



International Summer School

Myrtle Beach Experience 2010

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It was a great pleasure that I could accompany the 10th International Summer School Program to Myrtle Beach which took place from August 14 to September 5, this year.

I made use of this possibility to maintain the international contacts of the RheinAhrCampus and to arouse interest for studying or teaching a semester abroad in Germany. I also exploited this three week program to integrate into several courses, e.g. of the graduate program Health Promotion and Psychology: Women's Health Issues, Issues in Family Life and Sexuality, Global Health Perspectives, Nutrition or Career Development in Psychology. In this context I could present and discuss the Health Care System in Germany, Higher education and graduate programs in Germany, Women's Health Issues and Promotion of Women in Germany.

One educational objective (from student's point of view) was getting a taste of college life in the United States. The students joined classes, wrote assignments and made presentations, and also lived like American college students. They realized quickly one wide difference: In Germany, they do not have a campus this large, they do not have to do tests or papers during the semester but only at the end, and they do not live in dorms. They also got to know that or how much you have to pay for a study in the US. They also were surprised about the important role of school spirit and sports activities. They do not have this at their universities in Germany.

Another aspect was to give the students (from both countries) a sense of the differences in the national cultures of the two countries, what meant working together in class projects and learning the importance of being good global citizens. In this point, the students enjoyed the most the excursions to Charleston and Brookgreens Garden.

In the following I would like to summarize our magnificent experience:

Most of the 19 participants arrived on Saturday, August 14, in the afternoon/ early evening, so that nearly the whole group took part on the pizza party at the campus of the Coastal Carolina University (CCU), Myrtle Beach. There was a very well organized shuttle from the airport to the university so that even the students who arrived late in the evening would be met at the airport by CCU staff and transported to campus for

lodging. After the first night, we met on Sunday, August 15, for the campus tour that gave a good overview to the most important buildings on campus (e.g. library, cafeteria, buildings for the classes). In addition, we had the first discussion concerning the expectations of the program. During the dinner, you could take a look at the jobs of the campus police and – later – be part of the magician show of Peter Boie. He was nominated for two Campus Activities Magazine Awards - and if you know his show, you know why.



On Monday, August 16, the Convocation took place. This event is much more celebrated than in Germany. First, all the Professors came in and sat down in the front. All students stood up for the Star Spangled Banner, sat down for some speeches, stood up for the pledge of integrity, sat down for some speeches, stood up for the alma mater – and rested standing up until all professors were going out. Of course, we stood up as the professors came in, too.

The same day visited AVX Corporation – a manufacturer and supplier of electronic components. We got a good overview into this international company which has a stay in Germany (Betzdorf), too.

Our fourth day began with a Golf course in the morning. In the afternoon the first course meeting took place – and the students had to turn their first written assignment about their expectations. Three other written assignments (e.g. about the visited company, about the movie which would be shown the day after) followed. In the evening, we had dinner with the roommates of our students– to thank them for their help and support.



Wednesday, 18 August 10, was the first day the students attended scheduled classes. This might be Portfolio Management, American Government, Cross-Cultural

Management, National Security, Marketing Research, International Business, Political Parties, World Politics etc. They also took part on the German classes. In all these classes, the students have to do any assignments during their three weeks. Most of the classes took place on Monday/ Wednesday/ Friday or Tuesday/ Thursday.

One afternoon, we went to Mini-golf at Broadway Beach. Some of the students enjoyed their stay outside the university and could stay until 11.30pm. Another evening, we saw the movie “outsourced”, a movie about cross cultural conflicts, which has been discussed in the next Cross Cultural Management course.

On the first weekend we went to Brookgreen Gardens which has a significant outdoor collection of figurative sculptures by American artists. It also is a wildlife preserve. The 9,200-acre (37 km²) property includes several themed gardens with American figurative sculptures, the Lowcountry Zoo, and trails through several ecosystems on the property. It was opened in 1932, and is built on four former rice plantations, taking its name from the former Brookgreen Plantation.



After the first week with a lot of program issues, Sunday, 22 August, was the first day without any. The students enjoyed their free-time and went e.g. with their roommates to a water park, the beach, shopping – or worked for the university and wrote one of their assignments, prepared the presentation for Monday.

In the second and third week the classes continued. We also had a lot of activities which gave a further good insight in the local cultural and social life. We went to a Baseball Game of the Pelicans. We had a trip to Charleston and to an Alligator Adventure. We had brunch at Golden Coral. We also got a valuable insight in the organizational structure of the Coastal Carolina University because of the presentation of students from the Wall Fellow Program. Followed of the presentations of the RheinAhrCampus and Bonn-Rhine-Sieg we discussed similarities and differences between the structure of Germany and America.



Finally a few pictures of our photo competition:



We have asked the students to summarize their experiences with the help of several questions. We have condensed their remarks under the following headlines:

- 1 What lectures did you attend and how where they organized?
- 2 What leisure activities and excursions were offered and how did you benefit from taking part? Tell us about the most interesting observations you made about US culture
- 3 Please summarize what you learned during the week. Focus on the similarities and differences between your home university and CCU
- 4 Tell us something about the intercultural experiences you made by interacting with US students.
- 5 In what way has the first part of the Summer School Program in May prepared you for the trip to the US?
- 6 In what way has participating in this program helped you in deciding whether a study related stay abroad might be a realistic option for you?

1 What lectures did you attend and how where they organized?

Philipp Reimer

At Coastal Carolina University, which I will refer to as CCU in the following, classes that I attended so far consisted of about 20 students. This is the first obvious difference between both of the Universities which leads us inevitably to the next point, namely the way course material is taught. Due to the fact that classes at home are bigger than at CCU, most of the lectures at home consist of a professor standing in front of the students and reading out his lecture notes. At CCU, especially in language classes, I could observe that the professor tries to include the students in his lecture instead of simply reading his lecture notes out. These are good examples for the question of what the interaction between student and professor looks like.

Furthermore, another negative effect that goes along with more students sitting in a lecture room is that the noise level is much higher at home than at CCU. Professors at home often have to reprimand students who disturb the others. If I had to compare that to CCU, I'd have to say that I didn't notice that so far because no one disturbs the professor. On the other side, one can also find negative aspects concerning interaction between students and professors at CCU. In Germany, students who want to contribute something to the lecture indicate that by raising their hand or their finger and waiting till the professor picks one of them. During the last week I had to observe that at CCU, students advance their opinion without waiting for the professor to pick them.

The next part deals with the question how students are assessed at both of the Universities. At CCU, students in every class I attended so far get grades for many different types of work: participation during class, assignments, homework, projects, quizzes and a final examination contribute to a final grade, which is not only a "one chance grade" as it is at home.

This leads me inevitably to the effects of these differences on Germans' and Americans' thinking and behavior. As German students mostly have to pass a single final examination at the end of a semester, this seduces them to show less effort during the semester. Therefore, most of the knowledge has to be learned during a short period of time just before the examination. As a consequence, this leads to the fact that German students tend to forget much of the knowledge after they passed the examination.

This is quite different at CCU as American students get grades for many different things during the semester. Additionally, knowledge is built up over a longer period

of time which divides stress on the whole semester instead of coming up immediately at the end of it as you can see it at home. As a further result of this, CCU students remember more of the knowledge after a longer period of time than the German students because the Germans are only able to save it in their short term memory.

2 What leisure activities and excursions were offered and how did you benefit from taking part? Tell us about the most interesting observations you made about US culture

Markus Schlimper, Jacqueline Knaps, Jannis Reuter

At the beginning of the program we attended the University Convocation. To get an insight into the American corporate culture, we had a company visit at AVX. Further excursions to learn more about the American culture were a trip to Charleston and another trip to the Brookgreen Gardens. Some of the fun events were a stay at the Mini-golf at Broadway, at the Quail Creek Golf Course and at an official Baseball game. We also had a stay at the beach and visited an alligator adventure park.

On campus there were a lot of activities: Watch the football team while practicing, playing pool, table tennis or beach volleyball. These were always good opportunities to meet new people. During the whole stay we made a lot of American friends because all of them were very friendly and helpful.

Die für mich prägendste Erfahrung war allerdings die unglaublich verschwenderische Lebensweise der Amerikaner. Ich hätte nicht erwartet, dass schon alleine der Campus der Universität so stromverschwendend ist: LCD-Fernseher laufen 24 Stunden, auch wenn die Einrichtung schon um 19 Uhr geschlossen ist. Im Bad ist dauerhaft das Licht und der Lüfter an, weil es keinen Lichtschalter gibt und die Studenten lassen Laptop, DVD-Player, TV und Licht an, wenn sie aus dem Zimmer gehen. Wenn man sie darauf anspricht, stößt man auf Unverständnis, als ob das Thema Klimawandel für sie nicht existiert.

3 Please summarize what you learned during the week. Focus on the similarities and differences between your home university and CCU

Achim Pilz, Irina Menke, Esha Khanna, Uwe Geuenich

The following explanations will take a closer look on differences between the home university and Coastal Carolina University.

Specifically, I will describe how the class size, the way the course material is taught, the way the professors and the student interact, and the way that students are assessed differ between Coastal Carolina University and my university. I'd like to point out that the education system in the United States is in comparison to Germany in many ways more practise – orientated.

First of all, we have to differentiate between external and internal factors. Starting with the external reasons, we have to consider that the students in America are much younger than the German students and often come directly from High School. They also have only twelve and not thirteen years of school. Furthermore the American students usually don't have an apprenticeship before they come to university. Beyond that it is essential to know that tuition fees are much higher in America than in Germany. This is why many American students depend on scholarships and on the money of their parents. For them it is completely common to work in hotels, restaurants and bars during the summer to afford their study.

In Germany most of all the costs for the universities are paid by the government. In America most of all the costs for the universities are paid by the students. So here, indeed, is a significant difference.

Another difference is the time that you have to spend for the different types of study programs. In Germany you have to do three years to finish your bachelor degree whereas in America you have to do four years. I mention this because the American students in general are younger than the German students when they are beginning their studies. In Germany the most students have made an internship or an apprenticeship at a company to get in touch with the business world. I made an apprenticeship in a bank before I started studying and it was the best experience in my life for me so far.

But there are also internal factors, which we shouldn't forget. For example the class size at Coastal Carolina University seems for me to be much lesser compared to our university. Also the classroom style and the often used U-Shape take also care for truly wonderful class discussions. Due the fact that the classes are smaller compared

to those in Germany, a much closer relation between the students and the professor is possible. This means that the professor can take care of the individual success of each student. During my time at Coastal Carolina University I also recognised that the way course material is taught is much more entertaining and comprehensible compared to my experiences in Germany. Although I have sometimes the impression that in Germany the lectures contain more content I'm sure that most of the things I have learned at Coastal Carolina University will be unforgettable and this because of its practice-orientation. Compared to some lectures in Germany, I must confess that it is always very informative to join each class and that the professors are often more motivated. Another really interesting and important point for me is the way that students are assessed at Coastal Carolina University. In contrast to my university, American students have to take part in much more tests than I have, which makes their semester definitely much more stressful than mine. In Germany, we don't have to write this amount of essays, we often only have one final exam at the end of the semester. Students in Germany can take this final exam three times before they have to leave the university.

We were all surprised about the importance of sport at CCU. Students are very much supported to do any sports by the university and it is a very big event to watch the games of the different teams. One of the most striking points for me was the identification of the students with their university. There is huge difference between Germany and America in team spirit and pride to be at this particular university. In Germany we don't know this special feeling and strong connection to our university. American students show this by wearing shirts and other stuff with the university's logo. My roommate, for example, has a huge collection of CCU shirts.

To sum up, I'd like to say that I'm convinced that the American students definitely have a stronger relation to their university than German students have. This is not only because they are used to traditional Convocation ceremonies or because they have a really strong antipathy against cheating. I'm convinced that from the very beginning each student at Coastal Carolina University has the possibility to experience why it is so important to gain knowledge these days. Moreover I believe, that students at Coastal Carolina University in contrast to students from my university really know what they are studying for and that each student is somehow thankful for the support he or she gets here. I'm sure that high tuition fees, the traditional Convocation ceremony and the pledge encourage this effect. German Universities should in general refer to some of the named characteristics of American universities.

4 Tell us something about the intercultural experiences you made by interacting with US students.

Goetz Konstantin Bauer, Markus Schlimper, Esha Khanna, Julia Müller

I made the experience that Germans are very popular in the United States. Many Americans knew that there were Germans on Campus for Summer School Program. Nearly all of them had many questions concerning our country.

If we in turn had any questions about something we always got a friendly answer. They also said “Sorry” for everything. Even if I made a mistake, the Americans apologized for themselves. Also interacting with the other American students was very easy. They were very impressed that we were German students and asked us very many questions.

On the one hand I enjoyed answering their questions; on the other hand I was shocked about what they were asking. I had the impression that nearly all of them had no knowledge about Germany at all. It seemed to me that their latest information about Germany are the movies and reports about World War II. Many of them couldn't imagine that Germany is developed and on the same standard as the United States. I think one reason for this is, that they just come from High School and do not have the experience that they have at the end of their time at University. But some of the questions have been very curious, indeed, e.g. one of the Americans asked us if Germany is an independent state or do we have a president, a king or a queen as head of state. Some of them were related to typical stereo types, e.g. if Germans always drink a lot beer or if we ever visited the famous “Oktoberfest”.

I got the impression that the most Americans are very well informed about their own history and their own geography, but that they don't know anything about the rest of the world. We also discussed this in some of our lessons and we also found out that the American students don't speak any foreign languages. American students mostly just speak English and are not very interested in learning other languages. To give an example, in the International Business lecture we had a discussion about this topic and one American student commented: “Why should I learn your language, when you speak mine?”

There are some few students who want to learn foreign languages, but that is an optional choice. They don't have to learn a foreign language like German students; they only have to do this if they want to.

Another big difference pertains to the difference in student age between Germany and the US and the consequences that this has for student life. I met some Americans

who told me about how students change their way of life at College. We interacted a lot with the freshmen as we lived together with them in the same rooming houses. Before coming to university many of them didn't go out, didn't drink alcohol or just stayed at home with their parents all time. When they come to University, they start a completely new life. They suddenly become sole masters of their life without being supervised by their parents anymore. One could see that this meant a big challenge for the freshmen and also resulted in taking advantage of their new "liberty" in terms of staying up late and partying: They begin going out, drinking alcohol and make new friends. Often they find boy- and girlfriends. I was told that many parents don't want their children to go to University because they are afraid of those facts. Of course, the freshmen weren't left all alone at CCU, but taken care of by so called "RAs" (acronym for resident assistants). The RAs make sure that the freshmen act within their limits and are contact persons for nearly every matter. I think that the freshmen are in good hands and that the RA program performs well!

The way the Americans act and behave is completely different to the behavior of many German people. All American students I met were absolutely open minded, friendly and showed big interests in different countries and cultures. I didn't expect the Americans to be like that. Their friendliness is kind of scary to me, they excuse themselves for everything they do and they thank you for everything you do.

All in all I can say that I made very positive experiences with American students. I spent a lot of time with them in my free time and I'm still in touch with them on Facebook. One of them will visit me next year. I'm very grateful for these experiences and new friends I made at Coastal Carolina.

5 In what way has the first part of the Summer School Program in May prepared you for the trip to the US?

Irina Menke, Ines Körner

In May people from Coastal Carolina came to our university for one week. We did several excursions, for example a trip to Cologne or doing a rally, so that we could get to know the American students much better. This was for the most of us the first time being together with Americans and so we had our first impression about their culture and how they behave. I think that the Summer School Program in May was a nice introduction of the Program because you already lose the fear of speaking English to native speakers even before you go to the U.S.A. Everyone of the German students was partnered with an American buddy so that the Americans had a contact partner in Germany. I spend time with the American students each day in May. It was important to make them feel comfortable over here. This was really nice because we became really close with our buddies. This was good for my preparation, in so far as I was able to ask some questions about the campus, the environment and to get in touch for the first time with the American culture. Furthermore it was very nice to make some friends who study at CCU even before getting there yourself, because you already know someone at CCU who can help you when you get there.

During the time from May until August we kept in contact via internet and so we all were excited to meet our buddies again, when we arrived in the States. My buddy was really nice - she invited me to go out with her and we went to a Mexican restaurant. Besides that, she came with us and brought her American friends with her so that we were a mixed group of Americans and Germans which we all enjoyed.

During the time at CCU, I also made a lot of new friends, but unfortunately it was not possible to spend some time together most of the time: Most of them were RA's and they had a very structured schedule with only little free time, same the same was true for us. Most of the time, it was the Americans that I met during the May program that I spend time with. They were the ones who invited me into their houses. Making those friends in May was my way into the real American culture and being accepted into the real American life as a friend.

6 In what way has participating in this program helped you in deciding whether a study related stay abroad might be a realistic option for you?

Ines Körner, Martin Kowatzki, Klaus Fischer, Marius Sauerborn

It is always nice to read books or some articles in the internet about going abroad. But being there is something totally different. For example, we were concerned about how we would get around in Myrtle Beach (to do some grocery shopping or spending leisure time of campus) but we were told that as soon as we make friends we will get around automatically. But as a European who is used to a well working public transportation network and walking distances it is a shock to come to Myrtle Beach. This is nothing you can image before you see it. You need to have a car, even if you just want to go to a pharmacy: everything is build right next to the highway and even though it is in walking distance there is no sidewalk you could use!

Therefore being in such a situation, you start thinking about the financial issues of a semester abroad and realize that there will be more costs than you imagined.

The Summer School Program is a great opportunity when you don't know if you want to do a semester abroad or not. You can see the Summer School Program as a "semester" abroad compressed into 3 weeks, because you have to do the same things as the German exchange students who stay at the CCU for a whole semester and you have to attend even more classes than they have to attend. You see during the Summer School whether you understand the professors and whether you can follow the classes. The summer school puts you in a situation where you have to get along with a lot of people from different cultures, adapt to the American college system with its spirit. You can also see whether you like the American culture and the attitude of the Americans, which also differs very much from the German culture / attitude. That is something you will never experience in Europe. This experience will make you feel more self-confident and sure of what you really want and need in life.

In conclusion, I think the Summer School Program 2010 has broadened my personal horizon and taken me to another international level. Now if there would be a way after my graduation in Germany, it could well be that I chose CCU for a Master's degree. And this due to the fact of having had a short overview during the Summer School Program from August 14 until September 5, 2010.

Thanks, again, for this great opportunity – I learned a lot, about the US Culture, about my German Culture and, off course, about myself: If I was able to end this program with an A grade then I am also able to successfully make a semester abroad!

The program showed me what is possible and changed my horizon! Thank you for making that possible and please give other students in the next year the same chance again.