RIT Croatia students at work around the world

One of the most important parts of an RIT Croatia education is the opportunity to gain real world employment experience at international companies that are leaders in their industries. Students in all degree programs spend their summers at work, putting into practice the theoretical knowledge they have gained in the classroom, where building their skills and developing relationships with colleagues, clients and employees. Here are some highlights from the summer of 2017.

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

**Vjeran Pezdirc, Ocean Reef Club, Florida, USA**

Vjeran, our IB student, says that traveling to the United States for a 5-month co-op was a once in a lifetime experience that really changed his life. Not only did he learn the skills necessary to be a successful employee at leading world class resort, he also met the challenge of living far from home and adapting to a whole new culture.

“During my co-op at Ocean Reef, I got to work in almost every department in the resort: accounting, conference sales, human resources, the call center, room reservations and the front desk,” he said. “I learned so much in every department, but I do have to say that I enjoyed working in accounting the most, not because I love numbers, but because the team was incredible. They were all cheerful, and my managers would regularly stop by my desk to ask me how everything was going, and help me improve. By the end of my accounting experience, I was writing daily revenue and payroll reports for the whole club.

Being in a new country and new culture is challenging, but I managed to adapt to the food, and even get used to American “coffee.” When it came to communicating, I realized that I would have to get a little louder and more confident about everything I was saying, in order to blend in.

In my free time, my roommate Lucija Kuvačić, now an RIT alumni, and I did everything together – swam in the ocean, rode airboats in the Everglades National

**Sanja Ćović, RIT Croatia student**

“After the co-op experiences, I can honestly say I have a better understanding of the concepts of my courses we study here. What we learn here in RIT Croatia really is applicable in real-life situations in our careers and that is what I appreciate the most.”

(continues on page 3)
RIT Croatia students describe life-changing experiences at the Rochester, New York, campus

One of the greatest benefits of studying at RIT Croatia is the opportunity to study abroad by enrolling in one of RIT’s global campuses for one or two semesters. Students in the program receive personal guidance, program advising, and step-by-step instructions from study abroad specialists and the other RIT Global staff. Students can apply as early as sophomore year for the Global Scholars program to study at one of RIT Global campuses: Rochester, Dubai, and Kosovo. Each campus offers different business, cultural, academic, and life perspectives, but being part of the same global institution makes the whole studying experience easy and smooth.

Zagreb campus IB student Kristina Sardelić recently spent a full semester at the main campus in Rochester, New York.

“It is hard to describe the Rochester campus to someone who has grown up in Croatia. What you see on movies seems unreal, but yes, it is real in America. There are so many different facilities on campus (gyms, restaurants, sports facilities) which I used on a daily basis when I was there. Also, there is always something going on, and I had the opportunity to attend a lot of events every day.

The variety of academic courses available is also amazing. I took some courses which we do not have in Croatia, such as Introduction to Criminal Justice, and Entrepreneurship.

I gained many friends, whom I stayed in touch with even after I left Rochester. I also met some of them later on during my internship in New York City. I have a couple of friends from Rochester who are considering coming to RIT Croatia for a semester, and some who will be traveling to Europe soon. It is nice to know that these two campuses are connected, and it feels good to have friends all over the world.

I would definitely recommend this to everyone who wants to gain experience, work abroad one day, try and learn something different, and become more independent. Through this experience, I have been put in so many situations for the first time, and had to work my way through them. That made me a stronger person, and made me realize I am actually capable of doing and handling much more than I initially thought. Going through all of that built my confidence, made me more responsible and opened my eyes.

Finally, it may not have been an easy decision to pack my bags and move to the other side of the world where I do not know anyone, but it was definitely the best decision I made in my life. I feel like it is much easier for me now to study and connect things from classes to real life examples, because I have experienced it through the Global Scholars Program. Also, if I never took the Study Abroad opportunity, I never would have had a chance to complete my internship in New York City which is definitely a great addition to my CV and my future career. So, get out of your comfort zone, see and explore the world that is out there!

Andrea Kecić, an HTM student from the Dubrovnik campus, is currently spending the fall semester in Rochester.

“The Global Scholars program has so many advantages,” she said. “I also get to meet and network with so many people, also get to meet new sides of myself that I didn’t even know existed. For instance, I am an official student athlete – I’m rowing! This is something I never thought I would be doing!

I am also a member of the RIT Student Government and I work at the Global Office part-time. I know it may sound like a cliché, but I am sure that the relationships I have made – and continue to make – so far, I will keep forever! Now I have this group of friends – my sports team, roommates, classmates – and I truly feel like I’m home – away from home, that is.

Classes here are definitely much harder in terms of student competitiveness and the different backgrounds each student has; however, this has a positive connotation for me as it pushes me to study harder,” she said.

“My advice to current students is to get out of your comfort zone and away from your group of friends – you should definitely use this opportunity to meet new people in this is once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”
To any students who are thinking about applying for an internship outside of Croatia, I would say, stop thinking about it and do it. You will get a once in a lifetime experience, and knowledge about both your profession and life in another culture. Even though the idea of living somewhere far away from home might sound scary at first, it is an incredibly liberating experience.

The most memorable situation was when a local tour had been organized for the guests, but the tour guide was unable to come and I was asked to replace her. It was a challenge, but as I had become knowledgeable about the area, I decided to try it. It turned out to be the right choice. It helped boost my self-confidence and establish new friendships. I am also thankful for the support and training from my superiors, who were completely committed to preparing me to deal with every-day work challenges.

The biggest challenge for me was to develop multi-tasking skills. As it was high season, there was lots of work, lots of new guests coming in and others checking out. It took me a few days to adapt to the system, but I learned quickly and enjoyed being able to see a real melting pot of cultures every day.

This experience made me more empathetic, attentive listener and quick and efficient problem solver. I learned that the relationship I have with my internal customers (other employees) is just as important as the one with external customers (guests). After the co-op experiences, I can honestly say I have a better understanding of the concepts of my HTM courses we study here. What we learn here in RIT Croatia really is applicable in real-life situations in our careers and that is what I appreciate the most.”

While RIT Croatia President and Dean Don Hudspeth is focused on long term strategic initiatives such as relations with RIT executives and Croatian authorities and the development of new degree programs, the daily academic operations of the college fall under the direction of our Associate Deans. With many years’ experience at RIT Croatia, both associate deans continue to teach, while also spending time at both campuses and working closely with various faculty members.

Dr. Brassard is a specialist in Buddhist philosophy and Indian religions. After many years of teaching and research in Canada, the United States, and Japan, he moved to Croatia seven years ago, with his wife, Rina, who is from the old city of Dubrovnik. He joined RIT Croatia in 2012 and brings a wide variety of international experiences with him.

“During my graduate studies, I had the opportunity to experience firsthand the benefits of studying abroad in Germany and India. I am very much committed to encouraging students to avail themselves of such an opportunity,” said Dr. Brassard, who, in addition to teaching his native French and English, has become comfortably conversant in Croatian, has a good command of German, to a lesser extent, Italian and Japanese.

“The study of foreign languages is not only a passion, but also the expression of an earnest desire to expand my horizons by meeting people in their own milieu,” he explained. “This is an attitude I hope to foster among our students.”
Graduates of RIT Croatia gathered in Zagreb in September for a day of humanitarian volunteer work, visiting the elderly and joining the Croatian registry of bone marrow donors. The event was part of the annual RIT Global Day of Service, a joint effort between Alumni Association and RIT’s alumni chapters around the world, which brings together graduates of RIT for a day of service and friendship in communities around the world.

For RIT Croatia graduates, the first stop on this year’s event was a visit to the home for the elderly in Trnje, where Professor Ninoslav Mimica, President of the Croatian Alzheimer’s association, discussed the importance of preventing and diagnosing this disease.

Next, volunteers moved to the sports center in Trnje where, in collaboration with the Ana Rukavina Foundation, 35 volunteers joined the registry of potential bone marrow donors in Croatia. Volunteers on this registry have an opportunity to save lives of people suffering from leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma and other blood diseases, by safely donating bone marrow cells.

“The RIT Croatia Alumni Association continues to fully support the RIT Global Day of Service and I am very glad to have seen some of our Alumni take active part this year,” said Nina Mimica, RIT Croatia Alumni Association President. “We had an opportunity to hear about detection and prevention of Alzheimer’s disease from Prof. Mimica, President of Alzheimer’s Association Croatia, and to join the registry of potential donors of bone marrow, in collaboration with Ana Rukavina Foundation. Of course, this was also another much appreciated networking opportunity for our alumni, who enjoyed the opportunity to catch up with old friends.”

Vladimir Dujić, Class of 2006
“International co-ops that I completed at The Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado, USA, and on Royal Caribbean cruise lines were real eye-openers for me. They provided me with an opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge gained at RIT in real life. Working with a very diverse workforce also widened my horizons, as I learned to appreciate individual differences and the effect those differences had on teamwork and businesses as a whole.”

Mirela Subotić, Class of 2013
“When I started my college experience, I was eager to apply my learning to a professional work setting and develop my skills by transferring my knowledge from the classroom to the work place. The personal development, networks and connections I made and the opportunity to explore different career paths has been truly invaluable.”

Daren Perinčić, Class of 2017
“International co-op gave me a much broader sense of the global business environment and opened a completely different skillset compared to just working locally. I learned so much from my mentors. Hearing from their stories showed me what its like to work in a multicultural environment, how to think outside the box, and tackle multiple challenges at once.”

This summer, students had more than 130 000 hours of internship in more than 30 industries in more than 220 various companies in 17 different countries

Alumni Career Updates

Dinko Jurišić ’03, started a new position as a Category Manager at Nestlé in Zagreb.
Mirela Subotić ’04, started a new position as a Project Manager at 404 Agency, an advertising firm in Zagreb.
Ivan Mikić ’08, started a new position as a Key Account Manager at Microblink in Zagreb.
Edita Ercek ’08, started a new position as a Product and Support Manager at Privredna Banka Zagreb.
Marko Rulek ’08, started a new position as an E-Commerce Manager at Emerald Hospitality Associates, Inc., in Cleveland, Ohio, USA.
Tea Maček ’15, started a new position as a Trade Marketing Manager at HP (Hewlett Packard) in Zagreb.
Zvonimir Baljak ’16, started a new position as a Senior Analyst at CB Alliance, Inc. equity management in Zagreb.
Ivan Durčević ’17, started a new position as Sales Support Service Assistant at 3M in Zagreb.
When it comes to finding job opportunities, RIT students are fortunate to have a wide network of alumni to help open doors. This summer, several RIT Croatia IT students found co-op positions with ENUM Software in Dubrovnik, an innovative company founded by RIT Croatia alumni which now provides software development and design services to the city of Dubrovnik and other clients.

“Our primary focus is on developing smart city solutions. We have worked on multiple smart city projects for the city of Dubrovnik, including Smart Parking system, the Dubrovnik Card App, Visitor Counting system and Dubrovnik Eye,” explained Andrej Šarić, an RIT Croatia alumnus who co-founded the company, along with RIT alumni Dživo Jelić and Ivan Brčić.

Now, ENUM is pleased to invite current IT students to join the company for their co-ops, gaining valuable skills and experience by working on new current projects.

“In our company, students work on web and mobile software solutions. They work on real projects that are later used in production. This gives them a real experience of what it’s like to work in a team on a project that has deadlines and needs to be customer ready,” said Prof. Šarić, who also teaches at RIT Croatia.

Third-year IT student Frano Nola joined ENUM this summer as a programmer.

“My job was to design the website and work on the front end, basically everything the user sees and interacts with. I learned a lot about design, code writing practices and using new types of software. I also learned a lot about teamwork and what it’s like to work at an actual company,” Frano said.

“This job required a lot of communication with other colleagues. Whenever I did something I had to tell others what I’ve made, changed or improved. Sometimes it wasn’t easy because not everyone was located in Dubrovnik. For example one colleague was in Split and often times I had to call him with Skype. At the start it was a challenge, because I had to use a new program I hadn’t known before, but with their help and tips I quickly learned how to implement it in our project. ”

The continuing cooperation between RIT Croatia and ENUM software is truly a win-win situation.

“We are glad to be able to offer students a chance to work with new technologies and trends and prepare them for the market that is waiting for them once they finish the college. We were lucky enough to be able to keep some of the students even after their co-op,” Prof. Šarić said.

“When we look at the current state of IT we see all these new disruptive technologies that pop up almost on a weekly basis and we can’t help but wonder how will this reflect on our everyday jobs and what is yet to come. The only thing that we can be certain of is that we must keep on learning and find new ways of using technology to improve our everyday lives.”
Introducing Dr. David Munson

Today’s Rochester Institute of Technology is clearly different from the school created in the 19th century and RIT must continue to evolve to help solve the challenges facing society now and in the future, David Munson told hundreds gathered at the Rochester campus in September to witness his inauguration as the university’s 10th president.

“Let’s double down on making our campus a thriving ecosystem to stimulate creativity, and innovation,” said Munson. “We must continue to rethink our educational systems, so that we are building a broad, multidisciplinary skill set where creativity is exercised at every turn.” Munson asked the crowd what kind of education students should receive in order to contribute to the future of society. Citing a 2016 World Economic Forum report, he answered that no matter which discipline students are passionate about, they “should learn about and gain experience in critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, innovation, collaboration, communication and other high-level skills.”

Thousands of people from the RIT community, including more than 40 college and university leaders from throughout the United States, attended the ceremony. We hope to welcome Dr. Munson to the RIT Croatia campuses in the near future.

Dubrovnik campus wins RIT Global Slang Competition

Students from the Dubrovnik campus used their language skills and creative thinking to win the Global Slang competition, a friendly challenge among students from all of RIT’s global campuses, as part of the annual One SpiRIT event in October. This annual event unites members of all campuses for interaction and socializing in real time, all around the globe. This year, the highlight of the event was the Global Slang competition between RIT campuses from Rochester, Dubai, Zagreb, Dubrovnik and Kosovo. Teams from each campus had to guess the meanings of words that are typically used only in the city/region of each campus. For the second year in a row, the Dubrovnik campus won the competition and our Zagreb campus finished a close second. Besides the competition, this was a great opportunity for our students, faculty and staff to socialize and have fun while cheering for their teams. Congratulations to everyone who participated.

Alumni Awards in Hospitality and Service Innovation

The annual RIT School of International Hospitality and Service Innovation Alumni Awards Reception took place on October 12 at the Rochester campus. During the event Dr. Karthik Namasivayam, Department Chair, Hospitality & Tourism Management and Dr. Linda Underhill, Department Chair, Service Systems awarded 10 distinguished RIT Alumni. Among those 10 award recipients, there were two RIT Croatia alumni: Ana Brant, who received an International Award for Excellence and Božana Zekan, who received Service Leadership and Innovation International Award.

RIT Ranked in List of Top 100 US Colleges and Universities

Rochester Institute of Technology is now among the top 100 universities in the US, having jumped 10 places in the “National Universities” category, according to recent rankings published by the U.S. News & World Report newspaper. RIT, this year ranked 97th out of 311 universities in this prestigious category, which includes some of the nation’s best known colleges and universities.

“This ranking affirms what I’ve been saying all along: RIT is on a steep trajectory from greatness to preeminence,” said RIT President David Munson. “I’m very proud of everything our students, faculty and staff have done to help us achieve this milestone recognition, making us one of the top few universities that is working at the intersection of technology, the arts and design.”

In this year’s ranking, RIT was:

• Tied for 39th among national universities in a national survey of “High School Counselors Top College Picks.”
• 41st among national universities for “Great Schools, Great Prices.” The calculation compares a school’s academic quality to the net cost of attendance for a student who receives the average level of financial aid.
• Tied for 61st among engineering colleges programs where the highest degree is doctorate.
• Tied for 64th among undergraduate business programs.
• Among 20 universities that have excellent programs that encourage students to apply what they’re learning in the classroom to work in the real world through closely supervised internships or practicums, or through cooperative education. RIT has one of the largest and oldest experiential cooperative learning programs in the country. Last year, more than 4,400 RIT students completed nearly 6,000 work assignments with nearly 2,300 employers coast to coast and abroad.
Over the summer of 2017, while most students were busy traveling, taking summer courses and working on co-ops, the scene inside the Zagreb campus building at the Bundek center was busy as well, with a series of renovations and improvements underway to make the learning environment more comfortable and pleasant for students, faculty and staff. About 280 square meters of additional space were acquired and existing spaces reorganized to create new faculty offices, classrooms, and an improved meeting room. After about two months of work remodeling existing space, and preparing the new space, students came back to the college and found improvements to computer labs, meeting rooms and videoconference facilities. The college now has two large teaching labs, one with 42 brand new Mac computers, and the other with Windows PCs, for use by both IT and business students. There is also a designated quiet area for students to work on computers undisturbed. The videoconference facilities, often used for language classes, now seats up to 45 students comfortably, nearly double the previous capacity.

“The new videoconference room is a great improvement for teaching with Polycom,” said Professor Barbara Perić, who uses videoconferencing technology to teach Spanish classes to students at the Zagreb campus. “With larger capacity and a more comfortable room, I can communicate better with students, answer their questions, and create a more pleasant atmosphere.”

Renowned molecular biologist Dr. Ivan Đikić, held a guest lecture at our Dubrovnik campus in October about scientific creativity and innovation. Zagreb campus was connected via videoconference technology. The lecture was interactive and guided mostly by questions coming from the audience, as Dr. Đikić discussed his scientific journey and shared some inspiring thoughts for the future. He emphasized the importance of preserving the “integrity of you” in every aspect of both professional and personal life. Through developing oneself one should not be limited but on the contrary, one should be open to lifelong learning in many disciplines. Dr. Đikić also made an interesting comparison of educational systems in Croatia, the USA, Sweden and Germany. His main conclusion is the importance of investing in education that should be free of political influence. As Dr. Đikić said, “the image of a society is its educational system”. When asked how he deals with creative crisis, Dr. Đikić replied: “You have to learn from crisis; not panic but to try and navigate your way through the crisis, to talk, to discuss in order to find the way to overcome the obstacles. Think deeply, face problems and look for the support of the environment, both at your work and privately”.

Dr. Đikić was invited to RIT Croatia by Dr. Marlena Ćukteras, who teaches Environmental Science at the Dubrovnik campus and is an active member of the Association for Promoting Natural Sciences in Dubrovnik.

Dr. Ivan Đikić is a Croatian molecular biologist who is the Director of the Institute of Biochemistry II at Goethe University Frankfurt. In 1991, he earned his M.D. degree from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Zagreb. After finishing his medical studies he continued to pursue his Ph.D. thesis in molecular biology at the University of Zagreb and at the New York University School of Medicine until 1997. He continued to work as a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Joseph Schlessinger in New York from 1995 to 1997 before starting his own group at the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research in Uppsala, Sweden. In 2002, Ivan was appointed as a Professor at Goethe University Frankfurt. He followed in Werner Müller-Esterl’s footsteps as Director of the Institute of Biochemistry II in 2009. In addition, Ivan Đikić was the first Scientific Director (2009 - 2013) of the Buchmann Institute for Molecular Life Sciences, a cross-faculty, interdisciplinary institute at Goethe University which was founded as part of the Cluster of Excellence Macromolecular Complexes. He is speaker of the Collaborative Research Center 1177 on selective autophagy, and speaker of the LOEWE program “Ubiquitin Networks”.

Dr. Đikić’s research focuses on deciphering molecular mechanisms of cellular signaling pathways, which have a high relevance to human diseases such as cancer, neurodegenerative disorders and inflammation.
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.

It’s one thing to read a brochure, or watch a video, but something else completely to be there in person.

Professor Scott Coleman teaches a class at the Zagreb campus on the global business environment. The course is an introduction to the institutions, actors and forces that influence international business. Recently, several prospective students visited the class for a taste of what it’s like to be an RIT Croatia student.

“We were happy to be joined by several students for a case study on the globalisation of Hollywood,” Prof. Coleman said. “The class discussed how Hollywood movie content is evolving to meet the demands of an increasingly global audience. Students also debated how future changes in technology will influence the production, distribution and consumption of global blockbusters. It was a pleasure to have interested and engaged potential students in the room. We hope they will join us next year as enrolled students.”

To try being an RIT Croatia student for a day, the process is very simple. Potential students just need to contact the Admissions Office directly (admissions@croatia.rit.edu) or by filling out the Become a Student for a Day form on our website.


Then fill out an application at: [http://www.croatia.rit.edu/applicationform/](http://www.croatia.rit.edu/applicationform/).