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03/01/1985 - Exchange Program

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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Charleston, Illinois

news

March 1, 1985

Select 1

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Intern
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Picture yourself thousands of miles from home, speaking a foreign language, eating different foods, learning another culture's way of life. Sound scary? Exciting? Far-fetched? Thanks to an exchange student program with Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, Eastern Illinois University is helping students from a distant land experience all this, and more.

Isabel Fernandez-Ariza, an economics major from Frankfurt, said she enjoys the friendly atmosphere of Charleston.

"Ever since I arrived, people have made me feel at home. Some people say they experience a culture shock when they arrive, but I haven't."

Timo Klein, a 23-year old economics major from Frankfurt, said, "I was prepared for Charleston to be much sleepier, but in the first couple weeks we went out all the time. The town is livelier than I expected it to be."

Hans Velten, a Frankfurt history major, said, "I was not all enthusiastic about moving to a small town in the midwest. I realized it would be a large change from all the opportunities and possibilities not present in Charleston that a large town like Frankfurt offers."

"But there are many advantages to a smaller city too, like the clean air and closeness of nature. It has been a growing experience."

These young people are all enrolled in the graduate program at Eastern, and express happiness with the University's academic program.

-more-

Add 1

Exchange Students

"The relationship between professors and students is very fine here," Velten noted. "Teachers have time for you at Eastern and are enthusiastic. The learning conditions are excellent."

"Whereas German professors are more scholarly and abstract, the professors here at Eastern make the information clearer."

"Also, there is no student community in Frankfurt. Everything is more impersonal. The young people here are more in a group and there are more social ties," Velten explained.

Fernandez-Ariza agrees, saying, "my personal relationship with my professors is much deeper here."

Klein said, "the classes here are much different. In Germany, education is free so the classes are much bigger, sometimes 300 to 800 in a lecture. Learning is much easier when your classes are smaller."

Competition is stiffer in Germany, Klein noted, because of the large number of baby-boomers coming to working age. Because of this, almost all German students stay in school to work for a master's degree.

Many subjects studied during the freshman and sophomore year in American universities are learned during high school in Germany, Klein added. For this reason, a two-year intermediate degree (equivalent to an American bachelor's) is "not a certificate of any value."

"Everyone goes on to graduate work. You've got to if you want a good job."

Klein said one advantage to studying in America is that 80 percent of all literature about economics, his main area of study, is written in English.

"Not only has this experience helped me speak better English, it has helped me to read it and write it more effectively. It still takes me 10 to 20 percent more time to read English, but I rarely have to look up words.

Add 2

Exchange Students

I can usually get the meaning of a word through the context of a sentence."

Velten said there is one aspect of American college life he detests: exams. "I am not a friend of exams. You cannot put as much devotion in exams as you put in a paper. I feel a student can learn much more from writing and researching than by taking a test."

No tests are given to students of humanities in Frankfurt, the history student added.

Two undergraduate scholarships and a graduate award are being offered to Eastern students by Johann Wolfgang Goethe University for the 1985-86 school year. Up to fifteen credit hours in German plus an undetermined amount of credit in other areas may be earned.

Applicants for the undergraduate scholarship must meet two qualifications: the completion of 60 semester hours, and proficiency of the German language at the fifth proficiency level.

Applicants for the graduate award must have a bachelors degree, and also be proficient at the fifth level.

The scholarship offers are part of a continuing exchange program between Eastern and Johann Wolfgang Goethe University. The program is in its fourth year. This year's participants from Eastern are Rene Schmittgens, Mark Turner and John Walsdorf.