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Warming up for a unique intercultural experience

April 2021 was a month of cross-cultural interaction for students of the course Different Approaches to Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility in the US and the EU at the HWR Berlin.

28.06.2021 — Erica Callery

Students joined selected counterparts from the University at Albany in the US for a month-long interactive online course that placed international collaboration at its heart. Held as part of the UAS7 Virtual Academy, the project ran alongside similar virtual exchanges at other participating UAS7 schools of applied science.

The joint online project was embedded in two existing courses taught at the HWR Berlin's Department of Legal Studies (FB4) and the University at Albany's School of Criminal Justice. Participating students came together for four online sessions to explore the themes of Corporate Social Responsibility, corporate governance and the role of Black Wall Street in the United States. In parallel students worked in mixed groups to explore a range of case studies related to these themes online.

To kick-off this intercultural collaboration students took part in a range of icebreaker activities with the aim of warming students up for their teamwork and sensitising them to the different cultural contexts. Due to the virtual nature of the project icebreaking sessions were key to facilitating a smooth start to the student-led collaboration. Students reflected on their associations when it came to thinking about the cultural contexts of Berlin and New York. This activity started conversations between the students about their home cities and set them off down a road to intercultural discovery.

Students also produced passports introducing themselves to the group which also led to them exploring intercultural themes that went beyond the standard academic content of the class. As HWR Berlin student Anika Meyendorf put it, the icebreakers: "allowed us to warm up with the group members and we were no longer inhibited to exchange ideas."

Reflecting upon the month-long project, participating students highlighted both the challenges they faced in collaborating virtually across time zones, as well as the benefits of having exposure to a new culture, learning to work together in international teams and improving their English language abilities. The HWR Berlin students were interested in participating in similar projects in the future and some were now considering studying abroad for the first time and potentially visiting their counterparts in the US. Student Ronja Spielmann concluded: "I think that the COIL project is an interesting project for any student at the HWR Berlin who is interested in getting an impression of what it would be like to work with other people globally and wishes to extend their horizons."

For participating HWR Berlin professor Peter Ries the experience was also fruitful and offers benefits for everyone involved. Thanks to its success Professor Ries



intends to continue this project in coming semesters: "The cross-border exchange was also enriching for the teaching staff involved, as they were able to maintain international activities and get to know and appreciate interesting new colleagues from the fields of teaching and administration."

Read more about the UAS7 Virtual Academy project [here](#). If you are interested in taking part in future virtual collaborations you can also contact the following members of the HWR Berlin's International Office:

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