Engaging with Spain and Chile

Our new Spanish IEP Director Silke Scholz hit the ground running, with trips to Spain and Chile for company, partner university and student visits.

Residents in the IEP Living & Learning Community celebrated the end of the semester with a festive holiday party, complete with a Secret Santa gift exchange, games and an ugly sweater contest. This occasion also marked the debut of the IEP House living room’s beautiful new Persian rug, generously donated by the Silvia family.

Meeting with representatives at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (PUCV) in Chile. L-R: Monica Ramos, Marco Avilés, Silke Scholz, Luis López and Nicole Reinosa.

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IEP Welcomes New Assistant Director

Silke Scholz wears many hats! Our new IEP Assistant Director Silke Scholz is also serving as Director of the Spanish IEP.

With IEP students in Spain: Cara Nunez and Sean Marrain.

With IEP students in Chile: Kate Brown and Jack Clark.

Happy Holidays from the IEP!

IEP LLC Halloween pumpkin carving, always a hit with our visiting international students.

IEPers climbing to the top!

Director’s Notes

Dear Friends,

At the end of the year I’d like to update you on the latest IEP news & developments.

From September 18-21 we had the honor of hosting President Jürgen Hesselbach of the Technische Universität Braunschweig on campus for the first time and introduced him to faculty and students involved in our dual masters and MBA programs and to American football viewed from President Dooley’s suite. Shortly after, we welcomed our new Assistant IEP and Spanish Director Silke Scholz, who speaks three IEP languages and joined us from our corporate partner Hexagon Metrology. With her trademark enthusiasm and determination to get the job done, Silke hit the ground “flying” to Europe and on to Latin America all within one month, and has gained much new ground already in placing our large group of Spanish IEPers. Silke will join Vinka Graver traveling again in January to take a group of SIEPers to Chile for the “Spanish IEP Sustainability Project and Study Tour”, which is subsidised by Megan Echevarría’s Partnership in the Americas’ grant.

A second J-term, led by Lars Erickson, will introduce French IEPers to Parisian culture and partner companies Total, Technip, Schneider Electric and Vinci Construction. The German J-term, newly conceptualized by DAAD lecturer Aneft Geltner and also accompanied by our new German lecturer Shauna Rambour, will add the trademark German company visits to the experience of a Fastblind play in the Berlin Maxim Gorki theater, the investigation of electro-mobility in the Ministry of Transportation and Digital Infrastructure as well as much exploration, blogging and video-recording in small student groups.

Congratulations to Angela Graney, our IEP LLC Assistant Director who was on maternity leave this Fall with her new baby Violet. We look forward to seeing Angela back managing the IEP houses in January! Congratulations also to Lars Erickson who competed for and secured a one-year sabbatical which he will spend at our partner institution in Compiegne, UTC, on the “Preparation of URI’s French International Engineering Program Students.”

We were honored to have our own Amanda Gatali (Spanish & Civil Engineering 15) mentioned as a trail blazer in strengthening American competitiveness in Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker’s December 9th White House address at the Summit on Study Abroad and Global Citizenship – her journey from Rwanda to URI and on to studies in Spain and her internship in Chile exemplifies how the IEP sets our students on the path of “deepening their cultural fluency, ” “finding common ground” and picking up the “rhythms of daily life and nuances of other cultures.”

With respect to the IEP advisory board we are excited to have won Clay Pell as a new board member – Clay speaks Chinese, Spanish and Arabic, and spent time abroad in China, Spain and Argentina and thus is a great role model for our own students’ pursuit to gain profound new perspectives and make connections around the world. Many educational initiatives proposed in Clay’s gubernatorial campaign this year such as the hope internships, language leaders, international connections and career and technical opportunities align extremely well with our own mission. Last but not least, please don’t forget to raise your New Year’s champagne glasses to our Dean of Engineering Ray Wright who ran his own tireless and successful campaign to get a $125 million bond approved by R.I. voters to revamp our engineering complex at URI! Students and faculty will find a much improved engineering infrastructure in the near future with exciting new buildings, labs and spaces conducive to interdisciplinary team work and out-of-the-box thinking.

I wish you all joyous holidays and a very Happy New Year!

--Dr. Sigrid Berka
IEP Executive Director
The Journey of a Business Visitor at URI

Strong partnership between DB and URI by Friederike Vollenberg

My journey as the first DB Business Visitor at the University of Rhode Island began in mid-September. For me, coming back to URI has been a reunion with a special place. Five years ago I graduated from URI within the Dual Degree Program between DB and URI. In 2012, when we both signed our cooperation agreement, the Business Visitor Program was added – a three-month program in which a DB employee comes to URI to do research and to represent Deutsche Bahn on campus in order to promote career possibilities to German speaking students.

As the first Business Visitor, I have been honored to fill the past three months with my own ideas since I was starting from scratch. In retrospect, that was great! I organized nine events for International Engineering and International Business Program students as well as those of other majors. I attended the Engineering and Technology Career Fair in the Ryan Center and the Fall Internship and Job Fair in the Memorial Union, always accompanied by two small ICE-Bobby-Trains, brought from Germany to attract students to one of the world’s leading passenger and logistics companies. One Sunday afternoon IEP House residents got the chance to participate in an ICE-Bobby-Train-Relay in the parking lot behind the IEP House. Four teams of three students each raced against each other and answered tricky questions about DB. I gave the trains to the IEP as a gift, so students can still enjoy a ride! Furthermore I introduced DB to the students going abroad next year at the German IEP Pre-Departure Orientation, and for the IEP students I planned an informal evening at the Mews Tavern. I organized a DB information event and offered a workshop on how to write a German resume, followed by over twenty individual appointments with students revising their resumes. Overall the feedback of the students was very good and they were grateful for the time I spent with them.

In November I participated on a panel at the 17th Colloquium on International Engineering Education in Providence. My research under Professor Marbirt Sodhi in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering focused on Deutsche Bahn’s contributions to sustain DB Executive visitors. I gained new insights which will help me in my future work.

Another highlight of my three-month stay at URI was teaching a German conversation class. It was great to work with students on their German skills.

As the first DB Business Visitor to URI, Friederike represented Deutsche Bahn throughout the semester.

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I was even invited to the President’s office to tell President Dooley about my experience at URI. That was a remarkable moment – representing Deutsche Bahn in front of URI’s highest official.

The final event I organized was a day trip to the German Center for Research and Innovation (GCR) in New York City. Four Braun students had the chance to tour the German House and to meet Dr. Josef Blank, CEO & President of DB US Holding Corporation, in order to get to know more about the international business activities of DB. In the evening we attended a panel discussion of “Green Logistics” and a networking reception.

Overall the past three months have been a wonderful experience – living in the IEP House, working with students to explore DB, doing research, attending Kaffeezunde and setting up different types of events. I thank the University of Rhode Island and Deutsche Bahn AG for this opportunity to be a Business Visitor. I hope DB will be welcoming a lot of URI students in the future for internship jobs – after all, a job at Deutsche Bahn is: A job like no other.

Auf Wiedersehen ;-)