

A Great Collaboration

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One of the important, more pleasant, and intellectually stimulating aspects of teaching at a stateside university campus was the daily contact with colleagues in one's discipline. Offices were often grouped by discipline and to a great extent, "birds of a feather flocked together" in the faculty lounges. For the most part, teaching overseas with UMUC, unless you were at a large installation or in an area within a short distance of other installations, you often found yourself as the only instructor in your discipline. It was the nature of the beast, the necessary structuring of teaching assignments. At most installations, there was simply no need for more than one professor in each discipline.

Thus, there was little opportunity to discuss course materials, content, or to have the kind of discussions one might have regarding new developments in the field, the latest journal articles, theories, etc.

Yes, there were discipline meetings at the annual faculty meetings in Heidelberg. They were often short, rushed, and the topics were often more about administrative problems and sometimes turned into gripe sessions as did the larger group faculty meetings, and as time passed, the frequency of these meetings dropped off. Also, not all of one's colleagues attended these meetings.

Yes, some of us were able to share ideas, course suggestions, resources we had come across, with a colleague but certainly not as frequently or as in depth as might be desired.

Even though we were never as I can recall, teaching at the same installation at the same time, one of my closest colleagues in business and management was Tevis Noelting. We taught some of the same courses and seemed to hit it off well at the discipline meetings in Heidelberg. We had a few things in common besides some of the courses we taught. We both participated in the mentoring program and we both attended the Leadership Conferences that were held in Adelphi for a few years. In addition, we often received similar comments on our evaluations regarding the standards we maintained in our classes.

One of the courses we both taught was the Capstone course in the Business Management program. As a Capstone course, it brought together elements from all the classes a business management major would have completed and was taken most often in the last or next to last term in the student's program.

One term, luck would have it that Tevis was teaching the course in Mannheim, and I was teaching it at Ramstein. In previous terms, we had both used an international business game simulation where students were divided into teams and each team managed a fictitious digital camera company. The teams were in competition with each

other to manage “their companies” to produce the best results. Decisions were made by the teams each week and posted in the game template.

With the blessing of Stephen Richards, Assistant Dean for Business and Communications at that time, we decided to collaborate and have the teams compete with each other in each class, and with the teams in the other class. The nature of the simulation was such that we faculty and our students were also competing with teams in about 75 other classes using the simulation in universities around the world!

Ours were hybrid classes and much of the student activity took place on the simulation platform and in our own online classrooms. Each of our classes met once a week for some lecture, discussion, and to give the students the opportunity to discuss their strategies in an F2F format. There was lots of lively discussion and digs and jibes about which team was leading in the game.

The zinger came at the last F2F meeting. We arranged to get both of our classes together at the Mannheim location. Most of the students in both of our classes were able to attend. Nice meeting with congratulations to the winning companies, a review of the international standings which included recognition for the faculty running the classes, and good wishes to the students who will be graduating after this class.

It was a real effort on our part but well worth it. Most of the students loved the competition and course as did both of us.

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