



Dinburger: A Smart Casual Evening

Hospitality Students Present Gala ChaRITy Event

RIT Croatia hospitality program students organized a fabulous smart casual evening of dining and entertainment at the newly renovated Hilton Imperial Hotel in Dubrovnik in April.

Nearly 200 guests, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, business associates and friends of the college, enjoyed an evening of gourmet burgers, fine wines, craft beers and inventive cocktails, along with live music and

dancing, and informative demonstrations and tastings.

This gala event was the result of months of planning by students in Prof. **Domagoj Nikolić's** Project Management for Events course, who organized every aspect the event, from ticket sales and social media marketing, to reaching out to sponsors, to budgeting and accounting, food and beverage, guest experience, décor and entertainment. Students were organized

into departments, each with a different area of responsibility. On the night of the big event, students worked as hosts, greeters, bartenders, and food servers.

This fun evening of food, music, networking and socializing also served a charitable cause. Proceeds from ticket sales and a raffle raised more than 37,000



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SPRING 2018



Career Education



Community Service



Our Student Employees

Career Education Day

Real world advice from top industry professionals

An RIT Croatia education isn't only about what students learn in the classroom, it's about putting those ideas into practice. That's why the college's annual Career Education Day offers the chance to meet and learn from current business leaders, hear their advice, and find employment in some of the region's leading companies.

Real life work experience, in the form of co-ops and internships are an integral part of the RIT learning experience here. Over the course of four years of study, each student works 800-1,200 hours (about 6 months) in various jobs related to their degree program.

When you take into account all RIT Croatia alumni and their completed co-op hours over the past 20 years – more than 350 years of co-ops were completed in more than 3,500 companies. With this approach and focus on applied knowledge, it is no wonder that many RIT students find jobs even before they graduate.

This year, students at both Dubrovnik and Zagreb campuses met with representatives of leading companies to hear presentations and participate in lively discussions on current trends in international business, hospitality and information technology. Taking a break from regular classes, students spent the day at the Libertas Rixos hotel in Dubrovnik and the Westin hotel in Zagreb. The 2018 event was a record year with over 1,000 participants and 73 companies participating.

This year's event featured a new format customized to the needs of each year level. First-year students, who are just getting started on their career paths, were introduced to career basics such as how to prepare themselves for job interviews. Sophomores and juniors, who are looking for summer co-op opportunities attended company presentations, had individual job interviews, and tried an exciting speed networking event. Seniors who are nearing graduation, learned about skills they will need as they search for permanent jobs in the next few months, such as contract and salary negotiation and using social media to create a personal brand.

Senior student **Jelena Barićević** attended a special workshop on "self-branding" by Ms. **Michelle Golubić**, a



permanent placement consultant at the ADECCO company.

"She informed us about the usual interests and expectations companies have when looking for future employees. One component was being present at social media channels by self-creating a public picture of who we are and what we are like. One such channel which is yet to become more popular in Croatia is Linked In. Linked In is a great tool to get discovered and provided with the opportunity to work abroad without having to apply to various job ads nor get many rejections," Jelena said.

"I really appreciate the tips she shared with us, such as: always include your picture in your CV/application because it gives more of a personal note, never be late or too early to an interview because it shows disrespect for the interviewer who has other timely obligations, handshake leaves a strong impact without any words, and asking questions about the company means showing interest. However, skip the question about your salary on the first interview, there will be plenty of opportunity to reach that point. It is always beneficial to research a little about the company of your interest before showing up to the interview. Saying two sentences about the organization is more than enough to leave a good first impression.

Ms. Golubić helped us understand how even the most common behaviors get forgotten during a stressful interview. Her best suggestion is to take a minute to compose yourself and enter the room with confidence. Do so with a smile."

Employers have long recognized the value of RIT Croatia students as potential employees, and look forward to meeting our students at Career Education Day.

Vedran Podkrajšek, an HR Advisor from Megatrend Poslovna rješenja, shared his comments from this year's event.

"The interest for our company presentation exceeded my expectations (the room was full!) and it was a real pleasure being among those young people. They were actively listening to the presentation and more importantly, they had tons of questions after the presentation which is really rare among Croatian students. I believe it is the American way of studying that makes the difference."

STUDENT HONORS AND AWARDS

IMAGINE RIT Innovation Festival

Four freshman students were selected to attend the annual Imagine RIT Festival at the main campus in Rochester, New York in April. **Matea Laptalo** and **Petar Klešković** from the Dubrovnik campus, as well as **Sonja Armbrecht** and **Ivor Barić** from the Zagreb campus, spent a week in Rochester representing the college, meeting new colleagues and participating in a variety of exciting events.

Valedictorians

Each year, one student from the graduating class at each campus is selected as valedictorian, to represent his or her generation by giving a speech at the commencement ceremony. Valedictorians are selected based on their outstanding academic achievement and contribution to the RIT Croatia community through leadership and volunteer activities. This year, **Ana Maria Trojić**, from the Tourism Management program in Dubrovnik, and **Daniela Kunej** from the Information Technology program at the Zagreb campus, have been selected to represent their generation as valedictorians.

Outstanding Undergraduate Scholars

Five RIT Croatia graduating seniors were recognized this year with the Outstanding Undergraduate Scholar award. **Ana Marija Trojić** and **Antonela Topić** from the Hospitality and Service Management program at the Dubrovnik campus, **Daniela Kunej** and **Lučano Žganec** from the Information Technology/Web and Mobile Computing program at the Zagreb campus and **Lucija Nola** from the International Business program in Zagreb were honored this year with this prestigious award, which is granted to just one percent of all RIT students worldwide.

RIT Croatia students win Dubrovnik Hackathon (again!)

RIT Croatia IT students were declared winners of the 4th annual Dubrovnik Hackathon, a 36-hour IT challenge event, in which six teams competed. Zagreb campus students **Ana Perić**, **Matko Piškorić**, **Lehady Sani-Agatha**, **Matej Gadžo**, and **Boris Fjorović**, mentored by professor **Andrej Šarić**, had a great idea which was a traffic solution for the city of Dubrovnik using machine learning. They were able to prove that implementing that solution is possible. Besides the winning team, there were two more teams that comprised of our students from the Dubrovnik campus, and one of those teams was a mix of alumni and current students.

Student Government Reps Travel to Dubai



RIT Croatia Student Government members traveled to the Dubai campus this January to meet their colleagues from the global campuses and work together on improving student life. "The annual SG consortium is a learning conference where we have an amazing opportunity to work together on bringing global campuses as one unit," said **Niko Katušić**, RIT Croatia Student Government vice president.

This year, it was RIT Dubai's turn to host the event. SG president **Sven Kovačević**, vice president **Marin Androš**, vice president **Niko Katušić** and representative **Jovana Ivanović** travelled there to represent RIT Croatia. In Dubai they were welcomed by five colleagues from the host campus, along with SG members from the main campus in Rochester, New York and RIT Kosovo.

The agenda included 3-day workshops with updates from last year's consortium goals, and themed conversations such as: Project SpiRIT and other opportunities to engage students, deaf advocacy, finance structures, SG branding, increasing School spirit, and building positive relationships with faculty, staff, and administration.

"We had a very tight schedule," said

Niko. "Every morning from 8:30 am until 3-4 pm we were on campus working together. We presented the goals that we accomplished from last year. We also had few brainstorming sessions how to solve existing challenges and how to interact with students even more."

While it was a business trip, students also had time to enjoy some of the Dubai's most famous sights such as the world tallest building – Burj Khalifa, Burj al Arab and the Jumeriah beach, Global Village, and take a desert safari. They had a chance to learn more about the culture and lifestyle of the United Arab Emirates at the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding.

Niko says he has learned about leadership from his SG experience.

"Leadership is not all about being in charge and being the loudest person in the room. For me, success is when my colleagues and friends are successful and when others feel proud of themselves and motivated for future projects. I am so grateful that being involved actively in SG, leading a group of students, making other students happy, and creating a great environment for our students shaped me as a leader and after all – as a person."

Spotlight on student employees



When are students not just students? When they are also RIT Croatia employees! Many RIT Croatia students work at the college helping professors, staff and their fellow students as paid computer lab assistants, receptionists, librarians, fitness center monitors and in many other positions.

These students help solve problems and keep the college running smoothly every day, while getting to know the college "behind the scenes." At the same time, these paid positions help them cover their student living expenses. Managing their time wisely, they still have time for studying and social life.

Tina Kolić manages the library at our Zagreb campus. "My duties include managing student helpers who work at the library, copying and lending out books. In addition, we help student reception and other departments if needed," she said. "One of the most interesting aspects of working as a Student Helper at RIT is connecting with other students, especially students from other year levels whom I usually wouldn't get to meet."

Being a part of RIT Croatia staff is fun. I got a chance to get to know some of the staff members at RIT personally and I know that even when I finish my education, I will have some kind of positive personal relationship with them."

Renato Kocijan is the student Librarian Supervisor at the Dubrovnik campus. "The most interesting part about my position is the supervisor role and overseeing the organization of the library. This is great practice for my future job if I ever find myself in a position that requires experience in managing. I get to create the schedule, solve issues, but overall be of assistance to anyone who comes and needs help with something."

"The most important thing when working as a student is time management," he added. "Because of all the activities going on in our student lives (from studying, working and hanging out), making a schedule and keeping to it is a lifesaver. It is all about organizing our time."

Being a student worker at RIT has definitely paid off. I experienced how everything works and got to know all the facilities such as the library and computer lab. I got to know many students, faculty members and



professors, even those whose courses I might never take."

"The most interesting thing about my job as a student helper is definitely the people. I interact with a variety of people, from students to professors. I get to know a lot of them and make new friends. And it's always nice when you can help fellow students to get the materials they need," said **Gabriela Galić**. "But people are also most challenging thing about this position, too. This experience has helped me a lot in building my communication skills. When I have 10 anxious seniors waiting in the library for their copy because the exam is about to start, I learned a thing or two about how to calm people, make them feel confident, make them laugh and stall for time until the copies are ready."

The biggest advantage of this position is definitely more independence. Nothing can replace the feeling when you receive your paycheck and know that you've achieved that with your own work."

Dubrovnik sophomore **Belma Sokolović** works as Peer Mentor to a group of students from the Rochester, New York, campus who are spending the semester in Dubrovnik. She helps these Study

Abroad students get oriented to the college, the city and the culture and lifestyle of Croatia.

"My greatest goal as a Study Abroad Peer Mentor was for the students to feel welcomed and taken care of. I tried to create a relaxed atmosphere where everyone's opinion was equally valued and acknowledged."

Our group was very diverse and included students from the Rochester campus, as well as Erasmus students from Poland and France. In addition, we had a pleasure of working with deaf students from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at the Rochester campus and their sign language interpreters.

My main duties as a Study Abroad Peer Mentor were to assist the students in completing different documentation and introduce them to our college and philosophy of RIT Croatia. In addition, I was their guide for around the city of Dubrovnik and a go-to person who they could ask for advice regarding any issue during their stay in Croatia. It turned out that this group of students became more than just "new people" or even good friends. They became family."

Community Service Day

Students give back to local communities

Each year at the college's Community Service Day, students, faculty and staff reach out to members of our local communities, building relationships and helping to improve life for our fellow citizens.

This year, students at the Zagreb campus decided to dedicate their time and attention to stray animals in need. They volunteered to help the animal shelter Noina Arka (Noah's Ark) and also at the Veterinary College of the University of Zagreb. They spent the day walking dogs, trimming trees, painting, cleaning up and packaging supplies. Zagreb students also raised more than 3000 kunas through a series of bake sales, which were donated to the shelter.

"The employees at the animal shelter were at first taken aback by the sheer number of students who participated and were especially grateful for the hard work that went into cleaning and fixing up their work sites," said Professor **Ana Maria Šimundić**. "We learned how much the shelter is in need of regular volunteers because it's a lot of daily work for a small number of employees that they have, although it was great to see the love and passion that they have for their jobs."

Students and faculty in Dubrovnik volunteered at the Josipovac Center for Rehabilitation, a residential facility for adults with intellectual disabilities. They spent the day socializing with the residents, making crafts, playing games, singing, dancing and planting flowers in the center's greenhouse.

Center director Ms. **Marina Sambrailo** led students on a tour of the facility, explaining the various support services that are available to residents, including physical therapy and art and music therapy. She also explained how the

center functions as a humanitarian nonprofit organization with support from local and national government institutions.

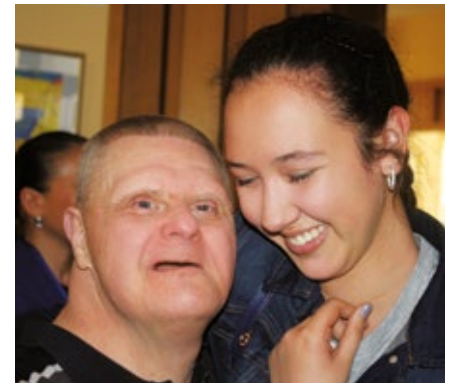
A highlight of the day was a talent show, featuring residents and students singing and dancing together, under the leadership of music therapist **Jelena Đuras Gleđ**, who is also a RIT Croatia graduate.

"I enjoyed the day very much," said Dubrovnik student **Mona Panadić**. "It felt good to put smiles on their faces. I think we really made them happy, but I wish they could know how happy they also made me. I was surprised to discover how quickly I felt comfortable around people who have serious disabilities. Coming face to face with such people made me realize how funny, joyful and full of energy they really are. Overall it was a great experience and I would gladly do it again."

Learning to reach out to the local community and support these worthwhile humanitarian agencies is an important part of an RIT Croatia education, explained professor **Rebecca Charry**. "Through events like this, students learn that they can have a

positive effect in their own communities, solve problems, and help people and institutions that need and deserve support. This year's event really helped students step out of their comfort zones, and meet some special people whom they otherwise would probably not come into contact with."

"The event is student-driven. In addition to choosing our community partner, students at both campuses are involved in all the logistical planning and public relations aspects of the event," added Professor Šimundić. "They learn how to take a good idea and make it into a reality."



Lana Nana Matić: a better future for Dubrovnik through creative education

RIT Croatia graduates know that they really can make a difference in their communities and change the world for the better. Alumna **Lana Nana Matić** has been working for more than four years on an initiative to bring a Waldorf school to Dubrovnik. This innovative, creative educational approach, based on the work of **Rudolf Steiner**, has been recognized around the world for its focus on holistic education that encourages children's imagination, empathy and critical thinking.

Lana and her husband **Mirko** (who is also an RIT Croatia graduate) are small business entrepreneurs, proud citizens of Dubrovnik, and parents of two young children. This initiative, under the title "I love Dubrovnik – I want a Waldorf School" has attracted support from many other parents in the community including fellow alums **Jelena Šipić** and **Alisa Aliti Vlašić**. These young parents want a better future for their children, through education that prepares them to be active, creative members of society. Starting from a simple Facebook page, Lana has started a grassroots movement, educating parents and politicians about the advantages of the Waldorf approach, and working to turn her dream into reality.

"My husband and I graduated from RIT Croatia, where we had an exceptional educational experience. They taught us how to think creatively, what problems we can expect in the real business world and what we need to do in order to develop a feasible business plan," she said. "I gained a great deal of knowledge from RIT that I continue to use in my everyday personal life and our own business. RIT taught me how to think creatively, how to collaborate with people on joint projects and how to learn. The RIT pedagogy taught me how to learn and put what I have learned into practice."



Lucija Bilandžić presents "Chef's Stage"

RIT Croatia alumna **Lucija Bilandžić** recently organized an international gastronomy expo and congress in Šibenik in March. The two-day "Chef's Stage" event was a great success in



promoting Croatian cuisine and gastronomy, bringing renowned chefs from around the region to share their knowledge and love of food with hundreds of local residents and visitors. The event included cooking masterclasses, tastings, demonstrations and workshops, and drew the attention of international journalists who cover the world gastro scene.

Lucija said she and her team of organizers wanted to bring together food enthusiasts in a creative, positive atmosphere, for exchange of knowledge, and discussion of the future of our gastronomy and its role in our tourist offer, and to bring attention to Croatian cuisine, which deserves recognition on a world level.

"Our goal is to ignite culinary curiosity and encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience, create shared conscious plan for the future, and suggest solutions to current challenges."



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kuna for a local humanitarian cause, the Dom Maslina orphanage in Dubrovnik.

Students said the event was both a challenge and a great learning experience that helped them build their knowledge of the hospitality industry and also their teamwork skills through hands on experience.



"As part of the sales department for this event, I learned that it is really important to have a sales pitch, to persuade our target guests to come and buy tickets," explained student **Ivana Čuljak**. "The most interesting part of the course is that we can apply the knowledge we got from other courses and we can see the event being built as we progress to the day of the event."

Student **Petra Knežević** worked on many aspects of the event planning, from décor to uniforms and entertainment.

"The most important thing I have learned so far is the importance of collaboration and communication among departments. Without effective communication among group members it is impossible to create a successful event. Positive energy, enthusiasm and creating a positive work environment is very important as well," she said.

"Finally, I learned how to appreciate and respect other group members' work and effort. Showing appreciation and encouraging others to work, creates a positive and productive work environment."

"Smart casual" is more than just a trendy phrase in the restaurant business, explained Prof. Nikolić. It has key components such as educating customers about the food and beverages they are enjoying, for example, learning to pair wine or beer with a particular dish.

Sponsors included Hotel Hilton Imperial, Tommy supermarkets, Dubrovnik Brewing Company, Dubrovačka TV, Fifi Sound, Splitska banka, Vina Vicelić and many others. Thanks to their generous donations, the evening was a great success. We are already looking to next year's event!



RIT invests in the business ideas of its students

Dr. **James Watters**, RIT Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration, visited RIT Croatia campuses in Dubrovnik and Zagreb to introduce the RIT Venture Fund to students and graduates. The fund was founded by the University a few years ago with a budget of \$ 3.5 million and with the intention of investing in business ideas of RIT students, graduates and employees.

“We have clever, creative and capable students and graduates and we aim to support their start-up ideas and business projects that are important to the RIT community,” said Dr. Watters.

“Young people with whom we work are full of energy and it is wonderful to be with them and share their enthusiasm. It is a great pleasure to present this opportunity to students and graduates in Croatia because we monitor their successes and projects they work on.”

Supported projects come from a variety of industries, mostly tech industries – from gaming, blockchain technology, cyber security, robotics, machine learning... The Fund acts as an Angel investor, i.e. in a way that financially helps the project and enters its ownership. All profits are used for further investment. Applications are

received throughout the year, and projects go through a detailed analysis. Among other things, it is extremely important that the project has clear intellectual property rights and that market for product / service is big enough.

“This is yet another exciting opportunity available for our RIT network – I am very glad our educational institution recognizes relevant business ideas and provides much needed initial financial injection in order to bring these ideas to life,” said **Nina Mimica**, President of the RIT Croatia Alumni Association.

Dubrovnik Mayor visits RIT’s New York Campus



Dubrovnik Mayor and RIT Croatia alumnus **Mato Franković** visited the Rochester, New York, campus of RIT where he gave a lecture on “Challenges Facing Dubrovnik Tourism” as part of a visit to the United States in March.

Mayor Franković discussed the challenges facing Dubrovnik, particularly the issue of overcrowding during the peak season, as well as the measures

the city is undertaking to address and resolve these issues, with an emphasis on sustainable tourism as a basis for the city’s future. Mayor Franković met with the new President of RIT, Dr. **David C. Munson**, and was enthusiastically received by all who attended his lecture in Rochester.

“Mayor Franković clearly communicated that Dubrovnik is facing increasing pressure on its natural, cultural and socio-economic environments,” said hospitality Professor **Besim Agušaj**, whose students watched the lecture live. “Finally, it is now recognized that uncontrolled expansion in tourism brought short-term profits but in a long run it is resulting in highly negative consequences. Students appreciated his honest confession that Dubrovnik does have a problem of unsustainable tourism, and that sustainability concerns are being addressed with concrete plans.”

US Ambassador visits Dubrovnik Campus



Newly appointed United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia, **W. Robert Kohorst**, visited Dubrovnik campus in January. He met with **Dean Hudspeth** for an orientation to RIT Croatia, and then addressed students in Professor **Kevin Walker**'s Hospitality Entrepreneurism in a Global Economy class. Ambassador Kohorst, who was a successful real estate investment entrepreneur in California, shared stories from his life and career, offered tips on becoming an entrepreneur and answered questions from students.

The students were excited to hear about the Ambassador’s successful business career and about the Embassy’s efforts to improve the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Croatia and U.S. – Croatian business ties.

International students on our campuses



- Albania
- Austria
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- France
- Germany
- Great Britain
- Hungary
- Macedonia
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- Norway
- Poland
- Serbia
- Slovenia
- Sweden
- Switzerland

As a global campus of a US university, RIT Croatia attracts students from all over the world. During an academic year, there are around 30 percent of international students on our campuses. Here's what some of them had to say about studying in Croatia:

Ebrima Ndure

I'm a native English speaker from Houston, Texas. I was born in Bakau, The Gambia, and I've traveled all over the world while I was in the U.S. Marine Corps for over five years. The culture here in Croatia is extremely laid back. They're a welcoming people and I love how proud they are of their heritage.



Sven Kovačević

I was born and raised in Sweden, but moved to Croatia five years ago. The biggest difference between the Swedish culture I grew up in and the Croatian culture is, how laid back the people are here. How incredibly relaxed and fun-loving everyone is. I fell in love with this country, both the people and the culture. Everything is so full of life at all times, there is never a boring moment. I'm not going back to Sweden, I'm staying right here where I feel at home.



Angela Madjer

I was born and raised in Chicago, USA. I came to Croatia in 2014. The first difference that I noticed between the two cultures was the mentality and the work ethic. I completed my summer co-ops in the US and the work schedule was very strict. When I came to Croatia, the first thing I realized was that it was a more relaxed and laid-back work culture, people take more breaks. It seemed that people were more present-oriented rather than future-oriented and believe that things



will fall in to place all by themselves. I adapted to the Croatian work culture by getting to know my colleagues during these breaks that allowed us to work better as a team at the end of the day.

These past four years have allowed me to be open to different cultures adapt to them. This is one of the most important skills I will need for my future career.

Maja Utrobičić

I come from Frankfurt, Germany. I've been studying at the Dubrovnik campus and am currently enjoying a semester abroad at the RIT Dubai campus. I speak German, Croatian, English, French, Spanish, Basic Italian and Arabic.



I have Croatian roots in my family and I always had a strong bond to Croatia, but I realized more differences when moving here. For example, there is an amazing diversity of dialects and attitudes within this small country. Also pace of life is slower compared to Germany, which is on the one hand relaxing, on the other hand can feel disorganized.

I have met many kind people since I moved to Croatia, who welcomed me and helped me a lot. I was grateful for this from the start, since I did not know a single person in Dubrovnik and it can be challenging to get along as a foreigner at first.

ADVICE FOR LOCAL STUDENTS: Help our international students get settled

Remember, international students have moved thousands of miles away from their home. Most of them aren't surrounded by familiar faces, and need to start completely over. Give them a chance. Put yourself in their shoes. Try putting yourself in their shoes, how would you feel if you had to make a fresh beginning in a foreign country. These are things that I believe people aren't quite aware of when meeting international students. RIT Croatia did a good job with making me feel comfortable here. I can easily say that the college has become my second home.

Angela Madjer

