Music, video and “flipped classrooms”

TEACHING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The world is changing, and professors at RIT/ACMT are changing with it, updating their teaching styles and methods in response to rapid changes in technology and today’s student lifestyles. Professors at RIT/ACMT and around the world are making increased use of technology, and multi-media learning, such as video and music, to help students learn better. Students say that these new methods really work, and make studying more interesting and, sometimes, even fun.

At the Zagreb campus, Professor Peter Schmidt has made big changes to his Financial Accounting course, which is known among students as a tough subject, especially for people who aren’t big fans of numbers. To better reach those students, Prof. Schmidt has introduced a “flipped classroom” – instead of the traditional schedule of in-class lectures and then practice exercises for homework, he does the reverse.

Starting in the fall of 2013, RIT and ACMT will move to a semester-based academic calendar. Two 16-week semesters will replace the current calendar of three 11-week quarters. This change will make study abroad and exchanges with other universities much easier, since the semester calendar is standard in most educational institutions around the world.

“Semester conversion is a positive change that promotes greater student mobility, and allows students to study in greater depth and breadth of subject matter,” said ACMT President and Dean Don Hudspeth.

Bye, bye quarters

SEMESTERS ARE COMING

WINTER BREAK: A CHANCE TO SEE THE WORLD

ZAGREB CAMPUS ASSOCIATE DEAN DR. SHAWN STURGEON

ALUMNI SHARE HR AND CONSULTING EXPERTISE

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Continued on page 8
Students, faculty and staff raised more than 28,000 kunas for worthy causes at the annual Holiday Auction events at both campuses. By bidding on donated items, members of the Dubrovnik campus raised 17,000 kunas for the family of Ante Jović, of Dubrovnik, whose disabilities require extensive therapy. The evening was hosted by student auctioneers Hanan Besović and Gregor Ettinger. The Zagreb auction event, hosted by students Mislav Peček and Ida Maržić, raised over 10,000 kunas for “Veliko srce malom srcu” a non-profit organization assisting children with heart problems, and their families.
Holiday Auction raises 28,000 kn for charities benefiting children with heart problems, and their families. Hosted by students Mislav Peček and Ida Maržić, raised over 10,000 kunas for "Veliko srce malom srcu," a non-profit organization assisting those with heart issues requiring extensive therapy. The evening was hosted by student auctioneers Hanan Besović and Gregor Ettinger. The Zagreb auction event, focusing on donated items, members of the Dubrovnik campus raised 17,000 kunas for the family of Ante Jović, of Dubrovnik, whose disabilities have led to a higher demand for medical care.

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Dr. Shawn Sturgeon, a wordsmith, an introvert by nature, someone who stopped listening to popular music in 1998, one of students’ favorite teachers, and the current associate dean and professor of English at the Zagreb campus, writes daily and believes he can find inspiration in everything. He believes poetry is a crucial form of knowledge about the world and that the poet helps us see things and understand them in new ways.

Dr. Sturgeon was born in Scottsbluff, on the high plains of western Nebraska, 47 years ago, and moved frequently during his childhood. He has lived all over the western US, in Washington, Colorado, Wyoming, "the sort of bleak small towns and empty, surreal landscapes that in the 19th century people called the Great American Desert," he said.

As a young man, Shawn was involved in all sorts of activities, perhaps because his strict parents believed that free time should be spent constructively. He was a part of the student government, community service, sports, speech team, music, drama, and journalism.

He showed a strong interest in writing during high school and won library awards for his prolific reading. At first he planned to attend law school and become a lawyer, but at the age of 23, decided that writing would be his career. His first professional publication was a poem called "Misreading Our Lives".

“I thought it a good omen that it appeared in The New Republic magazine on my birthday,” he said.

His first collection of poems, titled Either/Ur, written over a ten year period, was a finalist for the Paris Review Prize in 2000 and a semi-finalist for the Walt Whitman Award in 2001. "Ur is the oldest known city in human history and Either/Or is a famous book of philosophy by one of philosophy's most intriguing philosophers, Soren Kierkegaard," he explained. "The book is so much about beginnings—first or second or even third beginnings, and about making choices, that it seemed like an appropriately obscure title.”

His earliest influences have remained constant in his life. These include the poets Walt Whitman, T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden, although many others favorites have also influenced him over the years.

Dr. Sturgeon moved to Kosovo in 2008 and spent three years there as a professor of English and Director of Academic Affairs, at the American University of Kosovo, one of RIT’s global campuses, before joining the RIT/ACMT Zagreb campus in 2011.

“I love teaching, because as much as it sounds like a cliché, I learn a lot,” he said. “I wouldn’t be happy if I didn’t have the chance to work with students in the classroom.”

Students appreciate his knowledge and friendliness.

“Prof. Sturgeon is an outgoing, friendly dean who wants the best for his students,” said student Marina Milos. “He truly is looking to get involved and make sure we are happy with our studies. He walks around the halls with a big bright smile, ready to help out.”

“Prof. Sturgeon’s good soul shows through his teaching and care for his students,” added president of the Zagreb campus student council Tasia Pejkovic. “Class with him is something to look forward to.”

Prof. Sturgeon is currently working on several writing projects, including a new collection of poems called “Before I Sleep” and a novel called “The Big Bang Sayonara” which he describes as an apocalyptic comedy.

Into My Eyes

By Shawn Sturgeon

That was the time I hardly knew how to speak: cars and trucks passed me, wordless wondering at so much speed.

Things moved slowly: I could hold them forever: things moved without me, so much more between each blink. When stars fell, I could fill their space with an eye, and when puddles dried out there was earth left to drink, and all the small things crept into my hand touching me. It was a time, it was a space that wanted me to linger. The streets cried in syllables, signing take me take me and each step I took lifted me along. And I ate light, ate dark like the hungry child I was, moving past windows that looked in on open doors, feeling myself floating until I scraped the sky. And everything asking, when will you grow up?! I didn’t want to grow up. I wanted only to be alive.

Profile

ZAGREB CAMPUS
ASSOCIATE DEAN
DR. SHAWN STURGEON
Poet, wordsmith, teacher

By Ena Paponja

Dr. Shawn Sturgeon is a wordsmith, an introvert by nature, someone who stopped listening to popular music in 1998, one of students’ favorite teachers, and the current associate dean and professor of English at the Zagreb campus.

In addition to his administrative leadership and teaching responsibilities, Dr. Sturgeon writes daily and believes he can find inspiration in everything. He believes poetry is a crucial form of knowledge about the world and that the poet helps us see things and understand them in new ways.

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WINTER BREAK: A chance to see the world

By Pami Kolega

This winter break, some lucky RIT/ACMT students got to escape from college life and enjoy Christmas in cities all over Europe. Juniors Lucija Marinov and Nikolina Lazarević decided it was time to escape the small town life in Dubrovnik, for exciting trips to Paris, France, and Karlsruhe, Germany.

Lucija and her sister spent a week in the beauty of the romantic City of Light that they had always heard about.

“We went through the entire city from beginning to end,” Lucija said. “We were on the Trocadero, Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum, Moulin Rouge, Notre Dame, Arc de Triomphe, Place Charles de Gaulle and the Avenue des Champs-Élysées” she said, excitement still gleaming in her eyes.

“There were a million people on the streets. My sister and I barely made it around, but I had so much fun and I really learned a lot. People weren’t the best hosts, they barely smile. But overall it was an amazing trip! I truly think Paris is a mecca of world nations. The more I travel, the more I realize how little I know. The world is a wonderland and I feel like Alice in it”.

Meanwhile, Lucija’s best friend Nikolina Lazarević enjoyed her hometown of Karlsruhe, Germany.

“My whole hometown of Karlsruhe literally shines through the streets with decorations, Christmas music is played everywhere, including the street performers. They really pay attention to details and that’s what makes it special,” Nikolina explained.

“At the Christmas Market on the main square in town, people gather there to eat “Sauerkraut mit Bratwürst” (Cabbage with Sausage), and the whole place smells like “Glühwein” (Mulled wine) and “Gebrannte Mandeln” (Roasted Almonds). At home, we make “Weihnachtsplätzchen” (Christmas Cookies) of all shapes,” she described of the German traditions. “I always thought of Germany as my second home, and I love it so much. But I love it even more for Christmas, because that is the time when it looks like a small Christmas Wonderland.”

Lucija and Nikolina came back to Dubrovnik the night before school started, and even today if you see them around the college you can see the Eiffel Tower or the Weihnachtsmarkt am Marktplatz reflected in their eyes.

Coming up: Events for Spring
Mark your calendar now! There’s something for everyone.

27 April
Annual Fun Run and Student Sport Day
Dubrovnik

Career Education Days
Dubrovnik
Zagreb

Spring BBQ

5 May
12 May
Alumni share HR and consulting expertise

By Ena Paponja

Eight accomplished graduates visited the Zagreb campus in January to share their expertise and experience in the field of HR and consulting, share friendly news, and network with old and new colleagues. The event, titled, Eight Minutes for Eight People, is the latest in a series of RIT/ACMT Alumni gatherings, held in various locations on different professional topics.

“Alumni events are a great opportunity to see old friends and colleagues, or meet new ones,” said Alumni Association President Ana Jarak. “We had great speakers to discuss personal development in the time of economic crisis, EU funds management and consulting, the importance of brands and naming and many other interesting topics.”

Alumna Maja Vitas ’02, started off the evening by Skypeing in from Kuwait, where she is HR manager at the Radisson Blu Hotel. Many of the employees there have been working for the hotel for many years, and are so loyal that it is sometimes hard to get them to leave, even if they are not highly paid. She said people in Kuwait do not believe in the power of money but the stability that this kind of company offers, especially since the company encourages hiring of family members.

Maja Benčić ’99, shared her experience starting her own naming consultant business, called Vokado, in Zagreb. Maja gets paid to come up with names, and some of her most well known successes are the Soundset Radio and the Oryx Grupa. She admires creative and clever brand names on the market such as “Silk” soy milk, “Loverdose” perfume and “Innocent” all-fruit juice.

She was also the mind behind the company name of the next speaker, Miroslav Kosović ’05 senior consultant for EU funds at Sense Consulting. Miroslav addressed some of the negative stereotypes of consultants, who are often considered “fog sellers” or in other words, people who charge you big money to tell you everything you already know. He even had someone tell him that consultants are the people who call thieves in their village. It was interesting to hear him unravel this myth as well as the misconception that consulting cannot be creative. For example, Sense Consulting has a comic book about EU funds named “James Fond,” a funny spoof on the famous Agent 007.

Ljiva Reljić ’05, a regional manager with Smart Flex outlet placement. Her job is to help employees find new jobs in the unfortunate situation that their employer shuts down. In this helpful program, Ljiva and her co-workers help employees find a job and offer free counseling services.

Amila Avdagić ’05, made everyone laugh with her funny stories from her experience as retail manager for Riva tobacco company in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, customers like to pay half price for newspapers if they bring them back in half an hour, or store owners who keep their shop so neat they make Amila to take her shoes off and put on slippers if she wants to walk around.

Other speakers included Ida Hohnjec ’03, Talent Development Associate Director at Merck pharmaceuticals, Lea Uroš ’05, a senior consultant in retail services for Spiller Farmer real estate, and Zdenko Lučić ’05 director in the Sector for Investments in the Croatian government Agency for Investments and Competitiveness, who shared his experience in helping to write Croatia’s new Law on Strategic Investment.

All in all, it was a great event to help RIT/ACMT alumni reconnect with each other and share their industry experience with current students. Stay tuned for more information on our next event.
Handball team raises funds for tournament in Spain

The Zagreb campus handball team raised 250 kunas for their planned trip to compete in an upcoming tournament Barcelona, organized by Spanish national handball team coach Valero Rivera and goal keeper David Barrufet. Thanks to support from about 70 fellow students, who attended a special party at the Cab Club in Zagreb in January, the team is now one step closer to their goal.

The fundraiser was organized by team members Marin Juran, Matej Buzuk and Armin Alibegović, who hope to raise an additional 1000-1500 Euros through future events and possible sponsorships.

“Thanks to everyone who came to support the team,” Marin said. “We hope to see you at our next event!”

--Ena Paponja

BYE, BYE QUARTERS:
SEMESTERS ARE COMING

- Continued from the front cover

Under the new semester system, the majority of courses will carry 3 credits, (instead of the current 4), and will meet for 3 hours per week. Most students will take five courses per semester, for a total of 15 credit hours.

Fall semester at the Croatia campuses will begin September 2nd and run until December 19th and will be followed by a holiday break. This will be followed by an optional 3-week January intersession, called Tiger Terms, in which shorter, intensive, specialized courses will be offered. Tiger Terms allow students to catch up on or move ahead with their coursework, earn extra money, travel, or work intensively on a project.

The spring semester will start in late January and run through the end of May, with a one week Spring break.

To help students prepare for the change to semesters, each student will have a personal meeting with Academic Adviser Drazenka Franić at the Dubrovnik campus, or Danijela Kraljević at the Zagreb campus, to create an Individual Advisement Plan (IAP). This plan helps each student map out a course for completing the required courses in his or her degree program, on time.

“We are all excited about this change, and we know that once the semester system has been implemented all students will enjoy the new structure”, added Dean Hudspeth.

For more information about the RIT semester conversion process, visit http://www.rit.edu/conversion//
After a brief introduction to new concepts in class, students watch his recorded lectures for homework. That way, they learn theory on their own time, when they are ready, while class time is used for hands-on practice in small groups, since working on practice material is often the most efficient way of learning new concepts.

“With video lectures, learning and preparing for classes became much easier,” said student Tajana Grubišić. “When watching videos, I can always press pause and make notes, and if I didn’t understand something I can always go back and play it again, which is really important. Lectures are much better explained in the videos than in the textbook.”

This method has led to higher grades, more involvement with the material, and fewer failures in the class overall, Prof. Schmidt said.

“Students seem to find this method a lot more appealing than to sit ‘alone’ in front of a thick textbook, which they find discouraging,” he said. “Also it is easier for them to understand the spoken English of a video rather than the dense writing style and vocabulary of an accounting textbook. The videos seem to significantly lower the hurdle for students to engage in the course material.”

But supplementing textbook reading with a video lecture doesn’t mean students don’t have to work hard. Videos will not help students who are unwilling to do any work or who have poor study habits. Some of the F-students fell for the delusion that it would be “enough” to just watch videos. They watch the video, nod at everything they see, but completely fail to practice. Those students are obviously still going to be in trouble on the exam.

Music and video in Writing Seminar

At the Dubrovnik campus, Prof. Rebecca Charry has redesigned the Writing Seminar course, to increase use of video and music in the classroom.

When the Writing Seminar students worked on interpreting texts, they used popular songs and YouTube videos – from Pink Floyd to Japanese anime -- as subjects for their study, in addition to poems, paintings and magazine articles.

“Music, photography, video, and painting are as important and serious works of art as written words,” Prof Charry said. “Today’s students need to know how to understand and interpret all of these.”

“Prof. Charry obviously likes to try new teaching methods and thinking outside of the box, and I can see that in the Writing Seminar class. She keeps up with technology and trends and that’s really awesome,” said student Pero Djangradović.

“Everyone learns differently, and research shows that some people respond better to sounds or pictures than to written words. So, I introduced a series of 5 multimedia videos and animated presentations to help students prepare to write their own literary autobiographies,” Prof. Charry said. “I can see that these multimedia tools helped students better prepare to write their papers, and start thinking seriously about the concepts we discussed.”

In the Technology in Service Systems course, students are creating videos to promote Dubrovnik tourism, said Prof. Ivo Tomić, while Prof. Jasmina Samardžija uses current news videos and inspirational music in Macroeconomics class.

“We watched a video in connection with unemployment rate, inflation, GDP percentage, development of current global crises and many other topics,” she said. “Then we discuss the topic and look at it from different perspectives (macroeconomic and micro-economic) so we can compare the views. Students also enjoyed interviews with famous economists such as Jagdish Bhagwati and Xavier Sala-i-Martin. Diagrams of supply and demand curves make a lot more sense to students when they can hear a spoken explanation at the same time.”

Sometimes, music just helps make class more fun, and puts students and professors in a better mood for learning. “Before the exam, I listen to positive and motivational music to create a good atmosphere,” Prof. Samardžija said.

Many professors at RIT/ACMT have also made greater use of the My Courses online discussion forums to encourage students to share ideas, ask questions, and help each other. Prof. Schmidt uses the discussion forum to answer student questions, in a public way so that the whole class can benefit from the answers and explanations. As students become more comfortable with the material, more and more students will answer questions, and sometimes substantial discussions emerge from a simple practice problem solution.

“One of the advantages of online discussions is that the written format encourages more thoughtful and interesting responses from students,” Prof. Charry said. “They have time to think carefully about their responses, and write when they are ready. Because their comments are public and permanent, they seem to put more thought into them than just speaking casually in class. Online discussions are also great for students who are a little shy about speaking in front of a group, and help make sure that everyone gets an equal chance to speak.”

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FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

Professors Ana Maria Šimundić, and Bob Foley were members of an RIT team which won the Bronze Excellence Award for their First-Year Global Collaboration Initiative, a project which linked students in the first year Pathways course at the Rochester (NY), Dubrovnik, Zagreb and Prishtina (Kosovo) campuses. The award was given by an international association of Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA). RIT professors Maureen Barry and Julia Norrgard as well as Prishtina campus professor Albina Malidemaj also shared in the award.

Articles by professors Staša Puškaric, Milena Kužnin, Kevin Walker, Vanda Bazdan, Rebecca Charry and Shawn Sturgeon were published in the winter issue of the online multidisciplinary academic journal RITthink.


Prof. Walker’s paper was titled, “The Technopreneurship Process: Academic Entrepreneurs University Spin-Offs.” Prof. Bazdan’s paper was titled, “Einstein: The Method of Theoretical Physics and Reality.” Prof. Kužnin’s paper was titled, “Lifelong Learning for Tourism in Croatia: A ‘nice to have’ or ‘must have’?”

Prof. Sturgeon contributed a poem entitled, “Goodbye,” and Prof. Charry contributed a collection of seasonal haiku poems in Croatian and English.

Professor Nikola Božinović successfully defended her doctoral dissertation, entitled “Grammar learning strategies and grammatical competence in foreign language,” in the field of Applied Linguistics at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, in December.

RIT/ACMT President and Dean Don Hudspeth was recently appointed Chair of the Human Capital Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in Zagreb. This committee will be addressing required changes to the accreditation process in higher education, increasing competition in the hiring practices of state-run companies, and general education reform in Croatia.
Freshman IT student Josip Franjković has put his programming knowledge to work, helping Google and Facebook discover and fix security bugs on their websites. In the process, he has earned himself a place in the Google Hall of Fame and Facebook’s Whitehat lists and over $4,000 in rewards from these two companies.

“My hobbies are the internet and the security of web applications and I plan to work in that area in the future,” Josip said. “For both companies I found errors in their security systems. For Google I submitted three errors in their security systems that are called Cross Site Scripting (XSS) that can be stored. This bug enabled me to take a user’s “cookies” after they visited a site. Besides that, I reported two Cross Site Scripting (XSS) errors to Youtube. I also found a bug that enabled me to delete poll results that Google did for other companies.”

Both Google and Facebook have established reward programs for individuals who find errors in their systems. These programs enlist the help of skilled members of the public to help improve their security. Individuals who find errors in the security systems which can harm the confidentiality and integrity of its user’s data, receive a monetary reward and their names are then listed in their Hall of Fame.

“Facebook had a little bug in their system for their investor site that enabled me to see the private data of some users that I shouldn’t be allowed to see,” Josip said. “Both Facebook and I were confused as to why this happened under only specific conditions (e.g. special IP addresses), and we found out that it was a bug in their caching system.”

The issue of internet security is important to Josip and he sees his career focusing on this area. He has already entered several international team competitions in this field.

“Currently, I’m under the impression that many companies in Croatia don’t really care about the security of its users. Likewise, there are only a small number of companies that deal with that part of the internet. This personally bugs me, because I don’t want my password or personal data to be available to other people.”