The Center for Cancer Biology and Nutrition at Texas A&M University's Institute of Biosciences and Technology has a unique working relationship with universities in the People's Republic of China. Dr. Wallace L. McKeegan, who heads the center, has developed personal working relationships with several famous cell biologists in China. This has helped him build a program that trains Chinese graduate students at the institute and gives them full student status at Texas A&M University.

So far, four universities have participated in the program. To participate, Chinese graduate students must be in a biochemistry or cell biology doctoral program, must have passed their qualifying exams, and finished their course work. Then, if they are outstanding enough to be selected by their professors, they come to IBT to perform their doctoral research.

Not only does Dr. McKeegan become the Chinese graduate students' thesis supervisor and mentor, he also becomes an adjunct professor at the students' home universities. Ten graduate students have participated in this unique program so far.

"The beauty of this system," says McKeegan, "is that I trust the recommendations of the professors in China. They've never made a mistake in their selections."

McKeegan's closest ties are to Xiamen University, located in the south coastal city of Xiamen. Heading the cell biology lab there is ninety-year-old Dr. Deyao Wang, who is a famous Chinese pioneer in his field. His lab has established an extensive collaboration with foreign universities, having sent more than 40 students and visiting scientists abroad. Four of these have worked under McKeegan, and 25 currently work in the Houston area at other research and educational facilities.

Two years ago Dr. Wang sent two of his top students to work at IBT. Under McKeegan's tutelage, they are doing research on prostate cancer. (McKeegan is the only professor in the whole Texas A&M University System who does research on prostate cancer.) After only one year at the institute, Mr. Yongde Luo (age 29) is ready to submit his first paper to a scientific journal.

Yongde explains, "We work even harder here than we did in China because it is so easy to get the latest scientific data. This is exciting and makes my work more enjoyable. In China, we got a good grounding in theory, but here with all the plentiful resources, we can do more hands-on research."

Ms Weiquan Lu (also 29) says, "I'm so lucky to be here, doing my research at a part of Texas A&M. Everyone in our lab is warmhearted and helpful, and this makes our work progress quickly."

Yongde and Weiquan will do all their doctoral research here in Houston, but will return to Xiamen to defend their dissertations. Because they, like other graduate students from Texas A&M in McKeegan's lab, are selected as the best of very bright young scientists, they will have the chance either to head university
research groups in China or to return to the U.S. to work in industry or university labs.