Exchange students for the fall semester

Exchange Students from Wyoming
INTERNATIONAL FALL SEMESTER: PREPARATION
Before Coming

- How did I receive information?
  - The international office faculty emailed me directly about the details of my exchange
  - I was also in regular contact with:
    - Studierendenwerk Mannheim
    - The ME faculty
    - (one time only) the language program coordinator

- Why did you chose Hochschule Mannheim / Germany?
  - The exchange program was promoted directly to ME students at my university

- Scholarships available?
  - The two scholarships which I study with were both eligible to be used for my international semester. There were also a number of smaller scholarships available through my school
Travel

- Journey to destination
  - Travel to Mannheim is very easy
  - Fly to Frankfurt (Rheine air has direct flights)
    - Book a few months in advance and you should a well priced flight
    - (when I came it was $600 one way)
  - Train from Frankfurt to Mannheim is 30 minutes and costs only about 23 euro
  - The tram system in Mannheim can get you right next to your apartment
Housing

- There are a number of houses to choose from. I know a little about the ones the Wyoming students stayed at. In general they are all basically the same. There are some key differences
  - Ulmenweg: is really far away from everything
  - Hans-Sachs-Ring: is a very social apartment with many events in the large community space
  - Speyer Straße: smaller apartments, with only one house mate, closest to the Hochschule

- Make sure you have a copy of your lease to show to the housemaster
  - Call the International office if you have trouble moving in

Pictures of my living accommodations
local support (International Office, department)

- The international office will expect you to have some level of independence getting set up
  - However make sure that they are one of the first people you go see when you arrive. (get your apartment first)
    - They will give you a checklist of the things you need to take care of

- The ME office can also offer you a large amount of help
  - If you have problems registering, they will be the ones to help

This is the pamphlet to look to for answers of what you should do
Practical tips for applicants

- Know for sure where your apartment is before you arrive
- Have a map of the city downloaded
- Know where a hostel is incase you aren’t able to get into your apartment on the day of arrival
- Expect a few days of exhaustion
- Learn some basic German phrases if you don’t already know some German (DUO LINGO is a great app)
- Complete the paperwork in a timely manner

A lot of trouble would have been saved if I had made this picture before arriving
Other tips on preparation

- Have your CV and job application prepared before you arrive
- Make sure that you have all of the relevant information. Have a photo copy of your High school diploma and other important personal documents
- Start budgeting (if you don’t already), and carefully watch your spending

- Make sure that you know how you will access your money
  - It is worth it to have a card that doesn’t have international ATM fees
- Have a plan in place to transfer yourself large amounts of money when you have your German bank account set up
  - (planning with your family or friends ahead of time can be a life saver)

Everything that I brought in one photo
INTERNATIONAL FALL SEMESTER: DURING
Course offering

- lectures offered, your choice
  - Design project
  - Modern Production Technology Laser beams
  - Market research*
  - Material design
  - FEA
  - German

Classes that I didn’t take have the * by them

- My assessment
  - I did fairly well in my courses. However, I did find that the classes varied widely in difficulty and required effort. Most of the classes were taught in English (except for the Design Project). Without any previous experience in German, I found the German class to be the most difficult course by far, and almost all of my time went into studying for that
Lectures

- characteristics of German lectures?
  - No homework, one test (maybe two), requires a good deal of independent effort and study
    - (I totally crammed for the tests in the last two weeks, so it works out fine...)
- professional guidance by professors
  - They are willing to help anyone that wants to be helped, but you must ask!
- contacts with German students, projects
  - Many classes have projects, some are only projects. Working with the German students is a great way to learn German
language skills in German

- No prior German experience is required (I didn’t have any and I survived)
- It is much harder at the beginning if you don’t know any German
- What is your goal for the year
  - If you want to learn German then you can certainly do that
  - If you just want to party you can do that too
INTERNERSHIP
General

- The ME office can help you to find an internship
- All of the students who wanted an internship when I came found one
- It does require a bit of work to find employment
- It is not essential to know German, but it certainly would help
Tips for Applicants

- Have a CV (with your professional photo) ready for review before you arrive
- Have a draft cover letter ready to edit
- Make sure that you have a copy of your transcripts and diplomas (including a high school diploma)
- Be honest about your language skills
- Apply for every position, even if you feel you might not meet the requirements
- Practice the STARR method of interviewing (you can google it)
- If you have an HR contact, your chances of getting hired are much better (ask the ME staff to help find connections)
Information and Assistance

- The ME department is the best resource for finding opportunities
  - They can help with every aspect of the process
    - Application advice,
    - finding opportunities
    - practicing interviewing
MY INTERNSHIP
Short details about company

- John Deere is an American vehicle manufacture that specializes in agricultural and forestry vehicles
My Task

- In Europe all vehicles sold must be properly certified before they can be sold.
- In the past, the regulations varied in each country.
- In 2013, regulation 167 was passed to harmonize the regulation of vehicles in Europe.
- My task was to create an application for 2 John Deere vehicles so that they could be certified under this new regulation.
What did I actually do

- My job was mostly compiling information on the tractors and turning them into well organized documents for the regulators
- I had to take many pictures of the different components and create technical descriptions
- Most of my time was spent editing photos and word documents

They asked if I could remove the cars, I said I am really good with Photoshop. They said we have MS paint. I still removed the cars. They didn’t even say thank you. I went home and cried.

This is a before and after picture of my editing skills
Professional Guidance

- I worked directly with Dr. Peter Hloben, who is an homologation engineer for the Horst, Netherlands office of JD

- By sitting in meetings, traveling to test sites, and collaborating with him on my task; Peter offered me many insights into the work of homologation
Work details

- Contacts with colleagues
  - Working in an open office, I was able to talk with a mid sized work group.
  - We didn’t often work together, but we shared meals and they were always willing to practice German with me

- work atmosphere
  - The work space was professional, but very relaxed
  - No dress code, no set schedule, frequent breaks, lots of jokes, lots of conversations

This is not my office, but they all look the same anyway
superlatives

- **Best experience:**
  - The overall experience of having a professional job where I wasn’t serving coffee and constantly being micromanaged was a huge confidence booster. I definitely feel more comfortable in presenting myself as a professional and not just some college guy looking for a job.

- **Funniest Experience:**
  - I came in late one day after a night of celebration (My symphony had the end of the season party late into the night), I was clearly exhausted and hardly functioning, but I still came. My bosses supervisor came over to me, asked how late I was out, congratulated me for still making it to work, then told me that if it were him he wouldn’t have came to work.

- **Disappointing experience at work**
  - Missing out on social opportunities because I needed to travel for work. Adult life is lame

Just being in the symphony was pretty great
ENDING NOTES
Mannheim, region/Germany

Baden Württemberg is a beautiful region with many things to do and see. Everyone will have opinions on what you should go do and see, and I say you should ignore them all and just do what you want to do. That being said, there are a few things that everyone will agree you should see (see the names by the photos), and you should go see those things so that you don’t have to listen to people tell you how great they are.

The Pfalz region

Louisa park

A wine festival
(Bad Durkheim is good)

Heidelberg
Trips and Travels

Stuttgart

Eltz castle

Prague

Rheine River

I forget where this one was
Verdun

Some where in Germany

Inside Eltz Castle

Swiss Alps

Mannheim
Financing and cost

- An internship will pay well
  - For the students that I knew, an internship paid between 450-1300 euro
- The median income was around 600 euro

- Expect cost of living to be about 1000 euro (1200 Dollars) each month (if you include traveling)
  - Rent: € 235
  - Health insurance: € 80
  - Food: € 150
  - Travel: A lot

This is a graph and table excerpt from my actual budget. What is important to see is that my actual living expenses are very low compared to things like travel and personal spending (things like clothes and video games...).
Final assessment

- Definitely would recommend for those who want to:
  - Learn German
  - See more of Europe
  - Want to experience a different educational culture
  - Want the opportunity to work abroad

- Trip superlatives
  - Best: Joining a symphony and making a bunch of friends
  - Funniest: Constantly mispronouncing words and accidently swearing
  - Least Favorite: Basically every big party I went to
    - It was loud, hot, I didn’t know anyone, it just wasn’t as fun as the smaller group events that I joined with a group of people that I knew.