Happy Holidays from the IEP!

Above: IEP LLC Holiday Party. Residents celebrate the end of the semester by decorating cookies, playing games, and exchanging Secret Santa gifts.

Left, top: Residents show off their Halloween pumpkin-carving skills.
Left, bottom: LLC residents participate in rock climbing/team-building exercises at URI’s North Woods Challenge Course.

Director’s Notes

Dear Friends,

This Fall semester the IEP has seen several exciting developments. We have been fortunate to hire a new coordinator for the Spanish IEP, Alexis Gonzalez, who is originally from the Dominican Republic and has a Master’s in Education from the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB) in Ibiza, Spain. Alexis is assisting SIEP director Megan Echevarria in managing over 190 Spanish IEP students in this 2nd largest IEP program. He has made great strides in placing students in Spain while also expanding efforts to Latin American countries. Welcome to the IEP, Alexis!

To leverage the fast-growing economy in Chile and to create more visibility for Latin America as a site for technology and culture, Megan led the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Pontificia Catolica Universidad de Valparaiso. She also submitted a grant proposal to the Partnerships for the Americas Foundation which, if successful, will allow us to send 24 SIEP students to Chile in 2014 for study, internships, and summer research on sustainable development. Please keep your fingers crossed as we are developing new strategies to offset the sluggish economic growth in Spain.

Responding to increasing student demand and taking advantage of an already thriving major in Italian at URI, as well as a new MOU with the Universidad de Calabria, we have launched an Italian IEP this semester. Michelangelo La Luna, Associate Professor of Italian and an accomplished writer with a Ph.D. from Harvard and one from the University of California, has begun to get Italian companies/institutions on board such as FERRARI, BSP Pharmaceuticals, and the Center for Maritime Research and Experimentation of NATO. Michelangelo has also secured a generous donation in the memory of Teodoro Raffaele Diacono to establish the Italian IEP, and in particular an Italian wing in our IEP Living & Learning Community. Congratulations, Michelangelo, and welcome aboard!

The Chinese Flagship Program under direction of Wayne He has also made huge strides in moving this rigorous, government-sponsored program forward. Engineering students now make the majorities of Chinese Flagship participants (28%) followed by business and other majors, and they can benefit from several unique features: increased contact hours per week (5 instead of 3) which has already resulted in remarkable proficiency gains for the students; additional tutoring; winter and summer immersion programs in China; research opportunities with Chinese faculty on campus; and funding through combined Flagship, Con- fucius Institute, and IEP Hasbro funding sources. The November review committee led by Mike Nugent, new Director of the Defense Language National Security Education Program, was delighted to see the program’s progress, especially the way it is able to effectively integrate and retain our IEP engineers, which makes it a truly distinct program amongst its Chinese Flagship peers around the country.

On the French side, Lars Erickson is plotting a new 1 credit French for Engineering course in the Spring semester to provide tailored content to our FIEP students. He will also lead a group of younger French IEPers to Paris, Lyon, and Peau in January 2015 during a J-term study tour.

During this year’s 16th Annual Colloquium on International Engineering Education in Lexington, KY, Heather Price, Erin Papa, and I represented the IEP team reporting on how to get started with an IEP, how to build the Chinese Flagship/IEP Engineering community; our new transfer plan agreement with SUNY Adirondack; and plans to develop an IEP track at North Kingstown High School to fill the pipeline.

Provost DeHayes launched a new J-term initiative this year and our 3 credit “Germany Today: Science, Technology & Culture” J-term course has been accepted to start this January. Damon Rarick will teach an intensive three-day intensive preparation module on campus and Anett Geithner, our fabulous new DAAD Lecturer (welcome Anett!), and I will then take the students to Berlin, Hamburg, Braunschweig, Wolfsburg, Wuppertal, and Cologne. The trip is generously funded by the Van Meersteren Foundation, the DAAD, and possibly the Max Kade Foundation. Anett and Damon are also going to run a DAAD-sponsored professional development workshop in mid December for 25 German faculty members from U.S. institutions to develop their expertise in creating languages for the professions curriculum such as German for Engineers.

I thank all of you for your support of the IEP and wish you a wonderful end of the year as we are heading into the holiday season.

--Dr. Sigrid Berka

Dr. Sigrid Berka, Executive Director

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Global Update

Fall 2013 Volume 16 Issue 1

The University of Rhode Island
International Engineering Program

The new Italian IEP director, Michelangelo La Luna (far right) and representatives from the Universidad de Calabria.

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Hometown: Cranston, RI
Activities: URI Student Senate, Flagship Scholarship Award Winner, Student Athlete, Rugby, Society of Women Engineers (SWE)

Why study Chinese? My interest in Chinese came almost entirely from a desire to learn about China. Because it’s a critical language, and typically regarded difficult to learn, I thought it would be worth the investment. After I started studying Chinese, however, it was the language itself and the culture that made me realize just how interesting I really was.

Why did you choose the IEP? Before coming to URI I had always been interested in traveling, but during my time at URI I learned to love working on-engineering. The IEP was the answer I was looking for when choosing a college. Not only does the program provide the academic foundation for the student, but the experience of living abroad for a full year is truly unique and something that I knew I wanted to do. I have also met some really interesting people here in Lexington, Kentucky in November 2013.

Why did you choose the IEP? To me, choosing the IEP was about a million different things. First and foremost, I wanted to study Chinese, but primarily I wanted to focus on engineering. I have also met some really interesting people here in Lexington, Kentucky in November 2013.

What do you look forward to about studying in China? I love living in the IEP House and all the benefits that come along with it, from the close-knit social community to the ability to connect with students all over the world. I am excited about the opportunity to learn about Chinese culture and to be part of a global community. I am also excited about the opportunity to continue expanding my horizons. Living abroad will really be a great opportunity to start. It will be a challenge, but I am looking forward to it. I feel confident that I will be able to handle the challenges that will come my way.

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