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Reaping a Whirlwind

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The University of Dayton opened a stand-alone center last summer during the middle of a typhoon in Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP), one of the fastest-growing innovation parks in the world.

The whirlwind has continued throughout the institute's first year with construction, classes, projects, career assistance and even a chance to ask questions of two Federal Reserve presidents.

Here are some of the accomplishments University of Dayton and SIP officials will celebrate on Aug. 8, the one-year anniversary of the opening of the University of Dayton China Institute:

- Construction of two partner laboratories — the Lilly Pharmaceutical Lab and the Nanjing University of the Arts Industrial Design R&D Center, both of which will be dedicated at the open house.
- The signing of memoranda of understanding with 14 partner companies for a wide range of activities to be conducted at UDCI. Some of the activities include continuing education and professional development courses, recruiting assistance, providing facilities for research and development as well as training and videoconferencing, energy audits and project assistance through the UDCI Innovation Center.
- The launch of an inaugural six-week summer program for 20 University of Dayton students who took engineering, business and communication courses while working on research projects with companies in the park. Future plans include year-round academic classes for students wishing to study in China for a semester.
- Creation of more than 50 continuing education and executive training courses — from project management to energy-efficient manufacturing — for engineers and other professionals in the park.
- The establishment of internships and full-time positions with partner companies for University of Dayton students and graduates.
- Completion of a number of company-sponsored student projects, including a company training manual and laboratory training systems for programmable logic controllers.
- Hosting a University of Dayton China Institute career fair and company information sessions that brought together partner companies and more than 120 students from partner universities in China.
- Establishing a satellite hook-up for 30 Chinese students from partner universities that allowed participation in this spring's RISE student investment forum at the University, including asking questions of two Federal Reserve presidents.

"This is just the beginning," said Scott Segalewitz, professor of engineering technology and director of industrial and technical relations for UDCI. "We envision bringing undergraduate students here for full semesters of study and research. We envision designing more specialized courses for our partner companies. And we will provide research facilities and venture capital opportunities for faculty and students engaged in product development."

In 2011, SIP officials made a multimillion-dollar investment in the renovation of a five-story, 68,000-square-foot building for classrooms, laboratories and project space for the University of Dayton China Institute, primarily because of the University's strong ties in China and its track record in product development through the School of Engineering's Innovation Center.

Nearly two dozen universities from all over the globe have committed to establishing a presence here, but the University of Dayton is the first American one.

Home to a third of the world's Fortune 500 companies just 75 miles from the world's busiest port in Shanghai, Suzhou Industrial Park opened in 1994 as a cooperative venture between the governments of China and Singapore.

Provost Joe Saliba believes that University of Dayton graduates who have worked at the China Institute will stand out among their peers when seeking jobs. "Our students will have a competitive edge over students from other universities. I cannot think of a CEO or top manager in a major American company who doesn't have global experience," he said.

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