

German Exchange Students Brave Covid

During the 2021 academic year, NUST hosted eight exchange students from Germany and Finland. The students came from partner universities namely, Aalto University and Aachen University of Applied Sciences (FH Aachen). The number is a drastic decline from the annual average of 55 students in the five years preceding 2020. The pandemic is the culprit for the decline, as the Covid-19 infections and deaths in Namibia increased significantly in 2021 as compared to 2020.

Notwithstanding, Eline Sieben and Sophie Peters from Germany braved the pandemic to continue with their Bachelor in Civil Engineering double degree studies in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. NUST and FH Aachen have signed an agreement to offer a Bachelor of Civil Engineering double degree, which has graduated more than six students from FH Aachen since 2019.

During the First Semester, Sieben and Peters studied through a blended mode of online and face-to-face classes until an increase in Covid-19 cases during the winter forced a switch to online only mode. The students bemoaned the difficulties they faced, as they were unable to meet with or keep in touch with their classmates.

Fortunately, the cases abated just in time for the Mid-Year Break, allowing Sieben and Peters to engage in tourism activities. They travelled to the coast to witness the breath-

taking landscapes of Sandwich Harbour in the Namib-Naukluft National Park, Swakopmund, and the Namib Desert dunes. For wildlife viewing, the students visited Etosha National Park where they saw many animals at the watering holes due to the dry conditions.

"The different landscapes in Namibia are really beautiful and we are planning additional trips to different parts of Namibia before we return home," said Sieben.



Students Sophie and Eline

B360 Internships Go Virtual

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the annual selection and placement of students from NUST with Swiss-based organisations under the B360 Education Partnerships (B360) Internship Programme.

With the intake into the B360 Internship Programme unpredictable, B360 and the Department of International Relations at NUST set out to develop an initiative that enabled students to undertake internships with Swiss-based organisations while physically remaining in Namibia. The B360 Virtual Internship Programme, an initiative funded by the Staub Kaiser Foundation, was created and selected four students for the pilot project that lasted from April to July 2021.

Informatics student, Kashe Mayavero, Journalism and Media Technology student,

Rochelle Cornelius, and Communications students, Elizabeth Iita and Christine Scheepers, were virtually selected for the pilot project. Mayavero and Cornelius were placed with B360 for their internships, while Iita interned for the Swiss-Africa Business Circle, and Scheepers with Jobs for Africa. The students were provided with office space on the NUST campus and access to the Wi-Fi network to allow them to work remotely. B360 provided each intern with a laptop and a smartphone to enable seamless contribution to the work of the host Swiss-based companies.

"It was exciting to be part of a brand new initiative, and none of us really knew what to expect", said Iita, as she reflected on the early days of the Virtual Internship.

Scheepers added that the support provided by B360, the host companies, and the Department of International Relations ensured that they were well prepared for the demands of working life, and the challenges of remote work.

"I learned a lot about working life, and basic things I need to know for the

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Corporate world, and all I can say is that it was fun, educative and unforgettable experience," Cornelius recalled.

In order to provide the Virtual Interns with a holistic experience, including cultural exposure to Swiss life, B360 paired each of them with a virtual Swiss host family. The students engaged with their virtual host families on a weekly basis and gained insight into Swiss life. They also took a weekend-long road trip to Swakopmund funded by their Swiss host families, and were accompanied by Dr Rudolf Schmitt, a B360 Expert, who was guest lecturing at NUST.

The B360 President, Sabina Balmer, pointed to the uncertainty of the project at its early stages, saying: "It really took a lot of courage and hard work to get this initiative going, but we successfully concluded the pilot and we hope that the Virtual Internship Programme will become a lasting feature of the partnership between B360 and NUST."



CAPTION (from left to right): Elizabeth Iita, Rochelle Cornelius, Christine Scheepers and Kashe Mayavero on their road trip to Swakopmund during their B360 Virtual Internships

According to International Relations Officer and national B360 Coordinator, Nico Smit, the University "is excited to be involved in the development and piloting

of new initiatives, such as the B360 Virtual Internship Programme, that extend excellent opportunities for exposure to the world of work for NUST students."

Tourism Students Participate in Intercultural Project

Students from the Department of Hospitality and Tourism joined others from the Faculty of Computing and Informatics (FCI) in participating in the Global Intercultural Project Experience (GIPE), which is funded by the DAAD.

GIPE provides students with an opportunity to collaborate on an international project that brings together students, academics and cross-cultural working groups from Namibia, Peru, Indonesia and Germany. Although consisting of many components, the project for 2020/2021 aimed to assist Puspanita Eco-Spirit Centre in Bogor, Indonesia, to develop their business model, capitalise on modern technology tools for business, and transform their land and facilities into an environmentally friendly destination for eco-education and eco-tourism.

Bachelor of Tourism Innovation and Development students Angeline Khoeseb, Joshua Potts, and Rebecca Kapweya, were part of the business model and strategy component.

"It was amazing to have an intercultural exchange of ideas and perspectives, and it really allowed me to become more open-minded and learn about the world around me," said Angeline Khoeseb.

Five students and three lecturers from FCI also participated in the GIPE 2021 project. Stefanie Garises, Thomas Martin,

and PhD Candidate, Simon Muchinenyika, contributed to the design of the educational games, while Hage Angala, Jackson Nanghala, and Senior Lecturer, Dr Attlee Gamundani, joined the smart farming team. Isaac Lucio, and acting FCI Dean, Dr Colin Stanley, lent their skills to the website development team.

While 15 students and staff from NUST had previously participated in the 2019/2020 activity, this project was a first in which the Department of Hospitality and Tourism was involved.

"It helped me strengthen my teamwork skills as well as afforded many of us the opportunity to make new friends along the way. It was definitely a revelation for me having friends from completely different backgrounds that were able to work well together and develop an outstanding business model for our client, Puspanita Eco-Spirit Center," said Joshua Potts.

The NUST participants worked alongside students and academics from San Pablo Catholic University (Peru), Westphalian University of Applied Sciences (Germany), and Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia.