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Remembering Two Students

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Lighting incense and bowing slowly three times in front of the framed portraits of Zhongyi Xu and Hanqing Wu, Provost Joseph Saliba set a tone of reverence and respect at a Nov. 13 memorial service that drew a standing-room-only crowd in the Kennedy Union Ballroom.

"We are here today to honor and remember two University of Dayton students," said Tim Kao, associate director in the Center for International Programs. "This is an unexpected loss and tragic event for the University of Dayton community."

Wu, a 19-year-old electrical engineering major from Suzhou, and Xu, an 18-year-old civil engineering major from Nanjing, died in a car accident Nov. 6.

"Two words came up time and time again. Selfless and good-natured. These were good people," Kao said.

The service, presented in English and Chinese, included a reading from *Book 34, Tao Te Ching* and the *Gospel of John 14:1:3*. The gatherers offered intercessory prayers for the grieving and recited the Lord's Prayer. Some students buried their heads in their hands, while others embraced one another as four students told stories about their friends in their native language. They spoke of their generosity, character and humility — a common theme that cut across the memories of each classmate.

"The campus is grieving and will continue to grieve," Kao said. "An opinion piece in the *Flyer News* noted that these were not Chinese students. They were University of Dayton students. People came together this week from all walks of life to help University of Dayton students."

As the slow, sorrowful refrain of traditional music from the seven-stringed guqin filled the ballroom, Xu's family led a silent procession before the photos of their son and his friend. White candles, vases of yellow and white flowers, and bowls of apples and oranges adorned the tables, all part of Chinese culture.

The family lit sticks of incense and bowed three times.

Approximately 450 people — Chinese students, Marycrest Hall residents, faculty, staff and members of the Dayton Chinese Cultural Association and local Chinese Christian Church — followed University of Dayton President Daniel J. Curran and repeated the rituals.

Kao's closing words lingered in the incense-filled air. "Although we depart in sadness, we take comfort in the support we have for one another and in our faith."

(Photos courtesy of the *Flyer News*.)