



VCU

L. Douglas Wilder School of
Government and Public Affairs

The VCU-University of Kaiserslautern Student and Faculty Exchange Program



In September 2012 Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Kaiserslautern (UNIKL), Germany signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to create new initiatives in student and faculty exchange. Student and faculty exchanges between the two universities' Departments of Urban and Regional Planning had been taking place since 2009. The new Memorandum formalizes this cooperative relationship and opens up several new opportunities for students and faculty, beginning in summer 2013.

Trans-Atlantic Development Seminar

The purpose of this initiative is to help students understand how global socio-economic forces and structural changes have given rise to similar planning and development challenges in Germany and the United States, to see how each country addresses these issues, and to consider opportunities for cross-cultural learning about how to address them.

The seminar themes may include (but are not limited to): economic revitalization in mature regions; the role and function town centers in the revitalization of mature and lagging regions; and the changing relationship of core and periphery in the face of regional economic change. The primary language of instruction will be English.

The seminar will consist of about eight students from VCU and about eight from UNIKL. The seminar will take place as a three-week course during the summer semester (May or June). One half of the seminar will take place in Virginia and one half will take place in or near Kaiserslautern. VCU students will enroll in the seminar as a 3-credit Summer Study Abroad Course, paying tuition plus the usual Summer Study Abroad fees to VCU. (A six-credit option may also be available.) It is expected that each student will pay his or her own travel, lodging and per diem expenses while abroad. However, VCU and UNIKL will use best efforts to find low-cost lodging, meals and ground transportation arrangements for their guests from abroad.

Student information sessions will begin in November or December every year for the following summer semester. VCU students will need to register for the summer seminar by March with a deposit of \$250 (refundable if the seminar does not take place).

Trans-Atlantic Student Internship/Practicum

Up to one student per academic year from VCU and UNIKL may request permission to complete an unpaid internship in the community at the other institution. The internship will generally be of less than three months duration. In each case, UNIKL and VCU professors will make sure that the internship meets the requirements of the sending institution, if the student in question needs credit for the practicum work. Eligibility will generally be limited to graduate students and to upper-level undergraduates.

For VCU students going to Kaiserslautern, German language facility may be necessary, but there may also be internship sites there where English will be sufficient. Professors and students at the University of Kaiserslautern will try to find affordable housing arrangements for the VCU student. The cost of living in Kaiserslautern is comparable to living costs in Richmond.

Conduct Your Thesis Research Abroad

The purpose of this initiative is to help master's students conduct comparative international thesis research on urban and regional development themes in the United States and Germany. The primary vehicle through which this will occur will be the appointment of an "outside reader" on the thesis who is a professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the other university. In the VCU Wilder School's Master of Urban and Regional Planning program, each thesis panel must have two faculty members from the program and one faculty reader from outside the program, including from other universities. In this case, the role of the outside reader at UNIKL will include helping the student and his or her faculty advisors identify appropriate research sites and persons who can be contacted for information or interviews in the foreign country.

Some or perhaps all of this international contact facilitation may occur via email or telephone. However, if it is deemed appropriate by his or her primary thesis advisor, the student may elect to go to the other country, entirely at his or her own cost, to conduct research. In this case, students and professors at UNIKL will use best efforts to find low-cost accommodations for the student and to facilitate connections with resources and with students in that country.

In general, the student's study abroad will be for a period of about one month, but other arrangements may be made, as appropriate. The student will not be permitted to take courses in the other country; just to conduct research. The visiting student will be responsible for paying his or her own health insurance, for securing a travel visa, and for completing all paperwork required for a stay in the other country of less than 90 days.

Visiting Professor Lectureships

From time to time, professors from VCU will give lectures at UNIKL and UNIKL professors will come to VCU.

Interested?

Please contact Meghan Gough, Ph.D., associate professor and chair of the VCU Wilder School's Urban and Regional Planning program, at mzgough@vcu.edu for more information about these opportunities.