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Let the Innovation Begin

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In a rapidly growing part of China that was farmland less than two decades ago, the University of Dayton today opened a center in the ultra-modern Suzhou Industrial Park.

The University of Dayton kept to its grand opening schedule as a typhoon lashed eastern China, bringing all-day heavy rains and high winds to the region. After tours of the new center and a formal ceremony capped by confetti, University of Dayton music faculty and students joined the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company in an energetic, uplifting dedication concert at Dushu Lake

Theater.

"Today is a celebration," said Daniel J. Curran, University of Dayton president. "There's an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit in Suzhou Industrial Park that's unlike any in the world. The University of Dayton China Institute represents an extraordinary opportunity for our students, faculty and the high-tech companies in this park."

About 100 people attended the ceremony, which was conducted in English and Mandarin. Many of the speakers bowed to each other, and former Ohio Gov. Bob Taft greeted the largely Chinese crowd in their native language. In an exchange of gifts, Curran presented a model of the 1905 Wright Flyer and received a large, ceremonial key to the University of Dayton China Institute.

Taft presented a congratulatory proclamation from Ohio Gov. John Kasich to Curran. "The leadership of the University extends beyond our state's borders, where it serves as a national leader in higher education and research," said Taft, noting that the China Institute "places before us a wonderful and exciting opportunity to enhance the scientific, commercial and artistic ties between China and the state of Ohio."

Home to a third of the world's Fortune 500 companies, Suzhou Industrial Park was built from scratch. Located about 75 miles from Shanghai in Jiangsu Province in eastern China, the park is a cooperative venture between the governments of China and Singapore. 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.

The University of Dayton was handpicked by Suzhou Industrial Park officials, who made a multimillion-dollar investment in the renovation of a five-story, 68,000-square-foot building for classrooms, laboratories and project space because the multinational companies in the park are interested in innovation, product development and education.

The building features eight specialized science and engineering laboratories, and is designed for faculty and students to do applied research and product development for corporate partners in the park. It also includes space for a proposed Marianist

Heritage Center to showcase the University's mission and rich history.

At the ceremony, Curran signed memorandums of understanding for partnerships with five multinational companies — Marian (Suzhou) Co., Ltd., Makino (China) Co., Ltd., Henny Penny (Suzhou) Corp., Ltd., Emerson Climate Technologies (Suzhou) Research & Development Co., Ltd., and Lilly Suzhou Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. Partner companies unable to attend included GE Aviation China, Johnson & Johnson Medical (Suzhou), Ltd., SAS Automation, LLC, and Delphi Electronics Suzhou Co., Ltd.

Vic Bonneau, president of electrical power systems for GE Aviation, traveled to Shanghai, but road closures due to the typhoon prevented him from participating in the ceremony, where he was scheduled to speak.

Tony Saliba, dean of the School of Engineering, estimated he spent 600 hours last year working on the building's design. "They did a good job," he said after surveying the building for the first time. "We're simulating the world for our students. In the real world, sometimes you have to deal with a 12-hour time difference with clients, and sometimes you have to visit the site. This allows them to actually come here and work directly with companies. It's very important for our students to work across the globe."

Chinese officials participating in the ceremony included Gong Huijin, vice director general of Jiangsu Economic and Information Technology Commission; Pan Yi, vice president of Nanjing University; and Wang Hongsheng, vice mayor of Suzhou municipal government.

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