



USA

NORTH CAROLINA

10/19/2024 - 10/29/2024



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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S



01

Introduction

02

The Pall Mall Foundation

03

West Coast University of
Applied Sciences

04

The University of North
Carolina Wilmington

05

Our Journey

06

USA Diaries

07

Epilogue and
Acknowledgements

The Pall Mall Foundation



Promoting cultural exchange, supporting professional development of young people and strengthening career opportunities: these are the goals of the Pall Mall Foundation, which was founded in 1990 by British American Tobacco as the Pall Mall Initiative.

The Pall Mall Foundation is convinced that today's challenges can only be overcome by working together. It has therefore set itself the task of promoting cultural exchange between German and American students. This improves cohesion, cultural understanding and international communication on a common level. On a personal level, each individual also has the opportunity to develop further as part of the Pall Mall Foundation's exchange programs.

Since 2015, these projects also include the cooperation with the West Coast University of Applied Sciences. As part of a cultural exchange program, a group of students is given the opportunity to travel to the USA.

On this excursion, the students can immerse themselves in student life and everyday life in the USA. On the other hand, they gain an insight into the working world and various fields of work through company visits.



VISIT THE PMF WEBSITE



West Coast University of Applied Sciences



Moin from Heide!

Heide is a small town in northern Germany and home to the West Coast University of Applied Sciences — a young, innovative, and close-knit university founded in 1993. It currently has around 1,900 students, who come not only from the local region but also from across Germany and even from abroad.

The university employs approximately 200 staff members and offers nine degree programs across two faculties: the Faculty of Business and the Faculty of Engineering.

Studying at the West Coast University of Applied Sciences is highly practice-oriented, providing students with deep insights into the professional world and preparing them for their future careers.

To achieve this, the university collaborates closely with regional businesses as well as partners across Germany and abroad. Additionally, it fosters a highly personal atmosphere. Many seminars are held in small groups, allowing for individualized support.

For those looking to broaden their horizons beyond this close-knit environment, the university offers opportunities to study at one of its 40 partner institutions worldwide. This enables students to gain valuable international experience during their studies.

With these advantages, studying at the West Coast University of Applied Sciences provides excellent preparation for a successful career.

University of North Carolina Wilmington



Hello from Wilmington!

Wilmington is a vibrant port city in North Carolina and home to the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW), a public university with around 18,000 students. We had the opportunity to visit UNCW as part of our excursion.

Founded in 1947, the university spans a 2.6-square-kilometer campus and offers a diverse range of programs, including 55 bachelor's, 35 master's, and four doctoral degrees. UNCW places great emphasis on community and strong connections among students. To foster these values, the university offers a wide variety of clubs and organizations, ensuring that everyone can find their place on campus. To further strengthen its sense of community, UNCW embraces the identity of the "Seahawk Family".

Sports also play a major role at UNCW. The university is home to 18 athletic teams, including men's and women's basketball, baseball, and soccer. These teams are proudly supported by the campus mascot, Sammy the Seahawk, an osprey.

UNCW also prioritizes cultural exchange and international experiences. It offers students access to over 1,000 study abroad programs while also welcoming international students from around the world.

During our excursion, we had the opportunity to spend a few days at the university and fully immerse ourselves in student life.

Monday

10/19/2024



Flight Frankfurt - Raleigh



On the way to Wilmington

From Hamburg to Wilmington: Setting off on an unforgettable adventure

The alarm clock rang early, but our excitement far outweighed any exhaustion. At 5:15 AM, we gathered at Hamburg Airport: eight students, one vision, one destination — North Carolina.

Months of Preparation and First Steps

Months of preparation were behind us, and the moment had finally arrived. A mix of euphoria and nervous anticipation filled the air. For many of us, it was our very first trip to the USA. Even the first steps went smoothly—our luggage was checked in quickly, and the security check was hassle-free. Time to take a deep breath. No rush, no stress. Everything felt special: waiting at the gate, the conversations about what lay ahead in the coming days, and the realization that this day marked the beginning of something truly unique.

First stop: Frankfurt

We took off at 7:00 AM, leaving Hamburg behind as we headed toward Frankfurt. It was a short leg of the journey—before we even had time to process that we were airborne, we were already landing again.

In Frankfurt, we had a two-hour layover—just enough time to clear the next hurdle: passport control for entry into the USA. With that done, we were officially ready for our long-haul flight.

Long-Distance Flight to Raleigh/Durham

At around 10:00 AM, our Airbus A333 to Raleigh/Durham was ready for boarding. We took off right on schedule at 10:20 AM.

For the next nine hours, we settled into the plane's narrow seats—less comfortable than we had hoped. But with movies, snacks, and good conversation, the time passed surprisingly quickly.

Arrival in North Carolina

We landed in Raleigh/Durham at around 1:50 PM local time. As we approached immigration control, a wave of nervousness returned—but everything went smoothly. The officers were friendly, and the atmosphere was relaxed.

After clearing customs, we gathered our luggage and were greeted warmly by Prof. Dr. Reinhardt and his son, Johann, who had been waiting for us at the airport. Together, we took a shuttle to the car rental office, where we picked up our classic American rental cars—big, spacious, just as we had imagined.

And so, our first road trip began. The two-hour drive to Wilmington, our destination on the East Coast, flew by with music and excitement filling the air. Every sight along the way felt surreal—we were actually in North Carolina!

A Relaxing Evening at the Beach

When we arrived at our Airbnb in Wilmington, we quickly unpacked our luggage and headed straight to the beach. There, we spent the evening with Prof. Dr. Reinhardt and his son, enjoying pizza, the soothing sound of the waves, and conversations about the days ahead. It was the perfect way to unwind—a relaxed and memorable ending to a long day filled with new experiences.

Tired but Happy: The Adventure Begins

With a deep sense of gratitude and excitement for the week ahead, we finally collapsed into bed—exhausted but incredibly happy.

We had made it. The long journey was behind us, and an unforgettable adventure was just beginning.

Tuesday

10/20/2024

Introduction to American Campus Life

Our second day in the USA also marked the official start of our program—and what a way to begin!

We kicked things off at our partner university, the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW), founded in 1947. The university combines the classic American campus experience with close proximity to the beach — making it an appealing destination for international students as well.

Goals of the Visit

Our goal was to experience American student life firsthand and connect directly with local students. We were eager to see how education is structured in the USA and to explore the cultural and methodological differences compared to Germany.

Arrival at the University of North Carolina Wilmington

Even though our Airbnb was only a mile away, we took the car—in true American fashion. At 10:30 AM, we met Prof. Dr. Reinhardt in the UNCW parking lot. The moment we arrived, we were overwhelmed. The campus was massive! Wide pathways, well-maintained green spaces, and impressive buildings—it was exactly how we had imagined an American university to look. Our first experience in the classroom was the "Service Quality" seminar, led by Dr. Alexia Franzidis. As we made our way to the seminar room, our nervousness grew, but it quickly faded as we were met with the warmth and openness of the American students. To encourage interaction, we spread out across the room, making it easy to engage with our new classmates.

The seminar was interactive and lively: Discussions in small groups and sharing personal experiences in large groups, everyone was actively involved. It covered exciting topics such as employee motivation, recruiting, and onboarding.

Key Differences in Teaching

During the lesson and discussions, we noticed several differences compared to studying in Germany. Seminars in the USA are much shorter but far more interactive. Students openly share their thoughts, and group discussions foster a lively exchange of ideas.

One particularly interesting aspect was the way attendance is tracked. After each seminar, students are required to submit their notes to Dr. Alexia Franzidis—a practice we weren't familiar with in Germany.

Extracurricular Opportunities

During small talk with the students, we learned that UNCW has an impressive sports program. With over 260 clubs and teams, there's something for everyone—from classic sports like basketball, baseball, and volleyball to lesser-known ones like pickleball. This diverse range of activities plays a central role in campus life, fostering a strong sense of community and camaraderie among students.

The Reality of American Campus Life

This day showed us that American campus life is not just a cliché, it is actually lived.

Dr. Alexia Franzidis

Associate Professor & Program Coordinator

Dr. Alexia Franzidis is an Associate Professor and Program Coordinator at UNCW's College of Health and Human Services. Before moving to the USA in 2009, she lived in South Africa and Australia. In 2012, she relocated to Wilmington. She teaches tourism and related industries, including courses in hospitality, events, leisure, tourism planning and development, and tourism and health. Her research focuses on tourism as a mechanism for change, tourism and social justice, and tourism and travel health.



During her lecture, we were pleasantly surprised by Dr. Franzidis' engaging and dynamic teaching style. She actively encouraged students to share their own experiences in the tourism industry and their jobs, fostering meaningful discussions and exchange among classmates.

This interactive approach made the lecture more lively and helped bridge the gap between theory and practice. We truly appreciated the opportunity to participate in her class!



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

I think interacting with students. It is nice to kind of share stories and sort of help them get to where they want to be in life.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

I mean, I always think that you can teach the skill, but you can't hire the attitude. I think attitude is a big thing.

Tuesday

10/20/2024



Exploring the UNCW Campus

After attending the seminar, we met with Dr. Chris Lantz, who gave us a tour of the UNCW campus. The tour lasted about 1.5 hours, but even that wasn't enough time to see everything.

We had already noticed that the university was enormous—especially compared to our small campus in Heide—but walking around the grounds made the contrast even more striking.

Impressive Facilities

UNCW differs from our campus in Heide not only in size but also in its impressive facilities. For example, the university has its own sports center, complete with a gym, a running track, and a basketball court. In the library, students have access to cutting-edge technology to support their projects. Additionally, the campus is equipped with its own police force and on-site medical care, ensuring safety and well-being for everyone.

A Broader Perspective on Life in the USA

As we walked around the campus, we also took the opportunity to ask Dr. Chris Lantz general questions about life in the USA. This led to an engaging exchange from which we learned a great deal. The tour not only gave us valuable insight into daily life at an American university but also provided a broader perspective on life in the USA in general.

”

Better an oops than a *what if*.

- Lea Lorenzen

Insights from a German Exchange Student

In addition, Dr. Chris Lantz arranged a meeting with a German exchange student, who welcomed us into her apartment in the residence hall. She shared insights about her experiences as an exchange student and the student community beyond the classroom. This gave us an even deeper understanding of student life in the USA and what it's like to study abroad at UNCW.



Dr. Christopher Lantz

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, UNCW

Dr. Christopher Lantz is the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Health and Human Services at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.



Since joining UNCW in July 2012 as Director of the School of Health and Applied Human Sciences, Dr. Christopher Lantz was appointed Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in July 2017 and assumed the role permanently in July 2018.

In this position, Dr. Lantz oversees and manages curriculum development, enrollment, educational quality assessments and improvements, accreditation processes, summer programs, and academic support for faculty members.

We sincerely thank Dr. Lantz for his time, dedication, and the invaluable insights he shared with us!



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

The most rewarding part is I look out our window and I see the footprint of our college, knowing that I had and still have a big role in that. For example, the building that we're standing in. I remember looking at our very first conversation about what was the dream for what that building would look like, what was the footprint going to be, how would the rooms that look like this that we're in, I got to be at the foundation of that.

At the end of the day, the most rewarding thing are the students that I've had, pure and simple.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

I'm going to go with the ability to think critically, and the ability to communicate critical thoughts.

Tuesday

10/20/2024



Wilmington Green Community Gardens

From Campus to Willowdale Farm

After our wonderful first stay on the campus, we went to Willowdale Farm in Wilmington. This farm is one of several gardens in Wilmington used to grow fruits and vegetables for people in need. These gardens are managed by the volunteer organization "Wilmington Green Community Gardens."

Our Motivation: Helping Others and Learning New Skills

When we learned about their work, we were eager to help those in need in Wilmington and contribute to their well-being. Additionally, many of us were interested in gaining gardening experience to grow our own fruits and vegetables in the future. Beyond that, it was important for all of us to learn more about the organization—their mission, their motivation, and what drives them to do this meaningful work.

Initial Uncertainty and Warm Welcome

At first, we were quite unsure about what to expect. However, as we discovered upon our arrival, this uncertainty was entirely unfounded. We were warmly welcomed on the farm by **Dolores Williams**, a volunteer working for the Wilmington Green Community Gardens.

Getting to Work

Before we could ask all our questions, we got straight to work. After receiving the necessary tools and instructions, we split into groups to work on individual rows. Each of us took on different tasks to be efficient. Our strategy impressed Ms. Dolores Williams, who was very pleased with our pace, which made us proud!



Personal growth begins with trusting yourself and your abilities.

- Janne Lübbers

Teamwork and Connection

Through teamwork, we naturally began talking to one another, which allowed us to get to know each other even better. This greatly strengthened the bond within our group, which remained strong throughout our entire trip. Additionally, we realized that gardening doesn't have to be boring as it can be a fantastic way to connect with others and it can naturally build conversations.

Finding Peace and Purpose

The sounds of nature during our work significantly improved our mood, as the surrounding silence made us feel more relaxed and at ease. This was especially beneficial after our busy first few hours at Wilmington University. Many of us decided to spend more time in nature to balance out stressful situations. Thanks to Dolores Williams' explanations, we also learned a lot about gardening, further motivating us to stick to our goal.

After finishing the garden bed and admiring our work, we realized how fulfilling it is to create something with our hands, especially knowing it will bring joy to others in the future. That's why we recommend everyone get involved in volunteering – not only does it help others, but it also brings greater peace to yourself.

Dolores Williams

Wilmington Green Community Gardens

Dolores Williams is a volunteer at Community Enrichment Initiatives' Wilmington Green Community Gardens in Wilmington, which is a non-profit organisation. They operate several gardens in Wilmington, like Willowdale Farm, where they grow healthy food for people in need. The idea is simple. Everyone, regardless of their financial situation, should have access to healthy food.

That's why their volunteers mainly help with gardening to create beds to plant seedlings, but also watering the plants or weeding are common tasks. A nice side effect of the work is that Wilmington gets greener through the gardens, which is an enrichment for all inhabitants of the city. We thank Dolores for the wonderful afternoon!



” ”

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

The most rewarding part of my job to me personally is interactions with other people, because I am what you call a people person. I like to be around people. It's all about building community within the farm as we garden together. A direct benefit is that we address food insecurity in our community by providing free vegetables to those who need it.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

Definitely you need education and training, for sure.

Tuesday

10/20/2024



Strolling around the campus of the UNCW



Basketball Court



Campus avenue






Mc. Neill Hall

Taco Tuesday at Islands Fresh Mexx Grill

We ended the day with Taco Tuesday at Islands Fresh Mex Grill, a popular spot among American students. It was the perfect opportunity to immerse ourselves even further in everyday life in the USA. Although we were initially a bit overwhelmed by the menu, everyone eventually found something to enjoy. The lively, typical American atmosphere made the experience even more memorable. Chris and his wife also joined us, giving us the chance to continue our conversations in a relaxed setting. Once again, we learned a lot about the USA and its structure, all while enjoying great food and meaningful discussions.

Our Milkshake - Ranking

Sweet, creamy and with countless flavor combinations, a milkshake in the US is more than a drink. It's an experience. And we wanted that experience for ourselves. When we arrived at Cookout, we could hardly decide which flavors to try. And since taste is different, we couldn't decide on our number one top flavor. But at least we decided on the best three:

-  Banana Pudding
-  Reese's Cup
-  Butterfinger

Exploring American Milkshakes

After the tacos, we went on to Cook Out to try some typical American milkshakes. We were surprised at how many different flavors there were, some of which we didn't even know, and were able to experience another part of American culture.

Exploring American Milkshakes

The evening with tacos and milkshakes brought us a little closer to the culture of the USA and was also a good opportunity to reflect on the day and our impressions.



Taco Tuesday



Cookout Milkshakes

Wednesday

10/21/2024



Halloween as its best



Strolling around Wilmington Downtown



Sunset at Wrightsville Beach



*Free time at
Target & Walmart*

Wednesday

10/21/2024



Day 2 at UNCW

Introduction to the Seminar of Dr. Begum Otken

Our third day started with a seminar visit at the UNCW and a short interactive part organised by us at the end of the lesson. The seminar dealt with various corporate strategies and, like the seminar on Tuesday, was very much characterized by student participation.

At the end, we had 15 minutes to design a part of the seminar ourselves. Our aim was to lead a discussion in which as many students as possible took part in order to create the best possible exchange. Instead of giving a traditional presentation, we opted for an open question and answer session. We started with a question about the students' plans for their future after university. As we were very reliant on the commitment of the students, we were initially concerned that it would be difficult to establish an exchange in this way.

Interactive Discussion and Engagement

However, our concerns were unfounded and the students participated very actively. It was exciting for us to hear the different opinions of the students regarding family and career and we were pleased about the interesting exchange.

We ended the discussion with the question of whether the students felt sufficiently prepared for working life as a result of their studies. Again, it was interesting to hear the different opinions. Some were satisfied with the education system, others wanted more practical experience. At this point, we reported on internships in Germany and were thus able to contribute to the cultural exchange.



Courage begins where comfort ends, and every step beyond fear makes you stronger.

- Pauline Sieger

Reflections and Outcomes

Although we were a little worried at first that we wouldn't be able to have a flowing conversation, it was good to have such an open question and answer session. The students actively participated, and we were able to strengthen our contact with them, learn about their opinions, and engage in a closer exchange.

Q&A with Chris

After the seminar with Mrs. Otken, we had the opportunity to have a relaxed Q&A session with Chris. We were curious to learn about what he studied, how he came to UNCW, what he is most proud of at the university, and his thoughts on what makes people happy. Chris's answers were diverse, and we thank him for his time.

Dr. Begum Otken

Instructor of International Business Management

Dr. Begum Otken is an Instructor of International Business Management at the UNCW. Before she started teaching at the UNCW in 2022 she worked at a University in Turkey. In 2014 she became Associate Professor in the area of Management. Overall she has published more than 20 academic journal articles.



During our visit at the UNCW we had the chance to attend one of her classes, which was very interesting. She also organised a pizza night for us with some of her students, which was a great opportunity for us to learn more about their lives. Thank you for your time!



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

When I see that I make a difference in my students lives. That I make them curious, ask questions and also when they say: “Hey professor, I like this class, I learned a lot from your class”. This is the most beautiful, greatest part of my job. Then I see: okay, I did something right.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today’s job market?

To be flexible and work with people, who are from different cultures.

Wednesday

10/21/2024



Visit at Wilmington & Beaches

We spent our Wednesday afternoon at the Destination Marketing Organization Wilmington and Beaches. The Organization provides information and tourism tips for visitors to the area. Moreover they are responsible for marketing Wilmington and the surrounding area as a tourist destination. Additionally they collect and analyse all data related to tourism.

The Presentation

To get some insight into all of this we met with **Connie Nelson** and **Hannah Almeter**, who gave us a presentation. The presentation provided a range of insights into Wilmington as a destination, including local offerings and the organizational structure of the company. Given the extensive services featured on their website, the company collaborates with an external marketing organization. Through the presentation, we observed that film tourism has gained significant relevance in the region, driven by productions like “Where the Crawdads Sing” and the series “The Summer I Turned Pretty”. Additionally, the area’s diverse beaches play a crucial role in balancing work and leisure, attracting various tourists, including surfers.



You can’t do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth.

- Jelda Cordes

Interactive Discussion

After this theoretical part we had a question and answer session where we were able to ask anything we wanted to know. Our questions were not only about tourism and the Marketing Organization.

We also wanted to know the personal stories of Connie and Hannah and how they ended up in their jobs. Since most of us are students of tourism this visit was a chance for us to see an example of destination marketing in the real world and we received a lot of input.



Connie Nelson

Communications/PR at Wilmington and Beaches, North Carolina



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

I enjoy working with the media and telling the stories of our destinations. Not just the destination story, but also the unique stories about our history and the incredible people who helped make up our destination.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

I believe in communications.



Hannah Almeter

Communications/PR at Wilmington and Beaches, North Carolina



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

I would say, outside of just being able to be a tourist in a place that I love and talk about it with everybody else, it's just been really cool to see how the industry in our county has grown so much and we're going in a really good direction and I'd like to keep building on that.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

People skills. Just being able to talk to anybody. I would say networking [...]. But just being able to have an open conversation with people is really helpful.

Wednesday

10/21/2024

Pizza with Students & Freetime



Food and good Conversations

We kicked off Wednesday evening on the UNCW campus, where we had arranged to meet a few students for pizza.

This was a great opportunity to connect more closely with American students before leaving Wilmington and wrapping up our time at the university. It was fascinating to see student life from their perspective, and we also got to learn more about their personal lives. We took advantage of the evening to ask for recommendations on activities for the rest of our trip—and were especially excited to get tips on American supermarkets!

After dinner, we split into two groups. Half of us headed to Wrightsville Beach to watch the sunset, which provided the perfect balance to our day and gave us one last chance to enjoy the ocean.

The other half of our group went to Target for a classic American shopping experience. Later, we all met up at Walmart to do some shopping together.

Even though we had seen plenty about Walmart in the media, we were still overwhelmed by the sheer variety of products. From family-sized cereal boxes and bicycle accessories to an enormous pharmacy section, the selection seemed endless—we couldn't even take it all in! With so much to choose from, there was something for everyone. We had the chance to try new American foods and even pick up a few souvenirs.

Spending our Wednesday evening this way was the perfect way to wrap up our time in Wilmington. We connected with American students one last time, enjoyed the beach, and had our first true American shopping experience. Now, we were excited for the next part of our trip!

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Reinhardt

Professor at FH Westküste

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Reinhardt, born in 1970, is a German futurologist and scientific head of the Foundation for future studies - an initiative by BAT. He is a professor of empirical futures research in the Department of Economics at the West Coast University in Heide. Moreover, He is also a professor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington in the USA.



He encourages critical thinking and reflection in his lessons, always has a thought-provoking question ready, and makes learning both engaging and enjoyable. His dedication and unwavering support do not go unnoticed - his commitment to his students is truly commendable.



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

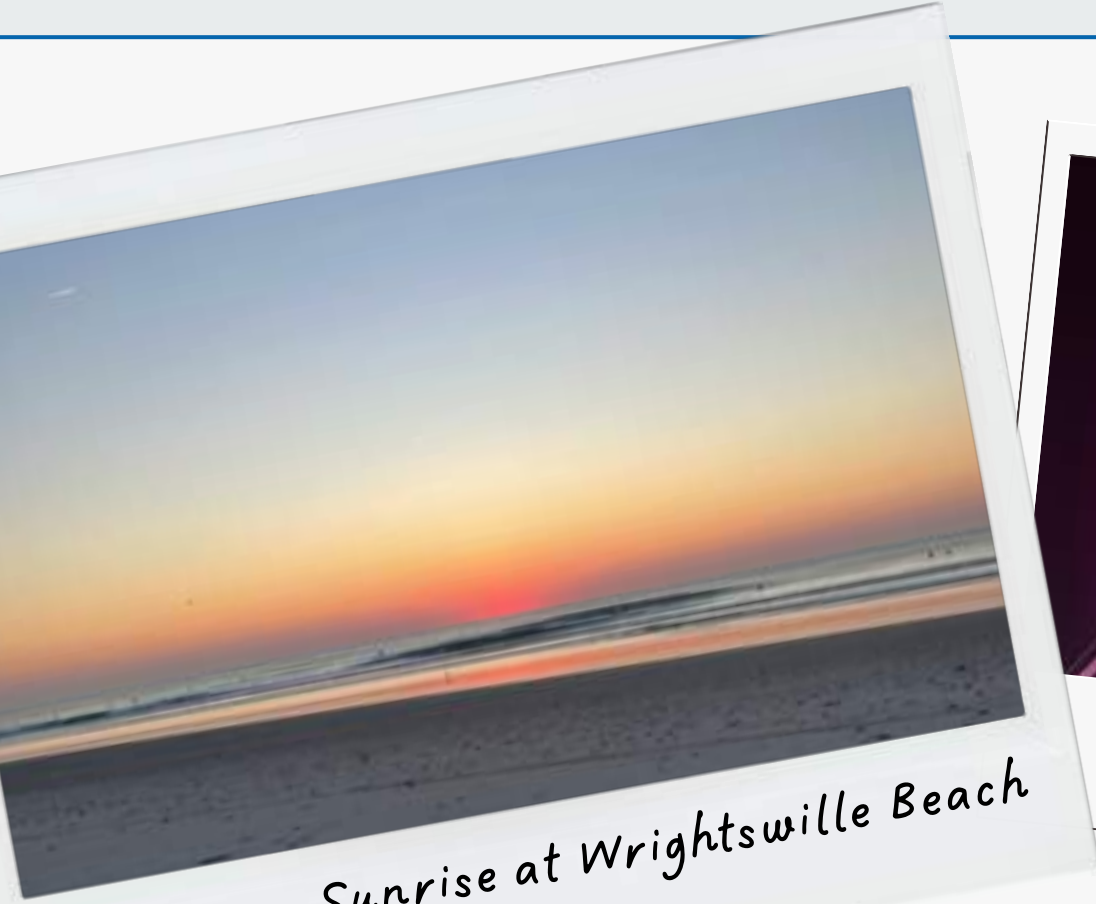
To experience how it sometimes makes “Eureka” - whether for my students or for me.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today’s job market?

Don't just do your job, dare to think, be active, suggest new things and do not forget to think about a family. I know it is a lot, but you are responsible for a better world and your own happiness, face this task and responsibility with courage – I believe in you.

Thursday

10/22/2024



Sunrise at Wrightswille Beach



State Fair



Tasting at Durham Distillery



Trip to Durham and Raleigh

On the road again: Off to Durham

Our road trip from Wilmington to Durham was a fantastic way to begin our day!

We packed our bags, loaded up the cars, and set off on our journey. On the way, we listened to music and admired the view. Upon our arrival in Durham, we first took a short tour of the shopping mall known as "The Streets at Southpoint". There we explored the shops a bit and enjoyed the time before heading to the distillery.

Enjoying the State Fair in Raleigh

On Thursday evening we visited the State Fair in Raleigh, North Carolina. Our arrival was quite challenging, as we were unprepared for it. Finding a parking space was particularly difficult, because many other visitors had also arrived by car. After a lengthy search, we finally secured a spot in one of the large parking lots. Since the State Fair was so big, we decided to take the shuttle bus, which quickly took us to the entrance. There was a lot to discover on-site, especially the food!

We wandered through the various stalls, amazed by the creativity of the treats—from fried delicacies to sweet specialties.

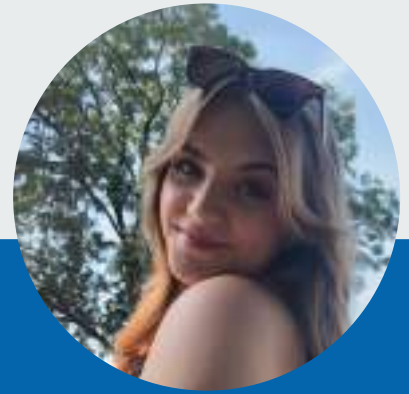
The highlight of the evening was definitely the Ferris wheel. The view from the top was absolutely breathtaking. The colorful lights, the bustling crowd, and the vibrant atmosphere created an unforgettable scene.

To top it all off, a spectacular fireworks display lit up the night sky, perfectly rounding off the evening. It was a fantastic night filled with fun, excitement, and unforgettable moments!



Thursday

10/22/2024



Exploring Local Craftsmanship

A Visit to the Durham Distillery

After arriving in the Triangle and spending a brief time at the shopping mall, we headed to 711 Washington St. in Durham, North Carolina - the home of the "Durham Distillery." Known for its local gin production, this distillery is the first in the USA to adopt a unique cold vacuum production method. Excited to learn more about the craft, we were warmly greeted by **Patrick**, a distillery employee, who welcomed us in a relaxed and friendly manner before leading us into the production areas.

A Guided Tour Paired with Gin Tasting

Our visit seamlessly combined a tour of the distillery with a gin tasting session. We began with our first tasting while Patrick shared the story behind the gin, explained the machinery, and described the production process. His approach was both entertaining and informative, which held our attention as we enjoyed sampling the gin. We had plenty of opportunities to ask questions, making the experience interactive and engaging.

Discovering Innovation and Regional Pride

One of our goals for this visit was to understand how local businesses like the Durham Distillery operate, contribute to the region, and distinguish themselves.



If you never try, you never will know.

- Lea Buckow

Our expectations of discovering something new while enjoying ourselves were fully met. We were particularly impressed to learn that the distillery introduced the cold vacuum production method to the USA. Patrick's expertise and enthusiasm added a personal touch, leaving us with a deeper appreciation for the craft.

Taking Memories (and Gin) Home

After the tour and tasting, many of us couldn't resist purchasing some of the gin and merchandise to remember this unique experience. The visit to the Durham Distillery was both educational and enjoyable, and we wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone interested in learning about local craftsmanship or simply savoring excellent gin.

Patrick

Senior Guest Associate

The Durham Distillery is located in the heart of Durham, North Carolina, and is known for its innovative distillation methods and award-winning spirits. Visitors can book tours, learn about the production processes and taste the various products. The products include the popular Connption Gins, the Damn Fine Liqueurs and the Krupnikas.

For a detailed insight, the official homepage is recommended.



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Well, actually being able to speak, educate, and have good conversations. At times, we have conversations with different people.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

[...] to understand that it does take work to keep going forward.

Friday

10/23/2024



Eno River State Park



Outlet Mall



Visit at Reynolds



S'mores at Metta & Marcos

Fascination of the tobacco industry: On a discovery tour at Reynolds in Winston-Salem

Our destination was the impressive Reynolds factory in Winston-Salem. This region developed into a center of the tobacco industry in the 19th century. Reynolds contributed significantly to the economic and social situation of the town. The factory in Winston-Salem is one of the most modern and largest production centers within **the British American Tobacco Group (BAT)**.

The Purpose of Our Visit

Our mission was to explore the origins of our adventure and experience them firsthand: Reynolds and the Pall Mall Foundation were the key to our unforgettable journey to North Carolina. We were driven by curiosity about the inner workings of a globally active company. In particular, we were eager to understand how such an industry giant balances innovation, sustainability, and profitability. Our expectations were high—this visit offered us a unique opportunity to gain firsthand insight into the world of a global market leader.

A Warm Welcome and First Impressions

As soon as we arrived, it was clear that they don't think small here. Safety was a top priority, and our visit began with a briefing. Equipped with safety clothing, we were warmly welcomed by **Bernd Meyer**, the executive Vice President with more than 25 years of experience in the BAT Group. In the conference room, he gave us an exciting overview of Reynolds' vision, mission, and development.

The global mindset of the company was tangible as Bernd Meyer, who has taken on leadership roles in various countries, gave us valuable insights into the challenges and strategies of a global group. His career at the BAT Group in particular showed us what career opportunities are available.

Exploring the Factory

Then it got practical: we visited the impressive production halls. The speed of production and the logistics were breathtaking! The dimensions and efficiency of the factory were remarkable: A minimum of 8,000 cigarettes per minute per machine, with a total of 27 machines running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We explored the extensive area in golf carts and learned about the innovative "Water Hub" sustainability project. This is a new type of water treatment plant.

Discussion and Insights

Finally, we got the opportunity to ask our questions in a discussion with Bernd Meyer. We learned that despite the increasing number of alternatives to traditional smoking, the established brands such as Camel, Newport, and Lucky Strike remain key sales drivers. At the same time, it was clear how strong the focus on profit is, from the closure of several factories to the strategic centralization of the main factories. Our interesting visit was rounded off with lunch together. It was an unforgettable experience!

Bernd Meyer

Executive Vice President

He became Executive Vice President – Operations within the Reynolds American group on January 1, 2021, and he has more than 25 years of experience in the BAT Group. Before taking on his current role, he was Operations Manager of the BAT Group in Europe and North Africa, significantly improving factory performance and KPIs in the factories there, and before that he was Regional Operations Manager in Western Europe.



As Operations Director in Ukraine, he led the reconstruction of the factories and the review of the organisational design. As Area Operations Director in Southern Africa, Bernd led a significant cultural change within the operations team of the Heidelberg factories, combined with a new market-driven design of the Secondary Supply Chain. Bernd has also served as Global Head of Supply Chain, Operations Director in Germany and Head of Western Europe Manufacturing. Bernd is a key member of the Global Operations Leadership Team and makes an important contribution in shaping the global operations strategy. We thank you for your time, Bernd!



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

The most rewarding part of my job is to work with 1.600 passionate and proud people who are working here also for Reynolds together with me in the Operations Function. And I love to engage and communicate with them all the time.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

The most important job skill is to be passionate about whatever you are doing. It doesn't matter what you are doing as long as you have energy, passion, joy and fun to do it. That's the most important thing in life.

Time for a little break

Between highlights and relaxation: Tanger Outlet Mall

It was time to clear our heads after our exciting visit at Reynolds. What could be better than a stop at the mall? We left Winston-Salem in the direction of Durham with a stop at the Tanger Outlets in Mebane. The idea of taking a leisurely stroll through the stores sounded great. To be honest, our expectations weren't entirely met. The outlet prices felt more like regular retail prices than real discounts. However, what mattered most was the chance to unwind and take a deep breath after our eventful days. Despite the slight disappointment, the trip was still a relaxing and refreshing experience, offering a nice change of pace.



Eno River State Park

Before heading to the diner in the evening and then to Metta and Marcos, we met with Uli at Eno River State Park. Surrounded by the quiet of nature, we had the chance to process the past few exciting days, enjoy some fresh air, and strengthen our bond as a group of girls and with our professor, Uli, during the walk.

An evening around the campfire with Metta and Marcos

It was one of those special evenings that we will never forget. **Metta, Marcos and their three children** had invited us to their home to make a campfire together. We were happy about this invitation and thankful as well. The warm welcome they gave us was extraordinary. The open and welcoming presence that Metta and Marcos exude is anything but self-evident.

Together, we prepared s'mores around the campfire, laughed and enjoyed the soothing atmosphere. The conversations weren't superficial at all. We talked about life, dreams, fears and challenges. Metta and Marcos have the special ability for making people feel comfortable and understood. They are inspiring personalities who impress with their optimism, authenticity and appreciation.

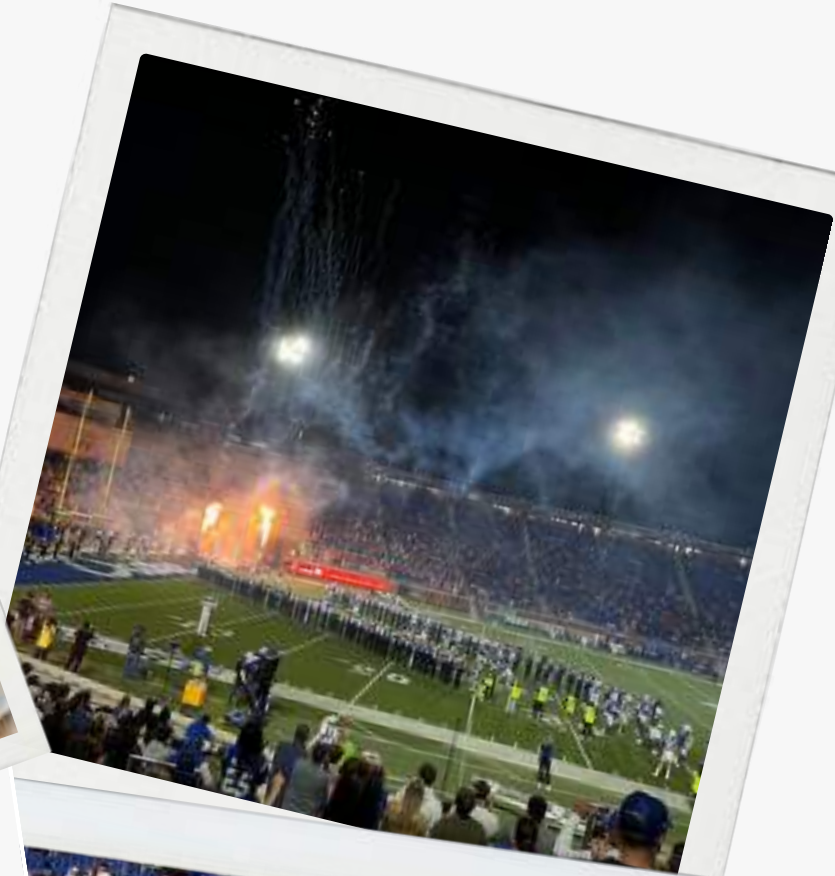
This evening will remain in our hearts for a long time, not just because of the s'mores, but because of the kindness and relaxed atmosphere we enjoyed here.

Saturday

10/24/2024



Brunch at IHOP



Tailgating at Duke's Campus



Football game

Brunch at IHOP

Starting the Day the American Way

To kick off the weekend, we all headed to IHOP in Durham on Saturday morning. Known for its classic American breakfast dishes, IHOP had everything we could imagine - pancakes, waffles, French toast and scrambled eggs. Experiencing an authentic American breakfast was a must for us, as it felt like an essential part of embracing the American lifestyle.

A Classic American Dining Experience

After a short wait, we settled at two tables and explored the extensive menu. The design of the restaurant caught our attention right away - it felt like stepping into a scene from an American TV show. The cozy seating areas, with their iconic booths, made the experience even more authentic. The variety of pancake toppings was especially impressive, with the Reese's topping standing out as a unique and indulgent option.

Outstanding Service and Atmosphere

What amazed us the most was the exceptional customer service. Despite the restaurant being quite busy, the staff was attentive, frequently checking if we needed anything and refilling our drinks without us having to ask. One highlight was our waiter's incredible memory; he managed to recall all our orders without writing anything down - a feat we found very impressive, given the size of our group.

A Perfect Start to the Day

The atmosphere at IHOP was warm and relaxed, making it the perfect place to begin our day. The combination of delicious food, welcoming service, and a cheerful environment left us energized and ready to take on the rest of the weekend.



Saturday

10/24/2024



The green heart of Durham: Duke Gardens

Discovering a Green Sanctuary

We went to the Sarah P. Duke Gardens, a 55-hectare botanical gem on the campus of Duke University. Since opening in 1934, the Duke Gardens have become one of the most visited places in Durham. With more than 650,000 visitors per year, they are one of the region's most popular attractions. This expansive garden, with its manicured paths, flowering beds, and variety of native plants, invites people to leave the hustle and bustle of everyday life behind and experience nature up close.

A Journey Into Nature's Essence

Our aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the connection between humans and nature. We wanted to learn more about the effects of climate change and how to protect the environment. At the same time, we wanted to take a break from everyday life in the relaxing atmosphere of the gardens and let the regenerating power of nature work its magic on us. Our tour started at the Doris Duke Welcome Center, where we were warmly welcomed. Together with gardener **Martin Jahn**, a true inspiration, we immersed ourselves in the history of the gardens on a privately guided tour.

From the Doris Duke Center Garden's quiet shady areas to the variety of native plants in the Blomquist Garden of Native Plants, Martin led us through the different garden areas. His passion for nature was immediately contagious as he revealed the diversity of this place. It was far more than just a walk through the gardens - it was a journey to the roots of our connection with nature.



There are no limits, only new horizons to explore.

- Jule Wille

Reflections and Lessons Learned

The garden revealed itself not only as a place of beauty but also as a symbol of the cycle of life. Martin's view that we humans originate from nature and will one day return to it was particularly impressive. His reflective thoughts on the fast pace and materialism of our time made us think deeply. We learned that nature is not only a place of rest but also a source of inspiration. Even in a world full of hustle and noise, there are quiet and powerful places that help us to find ourselves.

Understanding the Complexity of "Native Plants"

Furthermore, Martin explained that the term "native plants" is often misunderstood. The word "native" is used as a synonym for "growing here" without considering the ecological origin. Only plants that have developed in a region over thousands of years and are closely connected to the local ecosystem support native biodiversity. Many plants have been introduced by humans over time or have adapted without originally being native to the region. A clear distinction must be made between the two. This tour was an educational break that will remind us to protect and appreciate nature in the long term.

Martin Jahn

Horticulturist

He is a Horticulturist, working at the Sarah P. Duke Gardens and is known for his passion of sharing his knowledge of nature and horticulture with others. In addition to his work, he offers workshops in which he teaches topics such as the connection between people and nature. He is characterised by his commitment to sharing his knowledge with interested individuals.



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Sharing my job with student groups, that are coming to Duke Gardens, showing them around and giving them a perspective into nature.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

Patience, resilience and a good sense of humor.



Saturday

10/24/2024

An American Tradition: Tailgating Before the Game



Tailgating on Duke's Campus

One of the most memorable moments of our trip was experiencing not just the football game on Saturday, but also the quintessential American tradition of tailgating before the game. Tailgating is a pre-game activity where people come together to eat, drink, and socialize. At university football games, students gather on campus to celebrate and prepare for the event. Naturally, we were eager to immerse ourselves in this cultural phenomenon, so we made our way to Duke University's campus two hours before kickoff.

Immersion into American Culture

Our expectations for this experience were diverse. We wanted to gain a deeper understanding of football's significance in American culture, immerse ourselves in the vibrant university atmosphere, and connect with students to learn more about their lives in the USA.

As we walked through the picturesque Duke University campus, we were captivated by its stunning architecture and the almost movie-like feel of the setting.

Arriving at Wallace Wade Stadium, the infectious enthusiasm of the students immediately lifted our spirits. After grabbing complimentary drinks from one of the stands, we fully embraced the tailgating experience. To get into the spirit of the day, we even painted our faces in Duke University's team colors, adding to our excitement.

Cheerful Vibes and Shared Enthusiasm

Observing the students, we were amazed by their pride in their university and how deeply football is woven into the fabric of American culture. Many were dressed in their university colors and passionately cheering for their team long before the game began. This was a contrast to our own university, which doesn't have professional sports teams or such lively events. Once again, we experienced the warmth and hospitality of the American people. Fellow tailgaters generously offered us snacks and drinks, making us feel like part of the community. This welcoming spirit inspired us to be more open and approachable in our own lives. The way Americans treated us left a lasting impression, encouraging us to embrace and share positivity in the future.



The Heart of Football Fandom: Wallace Wade Stadium

As the game drew near, we made our way to the Wallace Wade Stadium, ready to immerse ourselves in the world of American college football. The first thing that caught our attention was the strict security measures - only transparent bags were allowed inside. Once through the security checks, we stopped by the Duke Blue Devils team shop, where the bustling crowd reminded us just how deeply Americans value football, even at the college level.

A Fan Shop Like No Other

Inside the shop, we were intrigued by the collaboration between major brands and the Duke Blue Devils. Despite being a university team, their merchandise rivaled that of professional teams in quality and appeal. The store was filled with fans of all ages, from students to adults, proudly buying gear to showcase their support. This highlighted the far-reaching impact of football culture in the U.S.

Entering the Stadium

Walking into the stadium, we were awestruck by its size and the bustling activity around us. Beyond the field and seating areas, there were numerous stands selling iconic American fast food and oversized drinks that left us wondering how anyone could manage to finish them! With excitement bubbling, we took our seats, eager for the game to begin. While some of us had a basic understanding of the rules, others hoped to pick up on the nuances of the game as it unfolded. Beyond the game itself, we looked forward to soaking in the atmosphere and observing how American fans engage with their teams.

”

Wherever you go becomes a part of you somehow.

- Kathrin Bock

Electric Atmosphere and Unwavering Fan Spirit

Even before kickoff, the crowd's energy was palpable. The cheerleaders' dynamic performance and the players' dramatic entrance - complete with fireworks - were met with roaring applause, emphasizing the fans' unyielding support. The camaraderie among supporters reminded us of the lively atmosphere of German soccer matches, yet the scale and spectacle felt distinctly American.

A Memorable Game and Experience

As the game progressed, we noticed the passionate reactions of the fans, from cheers for exceptional plays to groans at missed opportunities. However, the frequent pauses in gameplay were an adjustment for us. During these breaks, the stadium came alive with music, advertisements, and even tributes to historical figures from the team's history. While unusual compared to sports in Germany, these intermissions added a unique rhythm to the game and gave us a deeper appreciation for the cultural significance of football in the U.S. By the end of the game, we were left exhilarated by the extraordinary atmosphere and the sense of unity among the fans. Attending a football game proved to be an unforgettable way to connect with American culture, and we wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone seeking an authentic and vibrant experience on their next trip to the U.S.

Sunday

10/25/2024



Visiting Chapel Hill

A Welcoming Community and Interfaith Connection

On Sunday, we visited the Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill and attended a service. Our goal was to learn more about how the church influences the life of the local community and how it helps people find and live their faith. Upon arrival, we were warmly welcomed by **Perri Kersh**, a member of the church council, with whom we had previously been in contact via email. The service began with music from the church choir, which was very moving, and immediately impressed us. This was followed by prayers and Bible verses read by the priests.

After the service, we had the opportunity to talk to some of the parishioners and ask questions.

What particularly struck us was the exposure of the church. It welcomes people of all faiths - be they Catholic, Baptist, or atheist. In addition, the church is willing to help people find their own faith.

Historical and Social Significance

In addition, the church is heavily involved in social projects and helps people in need. The historical significance of the church is also particularly noteworthy. It was founded by former slaves, hence, it gives the church a special cultural and historical significance. The church also has a close connection to Chapel Hill University, which further strengthens its role in the community.



Exploring is a key to knowledge
- every discovery helps you learn
more.

- Knarik Margaryan

The church is a place of community, and it is clear that everyone finds a place here - whether through the choir, the numerous services offered, or the large number of priests and members. The history and social role of the church in Chapel Hill make it a unique place where people come together to pray, sing, and support one another.



Perri Kersh

Senior Warden of Vestry at the Chapel of the Cross

Perri Kersh is the Senior Warden of Vestry at the Chapel of the Cross. As a member of the lay leadership team, she plays a vital role in providing financial assistance and managing the budget. She works closely with the priest to ensure that the church operates smoothly. Through various careers in counseling, marketing and consulting, she finally settled in to her passion and started Neat Freak Professional Organizing in 2005.



As an organizing consultant, Perri works with families, individuals, small business owners and students to help them declutter their space and their lives so they can function at their very best. Perri is a past President of the National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals, North Carolina Chapter (NAPO-NC), and is a member of NAPO, where she has served as an instructor for new organizers (PO-102). She holds a BA in Psychology and a MAEd in Counselor Education from Wake Forest University. It was a pleasure to meet you, Perri!



What is the most rewarding part of your job?

The community, where people truly do care about each other and that has been really rewarding to be part of.

Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

Be optimistic, look for ways to bridge people of different backgrounds and different belief systems. I think you are all going to make everything so much better and that is exciting to me.

Sunday

10/25/2024

Pumpkins, Food, and Community



A Memorable Farewell Evening

On our final evening, Sunday night, Metta and Marcos invited us to join their neighborhood tradition of carving pumpkins and sharing a meal together. This special gathering takes place every year on the last Sunday before Halloween, a highly anticipated holiday for many Americans. We had already noticed the festive spirit during the week, with houses beautifully decorated for the season. While we didn't know exactly what to expect, we were excited to take part in this cherished tradition.

Carving Creativity Under the Stars

When we arrived, everything was perfectly prepared- tables, chairs, pumpkins, and carving tools were set up on Metta and Marcos' driveway. Their children eagerly helped us get started, showing us the proper way to carve pumpkins. Each of us embraced the challenge with our unique designs, resulting in a collection of wonderfully creative pumpkins. As the carving progressed, neighbors began to gather, bringing an array of home-cooked dishes to share. The dinner was a delightful surprise, featuring a variety of comforting dishes such as vegan chili con carne and corn pudding casserole. After a week of typical American fast food, this meal was a welcome change. Everyone sat together, enjoying the delicious food, exchanging stories, and laughing around the campfire. The evening felt warm and heartfelt, with neighbors connecting in a way that many of us had rarely experienced back in Germany.

Games, Laughter, and Gratitude

Adding to the fun, we participated in a traditional Halloween game - biting donuts strung on a rope without using our hands. It was a hilarious and lighthearted experience that brought us all closer together. What struck us most was the strong sense of community and solidarity among the neighbors, something that left a lasting impression on us.

This evening was the perfect conclusion to our trip, filled with warmth, laughter, and meaningful connections. Our **deepest thanks go to Metta and Marcos** for their trust, hospitality, and the opportunity to experience such a special tradition firsthand.

Metta & Marcos

Friends of Ulrich

Welcoming, communicative and warm-hearted, that's how we got to know Metta and Marcos. They are friends of Uli and live together with their three children in a beautiful house in Raleigh. The two place great value on community and exchange.

During our stay in Raleigh, they not only joined us for some activities but also warmly welcomed us into their home. We spent two cozy evenings there, enjoying good food and deep conversations around a small campfire—a truly memorable experience.

Meeting Metta and Marcos was definitely an enrichment for our trip and we could learn a lot from them about community and life in the US.

Thank you so much for having us!



Do you have any advice for our generation in today's job market?

Metta: Being willing to feel negative emotions. The truth is that life is like 50% comfortable and 50% uncomfortable. We feel stupid sometimes, we feel lonely sometimes and that is all totally normal and part of the process of becoming a successful adult in the world.

Marcos: To be helpful. Really, I think a missing thing for your generation is being able to see what's 's around and what's needed and take the initiative.



USA DIARIES:

All about pumpkins

From painting pumpkins to carve them

In **October 2023**, at the start of our seminar, some of us didn't know each other that well yet. To break the ice and get to know each other better, we spent an afternoon painting pumpkins.

As we travelled to North Carolina in fall 2024, there was one thing, which we have seen and heard of a lot during our trip: Pumpkins! You can find them literally everywhere. To prepare you for the next trip to the USA in fall, we want to present you some interesting facts about the pumpkin consumption in the USA.

Pumpkin Spiced Products

In the fall season many shops increase their pumpkin-flavoured offerings. This leads to a huge diversity in products with pumpkin flavour, including pumpkin spiced lattes, pumpkin spiced cheesecake, organic pumpkin pie ice cream sandwiches and so much more. Even dog food with pumpkin flavour is popular in the USA in fall. But an all-time favourite would be the Pumpkin Spiced Latte, which is even popular in Germany.

Pumpkin market

The U.S. processed pumpkin market was valued at USD 1.59 billion in 2024 and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 10.6% from 2025 to 2030. This reflects the increased demand through the various offered products with pumpkin flavour.

Halloween Traditions

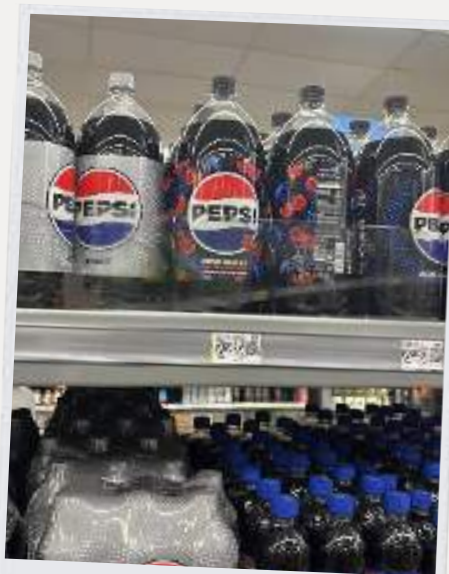
Pumpkin carving is a popular activity during Halloween, with 44% of Americans planning to carve pumpkins as part of their festivities, highlighting the cultural importance of pumpkins in autumn celebrations. Through the friends of Uli, we could participate in this activity on our last day.



USA DIARIES: Big, Bigger, USA



Cars



*Food & Drink
package sizes*



National Pride



Halloween Traditions



University Sport Arena



Football

USA DIARIES:

The Most Interesting Food Discoveries

Pumpkin Spiced Latte

A fall favorite! This creamy coffee drink is flavored with pumpkin, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Best enjoyed in the fall, it is a signature drink of American coffee culture. And we really enjoyed it.



Chlorine Water

Chlorine Water is known as tap water in many parts of the US and it is treated with chlorine for safety reasons, giving it a weird taste. It is often served free with food in restaurants.

Deep fried Oreos

A carnival and fair treat! Classic Oreo cookies are dipped in batter and fried until golden brown. The result is a warm and crispy delight.



Corn dog

A hot dog coated in a thick layer of cornmeal batter and deep-fried to perfection. It is popular at fairs, sports events, and Fast-Food stands.

Sweet relish packets

Sweet relish is a condiment made from pickled cucumbers, sugar, and spices. It is a tangy topping for hot dogs, burgers, and sandwiches, which is often found in small packets at fast-food places or sports events.



USA Diaries: The Most Unexpected Things We Found

"People here treat you like family after five minutes. How do they remember your name and your dog's name?"

"Every house has at least one American flag, the national pride is contagious!"

"Why does every dessert feel like it's 90% sugar and 10% food?"

"Wait, free refills? You mean I can drink unlimited iced tea?!"

"The tap water tastes like a swimming pool - how is this considered normal?"

"Tailgating is basically a food festival in a parking lot!"

"Why is everyone texting while driving? It's like they have an extra set of eyes!"

"The portion sizes are massive - I ordered a small, not a feast for five!"

"They'll bag a single candy bar in its own plastic bag!"

"The accents are like music, but I need subtitles for some conversations!"

"Why do grocery stores sell milk in such giant jugs? Who drinks that much?"

"A two-minute chat at the grocery store checkout feels like catching up with an old friend."

"Their idea of breakfast includes syrup-drenched everything - it's dessert, not a meal!"

"College football games feel like professional events - there's even a marching band!"



USA Diaries: Impressions



Epilogue and Acknowledgements

As we reflect on this unforgettable journey to North Carolina, we feel deeply grateful for the opportunity to experience such a unique cultural and educational adventure. This trip was undoubtedly one of the highlights of our entire academic journey. It challenged us, inspired us, and left us with countless memories and lessons that we will carry with us for years to come.

First and foremost, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who dedicated their time, energy, and knowledge to make this trip such a success. To all those who joined us, guided us, and shared their expertise - whether at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, the various organizations we visited, or within the local communities - thank you for opening your doors and offering us invaluable insights.

Special thanks go to Prof. Dr. Ulrich Reinhardt, whose dedication and vision were instrumental in making this experience possible. Your guidance, support, and belief in us as students made all the difference.

This journey was not without its challenges. From navigating cultural differences to stepping out of our comfort zones in seminars and group discussions, we faced moments that required us to adapt and grow. Yet, it was precisely these moments that made the experience so enriching. We learned to embrace uncertainty, foster teamwork, and develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and others.

Above all, we are taking home an array of invaluable learnings - both professionally and personally. Whether it was gaining new perspectives on international collaboration, discovering the value of open communication, or simply enjoying the warmth and hospitality of the people we met, these experiences have left a lasting impact.

Thank you to everyone who shared this journey with us. Your stories, kindness, and generosity have not only enriched our time in the USA but have also inspired us to carry these lessons into our future endeavors. Special thanks go to the Pall Mall Foundation, the University of North Carolina Wilmington, and the West Coast University of Applied Sciences for their invaluable support in making this extraordinary journey possible.

With heartfelt gratitude,
Pauline, Kathrin, Lea, Janne, Jule, Lea, Knarik and Jelda



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