

BA STUDENT, TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP, GERMANY

I write this proposal with heavy regard for the future of study abroad and for U. S./German relations. It is of absolute necessity that students continue to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps to experience other countries and their people. I have dedicated eight years of my life to the study of the German language at the high school and college levels. In 2001, I spent a study abroad year in Austria as a Rotary International exchange student, and returned to Tuebingen, Germany for the spring semester in 2004 as part of Temple's study abroad program. I have been immersed in both the German and the Austrian way of life. It is my firm belief that the exchange of students at a young age fosters the growth of understanding abroad and again once the student has returned to his or her home country.

My goal of completing a teaching assistantship in Germany will serve several purposes. First, I am qualified for this role because of my personal knowledge of learning a language, my experience tutoring high school and college students in German, my training as a teacher acquired through Temple's graduate level education courses, and an extensive knowledge in a range of German related topics. As a German major at Temple, I have completed courses on the history of the German language, the history of German culture, business and economics in Germany, German literature, and advanced grammar. German high school students will benefit from my skills as a teacher, my knowledge of German and English grammar and conversation, my familiarity with American culture and traditions, and my love for the country and its people.

In addition to the practice and skill I will gain in this teaching role, I aim to compile research on daily student life in the German middle or high school that I will use to write a handbook. It would be geared towards American students for use as preparation for study abroad. It will be both informative and encouraging. This handbook could be utilized by groups that arrange and fund study abroad for this age group, for example the Rotary Club Exchange International, American Field Service (AFS), and Cultural Homestay International (CHI). As all of these organizations have websites, the handbook could be posted online for students to print and read. A more ambitious objective would be to have the book published for distribution at middle and high schools.

The content of the handbook would include diverse categories, such as the structure of education in the country, class structure, student culture (media, music, hobbies and interests), customs and traditions, food, integration of international students, key school vocabulary and topics studied. I will complement this book with photographs of different students, schools and cities to give visual examples. I also intend to collect commentary from students about their view of international study, of American students, and of their perceptions of American culture. I will complete the design and layout of the book personally using my skills acquired from four years as a graphic design editor at 'The Temple News, official student newspaper at Temple University. Upon request, I will offer to present the information covered in my book to groups of prospective exchange students and answer their questions. I hope to work closely with Rotary International Youth Exchange and AFS as I have had contact with both, but I would not limit my involvement to those two organizations.

The proposed handbook and presentation could better prepare students for a somewhat daunting expedition. While it would be impossible to speak specifically to what a person will face in other areas of his or her exchange year (depending on host family, region of stay, etc.) the education system in Germany is standardized so that it can be discussed generally. What a student faces in northern Berlin will likely be similar in southern Stuttgart and in rural areas.

While there are many sources for advice for exchange students on preparing for study abroad, this handbook will be unique. It will combine my familiarity with the German school system from two perspectives - one as an exchange student and one as an observer of German high school students. Further, this guide will be specific to the needs of the student studying in Germany, where there are customs and traditions not practiced in other countries.

From a personal angle, an embarrassing moment for me occurred on my first day of school in Austria. It is customary to stand when the professor enters the room in many Austrian and German schools, much like in an

American courtroom upon the entrance of the judge. As I was unaware of this element of student life, I remained disrespectfully seated. Of course, no guidebook had taught me that, and none of the Austrian students thought to mention it as the practice was ingrained in their everyday lives. I intend to thoroughly cover these essentials to make immersion as comfortable as possible for these future students.

I will relish the chance to teach and share my own language and culture with German students, again from a new perspective. It is my hope that I affect their lives in the same way that those who taught me changed mine. This will give me precious practice for my life goal of teaching language and working with International Students. 'f he teaching assistantship will last a full year, which would have me leaving and returning according to the specific beginning and end of the German school's academic year.