

And they descended upon Rochester....

In June and July 35 students from the Rochester-Bern eMBA program came over from Switzerland to spend part of their summer at Simon. We asked their Class Speaker, Wilbert Sybesma, ten questions.

A Dutchman attending an eMBA program in Switzerland, can you explain?

About 4.5 years ago I got a job offer from quarters in Switzerland, and that is why my Switzerland. By the way, we have quite an inter-Singapore, Venezuela, Portugal, Hungary, course Switzerland. At present, almost every-



Nestlé, the multinational food company with head wife and I moved to Kanton Bern in the middle of national class, with people from the USA, France, Colombia, Germany, China, Cameron, Italy, and of body has an economic connection with Switzerland.

What are you doing for Nestlé?

With a PhD in Food Science, I am working for technicians who work in the area of Fermentation-development of production processes for probi-

Nestlé Research, leading a group of scientists and tion Technology. Most of our work focuses on the otic bacteria, aka healthy yogurt bacteria

What motivated you to pursue an MBA and why did you subscribe to the Rochester-Bern program?

Since I started to work at Nestlé, I became impressed by the dynamism and international focus of the company. It develops, produces and sells high quality food products all over the world. In the near future I would like manage the operational processes at one of Nestlé's factories. The MBA will provide me with the required tools. The Rochester-Bern MBA program has a good reputation in Switzerland. Many well-known multinational companies send employees to this program. In our class, we have students who work for UBS, Novartis, Schindler, and Credit Swiss to mention a few. Furthermore, my directors at Nestlé who support me in this program, have been very positive about what Rochester Bern has to offer.

How would you describe the 6 weeks spent at Rochester?

Great, impressive and inspiring! It was great to be able to focus for 6 full weeks solely on business related topics. The setting of the university is impressive; the buildings show tradition. The professors are without exception inspiring teachers. In my opinion, they are not only excellent researchers, but they have a lot of practical know-how because of their consultancy activities.

Which subject did you like most?

Organizational Architecture was a real eye opener, to balancing the three legs of the stool, for the insiders. Many of the topics we discussed in class I will immediately be able to apply. As soon as I am back at work my team and I will evaluate how we can deliver more value to our stakeholders, by re-discussing our incentives, awards system, and assignment of decision rights.

Did you learn a lot from your fellow students in the class?

This is another positive asset from the MBA. We have to work a lot in teams and at those moments you learn from the life and work experience of your colleagues. To give an example, for Managerial Economics we were asked to write a memo about the performance evaluation system of a colleague working for the Swiss bank UBS. It is fascinating to realize that after a few hours of brainstorming and discussion everybody in the team is able to understand and critically evaluate the award policy of a bank they only knew by name.

How was the interaction with the American MBA class here in Rochester?

So far we met them twice this summer during the presentation of the Business Cases. It was interesting to feel the entrepreneurial spirit living among the American students. Many of them have clear ideas how to set up their own business. I think that our class can learn from this 'just-do-it' mentality. Together with two of my Swiss colleagues, I will also work on a business case proposed by one of the American students. Our American colleague had a good idea in the area of biotechnology with probably a short-term realization potential for the pharmaceutical and food industries. Furthermore, I think it is a good experience to work intensively in a mixed European-American team using today's ICT facilities.

What does your role as Class Speaker involve?

It is an intermediate position between the program organization and the class. As soon as there are ideas or proposals from the class that regard all of us, the class speaker can approach the program director and discuss if they can comply with our 'wishes'. Furthermore, at certain moments it is useful because it allows one person to thank professors or guest speakers in the name of the entire class.

Continue to page 19

Do you have a recommendation for the Simon Business School with respect to the curriculum the Swiss class followed here?

First, I would like to acknowledge the staff and the professors for excellent organization and synergy between the different subjects. Looking back, I would have preferred to have some more time for reflection on what I was taught. For almost all of the students, the courses provided a lot of new knowledge. Everybody was in hurry during the 6 weeks to prepare for one exam after another. I think we would experience further added value if we could have time to take some distance and build up a 'helicopter view'. I also really appreciated the intensive teamwork, where you learn from and with your colleagues. I think that the time spent in Rochester provides a unique opportunity to work more in groups with different team compositions. Maybe we could also team-up with the American students for some of the home work assignments.

What is next for you?

At the end of August, the MBA continues in Switzerland. Several of the Rochester professors will come over to the Swiss mountains to help us achieve our goal of laying a superb foundation in business administration. In April, our Class will attend some seminars in China, and by May we should be able to integrate all we have learned into a final business case. In June, we will happily celebrate the graduation. For the very near future, I will enjoy some sea, sand and sun at the Spanish coast together with my family.

