



WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY



RUHR WEST
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Virtual Exchange + Conference in Detroit

Virtual transatlantic collaboration
project between Hochschule Ruhr West
and Wayne State University

Virtual Exchange+ is a transatlantic academic collaboration project, funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) within the scope of the IVAC (International Virtual Exchange Collaboration) program.

Key Facts about the collaboration

- As part of multiple virtual collaborations between the Ruhr West University of Applied Sciences and the Wayne State University, faculty members and 31 students had the opportunity to attend the Virtual Exchange+ Conference in Detroit this year
- For the students, participation in the conference created the opportunity to experience not only a virtual collaboration, but also achieve a higher level of intercultural exchange and strengthen the networking with US-students
- All in all, the students were impressed by the entire conference, had the opportunity to network internationally, learn more about the city of Detroit and gain cultural insights into the US-American way of life. In addition, all students took away various content-related and personal learning that will benefit them in the long term, both in their professional and private life

What was your best moment during our stay?



“Experiencing these **shared moments with other students** in Detroit and in a time where you usually do not have so many **social contacts** we grew together as friends.” (Darius Mews)



Foto: Tim Schuppert



Foto: Darius Mews



Foto: Nicole Janßen

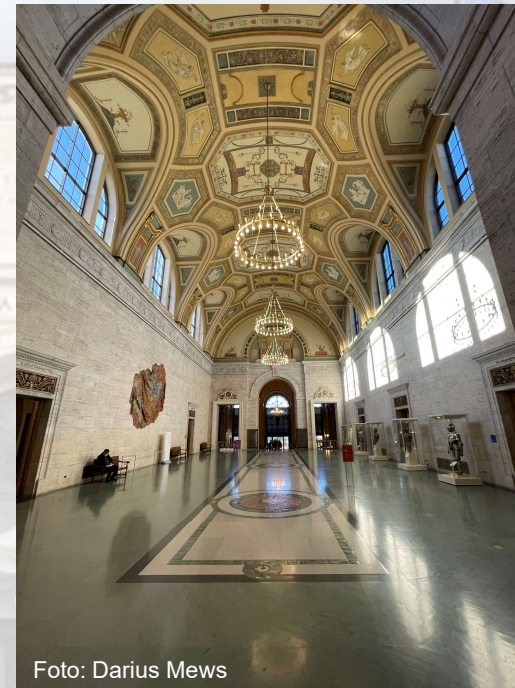


Foto: Darius Mews



Foto: Franziska Bahr



Foto: Tim Schuppert



Foto: Nicole Janßen

“A lot of things were simply so **impressive, a kind of extra**, extra large and extra intensive – like you can see it in the entrance of the **Detroit Institute of Arts.**” (Andra Jädtke)

“This **experience was really cool**. People ‘feel’ the game and **students dance** next to the basketball field and support the players. During the breaks, the cheerleaders and the dance club perform and entertain the whole hall. I was very surprised and it is a lot of fun.” *(Nicole Janßen)*

“It was amazing to **experience the unique US sports culture** with the great team support and the **marketing and merchandise culture** backing it.” *(Robin Hamke)*



Foto: Robin Hamke



Foto: Kevin Klostermeyer

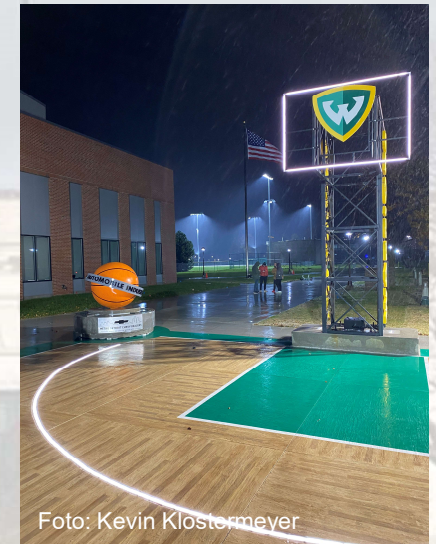


Foto: Kevin Klostermeyer

“I am in general not addicted to sports, but the game changed my mind and **got me in touch with the American spirit**. My highlight was the complete set-up of the game, which you can't compare to Germany. When I travel to the US again, I will visit a basketball game.” *(Kevin Klostermeyer)*

“It is hard to really name „that one best moment“ as the stay as a whole was really incredible!”
(Robin Hamke)



“I guess the other students had a great impact on how the trip felt for me during those moments as well. Everybody was very friendly and I guess we all had a good time together.”
(Tim Schuppert)



Foto: Franziska Bahr

“The campus of the Wayne State University was really looking like you would imagine it from Hollywood movies especially the **relaxed atmosphere on campus**. It was so great to be a part of the typical American university life for a few days.” (Franziska Bahr)



Foto: Franziska Bahr

“My best moment was **eating Detroit styled pizza** with a great view over the city with Professor **Jeff Stoltman**.

He was very open-minded and created a relaxed atmosphere by telling us something about the **history of Detroit** and answering our questions.” (Alexandra Babi)



Foto: Franziska Bahr

“Another highlight was the **Christmas market in downtown with the fantastic lighting**. There were people everywhere who were in a good mood and wanted to **spread their Christmas spirit**.”
(Marco Kaminski)



Foto: Tim Schuppert



Foto: Laura Witthaut



Foto: Marco Kaminski

“During our time in Detroit, I had a **lot of great experiences**, like watching a basketball game, exploring the city or visiting great workshops and presentations. But one moment that was really amazing for me, was during the **Christmas tree lighting** on Friday evening. When the big Christmas tree was enlightened in Downtown Detroit the **otherwise empty city of Detroit was filled with people**. The whole atmosphere was wonderful, and it was great to see how all the people **were just coming together and were enjoying their time**.” (Laura Witthaut)

What was your best cultural insight?

“My favorite cultural insight was the **Charles H. Wright museum of African American History**. The museum was very **sensitive and moving** and I gained a better understanding of the discrimination against black people in the USA.”
(Robin Hamke)



Foto: Robin Hamke



Foto: Robin Hamke

“A museum concept that I have not experienced so far, quite vivid; like **a leap in time** where you can hear and feel the atmosphere back then and therefore very emotional. **You experienced the dark side of history** - through sounds and recreation of places. Nevertheless the last section of the museum **highlighted as well positive moments of change.**” (Andra Jädtke)

“Within the short period of time, some **preconceptions** about the country of America **have been confirmed**, just as I had imagined, such as the **school buses or the cafeteria.**”
(Marco Kaminski)



Foto: Marco Kaminski



Foto: Darius Mews

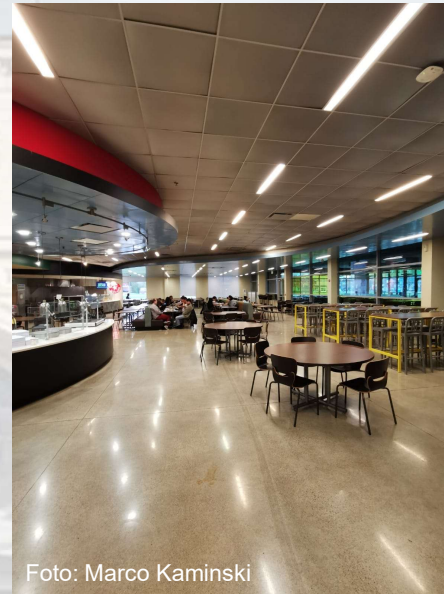


Foto: Marco Kaminski



Foto: Tim Schuppert

“As a person who is very interested in many kinds of sports i was really **impressed in the cultural importance of sports in the US.** I think it is great that every university has an own team in football, basketball and so on. It seems like the **whole university is dressed in the corporate wear** of the university team. That is something i really liked about the whole university concept.” (Tim Schuppert)



Foto: Franziska Bahr

“Being in the US and getting to know another way of how a campus can be designed, totally flashed me; when we arrived I was surprised **how big the campus** was and that it included stores of several fast-food chains.

The student panel was very interesting because we got to know the work from the social media courses before ours and **it was very interesting to hear, what the professors from the US think about the work we do in Germany.**
(Kevin Klostermeyer)

“I got a very good cultural insight during the various presentations. A highlight was the presentation by **Dr. Bryan Ellis on "Race and social Activism in Detroit"**, in which we learned new background knowledge about the city in really interesting and diverse presentations.” (Laura Witthaut)



Foto: Franziska Bahr

“Detroit is a city with big cultural differences, for example during the **day** time it is **quiet** but **full of life** during the **night**.”
(Darius Mews)



Foto: Darius Mews

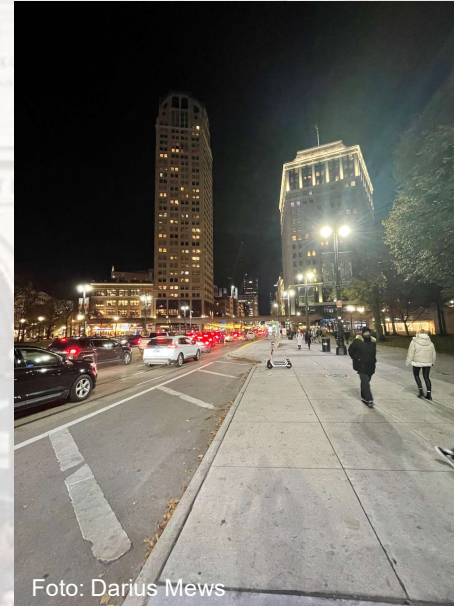


Foto: Darius Mews



Foto: Laura Witthaut



Foto: Laura Witthaut

“Furthermore, the Wayne State University is located in a **safe area** and you simply can **walk to downtown** Detroit.” (Laura Witthaut)

What was your one learning during the trip?

„I was able to **learn a lot about the history of Detroit** within the few days. If you have never dealt with the city of Detroit in more detail, you have a rather run-down image of the city. However, this has changed on the spot. **Detroit has a lot of beautiful corners and above all an exciting story to tell. I was very positively surprised.**“ (Marco Kaminski)

“Detroit was an experience I will not forget. The people were **very friendly, open-minded and interested in our trip**. Strangers quite often started a small talk. I guess in Germany we do not have that so often in our daily life. It was a very nice trip to learn about other cultures and history and to share with other students. It is worth it to experience new things. (Nicole Janßen)

„I learned a lot about the **history and the diversity** of the city of Detroit. From me it was really interesting to learn **how a city can shift** from once being one of the richest and influential cities in the world to a crime ridden place, on to new sparks of creativity in building new structures and inventing new use ideas for lost spaces. **I am always inspired by such places.**“ (Robin Hamke)

“To put it in one sentence: **a short journey can change a lot**; whether it is knowledge on culture or language skills and the capability to talk to native speakers, or whether it is different ways of learning. But most importantly the people around me made it unforgettable.” (Andra Jädtke)

“In exchange with other students, I discovered that even if you live in a different country, your **personal targets do not vary so much in terms of values, personal goals and experiences**; with this being said, I took a big learning for myself in working together with strangers.” *(Darius Mews)*

“It was a chance to meet new people and **experience a new culture in a city that is not a typical tourist destination**. It was also great to **get to know the students from our course** much better outside of the university, which unfortunately was hardly possible here in Germany in the last few months due to Corona.” *(Franziska Bahr)*

„I guess I really take a **big learning for myself** after the trip. During the preparation I had a couple of problems regarding an express ID card or a falsely positive antigen test. But I kept on trying to get it all under control and it went well. So I think I take something like a „**never give up – it will be worth it**“ **learning for myself** after the whole trip.“ *(Tim Schuppert)*

„The trip to the US was a highlight because it was **the first time for me in the US**. I had the opportunity to get in touch with people from the US, who had a **different mindset** than we have in Germany. I also had the opportunity to make **new friends** and when I look now back at the trip, I would say, it helped me in **my personal development**.“ *(Kevin Klostermeyer)*

“When I heard of the city Detroit before the conference, I often **associated Detroit with a more negative image**. But during our stay I learned more about the history, for example in a general presentation about Detroit by Dr. Kevin Deegan-Krause or in a lecture with the topic “Race and Social Activism in Detroit” by Dr. Bryan Ellis. Learning more about the city and exploring Detroit during different walking tours **showed that the city has beautiful places to offer, and that the city is incredibly diverse**.” *(Laura Witthaut)*

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