

Viewpoints

‘Sprechen Sie Deutsch?’

A few years ago, Professor Erika Daines spoke with me about adding a commercial emphasis to Weber State University’s German Language degree. She was convinced the commercial emphasis would allow WSU students to learn the lexicon of business in a second language and prepare them for global opportunities.

The rationale for the commercial emphasis is straightforward. Students who study a traditional language may gain conversational proficiency in a language but struggle with technical conversation in the same language. For example, it is difficult to explain the concept of a credit swap derivative to someone who is conversing in the same language. The complexity is intensified if you are speaking in a second language.

WSU added commercial language emphases in German, Spanish and French a decade ago. With these commercial emphasis students study the traditional foreign language and take additional classes devoted to business terminology in the language. Many students also choose to pursue a second degree in business to accompany their language degree. Students choosing this path find themselves facing some interesting options and opportunities they never dreamed possible.

WSU senior Jake Amaral is one of these students. Jake graduated from Bonneville High in 2005, and he is now pursuing dual degrees in Supply Chain Management and German with a commercial emphasis. Jake recently interviewed for an internship with Germany’s Deutsche Bank, a multibillion dollar company which operates in 72 countries.

Jake applied for the Deutsche Bank internship via email. He had previously sent out several inquires to major corporations only to be told “thanks but no thanks.” So, he was relieved when Deutsche Bank responded to his email with a request for an interview.

Jake’s first interview took place over the phone and resulted in an invitation

for a face-to-face interview. For the final interview Jake had to travel to Frankfurt and speak with the human resource manager as well as the supervisor and trainer for the internship. The interview was conducted in the German language.

Jake was a bit nervous at the start, but he quickly relaxed, finding that WSU’s rigorous language program had prepared him well.

After the interview Jake was told that he would hear from the bank in a day or so. Any uncertainty he had about the outcome of the interview didn’t last long. The interview had been a slam dunk. Before he was back to his room Jake received

a cell phone call telling him he had the job. Jake said, “I was jumping up and down I was so excited.”

During the four-month internship, which started this month, Jake will work with a team to develop innovative concepts which would be used for iPad and iPhone applications to help Deutsche Bank’s retail banking sector.

Before flying to Germany, Jake set four goals for himself. First, he wanted to study at a university in Germany, Bayreuth University. Second, he sought to attain an internship at a German corporation. Third, Jake wished to

continue taking classes through WSU’s online program. Finally, Jake wanted the experience of kissing a German girl. Now that he has the Deutsche Bank internship, Jake says all the goals have been accomplished.

After his internship Jake plans to complete his studies at WSU and graduate with dual degrees in December 2011. Jake thanks Professor Daines and says, “(She) has been by far the most inspirational professor that I have ever had.” In addition to inspiring students, Professor Daines played a pivotal role in adding the commercial emphasis to Weber State’s German Language degree. Because of her efforts, and those of the other language faculty, dozens of WSU students have the chance to pursue some life-changing opportunities.

Top of Utah Voices



Michael Vaughan

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Commentary

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