



Princeton Alumni Association of Germany

In this issue

- 50th Anniversary of the Princeton Summer Work Program in Princeton
- Internship at the ifo Institute in Munich
- Internship at Hitachi in Stuttgart
- Upcoming Events

Nr. 5 3rd and 4th Quarter 2008

50th Anniversary of the Princeton Summer Work Program in Princeton


By David T. Fisher '69, Director, Princeton Summer Work Program

This year marked the 50th anniversary year of the Princeton Summer Work Program. To celebrate this occasion the Princeton German Department organized a memorable event at the Palmer House in Princeton to which all former SWP participants, friends and sponsors were invited. The program included the presentation of a citation to the SWP's major donor, Ms. Dagmar Westberg, as well as an address on the current state of world financial markets by Andrew Dechet '90, former SWP participant and currently a director at Texas Pacific Group.

The guests included many SWP alumni spanning the entire 50 years of the program's existence. We were particularly pleased to have an alumnus in attendance who was among the very first six interns that ventured to Germany in 1958; Prof. George Russell '59 was able to shed some light on the details of the beginning of what was later to become the most successful university-based internship program of its kind. As George

informed us in his response to the invitation: "I was, of course, in the first group of Princeton students who spent a summer in Germany. Professor Lange and his colleagues managed to locate 6 (or perhaps 8) positions with various firms, but there were only 5 (or 7) students of German who wanted to go, so I, as a prospective Senior in Biology, was allowed to fill the last spot. (I had done very well in German 102-105, an intensive course with 9 hours of class each week and a solid exposure to Professor Richard Exner who taught us admirably. I made a 1+ in 102-105 and was very grateful for such an intensive exposure.) In summer 1958 I spent two exceedingly enjoyable months in Krefeld at the Deutsche Edelstahlwerke. George Dawson, a classmate who was majoring in German, was also placed at DEW. Because I had a strong background in Chemistry, I was given a position in the Rueckstandsanalysen Labor, a facility that analyzed various samples of steel alloys that were being prepared by the

company. George and I were given the occasional Saturday off so we could travel, and we saw Berlin and much else. That summer experience still lives with me." George's last sentence expresses a sentiment that was echoed by dozens of the former SWP participants who responded to our invitation. Even though many were unable to make it to Princeton to attend the event, they all agreed that the SWP had provided them with a life-changing experience and expressed great satisfaction to hear that the program is still doing well.

And doing well it is as we move into our 51st year with record numbers of both enrollments in German courses and applications for summer internships. We expect to place about 40 students this summer and are grateful for any assistance that our alumni and sponsors are able to provide. Anyone interested in checking out the very impressive resumes received this year is welcome to get in touch at dtf@princeton.edu. 



Internship at the ifo Institute in Munich

by Sarah Gershkon '11



Munich celebrated its 850th birthday this summer. I was there to wish it well. By a stroke of great and undeserved good fortune, I found myself spending the summer in this beautiful city, interning at the ifo Institute for economic research.

Every weekday morning, I would make my way through the "English garden" to the picturesque neighborhood of Bogenhausen, where the institute was located. After a bracing cup of German coffee and a few morning greetings, I'd head to my office to check any new emails and get started on the day's tasks.

On a typical day, my work might consist of seeking out and compiling comparative information on institutional factors affecting migration.

Although probably best known for its index of the German business climate, ifo conducts a great deal of other economic research as well. The department into which I was placed focused on international institutional comparisons: examining the institutional differences across countries and their economic effects.

Across all the departments, my coworkers at ifo never ceased to impress me. Everyone there was highly intelligent and dedicated to their research. As the least educated person in the office by far, I would frequently ask others about their work. Without fail, my inquiries were met with an enthusiastic and lengthy response.

From these interactions, and from the projects I was involved in, I was able to get a feel for the type of work that was going on. For the first time, I saw how the economic theories and statistical techniques I had studied in class could be applied to current-day research. This fall, I returned to my studies with a renewed interest and curiosity.

As far as learning German goes, I couldn't have asked for a more conducive environment. Everyone at ifo was overwhelmingly friendly and patient, and,

without exception, accepted my request to speak only German.

In a second stroke of luck, I managed to find an affordable dormitory in the vibrant "Schwabing" neighborhood. In no time at all, I became friendly with my neighbors, most of whom were young people working on their Diplomarbeit or interning like me.

Thanks to my new German friends, there was never a dull moment. Weekends consisted of hiking excursions, street festivals, swimming in nearby lakes, picnics in the park, and visits to Munich's numerous museums. Weeknights were filled with long conversations and grilling in the garden. In addition to being great practice in German, these conversations broadened my perspectives on everything from politics, to grocery store hours, to the many merits of soccer. (Although no one ever managed to persuade me that Leberkaese was appetizing.)

Strange Bavarian meat products aside, I feel very lucky to have had this experience. But, of course, it was not luck, but rather the generosity and assistance of others, which made this summer possible. Let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Summer Work Program, the Alumni Association, and especially Ms. Dagmar Westberg. Vielen herzlichen Dank! 🇩🇪

Princetonians in Berlin

Princeton interns working in Berlin got together for a cruise with some of the local alumni.



An Internship at Hitachi in Stuttgart

by Will Schaffer '09



Hello again, my name is Will Schaffer. For those of you who don't remember, I first participated with the SWP interning with David in Wiesbaden two summers ago. I returned to Germany this past summer to intern with the marketing department at Hitachi Data Systems in Stuttgart. I had an unbelievable experience there and David has asked me to share a little bit about it with you.

First a little bit about Hitachi Data Systems. HDS is a part of the greater Hitachi limited family. It is a data storage company that specializes in high quality data storage hardware for companies that need to store massive

amounts of data such as O2 and Deichmann. However, they are currently expanding into the mid level companies as well as small and local level businesses. Although it is Japanese founded and owned, it operates largely out of the United States. The branch in Germany is quite small in comparison and has offices in Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Munich and a small office in Berlin.

My experience at HDS was nothing short of fantastic. Everyone in the office was friendly and patient with me as I struggled to regain my German language skills. I have never worked in the tech industry before, so every aspect of the business was a learning experience for me. HDS operates along principles consistent with many Japanese companies, investing most of their profits back into the product rather than the product's promotion. It was great to work in this environment, composed of a special blend of Japanese philosophy and German work ethic overseen by American demands for efficiency and results.

The HDS marketing department is placed in between Frankfurt and Munich. The team took me along to meetings in the different offices and even had me participate in meetings planning the monthly company magazine. The ride to these meetings was quite the experience as well, hitting almost 240 km per hour on

the autobahn in a red Opel TT, techno music blaring. Along with typical intern tasks I was asked to analyze results from different marketing projects and present them. I learned a lot from my observations about marketing and the data storage business. And not least of all, my German improved by leaps and bounds.

During my stay I was privileged to meet Patrick Cowden, the head of HDS in Germany. He gave me 15 minutes of his valuable time to just talk to him and ask him some questions. Patrick is a self-made man with quite a story and impressive personality to match. I learned a great deal from him in the short time we had. Although he is an American, he grew up speaking German with his mother. It was interesting to see how much his German language skills were appreciated by my co-workers even though all spoke English fluently. His commitment to integrity and his goals for the HDS and the German business world were nothing short of admirable and inspiring. I can't thank him enough for his time and for the opportunity with which he helped to provide for me. 🇩🇪

As some of you may recall, it was Will Schaffer together with another intern, Morgan Jacobs, who produced the very first version of this newsletter as part of their internship work in 2007. - DTF

Princetonians at the Lorelei

Princeton interns working in the Wiesbaden-Frankfurt area took the opportunity this year to cruise up the Rhine and admire many features of this UNESCO World Heritage area.



Upcoming Events

Save the Dates!

Concert of the Princeton University Orchestra in Munich on Monday, the 26th of January at 19:30 at the Carl Orff Saal in the Gasteig Arts Center

Tour of the Princeton Tigerlilies in Germany in March, 2009 with Gala Concert in Frankfurt on the 15th of March, 2009

Annual Spring Get-Together of the PAA of Germany on the 27th and 28th of June, 2009 at the Jacobs University in Bremen

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Impressum

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