

EISENHOWER FELLOWSHIPS – 2009 Multi Nation Program
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Sean Sheng-Wen LIEN
Chairman, EasyCard Corporation
Taipei, CHINA (TAIWAN)

Sean Lien is Chairman of EasyCard Corporation, a Taipei municipal government-owned enterprise which operates a contactless smartcard system with multiple usages, including payment for buses, metro, rail, gas stations, fast food chains, hospitals, convenience stores, movie theaters, and more. Sean is also a co-founder and Director of the Board of Hong Kong-based Evenstar Advisor Limited, which specializes in Asian convertible bond investments. His fellowship objectives were to gain a better understanding of the current financial environment in the U.S., specifically the business environment of asset management and investment funds, and post-financial meltdown paradigms for asset allocation and risk management.

During his fellowship, Sean met and gained insight from industry leaders in organizations such as Cambridge Associates, Commonfund, Brown University Investment Management Company, Investcorp, and BlackRock Investment Management. There was consensus on the importance of liquidity, enhanced transparency and deleveraging and, regarding the financial crisis: “the worst is over but still a long road from recovery”. The financial industry’s current mood is passive and risk averse towards both the U.S. domestic market and Asia. This conclusion, coming directly from some of America’s leading financiers, will likely cause Sean to adjust Evenstar’s investment strategies. The senior executives that Sean met, including Maurice Greenberg, former AIG chairman and current chairman of C.V. Starr and Co., provided insights to the U.S. domestic economy and global development, especially related to the Greater China region.

With regard to EasyCard Corporation, Sean was surprised to find that similar smartcard systems are either nonexistent or underdeveloped in the U.S. San Francisco Municipal Government Commissioner George Yamamoto asked about the possibility of incorporating social welfare applications into smart cards and back-end systems. The people Sean met at New York’s Museum of Modern Art expressed interest in learning about how the smartcard system can improve a museum’s operating efficiency and cut costs.

On leadership, Sean felt the lectures on that topic during the Opening Seminar were stimulating and inspiring and allowed a rare opportunity to reflect on his own development as a leader and changes to make to improve his leadership skills. The sessions motivated Sean to plan an internal training program for EasyCard Corporation focusing on leadership development to galvanize executives to think deeper about managerial issues and improve internal communication.

Finally, Sean cited a conversation with a U.S.A. Fellow, where they disagreed on issues ranging from Middle East politics to what region of the U.S. is the “true America”. But he concluded, “This conversation revealed to me the true meaning of the Eisenhower Fellowship: it promotes dialogue between people from different parts of the world with different personal and professional experiences. Even if people disagree with each other and do not reach mutual understanding on controversial issues, it is even more important that they hear each other and continue to exchange their ideas.”