Global Geek: Language Training for IT Students’ Study Abroad in Austria and Germany

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Introduction

- EU–Atlantis program (GlobITPro.org)
  - Transatlantic student and faculty mobility program around the themes of entrepreneurship, global collaboration, and IT management and research.
- Four consortium partners
  - University of Nebraska–Omaha; University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire; Management Center Innsbruck; Braunschweig University of Technology
- 4 year grant of $194,000 from US DOE and match to EU partners from the EU Atlantis agency. Started in 2009.
- One year study program
  - Full semester of classes abroad (30 ECTS or 12 credits) at one or more consortium university
  - American students attend course modules and visit corporations in both Germany and Austria (e.g., SAP and VW)
  - EU students chose one location in the USA and also visit local corporations (e.g., Mutual of Omaha, Valmont)
- A total of 48 US and EU students and 18 faculty will participate in the program.
Program Learning Outcomes

- Global IT Component:
  - Increased global readiness
  - Developed global mindset, global knowledge and global work skills
  - Ability to seek out opportunities to learn more about Global IT Project Management and its related challenges
  - Student satisfaction with program

- Language Component:
  - Conversational German vocabulary relating to business and IT
  - Experience diverse aspects of the Austrian/German culture—ranging from social and political conditions to cuisine, sports, theater, art, and literature
  - Ability to access to various media sources for personal enrichment
  - Ability to seek out opportunities to learn more about German language and culture
  - Ability to seek out opportunities to use the German language
Language Preparation

- Prior to departure to EU:
  - Students either participate in Introductory German Language Course or
  - Students attend a immersion professional German language and culture workshop for a full day

- For the first group of six students (Summer 2010), five attended the workshop.

- The second group of students (Spring 2011) were selected early and three took the full semester class and four attended the workshop (including one who was enrolled in the class).
Assessment

- **Global IT Component:**
  - **Global readiness index** (global mindset – receptive to and respectful of cultural differences, global knowledge – continuing quest to know and learn more about other nations and cultures, and global work skills – work effectively across cultures)
  - **Learning satisfaction** (perceived skill development, self-reported learning, and learning interest)
  - Student blog/journal

- **Language Component:**
  - The STAMP assessment test for “Introductory German” before departure to and after return from the EU
  - Exit interviews to qualitatively assess language acquisition on return of students from EU
  - Student blog/journal
Global Readiness Assessment

Global Work Skills
- Pre-EU Trip: 3.67
- Post-EU Trip: 4.28

Global Knowledge
- Pre-EU Trip: 3.22
- Post-EU Trip: 3.67

Global Mindset
- Pre-EU Trip: 4.29
- Post-EU Trip: 4.46

GRI Scale (1 = very poor; 5 = very good)
Language Assessment: STAMP

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre–EU Trip</th>
<th>Post–EU Trip</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>4.17</td>
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STAMP Score

1.00 = Novice Low
2.00 = Novice Mid
3.00 = Novice High
4.00 = Intermediate Low
5.00 = Intermediate Mid
6.00 = Pre–Advanced
Language Assessment: Qualitative

- Exit Interviews on return from EU for all students
- Evaluation based on ACTFL Guidelines
  - Novice Low – 1
  - Novice Mid – 1
  - Novice High – 1
  - Intermediate Low – 1
  - Intermediate Mid – 1
  - Pre-Advanced (Intermediate High) – 1
- Quantitative and Qualitative results coincided relatively well
Conclusions

“The active relationship between the College of Information Science and Technology and the German program at UNO reflects the university’s recognition that the future of language programs lies in their ability to train not only history and philosophy majors but also students with ambitions outside of the humanities in global readiness, cultural literacy and trans-cultural experience, and the international exchange of knowledge and creativity.”
(From our Abstract)

- Enhancement of the German language program at UNO
- Establishing new connections with other disciplines (IT – UNO and business – UWEC)
- Increased awareness, credit hour production and enrollment in languages and related curriculum
- Influences potential future curriculum development

**Bottom Line:** To survive in the context of declining budgets we need to:
- Go beyond being traditional humanities scholars
- Continue to enhance and introduce language training across disciplines through similar projects
Comments from GlobITPro Students…

“*The Global IT Project Management study abroad experience enhanced my knowledge, skills, and understanding for my intended career field…. Additionally, the Atlantis program allowed me to increase my depth of the German language and put my knowledge into action immediately. The immersion experience is by far the best way to learn a new language and my future global employer will benefit from my increased language confidence and cultural awareness.*”
“My intended career field is in the IT service learning area. The experience abroad has exploded my understanding of career opportunities in this field…. Overall, the experience of being in foreign countries, feeling what it's like not being able to communicate at a verbal level and being forced to adapt has made me a more powerful person. It has given me a greater understanding of different cultures, perspectives and academic topics as well as a greater self-awareness.”