploy these technologies. At Wellington College Tianjin, AI supports a blend of administrative efficiency and immersive learning through platforms like Kognity and Futuclass VR. The Western Academy of Beijing (WAB) has developed an AI ethics code that prioritizes transparency and learning, encouraging students to responsibly engage with AI tools like MagicSchool and Diffit. Meanwhile, at ISA Wuhan International, administrators are adopting a more cautious approach, acknowledging the promise of AI but placing emphasis on preserving the “human touch” at the heart of their instruction.

The shift is also student-driven. As tech-savvy learners have quickly discovered the advantages of using AI for everything from summarizing biology concepts to generating LaTeX code for research projects. Some see AI as a productivity booster; others recognize the danger of “metacognitive laziness,” relying too heavily on machines at the cost of true learning. This duality underscores a critical truth: AI’s impact is as much about mindset as it is about technology.

At the heart of this transformation lies a fundamental question: How can schools harness AI to enrich education without compromising the quality and depth of student learning? For this feature, we interviewed administrators, students, educators, and parents from China’s leading international schools to explore how they are navigating this evolving landscape, seeking a delicate balance between innovation and integrity in education. AI is helping redefine traditional education philosophies, prompting the inclusion of digital citizenship, AI literacy, and coding curricula. At the same time, educators warn of potential risks: diminished critical thinking, inequities in access, and challenges to academic integrity.

Rather than grouping responses by institution, this discussion is grouped by subtopic, from current

adoption and curriculum redesigns to ethical implications and future trends. What emerges is a compelling story of cautious optimism. Schools are not blindly adopting new technologies. They are questioning, evaluating, and iterating, always striving to enhance student outcomes while staying true to their core values. In many ways, the responses mirror the broader educational mission: to prepare students not just for exams, but for the unpredictable demands of a rapidly evolving world.

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## Current Adoption of AI in International Schools

As AI tools become more embedded in school life, international institutions are finding diverse ways to integrate them into teaching, administration, and student learning. This section explores how schools are currently using AI across these different domains.

## How is AI currently being used in your school?



“At Wellington College Tianjin, we deploy AI to support both teaching and administration, boosting efficiency and—most importantly—student outcomes. Adaptive learning platforms such as Tassomai for science, IXL for English and math, and Kognity for economics and science personalize content to each pupil’s progress. Generative tools like ChatGPT lighten teachers’ workloads by helping with lesson planning and resource creation, while Curipod speeds up the production of classroom presentations. For English language acquisition, Microsoft Reading Progress and Reading Coach provide real-time feedback that strengthens literacy skills. On the administrative side, AI streamlines library management through a scanned book database and grades multiple-choice assessments via ZipGrade. We also pair AI with virtual-reality software—Futuclass VR in chemistry, for example—to create immersive, curriculum-aligned learning experiences.”

**Dr. Yang**

*Head of Tianjin Wellington College*



“At the Western Academy of Beijing (WAB) we use AI widely, but always under clear guidelines for transparency, accuracy, and learning. The aim is to enhance—never replace—critical thinking, interaction, and overall learning quality. In the high school, library and ed-tech staff lead workshops that show students how to find reliable sources through AI-enhanced academic search. Several teachers have built centrally managed AI tutors with Flint, particularly for language learning, giving students extra feedback and practice. Large language models also support staff in communication, lesson planning, and idea refinement, but are never used to out-source thinking. Tools such as MagicSchool help tailor materials to different reading levels and home languages, while LUDIA and Diffit promote inclusive practices. Students themselves now use age-appropriate AI for brainstorming, project development, and structuring their work. Finally, core platforms we already rely on—Microsoft, Canva, and others—offer AI features that we adopt when they clearly add value.”

**Stephen Taylor**

*Director of Innovation in Teaching and Learning,  
Western Academy of Beijing*

## What benefits have you observed? Any challenges or concerns?



“AI has brought clear advantages, most notably in personalized learning and in day-to-day efficiency. Adaptive platforms adjust content to each student, making differentiation easier and lifting academic results. Teachers get real-time data, allowing them to spot gaps quickly and target support. In our multilingual classrooms, AI-driven translation and language-development tools also make lessons more inclusive.

But challenges remain. We are mindful of data-privacy risks, algorithmic bias, and broader questions of ethical use. Ongoing professional development is essential so teachers can deploy these tools responsibly. Above all, we work to

keep a healthy balance between technological assistance and meaningful human interaction.

At ISA Wuhan we are beginning to explore learning analytics and to streamline operations with AI, yet we keep the ‘human touch’ at the center of our pedagogy. The technology is promising, but it must be applied thoughtfully and always in a student-centered way. Our approach is therefore measured and cautious, ensuring the integrity of human-led learning remains intact.”

#### **Mahesh Selvaraj**

*Deputy Director of School Development and Curriculum, ISA International Education Group; Deputy Head, ISA Wuhan Campus; Head, ISA Wuhan International School; Co-Head, ISA Wenhua Wuhan School*

## Has AI changed teacher recruitment or professional development?



“AI is impacting the way people process information. This is also true for those in the job search process. People use AI to help them prepare for job interviews,

analyze information, and make decisions. Recruiting is about building relationships and finding the right fit between the employee and employer. As people use AI in this process, it can increase efficiency. Some job seekers use AI tools to assist in the application process or to filter through potential employers that match their values.

I have seen cover letters and CVs that relied heavily on AI writing. In these cases, it’s essential to discern whether AI is responsible for the content and ideas or if the applicant used it simply for formatting and presentation. We want people who are resourceful and efficient, but we also want to recruit individuals with strong character, passion, creativity, and enthusiasm. School leaders need to be intentional in the recruiting process to understand prospective teachers and what drives them, to determine if they are the right fit. If candidates rely too heavily on AI, they miss the opportunity to demonstrate who they are. On the other hand, it can be a valuable tool to help job seekers find an organization that matches their interests and reduces the mundane and repetitive parts of the process.”

#### **Dr. William Hatten**

*Head of School, Chengdu International School*



#### **Above:**

The STEAM Centre of Wuhan ISA International School

Courtesy of Wuhan ISA International School

## How do you interact with AI tools in your studies?



“Depending on the information I aim to acquire through AI, the way I interact with it also differs. For instance, when trying to recall the concept of a Lewis

acid in chemistry or analogous structures in biology, I find it especially convenient to ask AI for quick reminders. AI tends to have an exceptionally low error rate when providing conceptual replies, which makes sense since concepts are predefined information with minimal room for variation.

In addition to being a kind of digital encyclopedia, AI has also been my ‘workhorse.’ It’s especially helpful for taking over repetitive or mechanical tasks, such as generating LaTeX code for a data table, which allows me to focus on higher-level thinking. You never know, sometimes AI really boosts my productivity and just makes life easier.

However, when it comes to tasks that require high creative input or logical reasoning, I’m cautious about accepting AI’s output at face value. For complex math problems (which AI isn’t fully trained for), I prefer to use it as a study buddy. By exchanging ideas, and sometimes even correcting its mistakes, I gain important insights that help me arrive at my own solution, rather than jumping straight to an answer that’s meaningless without the logical steps behind it.”

#### **Olivia Xu**

*Grade 12, Chengdu Meishi International School*



## Do you feel AI enhances or hinders your learning experience?



“Based on student feedback at QSI, the impact of AI on learning is viewed in different ways. Many students feel that AI can be a helpful

tool, especially when it comes to getting quick answers, clarifying difficult concepts, or overcoming moments of confusion when a teacher isn’t immediately available. They say it can make studying more efficient and reduce stress in some situations.

At the same time, several students pointed out that AI can become a distraction or a shortcut. They shared that it’s sometimes tempting to rely on AI too much, using it to complete work instead of thinking things through themselves. This can lead

to shallow learning and a lack of confidence when facing tests or assignments without AI support.

What came through clearly is that students believe AI’s effect on learning depends on the individual. Those who approach it with discipline and clear goals tend to benefit, while others risk using it in ways that don’t truly support their growth. Overall, students recognize that AI can enhance their learning experience—but only when they use it thoughtfully and with intention.”

**Christian Wang**

*Teacher (Science & Mathematics), QSI International School of Chengdu*



### AI's Influence on Curriculum & Pedagogy

As AI becomes more prominent in education, schools are rethinking both what students learn and how they learn it. This section looks at how AI is reshaping curriculum design, teaching methods, and classroom dynamics.

## Has AI prompted changes in your curriculum?



“AI has significantly influenced curriculum development in several key areas.

In coding and STEAM education, the school has implemented a structured progression in robotics and coding. Pupils begin with Bee Bots and Dot and Dash in the Early Years, move on to LEGO SPIKE Prime and micro:bit in Junior School, and conclude with VEX V5 Robotics in Senior School. These tools help introduce computational thinking and AI concepts from an early age.

In terms of AI ethics and digital citizenship, the school has developed its own GenAI Policy—the first in the Wellington China Group—to guide the ethical use of AI tools. This policy emphasizes academic integrity and critical engagement with AI-generated content. Related themes, such as digital citizenship and online safety, are reinforced through dedicated events like Digital Citizenship Week and Safer Internet Week, as well as through the Digital Citizenship Scope and Sequence document, which integrates AI ethics directly into the curriculum.

AI is also being used to enhance critical thinking and research skills. Tools like ChatGPT help pupils learn to evaluate sources and conduct research responsibly, while virtual reality experiences (for example, Dino Planet) support inquiry-based learning.”

**Dr. Yang**

*Head of Tianjin Wellington College*

## How do you balance AI-assisted learning with traditional teaching methods?



“When balancing AI-assisted learning with traditional teaching methods, teachers may face several

challenges. These include over-reliance on AI, reduced interpersonal interaction, mechanized learning experiences, weakened emotional connections between teachers and students, and overly

structured AI pathways that can lead to cognitive fatigue and limit students' exploratory interests. Additionally, AI tools may carry algorithmic biases that require regular evaluation, and technological disparities can worsen educational inequality.

To address these issues, it's important that teachers retain control over curriculum design. This means prioritizing traditional pedagogical approaches—such as classroom discussions and mentorship—to maintain strong teacher-student relationships and to better understand each student's personality and psychological state. AI should serve as a supplementary tool, not a replacement.

That said, teachers can strategically leverage AI's strengths. Personalized learning tools, such as intelligent tutoring systems, can adjust content difficulty based on a student's proficiency. Instant feedback mechanisms, like automated grading and online quizzes, help identify errors quickly and support continuous improvement.

However, successful integration requires that AI aligns with instructional goals through deliberate tool selection and adaptation. A blended learning model—combining online AI-assisted activities with offline, teacher-led instruction—is essential to ensure that human interaction remains central to the learning process. AI systems must also be regularly audited for fairness and accessibility, and equitable alternatives, such as offline materials, should be provided to bridge technological gaps.

This balanced approach helps preserve the irreplaceable human elements of education while harnessing AI's efficiency to enhance teaching and learning.”

**Naisi Gao**

*Vice President of Fayao Education Group*



“At WAB we are approaching AI at a sensible pace, through intentional and iterative approaches that promote challenging and joyful learning.

We look for appropriate entry points that don't sacrifice engagement and teacher-student relationships. The value of an expert, caring teacher in the classroom is immeasurable and irreplaceable. Innovative uses of AI are supported and monitored, while ongoing curriculum, teaching, and learning are iteratively evaluated to ensure excellent, student-centered, and experiential learning. At all stages, there is transparency in learning through strong relationships, feedback, and interaction.”

**Stephen Taylor**

*Director of Innovation in Teaching and Learning, WAB*

## Are you concerned about over-reliance on AI for assignments/exams?



“AI is part of the world that our students are growing up in, and its impact will likely continue to increase. Even before AI emerged, we

always acknowledged in education that we are preparing students for jobs of tomorrow that do not exist today. We want to equip students to solve problems and make a difference in the world around them, and our assignments and exams should reflect this. Technological innovation may change what that looks like, but it doesn't change the underlying truth.

Schools need to be aware of how AI impacts students and not settle for assessments that can be copied and pasted. High standards for assessments will help schools avoid overreliance on AI. At Chengdu International School, we emphasize student mastery and deep understanding, which will lead students to critical thinking and creativity. Whether or not they use AI as part of their research process, we want to ensure that students can engage with the material, discern truth, apply concepts creatively, and explain their thought processes. New technology always comes with concerns as it can require changes in our processes and procedures, but educators should embrace technology and teach students to use it responsibly.”

**Dr. William Hatten**

*Head of School, Chengdu International School*



“Yes, I am. Students tend to rely more and more on AI tools these days, and this reduces their critical thinking and writing skills. For subjects like

Literature, writing assignments now need to be conducted strictly in class to avoid the use of AI tools, and this also takes up a significant amount of class time. Over-engagement with AI also contributes to a culture of minimal effort, and it reduces students' engagement with course materials. Also, since students are not directly engaging with the task, ownership of ideas weakens, and this has a deep impact on learning and long-term retention. One of my biggest concerns is what the British Journal of Education Technology calls 'metacognitive laziness,' which meant a dependence on AI assistance, offloading thought processes to the bot and not engaging directly with the tasks that are



**Above:**  
Students using the 'Scratch System' before using AI to check their work

Courtesy of Optics Valley International School

needed to synthesize, analyze and explain. For students who are required to research and write in English, which might not be their native language, AI could become a crutch or shortcut. While it might speed up their assignment preparation time, there is a danger they are not learning or retaining as much knowledge as they would if they had to research and write on their own.”

**Robert Christensen**

*Principal at Optics Valley International School*

## How has AI changed the way you approach projects/ exams?



“It has become increasingly convenient for students like me to obtain and verify information with the help of AI. It has significantly changed the way I approach daily tasks, making my work more efficient and reducing unnecessary effort. For example, reviewing for exams is much less time-consuming—I no longer have to read through the entire book just to find a knowledge point I’ve forgotten. Instead, I can simply ask AI to summarize what I need by typing in keywords.

Determining the theme for research projects has also become easier. I don’t need to read every article or paper on a topic to find something engaging to write about. By using AI for inspiration, I can quickly skim recommendations, then refine my focus with more targeted online research.”

**A Student**

*Tianjin Farragut School*



## Ethical & Societal Implications

With AI’s growing presence in schools, questions around academic integrity, equitable access, and responsible use are becoming increasingly important. This section explores how schools are addressing these challenges. With AI’s growing presence in schools, questions around academic integrity, equitable access, and responsible use are becoming increasingly important. This section explores how schools are addressing these challenges.

## How does your school address AI-related plagiarism or misuse?



“When AI-related plagiarism is suspected, we use anti-plagiarism software to verify concerns. Confirmed AI-related plagiarism results in failing grades and a card-based disciplinary system. However, our school also adopts a balanced approach that aims to educate students. If AI-related plagiarism is detected, we engage with the students to understand the situation and to discuss their motivations. During these conversations, our faculty emphasizes the importance of academic integrity and of an ethical use of AI.”

**Robert Christensen**

*Principal at Optics Valley International School*





“QSI treats AI-related plagiarism as seriously as any other academic dishonesty. If students use AI tools and submit the content as their own without acknowledgment, it is considered plagiarism. We emphasize transparency and integrity, guided by the QSI Responsible AI in Learning (RAIL) framework.

Rather than reacting to misuse, we focus on education first. Students don't gain access to generative AI tools until they've received appropriate instruction. Like learning to drive, students need to build skills before using powerful tools. This approach helps prevent plagiarism and misuse at the root.

We also believe students must first develop independence, creativity, and critical thinking before AI becomes part of their workflow. We consider age and privacy considerations, ensuring all use is appropriate and intentional.

Through our AI Literacy Levels, students learn how to cite AI, think critically about its outputs, and apply it in ways that support real understanding. By preparing students before allowing AI access, we promote a culture of ethical, thoughtful, and informed use.”

#### **Christian Wang**

*Teacher (Science & Mathematics), QSI International School of Chengdu*

## Are there disparities in AI access among students? How do you mitigate them?



“At Wuhan Yangtze International School, our one-to-one device program across the grades provides equitable access to technology tools including AI.

Overall, we focus on character education and relationships, and specifically in academics we focus heavily on critical thinking and application. Although AI continues to develop rapidly, AI is not yet a replacement for these essential skills. By knowing our students well, we can determine how to best help them on their individualized path. Our students are coached to understand when AI is appropriate and when it is a detriment to their learning. These approaches mitigate the negative effects of AI while preparing them for the challenges of an unknown future.”

#### **Dr. Christopher J. Rehm**

*Head of School, Wuhan Yangtze International School*



#### **Right:**

A group of students working on an AI project

Courtesy of the International School of Tianjin

## Should AI literacy be mandatory in international education?



“Yes, AI literacy should be a core component of international education. As AI continues to shape the global workforce, students must be

equipped not only to use these technologies but to understand their ethical, social, and practical implications. AI literacy fosters critical thinking, digital responsibility, and informed decision-making which are essential skills in any 21st-century context. Incorporating AI into the curriculum doesn't mean turning every student into a programmer. Rather, it involves helping them grasp how AI systems work, how data influences outcomes, and how to question and interact with intelligent tools thoughtfully. This aligns well with the broader goals of international education: developing global citizens who are adaptable, ethical, and innovative. At ISA Wuhan, we see AI literacy as part of a future-ready education. As we prepare students for a rapidly evolving world, integrating AI understanding into interdisciplinary learning is both timely and necessary. The goal is not just to use AI, but to engage with it responsibly and meaningfully.”

### **Maresh Selvaraj**

*Deputy Director of School Development and Curriculum, ISA International Education Group; Deputy Head, ISA Wuhan Campus; Head, ISA Wuhan International School; Co-Head, ISA Wenhua Wuhan School*



“I'll begin by rephrasing the question: Should AI literacy be mandatory for educators? The education sector has long struggled to keep pace with

students' use of technology. Schools are generally

on the responding to technology side when it comes to technological advancements and trying to bring their educators up to speed. I don't believe AI is any different in that regard. Therefore, schools should start by focusing their education on best practices for all technology. Educating students with critical thinking skills and well-defined safeguarding practices casts a broader net in developing an understanding of appropriate use. Then, schools must specifically address AI by developing comprehensive guidelines and principles that align with their ethos, including both acceptable and unacceptable uses. Finally, schools must invest in professional development for their staff to equip them with the skills necessary to model appropriate educational usage, both in the classroom and in administrative settings. AI is a daily reality, and yes, we must educate and model for our students how to use it with discernment.”

### **Ryan Witt**

*Head of School, Tianjin International School*

## Do you think AI use in school gives some students an unfair advantage?

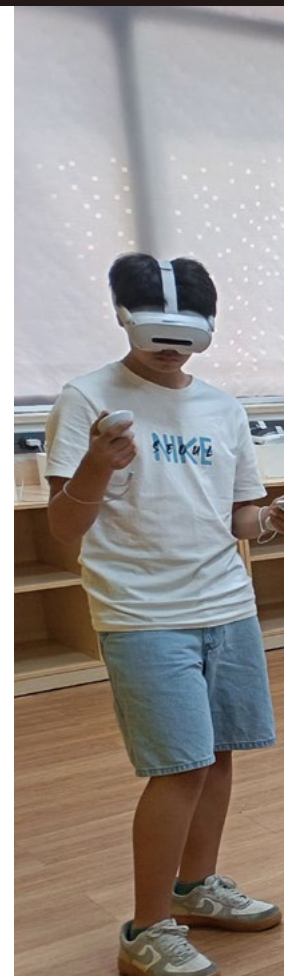


“There was a time early on with AI when this was true at our school. However, it has been much less true since our teachers adopted new

policies and practices for AI. For students who are interested in learning and knowledge, AI can support this and be very useful. For other students who are not interested in learning, I believe using AI hurts them in the long term.”

### **Jay Lee (grade 9)**

*Wuhan Yangtze International School*



**Top Right:**  
Students explore and learn during a VR/AR lesson

**Courtesy of the International School of Tianjin**





## Future Trends & Predictions

As AI continues to evolve, international schools are looking ahead to how it will shape education in the years to come, from redefining teaching roles to transforming assessments and student preparation for the future workforce.

## Where do you see AI making the biggest impact in the next 5 years?



“In the next five years, AI will transform education through personalized learning, cognitive partnering, and reimagined assessment—each requiring careful implementation to preserve essential cognitive development.

Personalized learning will evolve beyond simple content adjustment to create adaptive pathways responding to student interests, preferences, and emotional states. The most effective systems will maintain productive

struggle within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, supporting students while gradually developing independence.

In complex disciplines, AI will function as a collaborative thinking partner, suggesting experimental designs or alternative mathematical approaches. The challenge will be implementing these tools to enhance capabilities without encouraging cognitive offloading.

Assessment systems will evaluate complex performances with unprecedented sophistication, enabling authentic tasks previously limited by grading constraints. This shifts education from achievement-focused models toward agency-centered approaches that develop deep thinking and metacognition.

These developments will reshape rather than replace teaching. Effective educators will leverage these technologies while ensuring students



develop deep comprehension rather than superficial learning habits, focusing on building the neural architecture for wisdom that represents education's true purpose."

**Hao Zhai**

*Technology Director, International School of Tianjin*

## Will AI reduce the need for human teachers, or redefine their roles?



"I believe AI will not reduce the need for human teachers; instead, it will redefine their roles. My perspective is shaped by my experience as a Diploma Programme (DP) economics teacher and an assistant DP coordinator.

Our school emphasizes holistic education, spanning from kindergarten through secondary education. Academically, human teachers play a crucial role in guiding students through systematic learning. For instance, teachers can steer students toward projected learning outcomes by overseeing their learning pace and process, which is challenging for AI to replicate, as it requires nuanced understanding and flexibility of human teachers.

Moreover, human teachers are essential in developing specific student learning skills and dispositions. Teachers serve as role models, demonstrating behaviors and attitudes that students can emulate. This human touch is invaluable, as it allows students to learn not just through instruction, but also through observation. Additionally, teachers can monitor and support students' emotional and behavioral well-being throughout their learning journey. They can also structure the learning environment to foster collaboration and self-management skills.

These evolving educational needs place new demands on teachers. They will be facilitators of student learning and play a more active role in building student skills and dispositions."

**Monica Gao**

*Assistant DP Coordinator and DP Economics Teacher, Chengdu Meishi International School*



**Top:**

A 3D printing class allows students bring their creativity to life

*Courtesy of Tianjin International School*



"AI will redefine teaching while reinforcing—rather than reducing—the need for skilled educators. As content delivery, routine assessments, and administrative tasks become increasingly automated, the essential human elements of education will be brought into sharper focus.

AI may feel like magic, but behind the marvels lies mathematics. It's a sophisticated tool with specific capabilities and limitations. Teachers are uniquely positioned to demystify these tools, helping students understand the mathematical foundations that drive AI's seemingly magical abilities. The most effective educators empower students to master learning by applying the right tools for

the right tasks, unlocking learning experiences that would be otherwise impossible.

In this evolving role, teachers orchestrate environments where AI-supported activities are balanced with human interaction. They act as guardians against the short-circuiting of cognitive processes, ensuring students engage in productive struggle rather than outsourcing their thinking. Educators also help preserve deep reading experiences that nurture inferential, analogical, and empathic thinking, skills developed through guided human effort, not technological shortcuts.

These shifts demand more sophisticated pedagogical expertise. Educators must take proactive approaches to integrating technology, anticipating potential downsides before adoption, and prioritizing clear, purposeful learning goals over simple efficiency.”

#### Hao Zhai

*Technology Director, International School of Tianjin*



“As the education world continues to gain a deeper understanding of what AI will do to change the way people learn, we are presently living in a state of not yet understanding. We don’t know what the education world will look like in five, ten, or twenty years, or how the generation that grows up with AI embedded into their lives will use it to educate the next generation. However, educators know that AI cannot replace the developmentally critical relationship that exists between students and teachers. Teachers represent non-familial adult relationships in a child’s life that have an immeasurable societal impact in raising the next generation. Teachers must learn how to utilize AI in their teaching, but we must never let AI become the primary teacher.”

#### Ryan Witt

*Head of School, Tianjin International School*



“I don’t think AI will eliminate the need for human teachers, but it will certainly redefine their roles and make teaching more efficient. AI can be used for content creation and administrative tasks. This will reduce teachers’ workload and leave more time for them to focus on more meaningful tasks such as fostering positive relations with students, promoting collaborative discussions or providing personalized feedback. For example, for our Honors classes, we have cut down in-class instruction to four class periods per week, giving

students one day a week to self-study or get tutoring help. This is possible because AI-enhanced tools allow for more self-study and independent work.”

#### Robert Christensen

*Principal at Optics Valley International School*

## How can schools prepare students for an AI-driven workforce?



“Preparing students for an AI-driven workforce requires balancing technical fluency with distinctly human capacities. Learning is an adventure that transcends the mere accumulation of facts or mastery of skills. At its heart, education should enrich human life – equipping individuals with the tools to understand their world, appreciate the nuances of their experiences, and ultimately craft a life of purpose and meaning.

True learning thrives through a dynamic cycle: confronting meaningful problems, developing creative solutions, and refining ideas through experimentation. Schools should nurture this process by anchoring education in students’ innate curiosity. When students tackle problems they care about, they cultivate fundamental competencies: learning independently, embracing mistakes as growth, leveraging feedback, collaborating effectively, and adapting to evolving technologies.”

#### Hao Zhai

*Technology Director, International School of Tianjin*



“As students grow into an ever more rapidly changing world, it is essential we give them hope, agency and innovative opportunities underpinned by strong foundations in knowledge and skills that can withstand changes. The most valuable lifelong and employment skills remain those that AI cannot replace, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, passion and drive. The influences of AI on higher education, industry create challenges and opportunities for their future pathways, and exploration of these should be built into career guidance. Students can explore the implications of AI and other external forces on their areas of interest, uncovering new and



**Top Left:**  
Students using the 'Scratch System' before using AI to check their work

**Courtesy of Optics Valley International School**

emerging careers and professions, and seeking opportunities. Schools can support this through ongoing research, connection with external agencies, and industry.”

**Stephen Taylor**

*Director of Innovation in Teaching and Learning, Western Academy of Beijing*

## How do you train teachers to collaborate effectively with AI tools?



“The school provides structured training to ensure teachers are confident and proficient in using AI tools. Through the EdTech Teachers’ Learning Community, we offer sessions on AI

tools such as Tassomai and Kognity, explore VR integration, and examine the implications of generative AI on academic honesty. We also provide training on our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), including platforms like Microsoft Teams and OneNote Class Notebook, to help teachers effectively blend AI into their instruction.

In addition, teachers receive regular updates on our GenAI Policy and practical guidelines for using tools like the WCC Group ChatGPT via Teams. Hands-on pilots and action research are encouraged—for example, teachers may trial tools like Curipod or use Kognity in science classes to assess their impact and share best practices.

We also support professional growth through recognition and certification. Teachers are encouraged to become Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts (MIEEs) and to participate in competitions such as the Microsoft Imagine Cup Junior, which foster innovation and collaboration with AI.”

**Dr. Yang**

*Head of Tianjin Wellington College*





## Have you observed any effects of AI tools on students' mental health, stress levels, or creativity?



"At our school, we've seen both positive and negative effects of generative AI tools on students' learning, stress, and creativity. AI tutors and writing tools provide personalized support and instant feedback, which can reduce stress and enhance learning, especially when teachers aren't immediately available.

However, over-reliance on AI can hinder students' development of critical thinking and creativity. Some use AI to complete assignments without engaging deeply, which weakens understanding and confidence during assessments.

To guide responsible use, we follow the QSI Responsible AI in Learning (RAIL) framework. This framework promotes mission-driven, ethical, and balanced AI use in schools. We teach students to use AI as a support—after producing their ideas—rather than as a substitute for thinking.

Through our structured AI Literacy Levels, students learn how to use AI reflectively, ethically, and in ways that align with our educational goals. We aim to help students benefit from AI while still building independence, curiosity, and integrity in their learning."

**Christian Wang**

*Teacher (Science & Mathematics), QSI International School of Chengdu*

## Does using AI make you feel more anxious or more confident in your studies?



"AI acts like a study buddy to me, but I'm aware that relying too heavily on it isn't beneficial. From my perspective, overdependence on AI can create a false sense of understanding, it can make you believe you know more than you actually do. That's why I discipline myself to use AI alongside my own learning. I use it to check my work, get feedback on areas for improvement, and find references to support my ideas. I always keep academic integrity in mind, ensuring that my work is based on my own thinking, with AI used only to refine and enhance it. This approach gives me more confidence in my work and overall progress.

As an IB student, I'm constantly expected to process my own thoughts and express them clearly in assignments like essays and reflections. Taking part in the IB journey, my main goal is to cultivate the IB learner profile and reflect that growth personally. AI is a supportive tool in that process, but if I rely on it to do everything for me, I'll ultimately learn nothing and gain nothing—which goes against the purpose of being an IB student. This mindset helps me use AI responsibly and confidently, without feeling anxious. I remind myself that true learning comes from critical thinking and effort, not shortcuts."

**Student**

*ISA Wuhan International School*




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As international schools across China – and the world – grapple with the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence, one thing is clear: AI is not a passing trend; it is a defining force in the future of education. From classrooms to counselors' offices, lesson planning to student projects, AI tools are already reshaping how learning is delivered, supported, and understood. Yet amid this transformation, a resounding message emerged from educators, students, and administrators alike: technology must serve learning, not replace it.

The responses in this feature reflect a landscape of cautious optimism. Schools are embracing AI's potential to personalize learning, streamline instruction, and enhance operational efficiency. They are also acutely aware of the risks: overreliance, academic dishonesty, inequity in access, and the loss of critical thinking and creativity. In response, institutions are establishing thoughtful policies, fostering responsible use, and prioritizing professional development. Some, like WAB and Wellington College Tianjin, are leading with structured ethics frameworks and AI literacy initiatives. Others, such as ISA Wuhan and QSI, stress the importance of human connection and integrity in navigating the digital shift.

Students, too, are finding their footing. Many view AI as a useful 'study buddy' one that can help accelerate understanding, but does not substitute for their own thinking. Their reflections highlight an encouraging maturity: a growing recognition that learning is more than efficiency and ease; it's about engagement, curiosity, and ownership. As one IB student put it, "AI is a tool to refine and enhance, but true learning happens through effort and critical thought."

Looking ahead, we can expect AI's influence to deepen. Curriculum changes, personalized pathways, cognitive partnering, and reimagined assessment models are on the horizon. But rather than fearing disruption, these schools are preparing for evolution. Teachers are being called not only to adapt but to lead, to become guides, mentors, and interpreters of AI's role in meaningful education.

Ultimately, these institutions are not asking if AI belongs in education. They are asking how to use it ethically, equitably, and effectively, to ensure that every innovation serves a higher purpose: preparing students to thrive in a complex, AI-augmented world, without losing sight of the values and relationships that make education truly transformative. 

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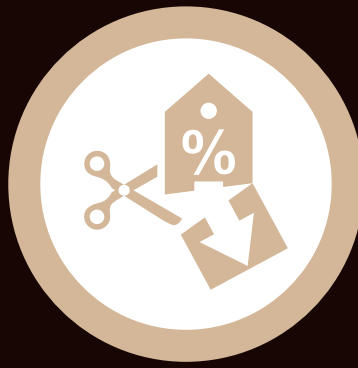
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