

Luxembourg 50th Anniversary Celebration

Wednesday, October 10, 2018

Your Royal Highness,
Our Miami University community,
And distinguished guests.

Welcome to all. Thank you for joining the Miami University family for such a wonderful milestone – the 50th anniversary of the Dolibois European Center in our host country of Luxembourg. During the past five decades, we have become more than partners in an educational experiment – we have become colleagues and friends inextricably tied together by our mission, purpose, and values – international education, global understanding, cultural awareness, diversity, and the hopes and dreams of so many young people around the world.

I have been Miami University's president now for two years. Study abroad holds a rich place in Miami's history. The Dolibois European Center in Luxembourg provides a signature opportunity for Miami students – now and in the future.

This large Miami University contingent – more than 700 of us in all – is here to celebrate with you, our colleagues, friends and partners in Luxembourg, to recognize the robust relationship that has benefited more than 12,000 Miami students during the last five decades.

Miami is an institution that honors our history, promotes diversity in all aspects of our life and work, and looks with hope and optimism toward a future of creativity and innovation. We are grateful for our long and prosperous partnership here in Luxembourg. We look forward to continuing and expanding this relationship for many years to come. I cannot imagine a more perfect place than Luxembourg for our Miami students to study, travel, and engage. We are grateful to our collaborators in Luxembourg. It is a beautiful country in every way. It is steeped in history – even as it advances as a leader into the future. It is a powerful model of the benefits of diversity. People of about 170 different nationalities live in Luxembourg – it has three official languages – and nearly half of the population is from another country. It is a country where diversity lives and thrives.

Similarly, we are looking forward to a prosperous future at Miami University – investing in our academic excellence to prepare our students for the globally connected careers and civic lives of this century. Our comprehensive campaign will strengthen our

partnership with Luxembourg – with scholarships to support discovery by all of our students globally, enhance diversity, and programs to foster the global understanding displayed so magnificently here.

It's no accident that Luxembourg has one of the highest standards of living, welcomes vast numbers of visitors, and hosts leading institutions for peace and unity in Europe. In Luxembourg, a student can experience all the benefits of study abroad in one extraordinary country.

Study abroad is an anchor of a Miami education – nearly half of our students leave the U.S. to study sometime during their career at Miami. To highlight the importance of Luxembourg to our hopes and aspirations for our students, I wanted to tell you a bit about my own experience with international work and research.

I did not study abroad as an undergraduate – which I still regret today. In many ways not studying abroad as an undergraduate, makes me even more passionate to have students study abroad now that I am a campus leader. I did get to travel internationally during graduate school and during my career as a professor – my equivalent of a study abroad experience.

Fifteen years ago, I was on sabbatical in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, collaborating with a European university and Phillips. The experience made me more competitive and more collaborative, deepening my passion for a global mindset. My faculty research in the flat-panel display industry took me to all parts of Asia. I observed the approach to research was very different than the way I had trained – start with a fundamental question, then find an application. My colleagues in Asia oftentimes did it in reverse – solve the problem for the application, then find some basic question to study. I learned there's more than one way to do science. At another point in my career, I was responsible for disease-fighting research and finding solutions in Haiti. I learned that innovative health approaches alone are not sufficient to solve societal or human health problems. You need a human perspective, a social and cultural understanding, and a capacity to connect with the people and culture you are trying to serve.

Traveling and researching abroad helped me learn more expansively, broaden my perspective and enhance my career and enrich my personal life. As I reflect on my global experiences, I come back to my three takeaways– learning about the world, learning about myself, and learning about my place in the world. I think that's exactly what our study abroad students' experience in Luxembourg.

First: Learning about the world

As the celebrated American author Mark Twain wrote, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness," College students in particular are at a point in their development where experiences in other countries can have a profound and positive impact for the rest of their lives, both personally and professionally. When I speak to many of the Luxembourg alumni here today – the words and phrases

transformative, life changing & eye-opening keep coming up in our conversations. Higher education is far more than facts and skills – it is about HOW one learns; WHY one learns; and WHERE one learns can make a tremendous difference.

The world is intimately connected as never before – and growing more connected every day. When students travel, they see how those connections work. In the world of commerce, for example, a product invented in the United States might be designed in India, manufactured in Malaysia, and sold in China. Students who study abroad are ready to understand and manage that kind of global complexity and connectedness.

That connected world is also a competitive world – a race to the top that can elevate everyone. Diversity generates creativity. It requires humility and compassion. Students who study abroad are ready to thrive in that environment. A recent survey showed that 41 percent of CEOs would consider a higher starting salary for a student who studied abroad. Our students studying in Luxembourg experience the power of this diverse collaboration every day and absorb the practices that will accelerate their success.

Second: Learning about yourself

In addition to learning about the world, studying abroad helps you learn about yourself. You find yourself in an entirely new context. The people around you did not grow up with the same traditions you did. This will challenge your assumptions, destroy your stereotypes, erase your biases, and reveal the fundamental common humanity underneath the differences. Luxembourg may be a small country, but it is a clear window into a big world. Students who experience that world gain a humility that opens them to broader experience. They gain empathy for people that are different. They gain a global sense of purpose for their own lives.

Third: Learning about your place in the world

Students who learn about the world and learn about themselves by studying abroad will also learn about their own place in that world. They will recognize the power of diversity in problem-solving, embrace the role of a respectful collaborator, and find personal fulfillment in a celebration of differences. That diversity is a core value for Miami, declared in our alma mater and elevated in our Code of Love and Honor. Students who study in Luxembourg are surrounded by that diversity and its benefits – in their classes, their host families, their service and volunteer activities, and their daily life. They are prepared to take their place in the global world of the future with excellence and empathy.

Studying abroad elevates success not only in work but also in life. Although I did not do it as an undergraduate, I am grateful that my career allowed me to have those experiences later. The things that once made others seem so different – language, food, music, dance, politics, and religion – become opportunities for sharing and celebration. Such an experience for students is integral to the mission of Miami and among my highest priorities as your president.

Our alma mater declares that Miami has embraced “the generations of all races, from all nations.” We have always aimed to produce students with that mindset. Study abroad empowers us to fulfill that mission effectively.

On the commemorative coins you all received tonight (in the mail) includes a phrase – a lofty goal for us all: “To Advance Global Peace and Understanding.” Study abroad is a vital way to advance that goal. Real knowledge and exploration and understanding replace abstract stereotypes and negativity. Collaboration replaces zero-sum competition. Friendship replaces fear.

On behalf of Miami University – thank you to Luxembourg for your partnership and your friendship –your welcoming spirit. On this auspicious occasion, let us pledge anew to work towards those lofty goals of global peace and understanding.

The traditional Miami greeting – Love and Honor! – unites Miamians of every generation wherever they may see each other in the world. It is our hallmark because it expresses our core values, our common loyalty, and our deep gratitude for this way of life. Luxembourg has been a part of that family for 50 years. Tonight we affirm our partnership, celebrate our friendship, and commit ourselves to advancing our future together – in Love and Honor.