

to use Internet sources for cutting-edge information on their chosen topics, and many of them chose to create Internet sources. Students presenting a report e-mail their three questions to me, which I then forward to the whole class to create a test bank. I chose a number of the most appropriate questions to include on their last test. Many of these were the same questions that I would have asked in the typical lecture-delivered setting.

Just to list a few examples here are some special connections that were revealed by the Student Report option in the most recent class:

One Student had been treated for leukemia in Houston back in the 70's, and her room was next to David (Boy in the Bubble). She remembers playing checkers with him by

using the "arms" connected to his bubble.

Another student was a scrub nurse for orthopedics in a local hospital. He was involved with setting up and controlling the field in the state's only UV operating room for total joint replacements.

A student's mother was one of the experimental patients in the testing of penicillin in the early 1940's.

Without the "Report" vehicle, we wouldn't have been able to share these and many other fascinating and significant experiences.

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## So, you want to go on an international teaching assignment...

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You might want to go on an international teaching assignment. I did. So, when an opportunity in Germany opened for me during 1998, I took it. Before leaving, I did not know what to expect. When the experience crystallized in my mind, it was better and more brilliant than my uncertain and cloudy expectations. Although my experience turned out very well, I believe that was mostly luck. It might have been otherwise.

Preparation is key to a successful international assignment. My goals are to share my observations, describe my experiences and offer some recommendations about teaching. My purpose is to aid colleagues in preparing to teach in another country. I include recommendations for personal, professional, and pedagogical preparation.

### Introduction and Background

Since I was graduated from Macalester College in the '70s, I have wanted to go on an international assignment. Macalester, which has produced a Vice President of the United States and a Secretary General of the United Nations, has always had a deep international presence. During an undergraduate growth experience, Macalester fostered a personal desire to work abroad someday. This desire burned within me for many years before it was fulfilled.

Being practical I delayed my international gratification and entered graduate school at Michigan. IBM hired me a few years after my degree completion. That my employer's first name was International was not lost on me. An international assignment was the top goal on every development plan. Although never achieving an international assignment at IBM, I got better at justifying and planning one with every renewal of my development plan.

*Recommendation: Look for a "fire within you."*

To teach abroad, one needs to have a fire inside. There are many situations that you will encounter requiring you

take actions on your own initiative and energy. You must be motivated to adapt quickly. Do some self-reflection. If you do not find a fire inside, reconsider an international assignment.

*Recommendation: Justify and plan your international assignment*

Your international assignment will require much time and effort from you and others. To focus that, you need a plan. As you plan, it helps to justify the effort to yourself and others. If you have family, do not forget them in this step. Plan the assignment from preparation to re-entry. Review your plan with all interested parties for buy-in.

### My Assignment and My Goals

During May and early July, 1998, I was Guest Professor of Wirtschaft Infomatik (roughly translated, Business Information Technology) at the Fachhochschule Anhalt (FHA) in Bernburg, Germany. I was the second professor from Southern Polytechnic to hold an FHA Guest Professorship. Sid Davis held the position earlier. I taught a seminar on computing and information technology for international business. These topics included international distance learning, teamwork, electronic commerce, knowledge mining, web development, etc. My students were in the International Business Program. Almost all of them spoke English. I delivered four lectures a week, and provided an exam at the end of the term.

Based on some early conversations with Sid, I decided to set some goals in collaboration with my sponsors at FHA and Southern Polytechnic. These goals turned out to be necessary and positive. When I faced one of the many decision-making situations on the assignment, they provided quick and sure guidance. My goals were:

- Promote cultural exchange.
- Teach special topic seminars covering computing for international business.

- Assist the development of an International MBA program.
- Meet with education and business professionals to discuss and promote collaboration and exchange.

*Recommendation: Find a good colleague here.*

Sid Davis was an invaluable colleague and resource. Through our discussions I was much better prepared for the experience and also to do a good job. Having an interested colleague for conversation and brainstorming was very positive and beneficial. I therefore recommend finding a good colleague who shares your international interest.

*Recommendation: Set goals and implement them.*

To paraphrase an advertisement slogan, "Do not leave on an international assignment without goals." They help you communicate with your hosts and yourself as they make difficult decisions easier.

### **The Campus the Language the Life and the Work**

Bernburg has about 40,000 inhabitants and is located in Saxon-Anhalt about half way between Berlin and Dresden. It is in the heart of the former East Germany. During World War II the campus was an airbase. During the cold war it headquartered a Soviet Garrison. For the fifty years prior to German reunification (in 1990), the campus site did not have many visitors from the U.S. Now it is a pleasant college campus community in a rural almost pastoral setting, where guests from around the world are welcome. My family (wife and two daughters) joined me for the last two weeks of the assignment. We all enjoyed walking around and touring the area.

I spoke some German and was understood. I could not understand 95% of the German spoken by the natives of the area. Up until reunification, the predominant foreign language spoken in the area was Russian. During my stay fewer than thirty of the hundreds of people I met spoke English. I met only three other Americans serendipitously, one traveling to Poland, and two in Dresden. It was nice to be understood and most people appreciated my efforts at German. At times it felt isolating not to understand simple conversations around me, but these times were few.

My German allowed me to participate in life. This life was comparable to small-city campus life in the U.S. There was a construction boom and many new cars in the area. Travel often was congested as in Atlanta. During the week, work is done at a frenetic pace. Weekends are slower and most businesses actually close for a rest. Leisure is often outdoors, but less often an organized sport. Bicycling, hiking, canoeing, and sitting are the predominate activities. I spent many pleasant hours and meals in a garden, backyard, or outside restaurant. I stayed mostly in the eastern part of Germany—an area rich in history and culture. Favorite spots included Bernberg, Dessau, Dresden, Halle, Leipsig, Merseburg, and Wernigerode.

*Recommendation: Learn the language.*

The person was right who said, "If you try to speak the language when you are in a foreign country, the residents will appreciate the effort." You will have a more fulfilling time.

*Recommendation: Learn about and tour the area of your assignment.*

Unless there are security or safety issues, I suggest touring and getting to know the area of your assignment. It is one of the best ways to learn and receive a good picture of the culture. For example, it was valuable to see many of the cultural centers of Germany as they emerge from the cold war. My hosts and travel guides such as Baedeker's and Fodor's were great resources. I am confident I saw everything I wanted and much more.

### **Teaching and Learning—Faculty and Students**

I also participated in the life of the faculty. Both "Ossies" and "Wessies" (respectively, people who grew up in the former East and West Germany) were faculty members. I quickly discovered that reunification had brought many issues. For example, Ossies and Wessies are compensated at different rates. When I first arrived I wondered how to react to these issues. In short time, my German colleagues showed me what to do: act as a good faculty colleague to other faculty. Don't try the impossible, instead do what is possible.

The German education system is different than the American system. After application, faculty and students are assigned to a school. Students attend lectures (optional) and take exams. The only requirement for receiving a degree is passing all exams. The students do not register for courses. Tuition is non-existent. Room and board and fees are very reasonable. Since each curriculum is set and completed with little variation, students know what courses they need to take. Since success rests on passing the exams, attendance in class is greatly variable. Fachhochschule students complete a practicum semester, where they might intern in industry.

Initially, the haphazard class attendance surprised me. After I realized they did not pay tuition and attended class (or didn't) based on juggling many priorities, I discovered a strategy to share how other cultures view priorities. Having the IBM experience, I was able to provide some glimpses into workday requirements. For many students this was eye opening.

*Recommendation: Be a good faculty colleague and a good professor/ambassador.*

After about the first week, I adopted a decision rule for my interaction with hosting faculty: Will this action make me a good colleague to all the people in this situation? I applied it once or twice each day, and it led to success. Since most of my students were in the International Business Program, they would likely end up in a multi-national firm. I shared some examples from my IBM experience.

## It's One World, but Your Assignment is in a Different Culture

In the 1970's at Macalester I was enthusiastic about the prospects for world citizenship. I had not thought about this very much in the intervening years (it was not required), but I had a vague recall of it on the trip to Germany. On my second day there I discovered how naïve was the concept of a world citizenry. On this day I first interpreted the political posters from the elections in the state of Saxon-Anhalt. Many had similar slogans as those used in the U.S. against the NAFTA treaty a few years earlier. On this day I changed my ideas about a world citizenry—that ideal is not viable. In Germany, I conceived of our developing two “personalities” or “personas.” One is the personality or persona of our native homeland. The other is a second “face” that we put forward in the international arena. Our international face is shaped by our native personality. It is also shaped by the diversity that we as the primary inhabitants of this planet need for survival.

*Recommendation: Use your assignment to develop an “international personality.”*

I suggest an international personality will make your international assignment more fulfilling. Maintain your cultural base, and also adopt an additional personality oriented towards internationalism and commonality. This brought me closer to my hosts and they often reciprocated. You will probably find as did I that your international assignment will be doubly good when experienced through your national and international personalities.

### Summary

These are my observations on teaching and learning from a recent international assignment. I taught well but learned much more. Good motivation and preparation, a collegial attitude, and an international perspective and personality are all keys to successfully teaching and learning abroad.

## From Kennesaw to Buenos Aires and Back

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As progressive universities worldwide struggle to remake themselves in the face of the traditional stereotype of elite, ivory tower retreats, their success can often be measured in the degree to which the new academy is able to make a substantial impact on real world concerns and participate directly to alleviate social problems and influence social practice. Service to the community has become as important as the more abstract contribution that a university makes to expanding knowledge. Clearly the best programs do both.

Examples of change may be found in the Welfare to Work (WTW) program in which Kennesaw State University's (KSU) Continuing Education department participates, and in projects such as the health exams KSU's nursing students assist faculty in performing at Atlanta area health fairs. This evolutionary change signals a new function for the American university as it works to harness its considerable intellectual and human resources for the benefit of the broader community of which it must be seen as an intrinsic part. It should not be surprising, perhaps, that there is a striking parallel in the changes occurring in universities in Argentina.

During a summer 1998 Faculty Development Seminar to Buenos Aires, Argentina, members of the KSU Faculty learned about two service oriented programs in which Argentine universities are involved and which mirror our concerns and interest in serving the community. University

education at public institutions in Argentina is free. In fact, it may surprise some Americans to learn that Argentine universities have extremely high student populations: Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), for example, has a student body of approximately 200,000. However, the extreme poverty in some sectors of the population works against the development and success of long-term educational goals for many young people. In response to the large gap between the formally educated (whose job opportunities and social position are both strong factors in their economic viability), and the generally uneducated, the Ministry of Labor in Buenos Aires initiated in 1994 a program through which universities and other organizations might provide basic skills training for an identified sector of the community. Working in collaboration with those offering training courses, companies and businesses agreed to hire the participants in an arrangement not unlike that of our Welfare to Work program (1997).

While in Buenos Aires, three KSU faculty were invited to visit with the Minister of Labor, Erman Gonzalez, to discuss the role Argentine universities are playing in the Ministry's project of integrating 280,000 individuals into its service learning system by the millennium called “Proyecto Joven,” or “Project Youth.” The program constitutes a social and educational challenge requiring both financial and intellectual resources. Participants are paid a weekly wage while enrolled in the courses of their choice;