

## UMD, students reap benefits of German exchange

Phil Rashkovetsky, a senior computer and electrical engineering major at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, said he's "ready to experience the world," following his participation in a summer exchange program in Germany.

Rashkovetsky was one of 10 students from the College of Engineering enrolled in Hessen International Summer University (ISU) at the University of Kassel. An additional dozen students from the Charlton College of Business took part.



Phil Rashkovetsky, a senior electrical and computer engineering major is back at UMass Dartmouth following his participation in the Hessen International Summer University program at the University of Kassel, Germany.

The program encompasses seminars and lectures, German language courses and extensive cultural and excursion opportunities, all of which the Newton, Massachusetts resident embraced.

To prepare for the trip, Rashkovetsky was required to take a basic German language course. Overseas, he learned more of the language and also studied Earthquake Engineering and Architecture. His classmates hailed from all over the world including Argentina, Brazil, Canada and Mexico. Comparing the two campuses, he described Kassel as "similar but on a smaller scale" to UMass Dartmouth and also felt the curriculum was "on par or easier" than the summer courses here.

“What struck me the most was the sense of history everywhere,” he said. “I had only positive experiences. Wherever you went, there was a feeling for the past...and some of it could be devastating.”

In particular, Rashkovetsky referred to seeing the remnants of a train car that transported people to concentration camps and the contrast between the “bright happy town of Weimar,” and a nearby concentration camp as well as the architectural differences between the country’s East and West sides.

Students live with host families during the five-week exchange and communication was not a problem for Rashkovetsky because the couple he stayed with spoke English. He initiated most conversations in German to make them feel more at ease, he said.

“This (experience) broke the barrier for me. I was encouraged by beginning to feel what is out there in the world...in Europe. It definitely makes me want to travel and I’d encourage other engineering majors to take advantage of this exchange,” Rashkovetsky said.

Although the College of Engineering has participated for many years in other exchange programs with Germany, those programs only involved accepting graduate students for study in the United States. When Professor Joseph Bronstad of the foreign language department presented the opportunity, the College of Engineering jumped on board because “it was a unique opportunity for undergraduate students and it just made sense to do it, “ according to Electrical and Computer Engineering Professor Steven Nardone, one of the advisors.

“Engineering is international. If you talk to industry leaders, you’ll find that design is done in one country and fabrication and distribution is done in other ones. This situation is especially common among software developers,” Dr. Nardone said.

The primary reason for getting involved, he said, is to expose students to an international opportunity that they may never otherwise get to experience.

UMass Dartmouth is in the process of developing a certificate program so that the student’s overseas coursework can be shown to an employer and put on a transcript. In addition, UMass Dartmouth gets a boost, Dr. Nardone said, because the young people from Germany who attend at the master’s degree level for one year are “without a doubt, some of our finest students...They bring a cultural and academic benefit to our program.”

Dr. Nardone is in the process of recruiting students for next summer’s exchange program. He can be reached at [snardone@umassd.edu](mailto:snardone@umassd.edu) for more information.

ISU is a joint project among several universities in the State of Hessen and is supported by the Hessen State Ministry of Higher Education Research and the Arts.