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WHY THIS NEWSLETTER

Our newsletter highlights and summarizes the latest news and events of the International Relations and Study Abroad Office. It is published 4 times per year and reaches approx. 4'000 readers, including USI students, faculty and staff, incoming students and staff from our many partner universities and other collaborators. We hope you enjoy it!

INTERVIEW WITH OMAR JAVED, PhD STUDENT AND SWISS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Each year, the Swiss Confederation awards Government Excellence Scholarships to promote international exchange and research cooperation between Switzerland and over 180 other countries. Recipients are selected by the awarding body, the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS), based on three criteria: candidate profile, quality of the research project or artistic work, and potential synergy for future research cooperation.

The Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are available to young researchers from abroad who have completed a master's degree or PhD and foreign artists holding a bachelor's degree.

Scholarships for the 2018–19 academic year will be advertised online from August 2017.

[Learn more about Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship](#)

Omar Javed is a Pakistani PhD student at the Faculty of Informatics, and winner of a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship. Read his inspiring story.

Hi Omar, could you please introduce yourself?

“Hi Arianna. I feel honored to share my experience with the people reading this newsletter. I am from a city in Pakistan which is quite hard to describe in a few adjectives. Though, you can aptly sum it up by saying that it is one of the world's largest (population and area-wise) cities as well as having high temperatures almost throughout the year. I was born and raised in this city which is Karachi. I graduated with a Masters degree in Computer Science from Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, in Karachi. I then began my Ph.D at the Faculty of Informatics in September 2015. During the past two years, I have been working with some truly outstanding individuals who are quite inspiring and motivating which helped me evolve as a person.”

You won a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship: how did you learn about this scholarship program?

“After completing my Masters program, I was in search for a PhD opportunity. During that time, my wife got an admission in Masters program in Université de Genève, which motivated me to look for a position in Switzerland. I looked for scholarship opportunities in Switzerland and found out



Omar Javed and his son Suleiman Omar.

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about Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship through a website. Interestingly, if you google Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship, you'd be amazed to find that it is one of the few prestigious scholarship programs along with US Fulbright and UK Chevening.”

Why did you choose USI?

“I chose USI because of my research interest which was being conducted here. My PhD supervisor has excellent expertise in designing some state-of-the-art software. During the time I've spent here, I have access to software, hardware, books, research papers as well as journals which facilitated my research work. I believe my training here has given me a solid foundation for a career in industry and I'm so glad I made the decision to come here.”

What are the main differences between your country of origin and Switzerland?

“Culturally, the two countries are quite dissimilar. If we look at the area and population-wise, Pakistan is quite big compared to Switzerland. However, GDP per capita of Switzerland is almost 12 times than that of Pakistan, which means that you will make almost 12 times more money if you are in Switzerland. Switzerland is famous for its natural beauty, but Pakistan also has some miraculous, breath-taking beauty of its own such as “Aansu Lake”, a lake shaped like a tear drop which is at a height of 16,490 feet in Kaghan Valley. Pakistan also has Trango Towers, the tallest vertical mountain in the world, along with four of the 10 highest peaks of the planet, making Pakistan the ‘rooftop of the world’. One could also find an archeological site for one of the oldest civilization - Mohenjo-daro (4500 years old). The music of Pakistan is also very diverse influenced from various parts of South Asia, Middle Eastern and modern-day Western popular musical styles. To get a taste of Pakistani music, I would recommend the readers to go on YouTube and listen to the song “Afreen Afreen”.”

How did the ESKAS Scholarship affect your life?

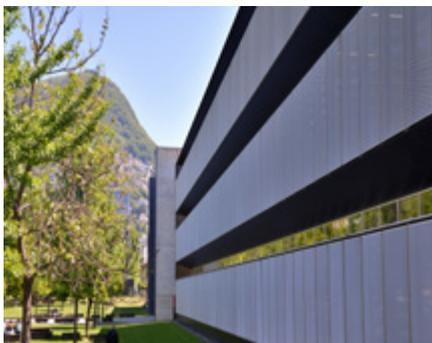
“Receiving a scholarship makes a big impact on any student. For me, this scholarship is about evolving as a person. This scholarship has changed my life, making me more optimistic towards the future. I am more confident now of achieving my goals. This change in me has come with the support of ESKAS Scholarship and I hope to do well in the future years to come.”

Your scholarship is finishing soon. How would you characterize your experience?

“My experience up till now has been great, both professionally and personally. Professionally, the learning and experience gain has been exponential in nature. This realization brings so much of fulfillment and satisfaction, and perhaps the fuel for doing greater things later on. Personally, I not only had the wonderful opportunity to work with experts, but also meeting people with diverse background, learning about the other cultures which has made me realize that we may look different, but we are quite similar.”

What are your plans for the future?

“My goal is to contribute in the field of computer science that can be beneficial for not only Switzerland and Pakistan, but for the world. I know this can sound clichéd but this PhD has motivated me to act more like a Global citizen than a Pakistani citizen.”



USI Informatics building, Lugano Campus.



Colourful façades along Nyhavn, new harbour, Copenhagen.

CBS CENTENNIAL STAFF WEEK

This year, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), one of our esteemed partner universities, celebrates its centennial. On April 24 and 25 2017, the CBS International Office organized and hosted the event “Celebrating CBS Centennial and our exchange partnership”, a two-day seminar focused on exchange and international education.

The seminar was about the operational side of exchange. It was designed for international office coordinators who work with exchange students and experience common high points and challenges in their daily jobs.

Maurizia decided to participate - read about her experience.

The CBS International Office ran a series of workshops and created a platform for discussion and knowledge sharing among the participants. It was a great opportunity for us to meet and network with colleagues from other partner universities and business schools, to explore the possibility of extending our partnerships, and to get inspiration from examples and good practices.

Here a brief abstract of the main issues:

- “How not to be a tourist while on exchange”; the International office staff explained its strategies, goals, activities and events for welcoming exchange students, and easing their integration to Danish culture.
- International Summer University Programme (ISUP): established in 1999, this is one of the world’s longest running and largest summer university programs. Last year, they had more than 2’000 participants, including more than 500 non-Danish students.
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation: we were explained how CBS has developed this area, including the establishment of the Copenhagen School of Entrepreneurship.
- The power of social media in student outreach: due to the fact that 96% of young people (age 16-24) in Denmark are using one or more social media platforms, the CBS international office has developed a social media strategy that invites students to explore and be active on their channels.
- Housing challenge: like other popular capital cities, Copenhagen has a competitive market for student housing. Moreover, as a public university in Denmark, CBS cannot own or run residence halls for exchange students. They rely on long-term agreements with privately owned residence halls where they assign students. The intake of exchange students is greater in the Fall than in the Spring. This creates a challenge to offer enough housing when the demand is high, while minimizing the costs of paying for empty rooms when the demand is low.
- Tri-national programs: for over a decade, CBS has developed innovative programs based on global partnerships between leading business schools in North America, Europe, and South East Asia. Two of these initiatives were presented during the workshop: the GLOBE program, a partnership program between CBS, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of North Carolina; and the new BSc in International Shipping and Trade, developed in close co-operation with the Danish Shipowners Association and two partner universities: Singapore Management University and Texas A&M University in Galveston, Texas.
- Buddy crew: the CBS international office promotes this program with great success, motivating volunteers on the buddy and exchange crew.



Above: the CBS logo.

Below: the sculpture in the CBS library which inspired the logo.

At the end of the first day, we were given a campus tour: CBS is primarily located in four modern buildings in Frederiksberg, a district in the heart of Copenhagen. The main complex at Solbjerg Plads and the building by architect Henning Larsen at Dalgas Have and Kilen (the Wedge) reflect the typical Scandinavian architectural style.

CBS has also rebuilt parts of the former Royal Copenhagen porcelain factory, gradually integrating it with the main campus, which is within walking distance.

Besides the seminars, the CBS International Office team organized a conference closing dinner on Tuesday night, as well as optional sightseeing tours in Copenhagen on Wednesday: a walking tour in the Copenhagen city center or a visit to the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art.

It was a great pleasure to meet colleagues from the international office at CBS. We all felt very welcome, and had the impression that they are a close-knit and motivated team, which was the basis of the great success of the conference, together with the invited speakers, professors, students, program coordinators and members of the international office staff, who contributed by giving interesting, stimulating and interactive presentations.



The new restaurant Fiore di Pietra and cogwheel railway (right).

DISCOVER TICINO: MONTE GENEROSO

It is a consolidated tradition to organize a day trip for exchange students hosted at USI with the aim of discovering our region. On April 29 we had the great pleasure to invite our incoming exchange students as well as the ones hosted by the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI) to visit Monte Generoso and the new restaurant Fiore di Pietra, which means “stone flower” in Italian. This new restaurant just opened on April 8, and is housed in a building created by the world famous architect Mario Botta, one of the founding fathers of USI Academy of Architecture.

Mario Botta has designed iconic landmarks throughout the world, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art or SFMOMA and the Cymbalista Synagogue and Jewish Heritage Center in Tel Aviv. He is well known for his ecclesiastic buildings in Ticino, such as the mountain church in Mogno and the church Santa Maria degli Angeli on Monte Tamaro. Mario Botta has a special connection with Monte Generoso, as he grew up in the Mendrisiotto region at the foot of the massif, and used to visit it since he was young: according to the architect, the form of the mountain inspired him and the flower was designed to mirror the mountain itself, and to become an integral part of the landscape.

The weather last spring was very unusual and, the night before our trip the snow reached 40 centimeters on the summit and the temperature dropped dramatically. Despite our concern, the inclement weather of the previous day contributed in creating a wonderful snowy landscape on the summit: the sun was shining, the sky was clear and blue, the air was fresh, and, as you can see in the picture, we enjoyed an amazing range of colors: white (the snow), blue (the sky) and gray (the stone).



The group of participants.

Some of our exchange students, for example those coming from Australia and India, saw and touched the snow for the very first time, and everyone really appreciated the snow and had a lot of fun playing with snowballs.

The guide accompanying us, Andrea Bonacina, is an architect on the team Mario Botta Architetti and an USI alumnus. He followed the Fiore di Pietra project and gave us an interesting and appreciated presentation in English about the project, the challenges and unusual characteristics of the site, and about Monte Generoso.

The peak of Monte Generoso lies at 1704 meters of altitude; we reached it after a 40-minute journey by cogwheel railway from Capolago through a fantastic landscape. From the summit, we had an awesome panorama that included a view of the Lake Lugano, Lake Como, Lake Maggiore and Lake Varese. Looking north, we clearly recognized the Matterhorn. On the south



Students playing with snowballs on the Monte Generoso summit.

side we could see the Lombardy plains, the city of Milan, and the Apennine Mountains, including Malpensa airport.

The new Fiore di Pietra building lies where the old Hotel Restaurant Vetta was located, a building from 1970, which had to be demolished in 2014 because of instability due to the land settling. The construction on the Fiore di Pietra started in 2015 and finished in 2017, after less than two years.

A local company provided the stone for the construction; 20'000 tons of material had to be moved, an enormous challenge. A cable car specially constructed for this purpose transported material from Muggio, in Muggio Valley, that lies to the south of the mountain. A helicopter was also employed to get materials to the building site.

Fiore di Pietra is an octagonal building formed by individual petals that embrace a central space. On the eastern facade, this circular crown opens out creating a large terrace that follows the shape of the mountain crest. The arrangement of the petals forms a series of towers that jut out slightly towards the outside and then converge on the top floors (hence the name). It offers a 360-degree view over the surrounding landscape. The ground floor hosts an exhibition space that explores the century-old history of the railway, while two restaurants and a conference room occupy the other floors.

The first train journeys ascended Monte Generoso in 1890 by steam train, the oldest still in circulation in Switzerland. During the war years, the owner wanted to dismantle the train, however, Gottlieb Duttweiler, the founder of Migros (Switzerland's largest retail company), bought the railway in 1941 and kept it open. It is still supported by the Migros Cultural Percentage initiative today.

[Read more about Monte Generoso](#)

NEW BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

We are pleased to announce that USI offers two new destinations for exchange students:

Faculty of Communication Sciences

- **Universität Bremen**, field: *Communication Studies*, Bachelor, Master and PhD level;

Faculty of Economics

- **Universität Hamburg**, field: *Public Management (for students enrolled in the PMP programme)*, Master level.

The complete list of bilateral agreements is available at our website: www.relint.usi.ch.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Erasmus+: no return for Switzerland

On April 27, Movetia, the Swiss national agency, announced that unfortunately Switzerland will not be rejoining the Erasmus+ programme until 2020. The Federal Council informed the Parliament of this decision with the dispatch "Promotion of international mobility in education and training for 2018-2020". The document guarantees that exchange and mobility with Europe will be funded until 2020. The interim solution for Erasmus+ financed with Swiss funds has been extended, annually, one year at a time. This decision gives more planning certainty even if the interim solution only partially covers the wide variety of activities and other benefits offered by Erasmus+ for all education sectors.



Visit from the Canadian Embassy

On June 1, Ms. Lakshmi Kern, Trade Commissioner Assistant at the Canadian Embassy in Bern, paid a visit to USI. The objective of the visit was to present the Embassy's various initiatives in the education sector and to learn more about USI's programmes.

A future event we will not miss is the EduCanada Fair in Milan, scheduled for October 13. We thank our guest for the visit.

Come and Go party

Farewell is a time for closing one cycle: it is both an occasion of gladness and sadness. We bid farewell to our exchange students who are returning to their home countries after completing their academic year or spring semester at USI. This time, we decided to extend the invitation to our future outgoing students: a great opportunity for them to get answers to practical questions, to find out more about their destination and to start building new friendships. The party took place on June 2 at "al Lido" Lugano on a sunny spring evening.

"Exchange is not a semester in a life, it's a life in one semester." The International Relations team wishes both outgoing and incoming students all the best in their future endeavors!



Come and go party group.



EAIE 2017 & 2018

From 12 to 15 September, the European Association for International Education (EAIE) will be hosting Europe's largest international higher education conference and exhibition in Seville, Spain. With more than 5'000 international higher education professionals expected to attend from over 80 countries, EAIE is the perfect place to capitalize on key networking opportunities, share ideas and expand one's knowledge. Such an event gives participants the occasion to build, maintain and extend their international professional networks with universities and companies in the international education business, to seek out and meet with potential partners, and provides officers with valuable opportunities for skill-development thanks to the many free training sessions and a few highly specialized workshops.

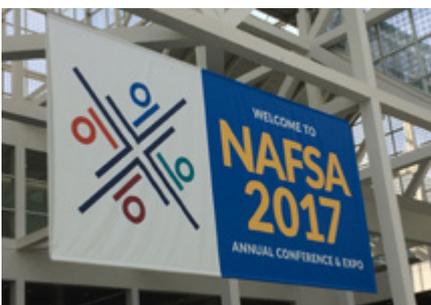
The International Relations team will attend and take advantage of the vast offer of activities and the possibility to meet with past, current, and future colleagues. The 2017 edition is particularly important for us and for Swiss universities: as officially announced, the EAIE2018 marks the 30th anniversary of the Conference and will be held in Geneva. The theme of EAIE Geneva 2018 is 'Facing Outward'.

The collaborative agreement between USI and swissnex Boston bears fruit!

In the context of this collaboration, USI participated in the NAFSA conference for the very first time in May 2017, with the objective of looking for new international student exchange partners, especially in the United States, and providing better international visibility of the university. This year's edition, held in Los Angeles, California, counted over 9'000 participants from all over the world. Francesco Bortoluzzi, USI alumnus and former intern at our office, is currently a Junior Project Manager at swissnex Boston and officially represents USI at NAFSA and on the American Continent. The experience proved to be successful and we are confident that we will have new developments in the future arising from this event.

With the support of swissnex Boston and its New York Outpost, USI organized its first alumni gathering across the Atlantic! The event, held on June 22, focused on strengthening the connection between USI and those alumni who have made the leap to the United States.

After a brief introduction about USI and its current developments by Prof. Paul Schneider (USI, Faculty of Economics) and Silvia Invrea (USI, Head of



USI alumni gathering.

Career and Alumni Service), the floor was given to USI alumni to recount their career paths after graduation. Alumni and current students from other Swiss institutions of higher education were also invited to join. The attendees were very enthusiastic and vowed to meet again.



The Lugano Campus.

Summer schools at USI

We are pleased to announce that two summer schools will be offered in the forthcoming weeks.

1. Summer school on Meshfree and immersed boundary methods for fluid-structure interaction

The Institute of Computational Science (ICS) of the Faculty of Informatics will offer a combined summer school and workshop on “*Mesh-free and immersed boundary methods for fluid-structure interaction*” from September 9 to 13 in Lugano. The summer school is supported and organized by the Swiss Graduate School FOMICS - “Foundations in Mathematics and Informatics for Computer Simulations in Science and Engineering”, which is located at ICS.

[Learn more about the FOMICS Summer School](#)

2. Summer school on Social Science Methods

The 21st *Swiss Social Science Methods Summer School* is open to all who need to use Social Science methods, both quantitative and qualitative, for their work. Organized by FORS, the Swiss Foundation for Social Science Research and located in Lugano will be held at USI from August 18 to September 1.

[Learn more about the Social Sciences Summer School](#)

Summer Break

The International Relations & Study-abroad office wishes you all a great summer.

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