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Globalization 101

05.02.2013 | Students, Faculty, Service and Giving, Engineering

"How many of you are very comfortable using chopsticks?" engineering technology professor Scott Segalewitz asked a group of University of Dayton students during a recent brown-bag lunch on campus. A few laughed nervously, while their Chinese peers smiled.

"It's unlikely you'll have forks and knives, so be adventurous. Try new things," he said to a roomful of students preparing to jet to China this month to take classes at the new University of Dayton China Institute (UDCI).

Last summer, in a part of eastern China that was rice fields and farmland less than two decades ago, the University opened a stand-alone center in the ultra-modern Suzhou Industrial Park. In a section of the park called BioBay, home to 275 high-tech companies, the University occupies a modern, renovated building that's outfitted with eight specialized science and engineering labs and classrooms.

Segalewitz and Phil Doecker, professor emeritus of mechanical engineering, are coordinating industrial and technical relations at UDCI. They're working closely with multinational companies in Suzhou Industrial Park to develop research projects and courses for students.

"When I heard about the program, I knew I wanted to go," said Christian Stuck, a sophomore industrial engineering major from Kettering. "UD brings a lot of international students here, and they seem to enjoy themselves and learn plenty. I thought the same would happen for me if I went to China."

Stuck is part of a group of 20 students — nine American, 10 Chinese and one Kuwaiti — taking three engineering, business and communication courses at UDCI from UD faculty members. They each received a \$3,000 scholarship to defray travel and housing expenses.

The students will conduct hands-on projects with multinational partner companies in the park. Guest speakers from these companies will offer lectures. And professors from Nanjing University and other partner universities will provide seminars on topics that range from how to do business in China to appreciating Chinese music, art and tai chi. On the weekends, the students will explore other cities in China.

"I was planning on taking summer classes anyway in Dayton," said Danny Legittino, a sophomore mechanical engineering technology major from Chicago. "Once I heard about this, I thought I want to immerse myself in another culture. It's something nice for my resume."

Zhenghang Gu, a sophomore electrical engineering major from Suzhou, spent last summer interning for Delphi Thermal in the park and taking weekend courses at UDCI. He made a presentation at this spring's Stander symposium about the experience.

"You get a chance to work with real engineers on real problems," he said. "You're not going to get that experience anywhere else."

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