

**16:30 – 17:45 Student Workshop: One Month at Uni Bremen – Student Experiences****7 Students of the Durden Dickinson in Bremen Program (3 groups):**

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**3 x 15 min. + 25 min.**

**Moderation: Janine Ludwig, Academic Director of the Durden Dickinson in Bremen Program**

Format: The participants of the RD Conference split into **3 groups/stations**, with one topic each. The suggested topics are:

1. Why Germany? Associations, Expectations and Reasons for Choosing Germany
2. Cultural Matters. First Impressions
3. Academic Matters. First Impressions of Courses

The 6 Dickinson students split up into 3 groups as well and go to one station each. They will respond to questions about the respective topic and the participants of the RD Conference write students' responses on a flip chart poster. After 15 minutes, the students rotate as in a speed dating format and go to the next station. The RDC participants welcome the next group and continue to write their poster. At the end, all three groups present their poster to everyone for general discussion (25 minutes).

**Station 1 – Topic: Why Germany?**

- Reasons for Choosing Germany: Why did you choose Germany as a country and German as a language?
- What appealed to you so much that you wanted to come here, what were you looking forward to?
- Why did you choose the Bremen program?
- Ideas: What did you know about Germany (or thought you knew)?
- Expectations/hopes: What did and do you expect from your study abroad here in Bremen?

**Answers:**

I've always naturally gravitated towards the German language. Because I lived in Germany when I was younger, it was the first language (outside of English) that I heard on a regular basis. I learned some German while living here, but I attended an international school and was never able to continue with it after leaving. So when I went to college, I decided that I wanted to start over from square one and learn German properly this time. Also, I do believe that Germany is simply a beautiful country, so any excuse to come back here seemed like a pretty good one to me.

Germany is my favorite country; I want to learn German; I already am familiar with the culture. The list of reasons why I wanted to and why it makes sense to study abroad here goes on and on.

I've chosen the Bremen program because of their strong ties with Dickinson College. As a Dickinson student taking German, it did not make sense to go anywhere else.

I did not have a lot of beliefs or perceptions before this program, because I didn't know what to expect; however, the one expectation I did have was that I could become fluent (or almost fluent) in German from this experience, so I have yet to see if that belief holds up or not. I have promised to give myself a good chance at learning German and to try and have fun doing it along the way. It is going to take a lot of hard work and will be quite stressful at times, but I will put my best effort forward.

- German ancestors
- German language– exotic discipline, also German Studies as a major
- German sometimes related to field of study -> sustainability is exemplary
- Bremen: diverse pictures of Germany, getting to know more than one region
- Surprise: how diverse Germany is
- Integration: German study buddy or tandem partner
- Typically German:
  - o Oktoberfest
  - o Public transportation
  - o Punctuality (even though not as much as expected)
  - o Standoffishness / reservedness
  - o What I will miss: the freedom/independence I enjoy as a student in Germany

## Station 2 – Topic: Cultural Matters. First Impressions

- Surprises: What was different than expected – better/worse/just different?
- Comparison to Pre-departure information: What would you have liked to be (better) informed about?
- What was the most difficult for you in the first days/weeks? How is it going with social contacts?
- Plans for the year: What are you still planning to do, what do you wish for, what will you still need help from the program for?

### Answers:

I went into this program with not a whole lot of expectations, simply because I didn't know what to expect. The only thing that was really worse than I had expected would probably have to be the weather in Bremen. Other than that, I just didn't know what to expect, it was an adventure.

There's a lot of things that I would have liked to have known beforehand. I would have liked to be given a description of what the average day in the life of a Bremen student is like.

The most difficult part about the first several days/weeks is making sure that you aren't missing anything important. It seemed like there were about a million forms to fill out, events to go to, and just preparation for your time in Bremen. It's just all a bit overwhelming, and I was continually worried that I had forgotten something important or had done it wrong or misunderstood what we had to do.

I simply need to speak more German. It's hard to do that sometimes when I know that I can string words together with ease, clarity, and good grammar in English. But I need to put that aside and practice my German more.

- University is bigger here -> contact
- Vienna was different, e.g. with regard to public transportation
- C. has studied German in Vienna also with adults
- At Dickinson, we have more stress (academically)
- Here, there is less time between courses to speak with Germans
- Courses are bigger – contact not easy
- German students are less open and seem to know each other already
- Had heard in pre-departure that it would be tough to get to know Germans, but it really is
- Living in a shared apartment is good for making contacts
- Language and learning tandem partners are of much help
- Students here are bolder and not afraid to be wrong
- Germans are not so concerned about the opinions of others and therefore speak more freely
- We are not used to buying things in different places (different stores, such as supermarkets, drugstores, pharmacies and other stores which are not on campus)
- Students in the US are more childish and immature
- Germans are more serious and less mature
- Surprise? K. found the Oktoberfest disgusting
- We go to seminars even if attendance is not taken
- Are glad that Germans are politically friendly to us
- Students in Germany have more time (to study)
- Students in the US choose an (expensive) degree course (too) early

### Station 3 – Topic: Academic Matters. First Impressions of Courses

- Studying at a German university. What is new, difficult, exciting?
- Academic system in Germany – differences – difficult/positive?
- How could one have prepared you even better at Dickinson – or how could you yourself have prepared better?
- But also: What is good/do you like/is enriching?
- Choice of courses – went well? Where are potential problems?

### Answers:

Certainly the number of students on campus is different. I am used to a very small, tight knit community, so coming to such a big campus is a bit shocking. It's not necessarily better or worse, just different.

I do miss the way in which classes are held at Dickinson. I find lectures to be far too big where it's hard to pay attention the entire class. The seminars are a great alternative, but I feel they are too student focused; I'd rather learn from a professor who is more of an expert in that area. Dickinson classes, in a way, combine the two styles. You have smaller classes where the Professor is the one teaching with input, questions, and comments by the students in the class. The German academic system is something I just need to become more used to and comfortable with.

Becoming more accustomed to different types of learning environments is always beneficial. I'm sure that this experience at the University of Bremen will allow me to look at certain topics from a different perspective.

Honestly, this entire program is very enriching. It is a wonderful opportunity for learning, some adventure, and becoming in touch with a new culture, and I think those experiences greatly impact a person's life.

It is nice that the University of Bremen has this testing out period for students, especially for people like me who didn't know what classes would be like. I liked that I could test out different professors and see what I liked and didn't. I had no problems with the course selection process, but it would have been nice to look at courses sooner.

- 1 month intensive language course as preparation. City of free choice
- Intensive preparation
- German courses at Uni Bremen's language center in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut during the semester
- Received information from former program participants in pre-departure orientation
- 24 ECTS points are the equivalent of 4 courses (1 Dickinson credit = 6 ECTS) per semester
- Have to take 3 courses in German
- Withdrawal or half credit or audit possible until 2 days before exam
- Grades are not factored into the GPA, (except for 1 course taught by the Academic Director)
- Most had 4 semesters of German at Dickinson
- Choice of courses in Bremen: pre-selection in USA, about 20 courses, narrowed down to 10 in the first week, counseling from Academic Director
- Study buddies from the International Office of Uni Bremen
- Differences German – American systems: no Quizzes here -> our own time management, self-discipline, course system
- Goal: to learn German, partly as 2nd major
- German instruction here is more intensive/faster
- Courses with international students
- Concern: to speak German in class