

UMUC, Munich and Augsburg — Campuses Like No Other

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I arrived in West Germany in August 1988 as a faculty member of the University of Maryland, European Division. It was my first teaching position after graduating with my doctorate from Ohio State in 1987 and teaching at OSU for a year. UM hired me as a “lecturer,” the title it gave to all faculty at the time. For the first two eight-week semesters, I taught public speaking courses at several U.S. military bases around Stuttgart. Later that year I would travel to Hahn AFB, Heidelberg, West Berlin, and Schwäbisch Gmünd to teach public speaking as well as interpersonal communication and management communication.

Several memories stand out from that initial year. The first ones deal with travel to West Germany. The airline, PanAm, had confused another new lecturer, Ellen Kaye, with me (Susan Kaye) and given her my airline ticket! Then upon arriving in West Germany, Joe Arden picked up and carried my suitcase! I was impressed that my boss would do that! Finally, it rained continuously during orientation at Patrick Henry Village, and I hadn’t seen rain in a while because Ohio had been experiencing a drought that year.

A teaching memory that stands out was the fear of getting “locked on” Hahn AFB during one of its practice drills. During the drills, all the gates would close, and we couldn’t enter or exit until the practice ended, and I lived off base. It typically happened as I was attempting to leave base after class or was rushing to get to class! A fun memory is all the interesting UM lecturers I met and hung out with as I traveled around the bases—Ted Bailey, Katherine Honig, Bernice Marcopulos, and Ken Henderson are a few names that come to mind. Then there are travel memories, specifically to West Berlin—driving the transit route after the U.S. briefing and going through the Soviet checkpoint where I had to salute the soldier. Or riding the transit train and never knowing exactly when it would start and end, the big lights that lit up the train as it entered East Germany, and the Soviet soldier with dogs that would walk along it at checkpoints.

Another faculty member, Melanie Peterson, who started with UM at the same time as I did, was teaching at the Munich Campus. We kept in contact, and one day she mentioned that she had signed up for a study tour to the USSR, which Munich Campus was offering during the winter break. She invited me to join her, but to travel to the USSR, I had to get a second passport to send off to the USSR for a visa. If I recall correctly, we were not allowed to have a USSR stamp in our main passport because of the Status of Forces agreement. Thus, I took the train to Munich to go to the U.S. consulate to get the passport. While in Munich, I visited Munich Campus for the first time.

It wasn’t the usual beautiful, green grass, tree-lined college campus that one might expect. I remember walking along the bullet-hole pocketed walls on Soyenhofstraße that surrounded McGraw Kaserne. Gate guards checked IDs at the Kaserne’s entrance on Stadelheimerstraße. Various concrete-carved figurines peered down above the World

War II building doorways. The Stars & Stripes bookstore served as the campus bookstore. Nearby it was a Student Union building where students could relax, party, and study. The university entrance was a doorway adjacent to the commissary loading dock. The university offices and classrooms were located on the third and fourth floors above the commissary. It was a campus unlike any other I had visited.

About a month after that visit, I learned that Munich Campus would have a faculty opening the following year to teach communication and journalism. Given that I had degrees and work experience in both areas, I applied and a few weeks later headed to Munich Campus again to interview with Dean William McMahon, who offered me the position. I would spend the next four years at the Munich and later Augsburg Campus. In August 1989, I moved to McGraw Kaserne, taking up residence in a building next to the student dorms on Tegernseer Landstraße and in an apartment that had once served as German officer quarters. The autobahn ran underground, right in front of my building! I would join Mike Denison, who also taught theatre and directed MC plays, in teaching public speaking. Additionally, I would teach newswriting and news editing and advise the student newspaper, the *Observer*. I would also enjoy opportunities to travel throughout Europe with MC students, faculty, and Germans I would come to befriend.

During the first few weeks of the semester, I discovered that I needed to adapt some of my teaching examples and exercises to my less-than-traditional students! Although Munich Campus was a U.S. university, a number of its students had never spent much time in the states! Unlike the traditional U.S. students I had taught in the past, most of the MC students had lived and traveled internationally. Many spoke a second and even a third or fourth language. Some I would come to know would participate in the Velvet Revolution. A few would escape Yugoslavia as it was dissolving. A few would witness firsthand the fall of the Berlin Wall. Initially my lecture examples seemed to fall on deaf ears as their knowledge of current U.S. culture and media often was limited to AFN TV and radio, the base cinema showings, and maybe the occasional videotape from the United States. However, their knowledge of German culture, sports, and beer was quite extensive, and I learned a lot from MC students in the ensuing years from the speeches they gave and articles they wrote for the *Observer*. But I also learned to expect student absences due to events such as Oktoberfest, Starkbierzeit, and skiing accidents! Broken legs meant students had to arrange to take the commissary's freight elevator to reach classrooms on the third and fourth floor of the building while the rest of us endured the daily stair climb. None of the student dorms or faculty housing areas had elevators either.

I also discovered I had to adapt to working with German printers, who were unlike ones I had used in the states. At the time, the *Munich Observer* articles were typed on a Mac SE computer, printed out, and pasted up by hand. Sometimes the student newspaper staff made layout errors, such as missing a line or page number. Although I assisted them in the overall production process, I did not correct their mistakes because it was their paper. However, the German printers intensely disliked the thought that they might print a paper that had errors in it, and they initially attempted to fix them. It took a while to convince them to publish the newspaper as received, mistakes and all, and that the newspaper would improve over time as the students learned from their errors.

The first issue that appeared under my guidance (September 1989) featured a front-page article with the headline “MC Professor Held at Gunpoint.” English professor Tony Homersham had traveled to China over the summer and tried to take photos of Tiananmen Square, where soldiers earlier had killed student protestors. A soldier pointed a gun at him and forced him to surrender his film. In 1990, a photograph of several *Munich Observer* cover pages, including that issue, appeared in the 1990-1992 *Munich Campus Course Catalog* until an administrator decided that the issue’s headline might scare parents. So, MC officials halted catalog distribution until a new photograph could be pasted over the old one. (Note: An archive of *Munich* and *Augsburg Observers* from 1989 to 1993 can be found at http://www.thegraphicimage.com/munich_observer/).

I also had to learn to adapt to military culture, another key difference from stateside universities where I had taught. The military often assumed I was a dependent rather than the “officer” rank that UM assigned me. When I tried to get a telephone line for my apartment, I was told my husband would have to get it. I replied, “I don’t have a husband, does that mean no telephone?” I also had to learn military acronyms and customs. For instance, the first time I got sick and called the base clinic to schedule an appointment, I was asked, “What are your last four?” I thought, “My last four what? Periods? Doctor’s appointments?” After inquiring, the receptionist explained, “The last four digits of your social security number.” I learned to avoid walking from my office to my apartment when Taps might sound as that required stopping and standing still until after the U.S. and German national anthems were played. In January 1991, the first Gulf War broke out just as students were returning to Munich Campus for spring semester. Initially, AFN blacked out coverage of it, even though we could easily turn to German TV to see events. I learned that wars meant dealing with extra security, car searches, and curfews, which students and faculty tried (and sometimes failed) to skirt. MC administration met with faculty to help them prepare for the possibility that students might suffer losses from the war. Fortunately, none occurred.

Because of the campus’s small size, MC professors and students had closer relationships than those stateside typically had. We frequently traveled together on study tours. My first tour was the one to the USSR, before I joined Munich Campus. Muriel Odle, an English professor, led the tour, walking up and down the aisles of the bus, lecturing about Russian literature and culture. We flew into the USSR when it was dark, supposedly because the USSR did not want foreigners seeing things they should not. On the Aeroflot flight from Munich to Moscow, flight attendants served us beer or lemonade in glass bottles. The overhead bins were simple unenclosed luggage racks, like on a bus. On the night train from Moscow to Leningrad, persons selling items such as samovars during the journey constantly awakened us. Before we boarded the flight back to Munich, we each had to pick out our luggage, which was standing on the tarmac by the plane, for it to be loaded. My hair dryer, which I had stored in an outside pocket of my luggage, disappeared on that flight.

The first trip I took as an MC professor was with students in a boat down the Donau to visit Kloster Weltenburg. A later spring break trip to Barcelona was particularly

memorable because the bus company had forgotten to attach a luggage trailer to the bus, so about 10 faculty and 45 students piled into the bus crammed with luggage in every spare space for the 20 hour journey! Besides traveling, we occasionally partied together. In December, during Operation Desert Shield and just before the outbreak of the Gulf War, several MC professors decided that the students needed distraction and support, so they organized a Pearl Harbor Day party in the Student Union on December 7 to raise scholarship funds. Although the party was a hit with students and raised scholarship money, UM headquarter officials reprimanded some of the faculty for designing party flyers that invited students to “come and get bombed.” Later I would visit Czechoslovakia on short study tours arranged the MC study tour director Michael Dickinson. With colleagues or German friends, I would travel to Austria, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Denmark, England, Turkey, and Malta during my time at Munich Campus.

Because of the campus’s small size, professors handled student course enrollments. One particular semester event I remember was advising and registration day. On that day, professors were expected to be in their offices from 9 to 5 p.m. to meet with students about their course selections for the following semester. Because we were not allowed to leave our offices, even during lunchtime, the MC administration delivered pizza and sodas to each office. Like most MC professors, I shared my office with other professors, in my case with anthropology professor Russanne Low and political science professor Susan May, and so between student registrations, we chatted. Such office sharing encouraged collegiality as professors got to know colleagues from other disciplines. Faculty often gathered in the campus mailbox room, which had chairs and couches, and swapped stories and snacks.

When I started at Munich Campus in August 1989, it had about 600 students. Then the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989. While we all celebrated this historical event, talk began to circulate that the U.S. military would pull out of Germany. In May 1990, the *Munich Observer* published a front-page story about how base closures might affect Munich Campus. Dean McMahan speculated that the campus might move to a base at Pirmasens or Bremerhaven. The base commander mentioned that the campus might move to Augsburg. In August 1990, Munich Campus began the new academic year with enrollment remaining steady at about 600. On October 3, 1990, MC students got an unexpected holiday to celebrate the reunification of West and East Germany. Many spent the day at Oktoberfest, which ended that evening. Soon afterward, the military announced that McGraw Kaserne would be closing, and UM officials revealed that Munich Campus would move to Augsburg in summer 1992. In spring 1991, MC officials began preparing for enrollment drops because of the move and cut the number of classes offered on the fall schedule. They also began organizing for the move to Augsburg, deciding which programs and faculty would relocate. In fall 1991, Dean McMahan announced his retirement after 16 years at Munich Campus. On May 9, 1992, we attended Munich Campus’s final graduation ceremony in which 125 students received Associate of Arts degrees. And the last issue of the *Munich Observer* was published that month.

The base closure meant I had to leave my apartment in the family housing area in Perlacher Forst, where I had moved in 1991, so over the summer, I took over an apartment on the west side of Munich, where MC accounting professor Glenn Rechtschaffen had lived. As McGraw Kaserne was closing, base officials sold off furniture and furnishings. End tables and chairs could be had for \$5 and desks and dining room cabinets for \$15, so I furnished the apartment inexpensively (and I still have some pieces today). Later, unsold pieces were piled into dumpsters. My German friends expressed dismay that I went dumpster diving as it reminded them too much of their own losses after World War II.

In August 1992, I, along with several MC faculty, began making the hour-long commute from Munich to Augsburg. For me, the commute involved taking a bus to the Laim S-Bahn station and then the S-Bahn to Pasing to catch a train to Augsburg. Sometimes I would meet up with other faculty on the train. In Augsburg, if the train arrived on time, we could catch a Straßenbahn that dropped us close to Reese Barracks. If not, we took a taxi or walked. Some faculty kept a bike at the Augsburg train station for transportation. Unlike the campus at McGraw Kaserne, the Augsburg Campus was spread out over several buildings, so I had a bike on campus to ride from my office, which was in the basement of the main building, at one end of the campus, to my classroom at the other end. Once a month, the student newspaper staff would gather in my office to put together the *Augsburg Observer*, which had been downsized from a tabloid-sized paper to a more compact large newsletter size. On production days I would stay the night in Augsburg with one of my Augsburg Campus colleagues.

Although the faces were familiar and the students the same, the spirit of Munich Campus did not relocate to Augsburg Campus, at least not for those of us who had known Munich Campus. Even though Augsburg offered the opportunity to get to know and explore a new area of Germany, we lost the physical and collegial closeness we had experienced as faculty at Munich Campus. At Augsburg Campus, faculty no longer had a common meeting area, and faculty offices were spread apart on campus. Several, like me, commuted and taught only two or three days a week, and so didn't spend much time at the campus. The students also seemed more scattered. Although enrollment dropped little during that first year in Augsburg, there was much concern and talk that even the Augsburg Campus would not be around long because of the possibility of Reese Barrack's closure. Thus, in summer 1993, I returned to states and joined Barry University in Florida for a year before moving on.

In summer 2001, I had one more chance to teach for UMUC. This time I served as a summer lecturer, teaching at SHAPE in Belgium during the week and at Spangdahlem AFB in Germany every other weekend. It was an amazing experience to work on a base in which 16 languages were spoken—I never knew exactly which language a person standing in line in front or back of me at the base exchange would use. At the U.S. 4th of July celebration on SHAPE, a Dutch major belted out an Elvis song at a karaoke event followed by a Spanish officer who sang and danced the Macarena. One weekend I got a play-by-play description of the Waterloo battle on a tour led by a British major general. I dealt with shifting place names and road signs as I drove across French and Flemish

Belgium to reach Spangdahlem AFB. I eventually realized that Aachen and Aix-la-Chapelle were the same city! Then once at Spangdahlem I encountered the base drills I had faced at Hahn in years before! I am grateful I had that summer experience because a month after I returned home the world would change again on September 11, 2001.

Over the years I've kept in contact with a few of my UMUC and MC colleagues and students via social media and in person and attended some of the UMUC reunions. In fact, my former officemate, Russanne Low, and I have co-authored two papers and traveled together on a Fulbright Service tour. Although almost three decades have passed since my time with UMUC, my years spent working for it were some of the most enjoyable and memorable of my career. I sometimes tell folks that the fall of the Berlin Wall changed my life, but not necessarily for the better!

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