Professors at RIT Croatia are more than just experts in their fields; they are approachable mentors who give the best of themselves to make the classroom a friendly and interesting place to explore new ideas.

Our professors don’t usually give traditional lectures. Instead of the professor talking and students listening for a whole hour, professors stimulate discussion and expect students to participate – not only to answer questions, but to also ask them, and to come up with ideas of their own. An RIT education isn’t about memorizing facts, but about learning to think.

“Many students come to our college fixated on finding “the right answer” – the answer they think the professor wants them to have. I try to break this habit by helping students see that serious questions always have more than one good answer,” said professor Rebecca Charry Roje, who teaches literature and writing at the Dubrovnik campus. “In my courses, the student’s job is not to find the answer, but to find their answer – one that makes sense for them, that they can explain and defend.”

When it comes to writing, one of the most common questions I hear from students is, “How long does this essay have to be?” This always makes me laugh. My answer: Your paper should be long enough to explain your idea in a clear and interesting way, but short enough to avoid repeating yourself or wandering off the topic. Being a good writer is not about filling up the page with a required number of words – it’s about finding something that you really want to say, and saying it well.”

“In my courses, we read, discuss, and...”

(continues on page 6)
Through the Erasmus program of the EU, and RIT Croatia’s agreements with universities throughout Europe, students and professors have the opportunity to study and teach for a full semester in Turkey, Germany, France, Poland, and Italy. Erasmus also brings students and professors from all over Europe to join us for a semester, and enrich our community with their languages, cultures and ideas.

Living and studying in a new country is a whole education in itself, and the opportunity to absorb new languages and cultures, and meet new friends can be an unforgettable and even life-changing experience. In addition, while studying abroad through Erasmus exchange, students have a wide choice of courses that fulfill the requirements for their degree program at RIT Croatia, all for the same tuition cost that they would pay staying in Croatia.

“My international experience is very different from studying at home, but different is good! You grow as a person, explore new horizons and see everything in new perspectives. The best things about studying abroad are people, new places and different cultures – these are what you will remember forever,” said Jovana Ivanović, a hospitality student from the Dubrovnik campus who is spending the fall semester at La Rochelle Business School in France. “On the other hand you learn to adapt to new ways of studying and living, and different kinds of people.”

Erasmus exchange is not only for study, it’s also for work and training. RIT Croatia students can apply for traineeships from two to 12 months throughout Europe. Zagreb IB student Tea Franjić spent last summer on an Erasmus trainee exchange in Antwerp and Brussels, Belgium, for the International School Sports Federation.

“I love Croatia, but I also love expanding my horizons and experiencing more,” she said. “Being alone and far from everything you know makes you get to know yourself even more. What I feel right now is just a huge motivation to learn as much as I can about the sports industry and how it functions. Also, to meet many interesting people and stay in contact with them. In the end, everybody you meet in your life will affect you and will bring you new knowledge.”

International exchange through the Erasmus program isn’t just beneficial for students, it’s also a great opportunity for professors to develop their teaching skills. Professor Evelina Miščin, who teaches English at the Zagreb campus, recently spent a semester exchange teaching writing, critical reading, and business English at Korkut Ata University in Osmaniye, Turkey.

“The campus is quite vast and impressive. All the professors were very hospitable, offering me their traditional tea. They showed me around the campus, introducing to their colleagues and the rector,” she said.

“I was surprised to learn that English is not an obligatory subject, so only a small number of students in Turkey study it, as they find it quite difficult. I exchanged some ideas with their professors and we are still in touch. Also, a few students expressed their wish to come to Croatia or other European countries for the Erasmus exchange. All in all, Erasmus is a challenging experience both for students and teachers. You come to a new country, meet new cultures, and experience both good and bad things. I learned how to adjust my teaching methods to new and unexpected circumstances and met a lot of new colleagues who work in a different environment.”

Interested in learning more about Erasmus opportunities at RIT Croatia? Contact our Erasmus manager, Christina Pejić. As she says, “Don’t be pushed around by the fears in your mind. Be led by the dreams in your heart.” (Roy T. Bennett).
Computing students create software solutions for the real world

As senior computing students complete their final year at RIT Croatia, they are hard at work on their final capstone projects – creating software products for business clients around the world. This challenging, two-semester project helps students develop the specific teamwork and long-term project management skills they will need in their future careers, through hands-on experience.

Teams of six to seven students from RIT’s global campuses in New York, Dubrovnik, Zagreb and Dubai work together to research, develop, design and test a functional software solution for a real client. The development process includes meeting with the client, conducting research, estimating costs and timeframes, scheduling meetings, responding to emails, re-evaluating the project and introducing changes along the way, while focusing on in-depth software development as well as user experience and accessibility.

“In this project, interdisciplinary teams of students are working with real people and real clients in remote locations, just like most computing business do today,” explained Professor Martin Žagar, who teaches the course in Croatia, along with Professor Steve Zilora in Rochester. “At most other schools, this kind of capstone work (diplomski rad) is purely hypothetical and the projects exist only on paper. But at RIT, students get feedback from the client and create an application that is ready for market. The projects they create will eventually be put into use. The outcome is real experience.”

“Projects are based on actual industry problems. Students are given minimal information at first. They have to investigate the client’s needs, often in a new business domain, and figure out how to get there as a group. Sometimes they struggle; they encounter problems or even failures, but this is the whole point. That’s how the real world works.”

This year, one student team is working on a project based in Germany, sponsored by Siemens Healthineers. Students are creating software that will help IT professionals remotely monitor the performance of the company’s MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) medical equipment. The software will be very valuable to help prevent expensive mechanical problems and delays for patients.

Another team is working on creating a joint hotel reservation system for 17 luxury hotels throughout Croatia. Sponsored by the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, the software will promote cooperation among hotels through a joint website where visitors can create a custom holiday experience. The long term goal is to build a loyal customer base for repeat visitors to Croatia.

“We are currently working with 17 different hotels that are united under one brand called Stories. The system will allow users to book rooms from all the hotels through one united reservation booking website,” explained student Ivan Kovačević. “The main challenge, at least for me, is working with people in different time zones, adapting to each other and finding a mutual working time.”

This course has a long history of creating successful applications that have been put to use in a variety of businesses and professions. One of last year’s projects is currently in use at the University Hospital for Tumors, University Hospital Center Sestre Milosrdnice in Zagreb. Medical specialists are using students’ web application, called Medical Diagnostics on the Move, to share medical images and request consultations.

Another successful project from previous years is a touch screen directory of faculty that is currently in use at Golisano College of Computing and Information Science at the Rochester, New York, campus.

“I’m grateful for this learning experience,” said Ivan. “I will gain more in-depth knowledge, and learn to be a better team member. This is crucial in today’s business world, where you simply cannot work on your own anymore.”
Clubs enrich student life

One of the best parts of an RIT Croatia education are the events and activities that happen outside the classroom – the times and places for students to gather, relax, discuss, learn and just have fun. In addition to the parties, trips and events planned by student government, student-run clubs provide unique ways for students to explore common interests together. Whether it’s training in a sport, putting on a play, getting to know students from other countries, building a robot, or investing in the stock market, student clubs follow their own interests and set their own agendas with logistical and financial support from the college. Most importantly, student clubs are founded and run by students themselves.

“Even though our college is relatively small, we get the full college experience,” said Aldina Žudjelović, member of the Student Government. “It’s amazing how many different interests we have, and it’s great that the college supports us in pursuing them.”

The Gaming Club in Dubrovnik offers movie nights and social board games, while football, basketball and volleyball clubs offer weekly practices and matches for both serious and not-so-serious athletes.

In addition to fun and recreation, many clubs help students explore their academic and professional interests more deeply. International Business student Donika Kristaj co-founded the popular Business Environment Exploration club. The club organizes visits to leading companies in the area, where students learn from experts in the field.

“I learned that teamwork and delegating is the most important part of working on a project. And starting off with a smaller project really helps, because you make small mistakes and learn from them. This is the skill I developed most, learning from my mistakes.”

Business Exploration Environment club has also organized company visits outside Croatia, including a visit to Morgan Stanley investment bank in Budapest and IBM in Bratislava. Trips like these seem to have multiple benefits: IB students Krešimir Guvo is currently working at IBM in Bratislava and Ivan Kolembus is working at Morgan Stanley in Budapest. English professor Dr. Matea Butković and her students started the Writing Club as “a place for the curious and the creative, for sharp pencils and even sharper minds.” The club will help students perfect their Academic English skills, share their passion for political satire or investigative journalism, or even get a bit of support if they’re struggling with the finishing touches on their first novel.

The Investment Club at the Zagreb campus offers students hands-on experience in financial markets, and allows them to work in teams towards achieving a common goal; a trait every employer looks for in potential employees. Started by students 2014, the club helps students learn how to manage money in a real business environment, instead of just studying it in theory.

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Alumni Give Back to the Community at Global Day of Service

Each year, RIT Croatia Alumni organize a community service event to benefit our local communities, as part of the Global Day of Service observed by RIT alumni from all campuses around the world. This year, alumni marked International Literacy Day on September 8, by organizing a book drive and foreign language workshops at the Dubrovnik campus. Alumni donated and helped collect hundreds of books which were donated to the Cavtat elementary school and the Red Cross Club 65+ in Dubrovnik.

On behalf of Elementary School Cavtat, the donation was received by the schools' librarian, Ms. Ivana Miletić, and the school’s principal, Ms. Kate Kukuljica, who thanked all participants for making this effort. On behalf of Club 65+, the books were received by one of the Red Cross volunteers, Ms. Katarina Miklej.

Alumni-Student Mentoring

Who better to help guide and advise our current students on their career paths than our own graduates? Pairing up RIT Croatia students with alumni mentors started with a pilot program last year, and so far, a number of students from all majors and year levels have joined the program and been matched to a mentor in their area of interest. Stay tuned for more news from this innovative program.

Alumni Success Stories

Hospitality program graduate Alen Botica ’04 works as a Team Leader of the Croatian SOLVIT Centre, but he also loves to paint. His works were recently exhibited at cafe Kavana Lav (Opatička 2) in Zagreb Upper Town. His inspiration comes from nature, science, PC games and cartoons. To produce his paintings, he mixes pastels, acrylic, markers, gel sticks and experiments with other media. Varieties of shades of pastel blue are often contrasted by bright fluorescent colors. Some work is dominated by darker tones, irresistibly reminiscent of the world of cyberpunk.

Computing program graduate Mateo Sokač ’17 returned to the Zagreb campus in October to share his knowledge in one of today’s hottest fields: bioinformatics, Big Data, and machine learning. As part of our series of Science and Research seminars, Mateo talked about his work which connects biology, medicine, and technology.

“We are in the era of Big Data, where data is generated every day and it is growing. The data sources that I am focused on are DNA/RNA sequences, medical images, medical tools and others... Using this approach and focusing on those fields and measures we are entering in the world of Bioinformatics and personalized medicine. Those fields are very interdisciplinary, and experts are needed from all sectors.”

He is currently pursuing a master’s degree in bioinformatics in Aarhus, Denmark, while working as a teaching and research assistant.

RIT Croatia hospitality graduate Ines Nãoč ‘04, owner of the wedding planning agency Dubrovnik Events, was recently named among the winners of the Entrepreneurial Award from the RIT School of International Hospitality and Service Innovation. The award recognizes outstanding hospitality alumni for their professional achievements and dedication to RIT.


Dušan Račević ‘07 was recently elected president of the municipality of Bar, Montenegro. At the age of 34, he is the youngest person to ever serve in this office. He is a member of the Democratic Socialist Party (DPS).

Adrian Tkalčec ’17, was hired as Reporting Analyst at Volkswagen Financial Services, in Sydney, Australia.

Matea Grbešić ’17 was hired as a Junior Analyst in the Financial Crime Unit at PwC (Price Waterhouse Coopers) auditing and consulting firm, in Gdansk, Poland.

Igor Sukurma ’17 was hired as Account Executive at the Gartner consulting firm in Egham, England.

Josip Lučić ’15 was hired as Commercial and Business Development Expert for MOL Group, in Budapest.

Reunion in Split

About 30 RIT Croatia alumni gathered for an evening of great memories and renewed friendships at the Paradox Wine & Cheese Bar Paradox in Split, owned and run by alumni Zoran Pejović and Marko Sušić.

“It was great to see old friends again,” said Mirela Subotić, current president of the RIT Croatia Alumni Association. “These events help us re-connect and create new opportunities, and remember the good years of being students.”
write about anything and everything,” said Professor Jakob Patekar, who teaches English courses at the Zagreb campus. “There isn’t a controversial topic that we haven’t tackled, from immigrants to gender inequality to racism or same sex marriages. The point of grappling with these hot topics is to develop critical thinking and reading skills and to be more aware of the world around us.

I try to create a supportive environment in which students are not afraid to speak their minds, a place where they won’t be laughed at or scorned for having ideas that go against those of the majority. We analyze words, word choices, agendas, arguments, evidence to get to the bottom of the message; we try to understand the position of the person we disagree with, which is a step towards building common ground.”

Of course, some students aren’t used to this approach, and need support to overcome their nervousness about speaking in front of others, especially in English. In the first year of studies, students at the Dubrovnik campus get help from professor Kevin Walker in his legendary public speaking course.

“My goal is to involve students; to make them comfortable in the classroom and feel that they have a voice. A simple first step in this effort is to get them to actually speak in class, to actually vocalize their thoughts... on anything. At the start of each class, each and every student has to say at least ten words out loud. Many students actually have difficulty with this at first. Perhaps they have never participated in a classroom discussion, offering their views before. But it really works. Students open up and start talking. They have to speak as I do not let them ‘slide’. If they respond with ‘I have nothing to say’, I ask them questions. About anything – what did they have for breakfast; what is their favorite movie; what is their superpower? They know that they cannot hide. In the end, they all progress. This experience pushes them out of their comfort zone, and prepares them to be active students, and eventually, active employees and citizens.”

tourism management at the Dubrovnik campus. “Professors encourage us to think critically and express ourselves. We discuss all kinds of ideas which help us to understand the world around us.”

“Of course, all our classes are conducted in English. At first, I did not want to speak very much in front of others in English, because I was afraid I would make a mistake. But our professors’ approach changed everything. It’s ok if we make a mistake; the important thing is that we feel free to express ourselves. Our professors are expert professionals, but they are also easy to talk to. They motivate us to participate actively in class discussions and help us overcome our nervousness about speaking in public.”

Career-focused education

RIT Croatia offers practical knowledge and real life working experience. Co-op work internships are a required part of the program, and offer students the opportunity to put their knowledge into practice.

“After my junior year, I was hired for my summer co-op in the Human Resources department at Erste Banka,” said Martina Pandža, who graduated last year from the International Business program at the Zagreb campus. “Even though I study finance, the transition to HR was easy, thanks to my studies at RIT Croatia that helped me develop skills like communication, public speaking, and teamwork. They were so pleased with my work that they offered me a permanent job after I graduated! I’m looking forward to the new challenges that await me.”

Join us: It’s easy to transfer

Sometimes, students enroll in a college or course of study that turns out not to be the right choice. RIT makes it easy for these students to change their plans and join us as transfer students, without falling behind and losing time.

“I was studying mechanical engineering at another university and discovered that it wasn’t right for me,” said Marin Androš, who is now a computing student at the Zagreb campus. “The transfer process was simple, and I got credit for some of the courses I had already completed. Even better, I didn’t have to wait for the start of a new academic year – I transferred right away into the spring semester.

“RIT Croatia has a totally different way of teaching and learning – I study everything in English, my professors are very open and friendly, and we do lots of practical hands-on work. Transferring to RIT Croatia was the best decision I ever made.”
Faculty Research and Publications

Professor Milena Kužnin attended the annual conference of EuroCHRIE in Dublin in November. The conference brings together hospitality educators and industry experts from around the world to discuss current trends and share insights that will shape the future of hospitality and tourism. "The theme of the conference was "Be Inspired" and after attending it I must say that I was inspired and motivated to share the experience gained by attending the conference,” said Prof. Kužnin.

Dr. Luka Borisić was recently named Editor of RIThink, the online journal of RIT Croatia. "Building upon the great work and efforts of the past editors, Dr. Staša Puškarić and Dr. Jasmina Samardžić, I would like to continue advancing and promoting academic and professional work of our faculty and our students as well as the academic reputation of RIT Croatia," said Dr. Borisić. RIThink is professional and scientific journal of peer reviewed articles from a broad range of fields. The journal brings together scientists, researchers, experts, and students of RIT Croatia community in an open academic discourse of innovative ideas, both tested and untested. Papers co-authored by academic researchers and their students are particularly encouraged.

Dr. Francis Brassard, recently presented a paper on the topic “The Mind-Body Problem in the Theory of Natural Philosophy of Ruder Josip Bošković” at the conference “27. Dani Frane Petrića”. The main theme of the conference was Human Nature.

Professors Kevin Walker and Dr. Besim Agušaj attended the Best Stay international conference in Dubrovnik, and participated in a panel discussion that addressed some of the most pressing HR related issues in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Learning American Sign Language at No Voice Zone

What can you learn by being silent? A lot! Including the basics of communication using American Sign Language (ASL). Dubrovnik student government and visiting study abroad students from RIT’s National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at the Rochester, New York, campus have been holding workshops each Friday at the Dubrovnik campus this semester. Called “No Voice Zone,” the workshops introduce hearing students to Deaf culture and a new world of nonverbal communication.

The idea was initiated by Andrea Kecić, an HTM senior student who spent her junior year studying at the Rochester campus, and attended similar events there.

Holiday Auctions Raise Funds for Local Charities

The annual RIT Croatia Holiday Auction is a fun tradition each year, in which students, faculty and staff join together to raise funds for local humanitarian organizations. Donated prizes, from artwork to gourmet foods to small kitchen appliances, are auctioned off to the highest bidder in an evening of holiday spirit.

This year, the Dubrovnik campus event raised more than 15,000 Croatian kunas for “Slatkí Život,” an organization which supports young people with diabetes and their families. The Zagreb campus event raised over 18,000 kunas for the humanitarian association “Mali Zmaj” which works to improve the quality of life for neglected children from financially underprivileged families.

Hospitality Honorary Society Inducts New Members

The Dubrovnik campus chapter of the Eta Sigma Delta hospitality honorary society proudly inducted nine new student members in December. These students were recognized for their outstanding academic achievement and initiative in pursuing careers in the hospitality industry. Under the leadership of Professor Milena Kužnin, ESD welcomed new members Teodora Božović, Erik Leko, Mirko Dukić, Antonia Stanković, Marko Sporiš, Ana Moretić, Aldina Žudjelović, Ivana Čuljak, and Tena Vuković, at an induction ceremony and cocktail reception at the Hilton Imperial Hotel in December. In addition, Mr. Ivan Karlić, Regional Director of Operations for Valamar Hotels and Resorts, was inducted as a distinguished professional member. ESD organizes guest lectures and professional events throughout the year related to current trends in hospitality industry.

Dr. Staša Puškarić is participating in an HBO climate change documentary, titled ‘Ice on Fire’ which is being produced by Leonardo DiCaprio. Dr. Puškarić is one of the scientists and visionaries talking about the possibility of reversing the global warming. The premiere will take place on January 5, 2019 in Oslo, Norway during the REARCTIC movement launch week.

Dr. Domagoj Tolić recently co-authored a scientific paper titled "Reinforcement learning for control: Performance, stability, and deep approximators," in the journal Annual Reviews in Control.

Dr. Kristijan Tabak submitted a paper titled ‘Subgroup development and 2-analog of a Fano plane’ to the journal Designs, Codes and Cryptography. The paper deals with group rings and group theory.
The best way to find out what RIT Croatia is really like, is to visit us! RIT Croatia welcomes students in their third and fourth years of high school to come see our campus, meet our professors and students, listen to lectures, and get to know the people and places that make our college special.

It’s a great way to experience our friendly learning community and the open, engaged relationship between students and professors.

When prospective students visit my classes, they are introduced to professors and current students, who include them in the lecture and make them feel at home. Sometimes they stay after class to chat, or even go have coffee with someone they met.

First-year student Gordan Krivokapić remembers visiting the college last year.

“At the end of high school, I had a few different college options available to me. But visiting the campus in the Student for a Day program definitely made RIT my first choice. I visited Professor Milena Kužnin’s class, and she made a really strong impression on me. I liked the way she was talking and teaching too. Also, I had a chance to feel the atmosphere at the college which I liked, so then I realized that RIT was the place for me.”

Student Maria Grbavac also remembers the mix of anxiety and excitement she felt during her visit to the campus last year.

“I was nervous at first because the university seemed so intimidating to me. I later realized that I had been anxious for nothing, because all the faculty members and students were so welcoming and warm towards me. What made me decide to enroll was Professor Kevin Walker’s class that I joined that day. I liked how interactive the class was and how the professor gently pushed the students to voice their ideas instead of just sitting and listening to a lecture. Towards the end of the day, my anxieties started fading away and I realized that this university was a great place for me to come out of my shell and study something new.”

Professors enjoy the opportunity to meet potential students and introduce them to our way of learning.

“Seeing a classroom experience in English is an important step for nonnative speakers of English,” said Professor Peter Schmidt. “It helps them understand that they can indeed do this, actually study in English. What they experience in the classroom looks and sounds manageable.”

To try being an RIT Croatia student for a day, the process is very simple. Potential students can just contact the Admissions Office directly or by filling out the Become a Student for a Day form on our website.