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Parlez-Vous Engineering?

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To give graduates an edge in the growing job market for engineers with the skills and perspectives for success in a global context, the University of Dayton has created the Global Manufacturing Systems Engineering Technology program.

"We wanted to come up with a way that when our students graduate they are ready to take on international assignments for companies," said Sean Falkowski, an associate professor of engineering technology who helped develop the program.

"The U.S. needs to make sure students have international experience and cultural awareness so they are more prepared to work in international settings. This hopefully will encourage foreign companies or engineering jobs that are international in nature to relocate to the U.S."

Students in the University of Dayton program must fulfill a foreign language requirement and complete a study-abroad experience, international service-learning experience or internship with an international company or division of a company.

Zach Dillon, a junior engineering student who is studying Italian, said he felt he missed a great deal when someone translated for him.

"I felt that I was closed off in a silo. I had to speak basic English, and I felt it degraded the quality of conversations," said Dillon, who studied in Germany this summer. "Knowing the language allows you to have a real conversation. It opens a lot of doors. It's really important."

Matt Engardio, a senior engineering student who also studied in Germany, said it was helpful to experience international engineering in practice. He saw how German engineers worked with Swiss and Austrian counterparts.

"Go talk with any employer running a global manufacturing outfit, which is pretty much everyone. Most U.S. firms work with companies outside the country," Engardio said. "A foreign language is an extremely useful tool. I don't see any negatives."

University of Dayton engineering students now have an unparalleled, hands-on opportunity to increase their global skills in one of the fastest-growing innovation centers in the world, where a third of the world's Fortune 500 companies have a presence.

The University of Dayton China Institute recently opened a five-story, 68,000-square-foot building for classrooms, laboratories and project space in the Suzhou Industrial Park, located about 75 miles east of Shanghai.

Students will have the opportunity to work with engineers and scientists to collaborate with Fortune 500 companies in the park, secure venture capital and bring technology to the market. Faculty and student exchanges are also envisioned along with graduate education and certificate programs.

"It's about providing our students with international opportunities few campuses can offer," University of Dayton President Daniel J. Curran said.

The University of Dayton China Institute will open the door to co-op and internship opportunities in China for University of Dayton students and provide a pipeline for recruiting Chinese students.

"Students need a greater understanding of China to succeed in the global economy," said Joseph Saliba, University of Dayton provost. "The University of Dayton China Institute will help prepare a new generation of students to be leaders in a world without traditional boundaries. They will be skilled at bringing diverse perspectives to problems and will be comfortable in adapting rapidly to change."

Other universities are part of this trend -- the University of Wisconsin offers a certificate in international engineering and the University of Michigan has a global leadership honors program.

And the American Society for Engineering Education and the International Federation of Engineering Education Societies are

surveying stakeholders about the importance of certain traits in global engineers.

Preliminary results from the survey released in 2011 reported nearly three-quarters of the respondents said it was important for engineering grads to demonstrate an understanding of political, social and economic perspectives. Fifty-eight percent said an international/global perspective is important; and a third said it's important to be fluent in at least two languages.

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