GLOBAL CO-OP: students at work in the real world

By ANDREJ BRATUN

Many ACMT students and alumni say that one of the most important parts of their ACMT education is co-op, the opportunity to put everything they have learned in the classroom into practice in the real world, building their resumes and earning valuable life experience that will prepare them for today's careers.

Most ACMT seniors returned to the college during winter quarter after completing their longest co-op so far, and most have collected 12 months or more of real working experience. Some students chose to stay close to home for co-op, while others took the opportunity to explore the world and travel.

Senior Hanne Edvardsen spent 6 months working for OSM Offshore, a Norwegian oil company. Hanne ended up being so involved in the company's operations, that she earned the titles of project manager, front desk manager, and even senior project manager.

SENIOR PROJECT: hands-on research

Most ACMT seniors can already see graduation just ahead. Co-ops are behind them, resumes are built, and the real world beckons. But before they graduate, they face one of the biggest challenges of their academic careers: senior project – an original research project on a real life topic of the student's choice. Under the guidance of a faculty mentor, students become up to date experts in the field by studying current trends. Then, each student poses an original research question that hasn't been answered yet, and looks for an answer through hands-on primary research, such as interviews with experts or statistical surveys. Students present the results of their research in both a formal research paper and a live presentation to their peers. Many students choose topics based on their previous work experience and career plans.

Marko Petrovic-Poljak has been working for the past 5 years for the Kompas Croatian tour agency on co-ops, and has traveled to the company's offices around the world.

"I've learned so much about tour operating. I am actually in love with this business. Since I am hoping to continue my career in this field, and hope for a good position after graduation,"
AMERICAN SUPER BOWL, ACMT STYLE

It was Super Bowl Sunday in the US, and halfway around the world, while most of Dubrovnik was asleep, a small group of ACMT students came to school at midnight to cheer for their favorite American football team.

Thanks to the college’s access to satellite TV and a big screen, students were able to watch the New York Giants and New England Patriots play for the winning title of the 46th Super Bowl Champion.

While most Croatians aren't all that interested in American football, to be honest, this year's Super Bowl got some extra attention this year in Croatia, thanks to the Giants' offensive lineman David Diehl, who is of Croatian descent. His maternal grandmother is from the island of Rab, and Diehl is a proud supporter of the Hajduk soccer team from Split.

He is known for pulling up his Giants uniform to reveal his tattoos of the Croatian coat of arms and the word neunistivo (indestructible).

“The game was brilliant,” said freshman Gregor Ettinger. “There were five of us cheering for the Patriots and one cheering for the Giants” (who eventually won.)

“The atmosphere was very exciting because the score was always ‘neck-and-neck’. At the end, we just started to yell, because the score was so tight.” Gregor said. “In the end it didn’t matter who won. It was a great experience.”

HOLIDAY AUCTION RAISES 14,800 KUNA

The 10th annual ACMT Holiday Auction was held at Fuego night club in December. This fun night helped to raise money for the Dubrovnik Association of Chronically Ill Children. With Hanan Bešović and Gregor Ettinger as the auctioneers, the students of ACMT had a blast shouting out bids on cool and unusual gift items donated by their fellow classmates, professors and ACMT staff and local businesses—everything from dinner for four at Sesamé restaurant to homemade cookies. With pride, the Student Council announced that the students of ACMT managed to raise one of the highest amounts of money in ACMT history: 14,800kn, and bringing the true meaning of the holiday season to ACMT.

ACMT Stars Shine at Karaoke Night

It was late February, exam week was approaching fast, and the students of ACMT desperately needed one last getaway before study lockdown. Luckily, just in time, came the annual Foreign Language Department Karaoke Night, for a dose of fun before students began to drown in their books.

Students, faculty and staff gathered at Fuego night club to sing, laugh, and socialize. It wasn't about having a great voice -- it was about finding the courage to do something out of the ordinary, and have a great time in the process.

“Karaoke night is always awesome. Everyone feels good and we are all singing songs and just having good times,” said junior Hanan Bešović, who acted as host for the evening. Students were a little shy to sing at first, but some brave souls opted to sing first thing while the night was young. The experience of getting on stage was like riding a roller coaster: students didn’t know whether they felt more excited… or more like throwing up. “I loved it, it was fun and terrifying at the same time,” said freshman JoAnna Walker, who joined a group singing Croatian pop star Severina’s hit “Brad Pitt.”

Since the evening was sponsored by the Foreign Language department, English and Croatian were not the only languages heard. The German class started off the evening with the ‘80s classic “99 Luftballons.” Then the IT students followed with “I Will Survive” (maybe they were thinking of finals?) and “Twist and Shout,” among others.

As the evening warmed up, even the wallflowers got into the act. A few students who at first said they wouldn’t sing if someone paid them, ended up singing solos.

“I will definitely go again next year,” said sophomore Tino Prššjevac. And anyone who missed this year’s event, can start practicing their favorite tunes now!
NEGOTIATION AND CONFLICT: Learning to manage change

By Rebecca Charry

Senior students on their way to exciting careers in the business world need to be armed with more than just knowledge and skills – they need to be prepared to handle conflict. In business, and in life, conflict is inevitable. The world of business is often a world of disputes, negotiations and even court cases. But not everyone can handle them in a productive way. Those who can, will win in the long run.

Students explored the world of conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation in winter quarter with Prof. Mladen Vukmir, a lawyer specializing in copyright and intellectual property law.

“I try to teach students to take disputes as opportunities to create and manage change,” he said. “An important step is to realize that everything we see as a “fact” is really just our perception. Like the well known animation of the spinning dancer so often seen online. Which direction is she turning? It depends on your perception. Sometimes you can see it one way, sometimes the other, sometimes even both at once. If you understand that, you can manage disputes. The key is not to be attached to what we personally like or dislike.”

With a broad range of examples from daily life, and professional fields such as psychology, sociology, tourism, and law, students were excited about learning from Prof. Vukmir’s lectures and hands on exercises.

“This class has been an eye opener for me,” said student Hanne Edvardsen. “We are future business leaders and entrepreneurs, and must be prepared for conflicts, as the business world gets more competitive, natural resources are scarcer and markets more saturated.

Prof. Vukmir engages us in discussions, self-reflection and practical exercises. By using examples from his experience as mediator and lawyer, he makes it clear how important basic knowledge in conflict management is for our results as future managers. His classes have made me re-think my behavior and perceptions of conflict solving, both in personal and future business life.”

“Prof. Vukmir is teaching us how to improve our negotiation skills, but also encourages us to avoid conflicts,” said student Ana Vuin. “The litigation process should be the last option. In this class we learned how to solve problems in a win-win way, and preserve a business relationship that would be ruined if we went to court.”

“The point of the course is to encourage students to create change and have the tools to think for themselves,” Prof. Vukmir said. “We Europeans in particular have a problem understanding change, because of our attachment to the past. We are so impressed by tradition that we think everything has to be done the same way it has always been done, but that approach is really not useful anymore.”

FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

Profs. Barbara Perić and Nikolina Božinović gave a lecture to the high school teachers/economists association of Dubrovnik Neretva County entitled "Motivational Techniques in the Classroom." The presentation included a theoretical overview of the concept of motivation and the importance of motivational techniques in the process of teaching, as well as a didactic/methodic workshop about the application of efficient motivational strategies in the classroom.

Professors Besim Agušai, Barbara Perić and Zrinka Friganović Sain, and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Dr. Larisa Buhin Loncar were all elected to the Croatian academic title of Lecturer by the Council of Universities and University Colleges of Applied Sciences.

Prof. Rebecca Charry published an article in the newsletter of the Croatian Association of Teachers of English (HUPE) entitled, “Communicative Methodologies Work: So Why Don’t We Use Them More Often?”
More than 300 ACMT graduates returned to Dubrovnik from throughout Croatia and around the world to catch up with old friends and former professors, and enjoy a weekend of memories from their college days. Sharing news from their careers, families, travels and adventures, ACMT alumni gathered at Gradska Kavana for cocktails, dancing, networking and good fun. They especially enjoyed hearing the rhythm of the reunited Tambo band, which got the crowd moving, and Dean Don Hudspeth and Alumni Association president Maja Skrinjar welcomed everyone.

“It was great to see so many old friends and professors again,” said Hana Dapo, who graduated in 2009, and recently started a new job as Brand Manager for Max Factor cosmetics in Sarajevo. “I have so many good memories of ACMT, and I know that I would not be the person I am today if it were not for the things I learned there. My ACMT experience gave me confidence and knowledge to express myself, negotiating and interview skills, and most of all, determination and persistence never to give up in pursuing my dreams.”
ACMT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT MAJA SKRINJAR

CAREER UPDATES

Branka Bebić, '06 earned an MBA degree from the Zagreb School of Economics, and was hired as Online Sales Account Manager for the Croatian market at Google, in Dublin.

Matija Zelic, '06, started a boutique yacht services company, Yacht IN d.o.o., based in Zagreb and Zadar.

Adela Markovic, '07 was hired as Marketing Director for KupiMe.hr group buying site in Zagreb.

Ida Hohnjec, '03, is the Human Resources Lead for Croatia & Bosnia at Merck Sharp & Dohme, formerly Schering Plough pharmaceuticals.

Nenad Marić, '07, was recently promoted to General Manager at Hotel Tirena, part of Valamar Hotels and Resorts, in Dubrovnik.

Danijela Vulinović, '06, started her own recruitment company in Nottingham, England. The company is called One Recruitment Partner, specializing in premium dining and branded operations.

Miran Stambolić, '11, was hired as an independent utility broker in the electricity, oil, and gas markets with Alfa Energy London. He is based in Sarajevo.

Naida Kadribegović, '04, was hired as Executive Director, at the Centre for Policy and Governance in Sarajevo. She also enrolled in an International MBA program at Cotrugli Business School.

Ognjen Bačić, '06, was hired as executive manager with Diokom Novi in Trogir.

Marino Rogošić, '10, was hired as a member of the cabin crew with Emirates Airlines, based in Dubai.

Ivana Valentić, '09, enrolled in a Master’s degree program in International Management at Kozminski University in Warsaw, Poland.

Jelena Žitko, 04, was hired as Director of the Tourist Board of the city of Solin.

Danijela Radić, '02, enrolled in a Doctoral degree program in Public Relations at the University of Tennessee, USA, where she is also employed as a graduate teaching associate.

Mia (Herencio) Salazar, '06, was hired at the Media Relations department of the Croatian National Tourist Board in New York.

Sanda Putica, '03, was hired as a consultant for the Italian Embassy to Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. She also earned a masters degree in State Management and Humanitarian Affairs from the University of Sarajevo in collaboration with University of Belgrade and La Sapienza, Rome.

Nikolina Birimša, '09, was hired as Human Resources Payroll Specialist with Philip Morris Zagreb.

Marko Sučić, '04 was hired as Product/Service Manager at the head office of Société Generale - Splitfska Banka in Split.

Alexandra Kežić-Zuvanović, '01 was hired as Advertising & Social Media Manager with Dornbirner Messe GmbH/Trade Fair Dornbirn in Dornbirn, Austria.

Jelena Cvitanović, '04, was hired as International Freight Manager for the Agent Plus Group in Zagreb.

Mia Guja, '10, was hired as Marketing and Sales Manager at the Beluga graphic and web design studio in Dubrovnik.

Suzana Bračun, '09, was hired as head of the Public Lighting department and Thorn Lighting Brand Manager at Dicentra in Osijek.

Ana Mutnjakovic, '07, was hired as Water and Sanitation Project Manager and Field Office Team Leader for the Pakistan Delegation of the German Red Cross, in Sindh Province, Pakistan.

Robert Bračun, '03, was hired as General Manager for Regus business workspace services in Zagreb.

Sanja (Jankovic) Majić, '07, opened her own bookkeeping and business consulting service, Importanca d.o.o, in Split.

Dragan Mrkajić, '04, recently returned from volunteering in Tanzania, Africa, and was hired as a consultant with Roland Berger Strategy Consultants in Zagreb.

Filipa Srzentić, '06, recently enrolled in an MBA degree program at the University of Leicester, in London.

Bojan Kavaš, '09, was recently promoted to Key Account Manager at Procter & Gamble Croatia, in Zagreb.

Andriana (Mandac) Vidaković '09 was hired as Sales & Marketing Manager at the soon-to-open Hotel Split in Podstrana.

Lucija Ramljač, was hired as an education advisor in the Center for Education at FINA, in Zagreb.
I wanted to use my senior project to help me bring something fresh to the company.”

Marko focused his research on an emerging business strategy known as Yield Management, which focuses on strategic control of inventory.

“This strategy is already in use in industries such as aviation, hotel accommodation and car rental with visible results in sales. I wondered how much Yield Management is used by tour operators, especially in Croatia. Somehow I always perceive that Croatia is last on the list to be inventive and creative. But through my interviews with Kompas executives throughout Europe, the results showed me that actually Kompas in Croatia is already trying to fully implement Yield Management, it just isn’t always called that.”

My goal is that by the end of this project I will be able to determine its strengths and weaknesses, so that in the future I can help bring my employer into a new era of business.”

Business Clusters in Croatia
Marijana Bello is studying the economic phenomenon of “business clusters” and the potential for cluster development in Croatia.

“Clusters are a competitive, collaborative arrangement of businesses with a common long-term goal. These “rival” businesses actually work together towards greater market competitiveness. Clusters have proved to be a useful tool for developing regional economies, especially in developing countries like Croatia.”

“Many people would think that globalization and advanced technology would diminish the importance of geographic location in business. However, regions like Hollywood, Silicon Valley, or the German auto industry prove that location still plays a very important role,” she explained.

Marijana surveyed 19 Croatian business clusters, including olive producers in Istria, shipbuilders, and textile manufacturers. She found that lobbying, shared representation, and education are the activities most clusters collaborate in, while increased innovation is the highest valued benefit.

“Croatia will soon join the European Union, which will open our market to millions of European businesses. In the same time, it will open the European market to small and medium Croatian businesses. Clustering is one of the ways our business can reach the competitiveness needed to succeed,” she concluded.

Working Mothers
Some students are motivated to choose a topic that has a direct connection to questions about their future lives.

“My senior project deals with trying to find a sustainable model for women in balancing career and family,” said Katarina Skugor. “I was interested in this topic because, I know it will affect my life, and I want to be able to make a wise decision when the time comes to have my own family. It’s not only a question of what I do, it’s also a question of what kind of employer I choose.”

“This project made me more aware of gender inequality at work and the variation of maternity leave benefits throughout the world. The work environment can be really difficult for women. And their families, but the results of my interviews showed that depending on the country’s benefits and laws, balancing work and family is possible.”

Customer Service at 5-star hotels
Deni Paskojević is investigating the way luxury hotels respond to customer complaints, a field known as service recovery.

“No hotel is perfect. There is always some flaw somewhere, or something that goes wrong. The important thing is how they handle guest complaints,” she explained. “Research shows that customers will be even more satisfied if you compensate for a failure, than if you just did it right the first time. The most important factor in customer satisfaction is how fast you react to a problem.”

During her previous co-op position in guest relations at a well-known Dubrovnik hotel, she noticed that there wasn’t a clear strategy on dealing with customer complaints.

“When a guest came to with a complaint, I wasn’t empowered to do anything to solve it. All I could do was apologize, and promise to tell my boss, but I wasn’t allowed to solve the problem. It made me feel incompetent.”

To investigate this issue more scientifically, she conducted interviews with upper management and front line staff at four 5-star hotels in Dubrovnik.

“I wanted to know, are problems handled just ad hoc, case by case, or is there a system in place to deal with complaints? What I found was that the structure at most hotels is really more like a formality. A policy is written down somewhere, but it is not evaluated or discussed. Some employees are not even aware of some parts of the policy and it’s usually not discussed in training.”

It turns out her personal experience was typical.

“Front line employees are not empowered to actually do something on the spot, but have to ask permission from their supervisor, which takes time. Meanwhile, the customers get frustrated.”

“My conclusion is that Dubrovnik hotels do not yet have a true service mentality. We are not providing good service for its own sake, just for short term returns. But it seems that everyone is completely satisfied with the system as it is.”

Research shows that customers will be even more satisfied if you compensate for a failure, than if you just did it right the first time. The most important factor in customer satisfaction is how fast you react to a problem.” - Deni Paskojević
CO-OP: STUDENTS AT WORK

Continued from the cover

photographer. One of the challenges of the job was the diversity of responsibilities, she said.

Once, she was told to organize a project regarding ship construction, something she had no knowledge and experience about. Nevertheless, Hanne completed the task successfully and even the demanding engineers were impressed with her work. Hanne became so integrated to the team that today the HR department of OSM Offshore has her on their “wish list” of potential employees. Hanne considers the experience and professional connections that she gained, the most valuable outcome of her co-op. Today she can unhesitatingly say: “I know how corporations actually work.”

U.S. Embassy

Senior Ivan Zelko completed his final co-op at the Commercial Services department of the US Embassy in Zagreb. As part of his job, compiled market briefs for publication, researched Croatian receptivity to U.S. franchise concepts and financing mechanisms, assisted Commercial Specialists in identifying Croatian agents and distributors for American exporters, prepared marketing packages for upcoming trade shows in the United States, and created marketing materials to inform and attract U.S. companies to Croatia. He even received a recommendation from the United States Ambassador to the Croatia, James B. Foley.

Unlike most students, who are paid employees, Ivan worked as a volunteer.

“For me, it was not about making money, it was about gaining experience, which I am sure will pay off in the future. The most valuable experience was participating in meetings with executives of some of the largest companies in Croatia. That helped me get insight into some of the important aspects of business to business (B2B) relationships. I was lucky to have a great boss who gave me a lot of freedom, and I gained a lot of business contacts throughout various industries in Croatia. Working as a volunteer is definitely worth it.”

“Before ACMT, I would never have decided to go to another country all by myself. Now I have confidence that I’m ready for any new opportunity.” - Daria Dražeta

Brussels, Belgium

Daria Dražeta spent her co-op at the Dubrovnik - Neretva county representative’s office in Brussels, the center of European diplomacy.

“When I arrived I felt so lost in this big, million people city but my colleagues were so helpful and kind that in two days it was like I had lived there for a year already,” she said. “Everything was so interesting, I have never before met so many different people, from different nations and there was no language barrier, everyone speaks English and other languages.

The meetings were very interesting and I could learn so many new things and especially about Croatia entering the EU. This was not only a co-op; for me this was a life-changing experience. Before ACMT, I would never have decided to go to another country all by myself. Now I have confidence that I’m ready for any new opportunity.”

STUDENT HONORS

Senior student Ivo Hajdić was selected by the professors of ACMT to participate in a conference in Budapest, Hungary, organized by the INA fuel company’s MOL group in April.

Senior student Đeni Paskojević was selected by the professors of ACMT and her peers to represent the graduating class of 2012 as the commencement speaker. She will also represent ACMT at the Convocation ceremony at the RIT campus in Rochester, New York, in May.

Freshman student Rafaela Šutić was selected to represent the International Hospitality and Service Management program of ACMT at the annual ‘Puttin’ on the RITz” Dinner at the Rochester, New York campus in March. Rafaela will spend a week in Rochester where she will along with other RIT students actively participate in organizing this gala charity event.

Freshman students Marko Kulhavi (IT program Dubrovnik) Goran Pekica (IB program Zagreb) and Petra Rajko (IT program Zagreb) were selected to represent the ACMT at the annual Imagine RIT Festival at the Rochester Campus in April. Imagine RIT is a series of exhibits and activities meant to showcase the interesting projects that students and community members have been working on. These students, selected on the basis of their academic achievements and personal leadership qualities, will spend a week at the Rochester campus for a series of educational and cultural activities.

Senior Luka Maleš won a silver medal in the college judo competition, organized by University of Zagreb in January.
Coming Soon: the third annual ACMT Fun Run, Saturday April 28

Put on your running shoes, and join ACMT students, faculty and staff, along with elementary and high school students of Dubrovnik for a "fun run" race through the Old City, complete with snacks, prizes and entertainment.

Whether you are interested in competing as an athlete, cheering along the sidelines, or volunteering to help, make sure you join in this ACMT tradition.