Chinese institute opens at San Diego State University-Imperial Valley

By DAVID STEFFEN, Staff Writer

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CALEXICO — The Confucius Institute debuted at the San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus here Friday with Chinese dragon dances and the visit of Chinese dignitaries.

“People here are interested in the Mandarin language and learning Chinese culture — it’s amazing,” Zhunmin Chen, the head of the education office at the Chinese consulate in Los Angeles, said.

The Confucius Institute is a private, worldwide organization that promotes Chinese language and culture. The permanent Confucius Institute at SDSU-IV features Chinese artwork, videos, historical photos, Mandarin language materials and books. It is located in the SDSU-IV library and is open to the public.

Funds from the Chinese government and the Chinese business community in San Diego helped fund the Imperial Valley Confucius Institute, Paul Wong, dean of the SDSU college of arts and letters, said.

SDSU-IV Dean Stephen Roeder said the new Confucius Institute will promote Chinese culture, which is present in the Imperial Valley and Mexicali. He said learning about Chinese language and culture is vital to promoting local business with China.

“This will be a tremendous catalyst for doing that,” he said.

He said feedback he has heard on campus about the Confucius Institute is positive. SDSU-IV is working to develop Mandarin language classes on campus and in local schools, he said.

“Everywhere I go, the reaction is really positive,” Roeder said. “People are really excited about China.”

The inauguration ceremony took place on the steps of the SDSU-IV library. Chen, faculty and other dignitaries cut the inaugural ribbon and unveiled a Confucius Institute plaque.

Members of the Calexico Martial Arts Academy played Chinese drums and danced in traditional Chinese dragon costumes. Afterward, guests toured the Confucius Institute’s dedicated section in the library and ate Chinese food, courtesy of Louis Wong, owner of Yum Yum Chinese restaurant in Calexico.

SDSU-IV senior Maricela Canales said she was appreciative of the unique institute on campus.
“It's good we have something like that because not all universities have it,” Canales said.

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