

MAIB Students Fly on “Wings of Excellence” to the Alps

Gainesville, Fla. – Every year, the competition for the St. Gallen Wings of Excellence Award offers the world’s students the unique opportunity to take part in the St. Gallen Symposium in Switzerland. This year, two students from the Hough Graduate School of Business, Nicholas Campiz and Richard Woods, were accepted for this prestigious international Symposium, held at University of St. Gallen, May 7–9, 2009. Both are earning master’s degrees in the MA-International Business (MAIB) Program, and heard about the symposium through the program. Students who were accepted entered into a challenging exchange of ideas about the pressing economic and societal questions of our time with today’s global leaders, including three national leaders: the presidents of the Swiss Confederation, Estonia and Serbia. Other notable presenters included Singapore’s Minister of Finance and the Vice Chairman of Goldman Sachs.

The 39th Symposium theme was “Reemerging Boundaries in Business and Finance,” and students were required to submit an essay, a scenario, a project report or proposal, a multimedia presentation, or an entrepreneurial concept. Woods and Campiz were among the authors of the best 200 entries (out of about 1,000) and were invited to the symposium, all expenses paid by St. Gallen, to make their presentations. Campiz, who is also pursuing a master’s in Economic Geography, wrote his paper on the continuing importance of place in the fast-flowing world of finance: “Understanding Place: A Necessary, Interdisciplinary Concept in the New Global Economy.” Woods’ essay, “Capitalism vs. Populism: The Fight for the Economic Heart of South America and its implications to the Developing World,” was based on the geopolitical struggle between the Populist nations of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador and the Capitalist nations of Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. He says, “Whatever economic thinking wins out could determine the course of action for all of South America, and even could set a precedent for a radical change of economic thinking for the entire developing world.”

One of the major advantages of being in the company of 600 entrepreneurs, top managers, politicians and scientists from more than 60 nations was that “All participants, students and professionals, were treated pretty much equally, and that made for a very positive, interactive atmosphere,” according to Campiz. “Between sessions, students and professionals alike dined in the same pavilion. Almost all tables were standing tables and had no chairs, so we were forced to walk around and mingle, meet everyone and continue discussion and debate. The CEO of PricewaterhouseCoopers ate dinner at our table one night.”

Woods says he met students from all over Europe, Argentina, South Africa, New Zealand, Singapore, India, Japan, and even Mongolia. Both say they made friends from all over the world, as well as possible future business contacts or partners.

“I plan to keep in contact with as many of them as possible,” Campiz says. “Meeting up and working together in the future was discussed—from small business ideas to getting academic papers published together. I believe I will get at least one published with a collaborator from St. Gallen.”

Although Woods notes that he and Campiz were among only a handful of participants that came from U.S. state schools, and that most of the American students were Ivy League or went to school abroad, he would recommend that any student apply for the award. In fact, both say they would love the chance to return and savor such a unique experience again. Campiz, who hasn’t finished his graduate studies, is already looking forward to another chance to visit the “rare air” of St. Gallen.

“What I experienced was incredible,” he says, “and every conference I will go to will be a let down, I think, from here. And, apparently, this was a “down year,” too, because of the economy! Next year is the 40th year Jubilee celebration; I will be applying again.”

###

The Warrington College of Business Administration is one of the world’s top-rated public business programs, recognized for excellence by *U.S. News & World Report*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, and *Fortune*. As part of a Research 1 institution, Warrington is dedicated to a substantial research agenda, in addition to its teaching mission, from the undergraduate to the doctoral level. Warrington educates future business leaders using teamwork that provides opportunities for development of leadership, interpersonal and total management skills; promoting mastery of business functional areas; and fostering the habits and attitudes that constitute a solid research and work ethic.