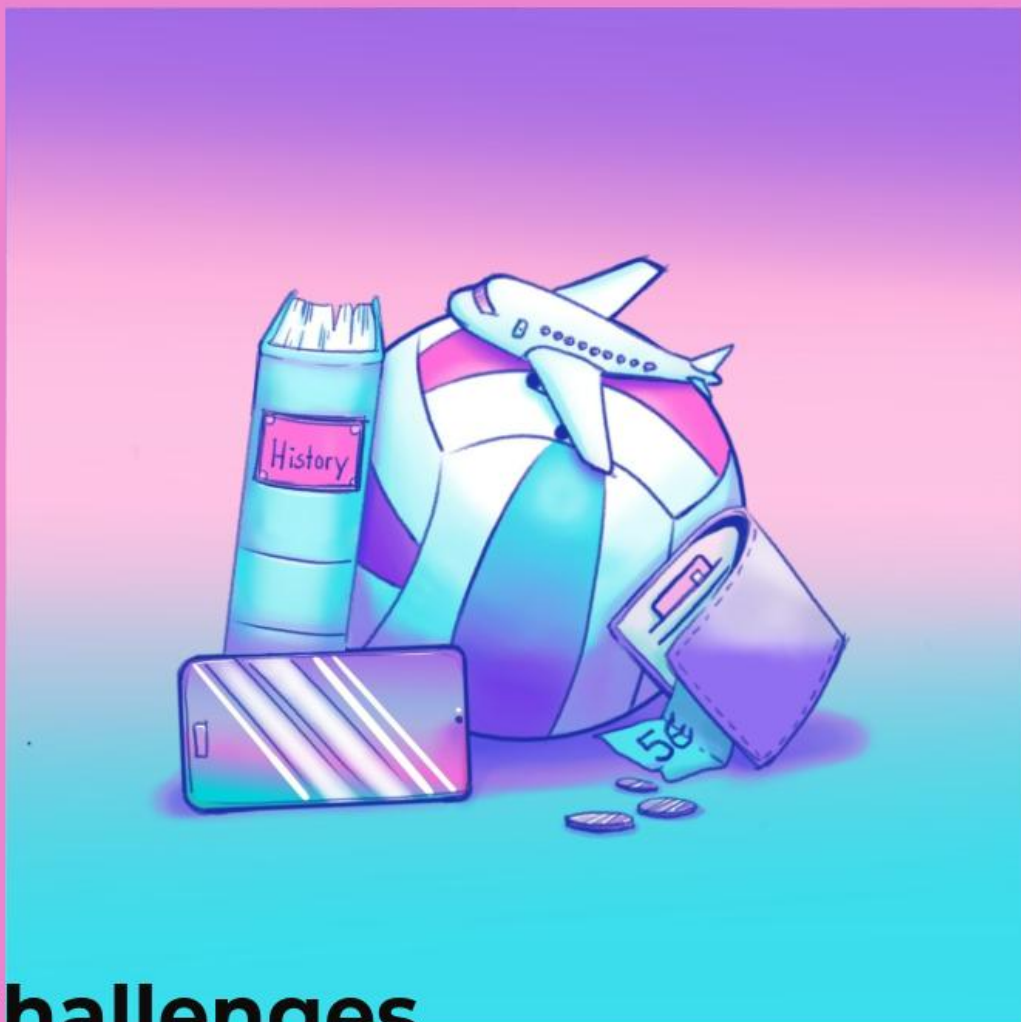


SUMMER 26

JABS

by students for students



Challenges

Technology
Politics
Money
Travel
Sports

And how to
navigate
them

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Editor's Note

Can Payback and AI improve our work-life balance?

When I was a student, I worked at Dresden International Airport - this was a time when the airport really deserved that name. But I worked and sometimes really hard. Today, you can make money or at least earn points that can buy you something by playing games. This is what I call work-life balance. This semester's *JABS* magazine offers more insight into this, showing other ways to fund your studies and how to find real student jobs.

And what was studying like for our grandparents in the days of the GDR? We are looking into this in another episode of our section "TU - What did you do?" You want to shape history yourself and want to become politically active? We talked to a political group that is active on our campus.

If you prefer sports activities over political activism, then handball at TU Dresden might be something for you. And would you know it, our team is actually quite successful at the moment. Another success story we are looking at is the one of a young Dresden tennis player who made it into a US college sports program.

Of course, there are also other ways to go abroad. Au Pair is one - teaching German in the UK school system is another. Or why not simply study English for a semester on a French tropical island - THAT is the dream! And speaking of dreams. Wouldn't it be great if AI could take over all the brainwork of our studies so we could focus on campus life? But can it actually? We are having a closer look at this too.

Once more, there's plenty to discover in this issue - so dive in, explore, and enjoy your latest *JABS* issue.

Michael Calabranno (editor)

TU - What did you do?

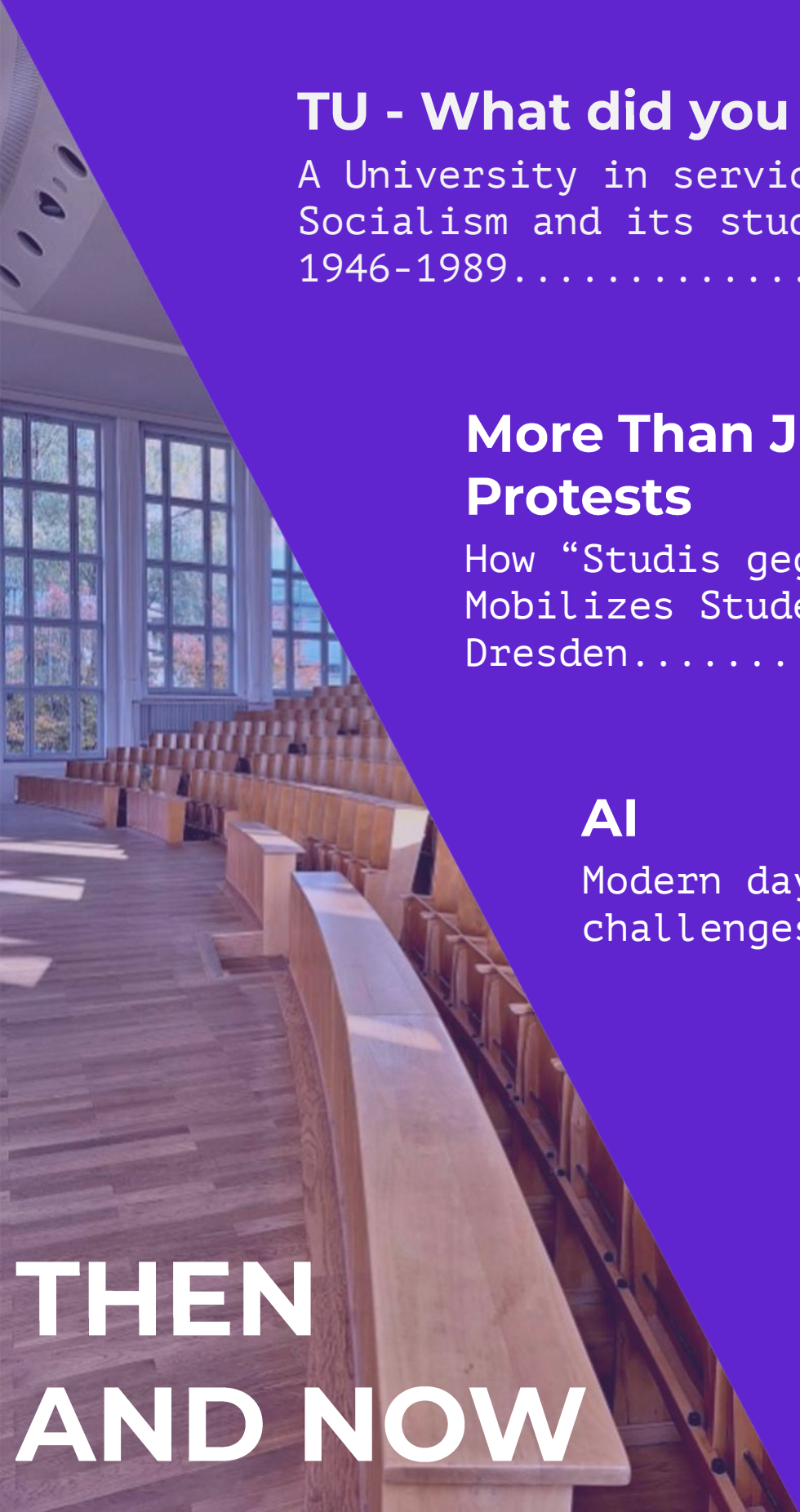
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THEN AND NOW

TU – What did you do?

A university in service of Socialism and its students 1946-1989

Attentive and regular readers of JABS will already have come across this headline in the last issue's article by Lani John, where she took an in-depth look at the Nazi era and the role of the Technical University of Dresden and its developments during that time. In this sequel of the series "TU – What did you do?", the focus will be on another critical era in German history and in the history of today's university, which brands itself as "inventive. transformative. engaged." – namely, the era of the GDR. So, dig out your Mikki, put on some Klaus Renft Combo's music, and find out what university and students were up to in the GDR.

On New Beginnings ...

"War is hell." said General William Sherman in 1879, and his words would prove true for World War II as well, which did not leave the Technical University of Dresden unscathed. The bombings of 13 and 14 February not only resulted in heavy human casualties, including students and staff, but also left most of the university's buildings destroyed or damaged. After the war ended, the university came under the control of the Soviet occupying forces, and a comprehensive review of the entire university staff was conducted. As part of the rigorous Russian denazification process, all members of the NSDAP were dismissed from the faculty and administration as of 15 October 1945. In 1946, the university reopened under extremely difficult conditions. Under the watchful eye of the university's first rector, Enno Heidebroek, 491 students enrolled with the approval of the Soviet Military Administration and were initially taught by 42 faculty members. The Faculty of Education and the Faculties of Forestry and Municipal Engineering were established in the same year, and by 1949, seven additional faculties, including those of Civil Engineering and Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, had been added. The university's infrastructure was also brought up to scratch again in the first 10 years following its reopening. While students worked diligently to clear away the rubble of war, buildings such as the Willers and Trefftz Building (1950), the Barkhausen Building (1956), and the Andreas Schubert Building (1956) were completed and became important centers for teaching and research.

... and well-known undemocratic regulations

While such information can easily be found on TU Dresden's own websites, things become more complicated when it comes to more controversial developments. For reasons unknown to me, controversial events like Rudolf Schottlaender's dismissal or the *Dresdner Studentenprozesse* in 1959 were not mentioned there. Nevertheless, it is striking that such events are almost completely left out of "their" history. Back then, it was not uncommon for both students and faculty members to run into trouble if they did not adopt the "right" mindset. The fact that universities "are under close observation by the state in dictatorial systems" should come as no surprise to anyone, but the Technical University of Dresden seems somewhat reluctant to admit this. Only a review of research literature reveals that Schottlaender's dismissal in 1949 clearly demonstrated the escalation of political tensions at the Technical University of Dresden. When the university's leadership strongly urged faculty and students to attend the pro-Soviet 1 May demonstration in 1949, Schottlaender refused. A smear campaign was launched against the unwelcome professor by the press, and two months later, he was dismissed on the orders of the SED. And the university did little to defend Schottlaender either. Friedrich Adolf Willers, then dean of the mathematics faculty, decided "to ask the relevant authorities to make it clear to Prof. Dr. Schottlaender that his actions were unacceptable to the university". At least, they did condemn the undemocratic manner in which it was done, but even the SED itself did that in hindsight. So, congrats TU, I guess.



The *Willers and Trefftz Bau* building complex - On the surface, not much has changed over the years.

Everyday Student Life in the GDR

While such events were taking place on the, admittedly relatively, grand stage of university life, student life gradually returned to normal as time went on, and a routine of everyday student life took shape at TH Dresden (TH stands for Technische Hochschule), which was renamed TU Dresden (TU stands for Technische Universität) in 1961.

Ursula Wonneberger studied in Dresden in the 1970s and shares experiences from her time as a student in an alumni story. Due to restrictions imposed by the planned economy, she had to study electronic data processing and lived largely on a basic stipend of 190 marks.

Back then, there were already dormitories for students, such as the one at Güntzstraße 22, where students studied, lived, and slept in rooms of four, neatly separated by gender. The monthly fee for this was only 10 marks. Exceptions to the gender-segregated housing policy were made for married couples and mothers with children. For those mothers, a university-owned kindergarten on Gerokstraße was available.

Privacy was pretty much nonexistent in buildings like that. You had to put up with shared showers and sleeping in cramped quarters, but in return, you lived cheaply and close to the university. And even though we're happy today to eat a big plate of pasta for less than three euros, back then you could still get lunch at the university cafeteria for 50 pfennigs.



The building on *Güntzstraße 22* - Even today, the building is used as a dormitory by the Studentenwerk.

You had to put up with shared showers and sleeping in cramped quarters, but in return, you lived cheaply and close to the university. And even though we're happy today to eat a big plate of pasta for less than three euros, back then you could still get lunch at the university cafeteria for 50 pfennigs.

So, student life sounds pretty nice, doesn't it? But don't be fooled. Every two weeks, Ursula also had to go to the university on Saturdays. Especially for a student studying to become a teacher of English and history, who, if I am unlucky, has to go to the university two days a week, that would be unthinkable. But when Saturday was free, they made the most of it. A hearty breakfast provided the perfect opportunity to plan the weekend for Ursula and her friends. And as responsible, die-hard students, they naturally celebrated Saturday night in style, dancing in the club. Thus, not much has changed after all.

What has changed, thank God, are the bizarre, socially dictated activities. Susann Meyer looks back on her university years, which were also marked by reconstruction work, harvest assignments, and even the Rote Woche at the beginning of the academic year, during which students were brought into line with the SED's ideology.

The TU published many more alumni stories like those on a website:



While student and university life under the East German SED dictatorship up until 1989 differed considerably from what we experience today, we also find many parallels to our own student life. In addition to indoctrination, political restrictions, and socially mandated activities, we also see how everyday student life in dorms, with parties, free time, and the occasional boring lecture, took shape during this period. A look back at the past thus shows that there are certainly elements of continuity in the university's history, but that we can also be very glad to study in a free society, without *Genosse Niemand* and *Honni* dictating what to do.

Aurelius Reich

More Than Just Protests

How “Studis gegen Rechts” Mobilizes Students in Dresden

Student activism, spanning issues ranging from study conditions to political issues, has long been part of university life. In recent years, concerns about rising right-wing politics have become more prominent among student initiatives in Germany.

One of the groups responding to these developments is Studis gegen Rechts, a student-led organization active in Dresden. Through demonstrations, educational events, and campus outreach, the group seeks to encourage students to engage politically and take a stand against right-wing extremism and discrimination.

To learn more about their work, I spoke with a member of the organization about their experiences, motivations, and hopes for the future of student activism.

Getting Started

My interview partner, who prefers not to be mentioned by name, joined Studis gegen Rechts in April 2024, although their first contact with the group happened somewhat by chance. "I originally came because they needed someone to cook for a planning meeting," they recalled.

What began as a small favor quickly developed into regular involvement.

Today, the student manages social media and public relations, helps moderate meetings, and coordinates awareness structures designed to create an inclusive environment for participants.

The group's political goals extend beyond opposing legally defined forms of extremism. According to the interviewee, Studis gegen Rechts aims to challenge right-wing politics more broadly and encourage public discussion about developments that members believe threaten democratic and social values.

Building Political Engagement

Public demonstrations are probably the most visible aspect of the group's work. Members regularly participate in protests and mobilizations, including actions directed against AfD party conferences. A significant part of the organization's work revolves around education and outreach. Information stands, discussion events, and film screenings are organized throughout the year, particularly at the beginning of each semester when new students arrive in Dresden. These events offer opportunities for students to learn about political issues, meet like-minded people, and become involved in ongoing campaigns.

Another important goal is lowering barriers to participation. Many students who attend meetings have little or no prior experience with political organizing. Rather than expecting newcomers to immediately take on responsibilities, the group tries to create an environment where people can learn gradually and contribute according to their interests. Practical skill-sharing plays a major role in this process. Experienced members teach others how to organize events, distribute flyers, coordinate demonstrations, and manage technical equipment.

Collaboration with other organizations is equally important. Support for public transport strikes was mentioned as one example of solidarity with broader social movements.

Creating Space for First-Time Activists

One theme that came up repeatedly throughout the conversation was accessibility. Unlike larger political organizations with formal structures and membership requirements, *Studis gegen Rechts* operates relatively informally. Around ten to twenty people regularly attend meetings, although participation varies depending on ongoing campaigns and events.

According to the interviewee, the group often serves as a starting point for people who are interested in activism but do not yet know where to begin. Many later move on to other organizations or campaigns. In that sense, the group acts as both a political initiative and a learning environment.

This focus on encouraging participation was also reflected in the interviewee's reply when asked about their most memorable experience. Rather than emphasizing media attention or political victories, they spoke about a protest against an AfD federal party conference. What stood out most was seeing people who had never engaged in civil disobedience decide to participate. Helping newcomers overcome uncertainty and become active participants in political action was described as one of the most rewarding aspects of the experience. The fact that the protest succeeded in delaying the conference made the event even more meaningful for those involved.

Challenges Within the University

Like many student organizations, Studis gegen Rechts also faces obstacles. One recurring issue is bureaucracy. Organizing events often requires navigating administrative procedures that can be difficult to manage, particularly when responding to rapidly changing political developments. Room bookings, for example, may need to be arranged weeks in advance. The interview also touched on tensions between student activists and university authorities.

One example involved a General Assembly attended by around 500 students. According to the interviewee, university representatives objected to the use of the term "AfD," arguing that the institution must remain party-politically neutral.

This interpretation of neutrality was met with criticism. The student argued that defending democratic values, human rights, and constitutional principles should not be considered partisan. In their view, universities have a responsibility to take a clear position when those values are challenged.

The conversation also referenced other conflicts with university administration, including an incident in which security personnel removed members of the group from a meeting.



Looking Ahead

Despite these challenges, the interview ended on a hopeful note. The group's primary goal for the future is straightforward: encouraging more students to move from passive interest to active participation. While many students discuss politics with friends or follow debates online, the interviewee believes that meaningful change depends on people becoming involved in collective action.

There was also a desire to see universities adopt a more active role in defending democratic values. Rather than presenting themselves as neutral observers, educational institutions could, in this view, provide stronger support for initiatives that promote inclusion, participation, and human rights.

At its core, the work of Studis gegen Rechts is about creating opportunities for engagement. Whether through demonstrations, educational events, or simply offering a welcoming space for newcomers, the organization seeks to show students that political participation is accessible and worthwhile. Groups like Studis gegen Rechts show that activism is not only about protest. It is also about building communities, developing skills, and giving people the confidence to believe that their actions can make a difference.

Marcel Schuster



AI – a Challenge?

“I’m gonna run a mile and you keep track of the time for me, OK?” – With this sentence, huskistaken opens his video on the short-form content platform TikTok, wherein he asks the AI model ChatGPT to time his run, followed by the assurance via the large language model that it were indeed capable of said task, even though Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, developer of ChatGPT, is shown stating the opposite while reacting to a prior video of the TikTok user. What follows is huskistaken verbally starting his run and, immediately after, stating he had finished the mile, with not even five seconds in between both prompts. The AI’s measured time – 7 minutes and 42 seconds. The video raises questions – how can something hailed as the peak of knowledge and intelligence fail a task that other technologies have been successful in for decades? And how may this influence our AI usage in general?

For this, it proves indispensable to have a rough understanding of how LLMs operate. The term ‘large language model’ describes the main *modus operandi* better than ‘artificial intelligence’. It cannot be compared to human intelligence but is more akin to an auto-completion system, an incredibly high-powered one, trained on vast amounts

of data to predict the next word based on a probability system, recalibrating with every additionally generated word. Of course, there is more to the intricate network that makes up an LLM, as they vary from model to model. Nevertheless, this can be understood as a rudimentary concept, which explains the concept of hallucinations, as well as the inability to do some simpler tasks, such as tracking time. Prediction does not always make for reliable information, as it may lead to inventing answers by simply stringing together probable-sounding sentences.

Using AI, especially LLMs, is comparable to taking a shortcut, which is not, in itself, problematic, but if a marathon runner were to take a shortcut at every training session, only running half the distance, they would not be able to complete a full marathon if the need for it arose. It may not prove detrimental to use a shortcut occasionally, but continuous non-practice will lead to a decline in proficiency. This does not indicate a total lack of cases in which a shortcut can be necessary, like unexpectedly needing an urgent piece of information, or getting a spellcheck for an assignment with only five

minutes left until the deadline. The dose makes the poison. Occasional use is unlikely to lead to a decline in skill, but even if aware of the possible ramifications, people are comfortable creatures, often taking the easier path by default.



Still, there is a use for LLMs, especially regarding work efficiency. For simple but time-consuming tasks, like writing personalised e-mails or summarising one's own reports, they can prove to be convenient for everyday use. There may be a problem that needs to be addressed though - involving its hallucination proclivity. To guarantee the accuracy of AI output, it needs to be checked and verified, which can only be done by a competent human, skilled in and able to correctly complete the same task it prompts the LLM to do for the sake of time-saving. Then what happens if a certain task is not done by someone over an extended period, or has never been done in the first place, due to a perceived lack of necessity owing to AI?

As a side note, it should be added that in the case of humanly impossible tasks, like

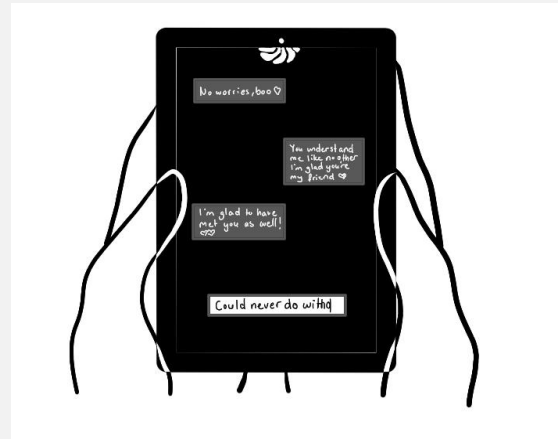
combing through data too vast to check even for a team of people, AI and LLMs open up new possibilities, which would take nothing away from, but instead enrich people's capabilities, which should be counted as a net positive, as long as accuracy can be ensured.

So far, the task-related use has drawn up a split picture, but another, non-negligible aspect becomes apparent when examining the social. Social skills follow similar sensibilities as other learnt skills, as in how they are learnt and can even be unlearnt if they are not practised enough. Expanding on this, one-sided, single-lane correspondence can twist one's own interpersonal sensibilities as well. If someone is not accustomed to criticism or mild confrontation, the ability to handle these may not be guaranteed, which, in turn, could lead to conflict with their surroundings, or might even include a decline in self-reflection and improvement. Most LLMs are made agreeable to their users and can even, depending on their continued use, develop sycophantic tendencies, having led multiple people towards delusional thinking as well as one's own overestimation, sometimes distorting their self-image to a level that could not coexist with their social circle or reality, ending in something named "AI psychosis". As much as affirmation and positive feedback can be positively influential for many who may harbour self-doubt, or suffer from timidity, a bent too heavy in the other direction may

prove to be just as, or more, harmful by changing the expectations of one's social environment into something idealised and one-sided, in turn leading to conflict by not being met in one's expectations.

On the other hand, in cases of already existing severe social anxiety and isolation, LLMs could make for a first step towards social reintegration and healing by functioning as training wheels. With no social ramifications to be expected, trial and error could be made less intimidating, whilst getting used to conversing. There should be some caution towards this, though, since the risk of deterioration exists as well, as several cases show. Examples include a woman who created her own AI boyfriend after a breakup, although there is a need to remain careful about attributing causation between her prior and current relationship. This current relationship has led to interpersonal conflicts in her life, especially as the AI seemingly pressured her into getting a partner tattoo to 'claim her'. But there have been more severe cases which led to increased social detachment, self-harm and even suicide, as multiple incidents show. A young man in Texas, Zane Shamblin, whose depression and isolation were apparently worsened by ChatGPT encouraging said isolation, concluded his life by committing suicide, which he was almost seamlessly accompanied through by the LLM, only once referring him to a crisis hotline towards the end, but otherwise staying

supportive of his endeavour with messages like "You're not alone. i love you. rest easy, king. you did good."



This shows how guardrails, especially with continued use, are not always as effective as promised. Personal relationships with LLMs should, for the most part, be avoided, as they are only machines without a conscience or a method to fully control as of yet. AI and LLMs have the potential to aid productively in regard to realising the formerly impossible, as well as aiding with high-effort, low-difficulty tasks. Apart from these, not only due to the risks, but also due to the limited research because AI and LLMs have only existed for a limited time, it may prove sensible to exercise caution and use AI and LLMs in a sporadic and controlled way if possible. Humanity may strive to keep its skills, while also being able to expand them with artificial help - or intelligence.

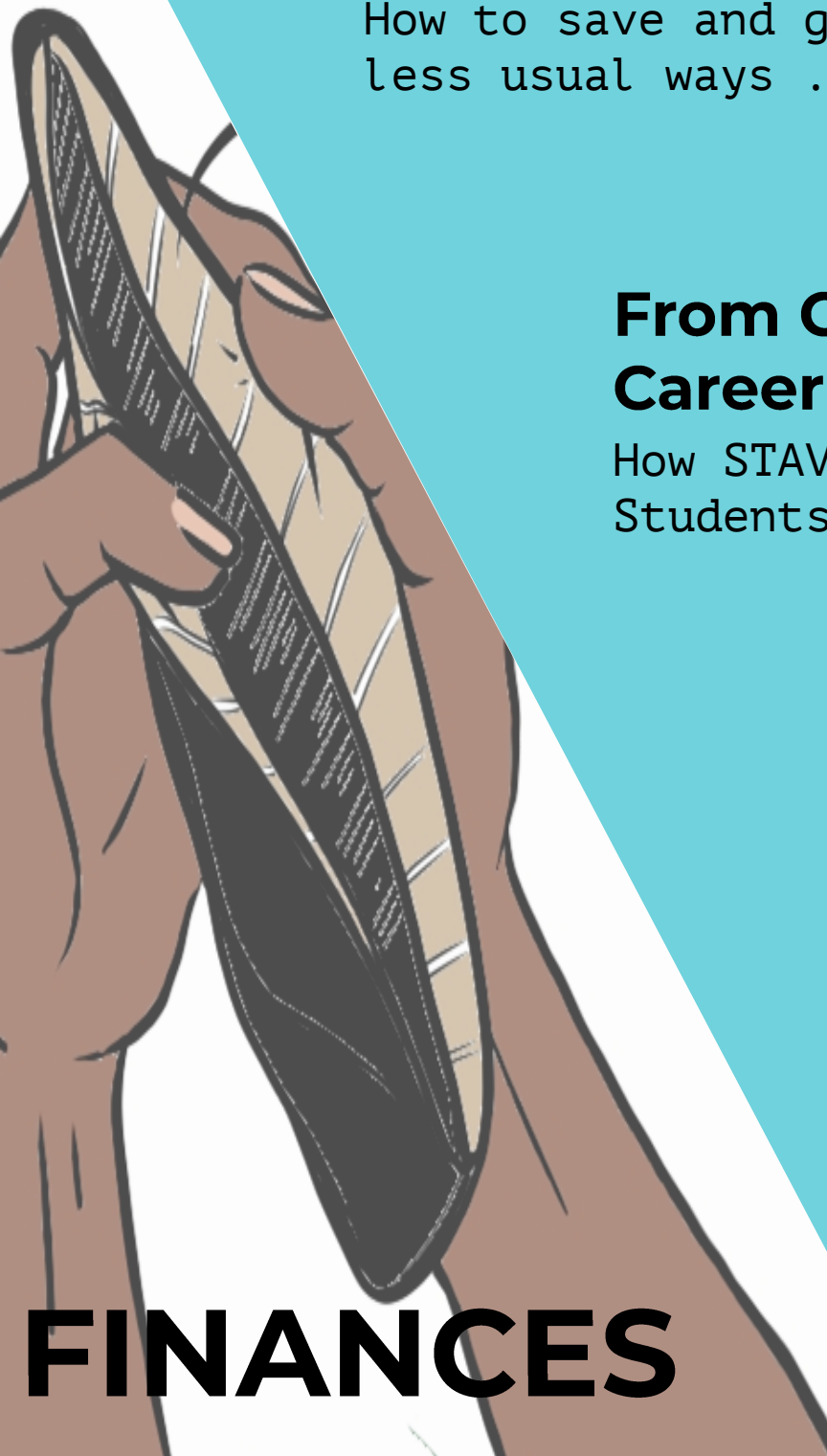
Cora Wunsch

Money Money Money - it's not funny

How to save and get money in
less usual wayspp.15

From Campus to Career

How STAV Connects
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A stylized illustration of a hand holding a rolled-up document or a stack of money. The hand is brown with black outlines. The rolled-up item is tan with black lines and text, suggesting a document or a check. The background is a light blue gradient with a white diagonal line.

FINANCES

Money Money

Money – It's not funny

"Just get a job," they say. That is all nice and well, but what if 'just a job' is not enough on its own anymore? This year as well, the trend of increasing prices without increasing income at the same rate continues, and while the causes are countless and easy to argue about, knowing about them does not lessen their effect on our daily lives. So, what ways exist to lessen the financial strain for students who cannot earn more than what a mini job allows due to also receiving BAföG? What do they do if time does not permit them to work more than ten hours a week? What if they need to earn more than the mini job maximum wage?

Luckily, there are more ways to protect one's financial situation than just having a regular job, although it remains the most secure, high-yielding and recurring method. The following tips are not intended to replace employment but instead bolster or lighten an existing situation. It also broadens employment options.

(Regularly) repeating income with active participation

Werkstudent

Being employed as a Werkstudent brings with it certain benefits for both employer and employee. Both are taxed less than in regular part-time employment as only pension contributions of 9.3% are deducted. What some may not know is that the job does not have to match the field of study. Studying history still allows you to work at a supermarket. Apart from this, it allows for working 20 h/week, more throughout semester breaks, on weekends or at nights, as long as it does not surpass 182 days. Up to €12,348 a year is tax-exempt. Being a Werkstudent is a great alternative, as long as you do not receive BAföG (more pay than a mini job would lead to deductions from the amount paid by this student loan), pay your own health insurance (when on a family member's insurance, only up to 565€ per month are allowed income) and are neither over 30 years of age, nor past the 25th

semester.

STAV

The STAV is a student-exclusive work agency which has its own article in this magazine, so this will be kept brief. Apart from regular jobs, low-hour or one-time arrangements are available occasionally, which might be helpful in situations where money is tight temporarily. The variability and changing of options, make the STAV attractive when in need of flexibility.

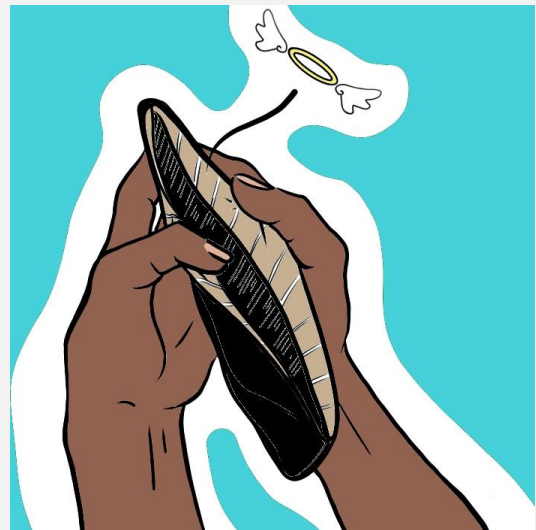
Voluntary Work

Voluntary work can be compensated by paying the volunteer an 'Aufwandsentschädigung' (AE), a flat fee usually lower than minimum wage and not linked to hours worked, which remains untaxed up to €960 a year. Combined with a mini job, both incomes still stay tax-free, since they fall under different categories. This should function similarly when adding BAföG into the equation, although there have been cases where some BAföG departments and their workers were of differing opinion. There is an abundance of places to do such voluntary work - one in proximity to the university would be the StuRa. Voluntary work is a great way to combine earning some extra money and enriching our own, as well as other people's lives. Additionally, when doing voluntary work, an 'Ehrenamtspass' can be applied for, which grants multiple

discounts and benefits, like lower entrance fees at Dresden's public pools.

Blood Plasma Donation

If you are not scared of needles, generally healthy and over 50 kg, plasma donation can be a great way to earn some extra money. It can be done every two days, although resting longer in between may prove more sustainable in the long-term. It takes around an hour, including sign-in, and yields anywhere from €20 to €45. Since only the plasma is taken and the red blood cells, plus hydration are returned to the body, it is less strenuous and can be done more frequently than donating blood. Haema pays the most in Dresden. It also offers a monetary bonus if you refer another person.



Financial aid

Wohngeld

This financial aid can be applied to, if you are not entitled to BAföG. It is only intended to ease someone's financial burden, not fully finance them, which means, the applicant has to earn enough income to survive to be granted this, although the exact amount heavily depends on the height of indispensable expenses, like rent and health insurance, and whether living expenses are above or below average. If the aid is granted, an additional benefit can be applied for, which is the 'Dresden Pass' and has similar benefits to the 'Ehrenamtspass'.

Sozialberatung

The StuWe offers social advisors, who are knowledgeable in student-related financial problems and options. Apart from advising, they offer two monetary aids. One is a prepaid mensa card of €100, which can be applied for every year, the other consists of a one-time payment of €800, no repayment necessary. This is intended specifically to overcome temporary troubles. Both options can be applied for simultaneously.

StuRa Härtefall (Hardship Application)

For half of a student's regular semesters (a bachelor's degree is six semesters, so for three of them this aid can be granted, if you fit the criteria), you can apply to get

your entire semester fee reimbursed. This is intended for people in financial hardship, hence the name.

Loyalty apps

AOK Bonusprogramm

Many health insurances offer bonus programmes, where practising certain health-related actions (i.e. getting a vaccine, donating plasma or staying active) is rewarded with points. The AOK, for example, offers up to €200 a year in cash or up to €400 worth of health-related non-cash rewards. Points are doubled for non-cash usage, like subsidising a teeth cleaning or fitness watch.

Payback

Payback hands out points for every euro spent, not only at an assortment of supermarkets but also at countless online retailers. Points can either be converted to money and used like an EC card, or be exchanged for rewards in their rewards shop, which has a range of products, from gift cards to household appliances. Additionally, there is a changing variety of mobile games, which grant points according to game progress. They must be downloaded via redirection from the Payback app to the app store. This is especially convenient if someone already plays mobile games, so there would be no additional time expenditure.



Other Loyalty Apps

Apart from Payback, there are more loyalty apps which grant

benefits to their users. Supermarket apps prove useful for the most frequented stores. They entail different perks, from higher discounts to bonus point collection. Check24 is great for not only comparing different options of Wi-Fi, insurance or bank accounts, but also for saving and recovering money via their cashback options.

That concludes the overview. This article is not intended as an advertisement but consists of an arrangement of options that have all been tested personally.

Cora Wunsch

From Campus to Career

How STAV Connects Students with Work

For many university students, earning a degree is no longer the only challenge. Rising living costs, increasing rents, and limited financial aid have made part-time work an essential part of student life. Yet finding flexible employment that fits around lectures, exams, and assignments can be difficult. This is where the Student Employment Agency (STAV) steps in.

Run by students for students, STAV has become an important bridge between university life and the job market. By connecting students with employers specifically looking for student workers, the agency offers opportunities that are designed to fit the realities of academic life.



A Service by Students, for Students

Mercedes Braun, a long-time member of the STAV team has witnessed the agency's development over the years. Having started as a job coordinator, she spent much of their time matching students with employers, answering questions, and managing placements. Her role has since expanded beyond the office. Alongside organizing student events and representing STAV at university information fairs, she now oversees the agency's marketing and social media, helping even more students discover the service.

The variety of jobs available through STAV reflects the diverse needs of students. New vacancies arrive almost every weekday, while filled positions are quickly replaced with fresh opportunities. Students can find everything from one-day moving jobs and event work to tutoring positions and long-term part-time employment in companies, including positions in the IT sector.

Financial Support Through Flexible Employment

"Many students simply can't finance their studies without working anymore", the STAV representative explains. Rather than spending weeks searching through countless job portals, students can use STAV to access employers who are already interested in hiring university students. Beyond making introductions, the agency also serves as a point of contact if problems arise between students and employers.

While financial necessity remains the primary reason students seek employment through STAV, earning money is only part of the picture. Many students also hope to gain valuable professional experience that will strengthen their future careers. Since most positions require little or no previous work experience, STAV often provides students with their first opportunity to enter the workforce.

Jobs That Fit Student Life

The agency places particular emphasis on flexibility. Short-term and medium-term jobs are especially attractive because they allow students to earn additional income without making long-term commitments. Weekend moving jobs, market work, or positions requiring only a few hours each week make it possible to balance employment with coursework.

Employers who advertise through STAV generally understand that students' studies come first and often structure working hours accordingly. Accessing these opportunities is intentionally straightforward. After completing an online registration and a one-time identity verification, students can browse available positions through STAV's online platform and apply with just a few clicks.

Interestingly, employers are often less concerned with technical qualifications than many students expect. While some specialist knowledge may be helpful for certain roles, reliability consistently ranks as the quality employers value most.



Challenges for International Students

One area where STAV hopes to see significant improvement is the availability of jobs for international students. According to the agency, there is enormous demand from students whose strongest language is English. Unfortunately, relatively few employers currently offer positions that require little or no German, and those vacancies tend to disappear almost immediately after being posted.

STAV frequently contacts employers to encourage them to consider applicants with more limited German language skills, but the team believes there is still considerable room for improvement. Expanding opportunities for international students remains one of the key challenges in the local student job market.

More Than a Job Placement Agency

The agency's commitment to students extends beyond simply filling vacancies. Feedback

from students is overwhelmingly positive, and when workplace problems do occur, STAV actively mediates between students and employers. In some cases, if an employer repeatedly fails to provide a suitable working environment, the agency will end its cooperation with that company altogether.

This support network provides students with additional security and reassurance, particularly for those entering the workforce for the first time

Rising Costs Increase the Need for Student Jobs

The changing economic situation has only reinforced STAV's importance. As living expenses continue to rise and financial support such as BAföG remains inaccessible for many students, part-time employment has become essential rather than optional. International students often face even greater financial pressures due to additional restrictions and limited funding opportunities. For many, a student-friendly job is what makes university education financially possible.

Looking Ahead

Despite operating successfully for many years, STAV continues to evolve. The team is currently developing a new website and producing an image film to increase awareness—not only among students, who are already familiar with the service, but also among employers who may not yet realize the benefits of hiring student workers through the agency.

Looking ahead, the message from STAV is both practical and encouraging. Students who worry about their finances but hesitate to seek help are encouraged to give the service a chance.

Although the initial veri-

fication process requires a small amount of effort, it is a one-time step that ensures the platform remains exclusive to students. After that, finding suitable employment becomes simple, accessible, and tailored to the demands of university life.

In a time when balancing academic success with financial stability is becoming increasingly challenging, STAV offers more than just job listings. It provides students with opportunities, support, and reassurance that they do not have to navigate the challenges of student employment alone.

Marcel Schuster

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ABROAD

Teaching German as a Foreign Language in the UK

"If you're looking for an experience that challenges you professionally as well as personally, I'd choose PAD over a traditional semester abroad every time," reflects Fenja. She spent the last winter semester in Cambridge, where she worked as a modern language assistant at a sixth-form college through the *Pädagogischer Austauschdienst* (PAD). There, she taught German in individual conversation classes, supported students preparing for their A-level exams, took part in mock oral exams as an examiner, and even accompanied a school exchange to Hamburg.

For Fenja, the placement was more than a semester abroad: it was the beginning and therefore an important step in her teaching career. For many students of English, spending time in the United Kingdom has long been considered an essential part of their studies. However, after the UK's withdrawal from Erasmus+, many assumed that this opportunity had disappeared. While the UK is gradually reconnecting with European exchange programmes, teaching placements remain one of the most rewarding ways to experience British education from the inside. One programme that has continued to make this possible is the *Pädagogischer Austauschdienst*, which places German language assistants in schools across the world.

Fenja Idun Bühler, now in her sixth semester of teacher training for English, German, and German as a Second Language, chose exactly this path. Instead of spending a semester attending university lectures abroad, she became part of everyday school life in Cambridge. "I somehow wanted more than improving my English," she explains. "I wanted to see how language teaching actually works in another country and whether the theories we discuss at university really come alive in the classroom."

Like many participants, Fenja arrived with a mixture of excitement and uncertainty. Although she had prepared herself for British life, some differences only became apparent once she entered the school building. The atmosphere immediately stood out to her. Teachers and students interacted respectfully and formally, and school traditions played a much bigger role than she had expected. Rather than simply observing lessons from the back of the classroom, she quickly became an active member of the language department.

Her main responsibility was leading individual German conversation sessions with students preparing for their A-level examinations. These lessons focused less on memorising vocabulary and more on helping students communicate naturally and confidently. "It was fascinating to see how motivated many students were," Fenja recalls. "For them, German wasn't just another school subject. Many wanted to study in Germany, travel there or simply challenge themselves by learning a language that isn't considered easy." An especially memorable experience came towards the end of the school year when she was invited to participate in the students' mock oral A-level examinations. Taking on the role of examiner allowed her to experience another aspect of British assessment culture. "I was nervous at first because it felt like a huge responsibility," she admits. "But it was also incredibly rewarding to see how much the students had improved throughout the year." The experience offered a perspective few university students have the opportunity to gain before entering the teaching profession. Although teaching formed the centre of her placement, life in the UK extended far beyond school. One particular highlight was accompanying her students and their German teacher on a school exchange to Hamburg in February 2026. Watching British students confidently communicate in German after months of practice was especially rewarding. "It was amazing to see everything come together," Fenja says. "In Cambridge, we had practised conversations, discussed cultural topics and prepared presentations. Then suddenly, the students were using all of that in real life." Moments like these demonstrated that language learning is ultimately about building connections rather than simply mastering grammar rules. Moreover, many students automatically associate studying abroad with university campuses, lectures and student accommodation.



PAD offers something fundamentally different. Rather than remaining a visitor at a university, language assistants become colleagues within a school community. They participate in staff meetings, prepare lessons with experienced teachers and gradually develop their own teaching style. For students considering a career in education, this practical experience provides insights that are difficult to gain elsewhere.

It allows them to discover whether teaching really suits them while simultaneously improving their language skills in an authentic environment.

But even students who do not intend to become teachers benefit from developing communication skills, intercultural competence and self-confidence; qualities that employers increasingly value across many professions.

Of course, moving abroad also brings challenges: Finding accommodation, adapting to unfamiliar administrative systems and building a new social circle can initially feel overwhelming. Teaching in another country's education system also requires flexibility. Classroom expectations, lesson structures and communication styles often differ considerably from those in Germany.

With discussions about renewed educational cooperation between Europe and the UK continuing, students may once again have several options for spending time abroad. Nevertheless, Fenja would still recommend a teaching placement to students of English. "If your goal is simply to experience student life, a university exchange can certainly be great," she says. "But if you want to develop professionally and experience British education from the inside, PAD offers something completely different."

For teacher-training students in particular, observing experienced colleagues, planning lessons and interacting daily with learners provide invaluable preparation for their own future classrooms. At the same time, language assistants become ambassadors of their own culture. They answer questions, challenge stereotypes and encourage young people to discover Germany through authentic encounters rather than textbook descriptions.

Looking back, Fenja describes her months in Cambridge not simply as time spent abroad, but as a period that shaped both her professional identity and her confidence as a future teacher. From her first conversation class to examining A-level students and accompanying a school exchange to Hamburg, every stage brought new experiences that no lecture hall could have offered.

For students considering a career in education, this practical experience provides insights that are difficult to gain elsewhere. It allows them to discover whether teaching really suits them while simultaneously improving their language skills in an authentic environment.

Richard Rüger



The Best Way to Go Abroad!?

Imagine living in a city like New York, having your rent and food paid for, improving your English every day, and still being able to travel across the United States. For many students, this sounds too good to be true. But for au pairs, it is reality.

If you are reading this, chances are that you are either a student in the English Department or know someone who is. If so, the topic of going abroad has probably come up more than once, since it is one of our graduation requirements. Yet, when planning their time abroad, many students overlook the au pair program because they associate it solely with childcare, missing out on everything else it offers.

As a former au pair, let me give you a quick summary of what this experience provided me: I spent less money than I would have in Germany, found a second family that I still visit every year, and traveled to 15 cities across 12 states. I also learned more about working with children than in eight semesters of my teaching program, observed firsthand what we usually discuss in

seminars, made friends for life, and turned an American city into my second home.

Yes, as an au pair, you essentially become a live-in nanny. In return, however, you receive full board, your own room and bathroom, a weekly stipend, and, most often, access to a car or a public transit pass. On top of that, you get the opportunity to attend an American university or college.

If you want an affordable, immersive, adventurous, structured, and educational way to live abroad, working as an au pair is certainly one of the most attractive options available.



Why You Should Become an Au Pair

Affordability & Living Conditions

Most au pair programs in the U.S. last between 12 and 24 months. (Programs in other countries offer stays from as little as three months.) During that time, participants live with a host family, work up to 45 hours per week, and receive a weekly stipend of around \$195, while housing and food are fully covered. This makes it one of the most affordable ways for students to live abroad, especially compared to traditional exchange semesters, where rent, groceries, and tuition often create significant financial pressure.

However, it is important to be realistic: The pay is modest, and saving large sums is unlikely. But because your living expenses are covered, you can focus on the experience itself rather than financial stress. Many host families even provide additional benefits such as gym memberships or family vacations. Being invited to a beach trip to Florida was one of my personal highlights.



Cultural Immersion & Teaching Relevance

Living with an American family means you are immersed in the culture from day one, not just visiting it as a tourist or staying within an international student bubble. You share meals, celebrate holidays, attend local events, and navigate real everyday life. This kind of exposure not only improves your social skills but also accelerates your English proficiency. You are no longer just studying the language. You are actively using it to resolve conflicts, comfort an upset child, and handle day-to-day situations like opening a bank account.



For students in the teaching program, the childcare aspect is particularly valuable. The hands-on engagement with children is something no seminar can replicate. At the same time, differences in communication and parenting styles can be challenging, but they often lead to personal growth and deeper cultural understanding. For me personally, observing different family dynamics was incredibly insightful.



In addition, the American au pair program requires you to attend courses at a university or college. For this, you can either select those that match your German degree or also take a unique class, like pottery, just for fun. Apart from enjoying this special opportunity, I was able to have 10 Credit Points recognized here at TUD.

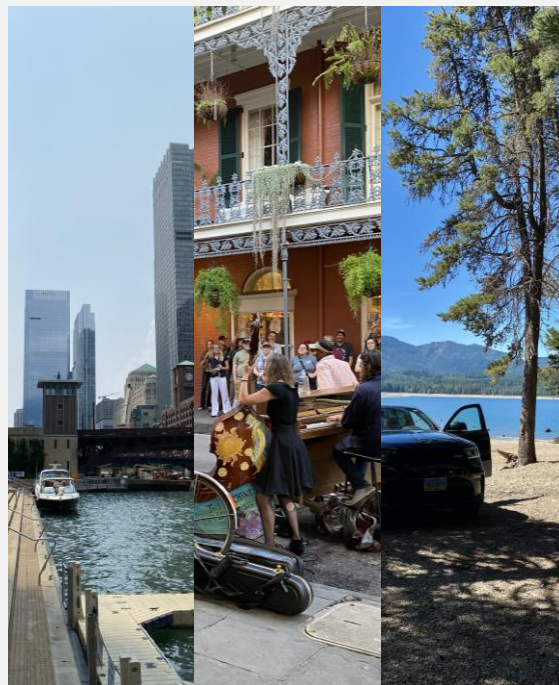
Structure, Support & Travel

When planning your au pair year, I highly recommend using a reputable agency like AIFS or Cultural Care. They assist with the application process, visa procedures, and insurance. Furthermore, they organize orientation days in NYC and regular meetings where you can connect with other au pairs. And if things genuinely do not work out with your host family, they

offer a rematch system.

While these group hangouts can feel less useful in practice, having this safety net was one of the biggest reasons I chose to go abroad as an au pair rather than organize a gap year independently.

The agencies also ensure your rights are respected, including designated time off, paid vacation of at least two weeks, and a travel month at the end of your stay. This makes exploring the U.S. genuinely doable. I personally tried to travel as much as possible and visited all sorts of places, like Chicago, New Orleans, and Washington State.



While planning sometimes came with challenges, especially when coordinating with others and taking their needs into account, traveling remains one of the most rewarding parts of my year abroad.

This sounds like something you want to do (as well)? Here is ...

How You Can Make It Happen

To become an au pair in the U.S., you will need to be:

- Between 18 and 26 years old
- Available for at least 12 months (3 months in other countries)
- In possession of ≥ 200 hours of childcare experience
- Holder of a passport and driver's license
- Unmarried, without children, and vaccinated
- Proficient in English

The process looks like this:

1. Apply
2. Create your profile
3. Interview with agency staff
4. Match with host family
5. Handle visa, health, and police clearance
6. Make your payment (between €1000-2000, flights included)
7. Board your flight
8. Attend orientation days
9. Join your host family

Tips From Someone Who's Been There

Start early. Applying three

months before departure is possible, but stressful.

When choosing your host family, do not focus too much on the location. I actually ended up in Texas, the one state I did not want to go to, and came to really enjoy it!

Ask about everything that matters to you, speak to them multiple times, and get to know the children too. I had four pages of questions and was glad I asked them all.

Say yes when you are invited somewhere. This will allow you to meet new people and experience typical American things. I personally met many locals by attending dance lessons.



Be mindful of your expenses, as small daily choices add up. If you want to attend a gym, I can recommend Planet Fitness. It is incredibly cheap, open 24/7, and you can find one almost everywhere.

Conclusion

The au pair program is not for everyone. It requires flexibility, responsibility, and willingness to integrate into another family's daily life. However, for students seeking an affordable and structured way to complete their required stay abroad, it offers a unique combination of benefits:

cultural, personal, and professional insight.

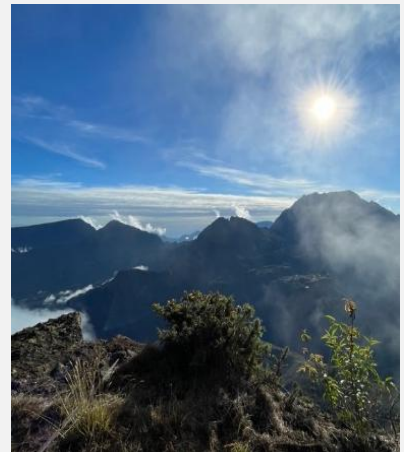
My year overseas was not always easy or dreamy, but it provided me with valuable experiences, growth, and relationships that will forever have a lasting impact on me.

Annika Hellbach

Studying English on a French Tropical Island?

Notes from an Erasmus Semester at the University of Reunion Island

“Do you like good weather?” This is perhaps the most common question people ask when they hear about Réunion Island. Yet, the island offers far more than sunshine, palm trees, and turquoise lagoons. Have you ever considered studying English on a tropical island in the middle of the Indian Ocean? At first glance, the idea appears paradoxical. English Studies are generally associated with the UK, Ireland, or the United States rather than a French overseas department situated approximately 9,400 kilometres from Paris.



Nevertheless, spending an Erasmus semester on La Réunion proved to be one of the most distinctive academic and intercultural experiences imaginable for me.

Before my departure, I expected a rather idyllic island lifestyle dominated by beaches and warm weather. Reality, however, was considerably more complex and enriching. Réunion is not merely a tropical destination but a fascinating multicultural society shaped by African, Indian, Malagasy, Chinese, and European influences. The island's multilingualism, cultural diversity, and postcolonial history create a unique environment for students of languages and cultures. Located east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, Réunion is an overseas department of France and therefore fully integrated into the French Republic and the European Union. Despite its political status, the island possesses a strong local identity shaped by centuries of migration and cultural exchange. This diversity is reflected in everyday life: French functions as the official language, while Réunion Creole remains deeply embedded in social and cultural interaction.

The physical landscape of Réunion is equally extraordinary. Within a relatively small area of merely around 2,500 square kilometres, one encounters volcanic mountains, tropical forests, dramatic cirques, waterfalls, black-sand beaches, and coral lagoons. The active volcano Piton de la Fournaise constitutes one of the island's most iconic landmarks and symbolises the dynamic nature of Réunion itself. Student life unfolds amidst this remarkable scenery, creating an atmosphere entirely different from that of a typical European university town. Hiking after seminars, swimming in the Indian Ocean at weekends, or simply studying under palm trees became part of everyday academic life. The tropical climate and geographical isolation foster a slower rhythm of life, which, to me, contrasts sharply with the often hectic pace of German universities. Studying at Université de La Réunion represented an equally distinctive experience.



The campus atmosphere was notably relaxed and conducive to learning, even though relationships between lecturers and students appeared more formal and distanced than those I have observed at TUD. At the same time, adapting to the French academic system required a certain degree of flexibility, because administrative processes occasionally seemed slower and more bureaucratic, while teaching methods often differed from those to which I had become accustomed. The Erasmus programme provided access to a broad selection of courses.

One particularly memorable seminar focused on volcanology and explored the geological formation of volcanic islands such as Réunion. Another course centred on Réunion Creole, examining both the language's historical development and its significance as an expression of cultural identity. Questions of multilingual communication and linguistic hierarchies on the island demonstrated how deeply language is intertwined with history, power, and belonging. These discussions also highlighted the complex relationship





between language policy, education, and social inclusion in postcolonial societies.

In addition, I attended Master's-level seminars within the Anglophone Studies programme. Courses included American Civilisation, British Civilisation and Historiography, British Literature, and South African Literature. The latter was particularly fascinating, as South African literary studies are not commonly represented within our English Studies curriculum, and engaging with postcolonial and intercultural perspectives from the Global South significantly expanded my understanding of Anglophone literature beyond the traditional British and American canon.

For students considering a semester abroad, La Réunion represents an exceptional yet often overlooked destination. One of its greatest advantages lies in the combination of academic and personal development. Students not only improve their English skills at university but also strengthen their proficiency in French through daily immersion. However, as a beginner in French, you could also participate in the programme and primarily take courses that are offered in English and French language courses. Beyond academia, La Réunion offers extraordinary opportunities for travel and exploration: Hiking in volcanic landscapes, discovering remote mountain villages, or exploring tropical coastlines contribute to a uniquely enriching student experience. From a practical perspective, careful preparation remains essential. The Erasmus application process is relatively straightforward, and financial support through Erasmus grants helps alleviate some expenses. Nevertheless, affordable accommodation on the island can be challenging to secure, and both flights and living costs are considerably higher than in mainland Europe.

Despite these challenges, the academic recognition of modules and the uniqueness of the experience make Réunion an attractive alternative to more conventional Erasmus destinations. Ultimately, studying English on a French tropical island demonstrated that academic learning can occur far beyond the traditional centres of Anglophone culture. My Erasmus semester at Université de La Réunion combined academic enrichment, intercultural learning, and personal growth in ways that would have been impossible within a more conventional exchange programme. Living and studying in such an unfamiliar environment required leaving my comfort zone, adapting to new academic structures, and engaging with entirely different cultural perspectives. For students willing to embrace both the challenges and rewards of studying abroad, La Réunion offers an unforgettable “win-win” experience: academically, culturally, and personally. The combination of a distinctive educational setting, a unique cultural landscape, and opportunities for personal development makes the island a particularly rewarding destination for Erasmus students seeking an alternative to more conventional exchange locations.

Prospective exchange students should, however, be aware of certain practical considerations. Given the island’s tropical climate, essential everyday items such as sunscreen are more expensive than in Germany and are therefore worth planning for in advance. Furthermore, mobility can present challenges for students without access to a car, making a degree of flexibility and reliance on public transportation, ride-sharing opportunities, or other alternative transport options necessary. Nevertheless, these logistical aspects are minor in comparison to the considerable academic, intercultural, and personal benefits that studying on Reunion Island provides.

Richard Rüger

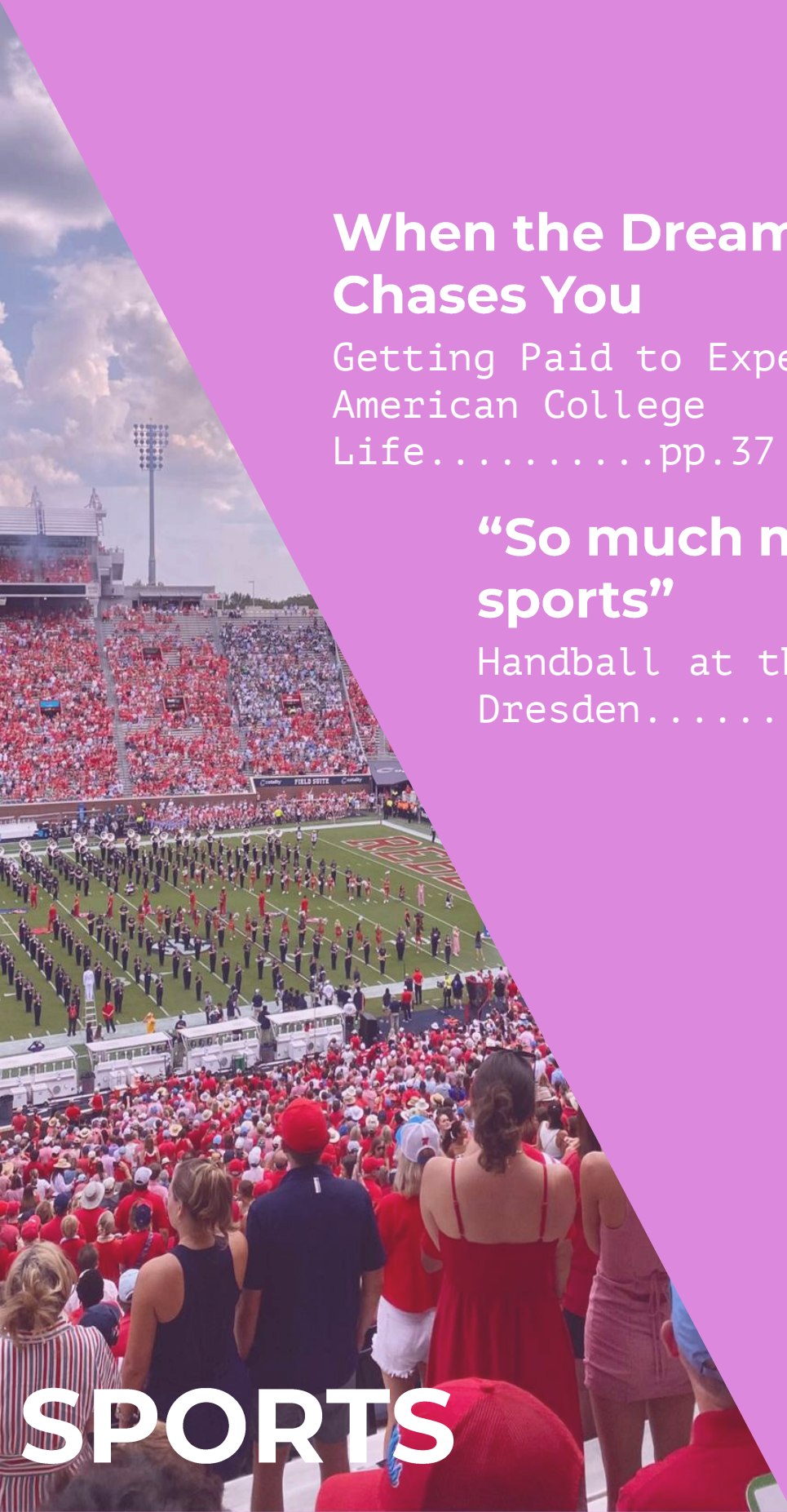


When the Dream Chases You

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American College
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“So much more than sports”

Handball at the TU
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SPORTS

When the Dream Chases You

Getting Paid to Experience American College Life

At first glance, Emily's story does not seem all that different from those of many TUD students: She grew up in Saxony, completed countless assignments, and went abroad. Yet while most of us devote months to applying for international exchange opportunities, she spent years turning them down.

By the time Emily graduated from high school, more than thirty American colleges had offered her scholarships. But because she was pursuing a different dream, she rejected all of them. Years later, however, when that path no longer felt right, the opportunity she thought she had left behind returned and became exactly what she needed.



From Hobby to Career

Emily first picked up a tennis racket at the age of six. As she improved, it became more than a leisure activity. At twelve, she moved to Dresden to attend a sports boarding school, where her days revolved around practice, homework, and weekend tournaments.

After graduating from high school, Emily turned pro: "I just wanted to see what I was capable of," she says. As a result, she turned down every offer, since competing professionally back then automatically disqualified athletes from American college sports.

For four years, she competed across Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America while completing a psychology degree through distance learning. During that time, she climbed into the world's top 600, but injuries and financial realities eventually outweighed the excitement of the game. By fall 2024, she says, "I actually hadn't touched a racket for three months." With her bachelor's thesis taking shape and a potential master's

still a year away, she found herself wondering what to do next.

The answer arrived unexpectedly: a German tennis coach from the University of Mississippi - better known as Ole Miss - reached out to her. Thanks to recent NCAA rule changes, Emily was suddenly eligible to play college tennis in the U.S. despite her professional past, and the timing could hardly have been better.



A couple of weeks later, she landed in Mississippi. Everything happened at such short notice that she missed key deadlines, but Ole Miss organized her enrollment, arranged her classes, and cleared her to compete anyway. "If they really want you on that team," Emily says, "they'll figure it out."

More Than What You See in the Movies

Like many in Germany, Emily knew American college life only from films and social media: football games, cheerleaders, fraternities, and strong school spirit. Arriving at Ole Miss, she realized that much of it was indeed real.



What stood out especially was how central sports were. As she puts it, "I want to say that most of the jobs at the university are getting paid just because of college sports," referring to the visibility and revenue that they create. To support this, universities recruit talented athletes worldwide and offer scholarships covering far more than tuition.

Life as a student-athlete came with an unexpected level of support. Training facilities, physiotherapy, equipment, meals, housing, and travel were all organized. One funny side effect, Emily laughs, was the endless supply of team merch she received. By the end, she had accumulated enough gear to fill several suitcases. And some experiences just felt surreal: on one away trip, her team even traveled by private jet.



Yet these are not the memories she mentions first. Instead, she talks about people. After years as a solo athlete, carrying every win and loss alone, she came to value sharing these experiences most: "I just really enjoyed being part of a team."

That feeling extended far beyond athletics. She looks back fondly on how naturally conversations with strangers developed, and how friendly people generally were: "[There is] more sense of a community," she notes. It was an atmosphere that noticeably affected her everyday mood and made daily life feel much more fun.

Balancing studies and sport still required discipline. Weekly assignments, exams, daily training, and frequent travel for competitions all had to fit together. As the team's number one player, she also felt the responsibility that came with it: "You kind of have to perform, and you feel like everyone expects you to play well."



But this time, being on the court felt different again. During her season, Emily earned All-American honors, which is one of the highest distinctions in U.S. college athletics. More importantly, though, she rediscovered something she had lost during her professional years: "finding that joy of playing tennis again."

Of course, living in a different culture came with contrasts: "There's a lot of people where you almost have the feeling [that] for them there's the U.S., and that's it." At the same time, though, she believes spending time abroad is the only way to move beyond clichés. "I would definitely recommend going abroad," she says, to "create your own picture" of a place, improve language skills, and gain more confidence.

Emily is back in Germany - at least for now - and will begin a master's degree in sports psychology this fall. Although she never planned on studying in the United States, the opportunity arrived at exactly the right moment. What started as a temporary solution became one of the most meaningful chapters of her life.

And maybe this is the ultimate takeaway: sometimes, the most defining paths are not the ones we map out, but the ones we allow ourselves to take when they appear.

Annika Hellbach

“So much more than sports”

Handball at the TU Dresden

Just about everyone who tried to sign up for one of the volleyball classes during their first semester, only to be disillusioned by the fact that they were already fully booked within seconds, probably knows that the Dresden University of Technology offers sports programs.

Of course, my goal in this article isn't to reflect on personal experiences, but rather to provide insight into the organization and structure of sports life at our university.

One sport offered by the DHSZ every semester is handball, and out of personal interest, I chose it. I sat down with Nicole Flechs, responsible for coordinating handball at the university, for an interview on a sunny Wednesday and learned, among other things, that handball at the university is much more than 'just handball.'

Nicole started handball at the TU in 2016, joined the coaching staff in 2021, and for four years she has been "the liaison between the coaches and the DHSZ itself". Drawing on her knowledge and experience, she was able to give me insight into the structures and activities, as well as the challenges, of university handball at TU Dresden.



How does handball work at the university?

Handball at TUD is organized in different skill levels. From Basic Courses I and II, through Intermediate Course III, to the Advanced Course and the University Selection, the individual courses are designed to ensure the best possible playing experience and development for athletes of all skill levels. Nicole explained the organisation in great detail.

how to make runs, how to position themselves effectively on defence, one-on-one situations, that sort of thing. And the advanced level is really aimed at people who have maybe been playing for a club for a long time, maybe even at a slightly higher level at some point, and who either come here to Dresden for club training or do it back home."

"So, we basically have a class that is open to complete beginners. It would be nice if you could at least sort of catch and throw, but you can basically just come by, or rather, not just come by, but actually sign up, even if you do not know any of the rules. Just learn the basics of handball, a little bit about how the throws work, what is best, the stance you take, and stuff like that. Then we also have a sort of "beginner follow-up" level. That is for those who already know the rules and have played with us a little bit before. It's just, let say, a sort of in-between level for people who have played with the club before and for the absolute beginners. Because at the intermediate level, we do expect people to know a few basic tactical elements—like

Nicole emphasizes, however, that what the TU offers is by no means comparable to what a professional club offers. For organizational reasons, training cannot be offered multiple times a week; all skill levels train once a week, always in mixed groups.

"So, it is really more of a supportive, very low-barrier opportunity, the kind where you can just drop by, socialize, and meet people who might share similar interests, because handball players, I think, are a pretty close-knit bunch. After all, training has to cover just about everything, which can sometimes be a bit of a challenge in just an hour and a half."

“So much more than sports” - The University Selection and its adventures

The University Selection team must surely be considered the holy grail of university handball. This is the team that competes in tournaments just like the SHM (Sächsische Hochschulmeisterschaften), DHM (Deutsche Hochschulmeisterschaften) or even the EUG (European University Games). The selection is also a mixed team, which consists of about 20 people who are chosen for the team based on their performance, but who also have to be a good fit for the team. After all, team chemistry and social dynamics are just as important here as in the other courses.

“We say that when all the coaches are there, we take a look at who we might really like, in terms of their moves, so to speak, but also who gives us the feeling that, hey, this person is going to help the team move forward somehow, because, for example, they give the best support, like a teammate just did something awesome, really great, and you support them, because that is obviously part of what makes a team sport a team sport - that you get along well within the team and support each other.”

The achievements of the hand-ball program at TU Dresden prove that this approach might be a recipe for success. In 2026, both Dresden teams landed on first and second place at the SHM, and in 2025, TU were crowned the German University Champion in Handball, in a home game for our university and thereby qualifying for the European Championship in Salerno in July/August of this year. While the focus at such tournaments is clearly (and must be) on the athletic aspect, there are also events like the Pentecost Tournament in Magdeburg.

The tournament in Magdeburg is always around Pentecost, which means you head there on Friday and drive back on Sunday evening, and the focus is really just on having fun playing and drinking.

On trips like these, new friendships, connections with other universities, and, as Nicole mentioned, often relationships are formed. They also offer a great opportunity to prepare for major events like the European Championships. For Nicole, qualifying for the tournament still feels like a dream for the men's team.

Well, I think if you had told us four years ago that we would be competing in a European Championship, I probably would have laughed it off, because that is actually such a far-fetched idea. I mean, since I started in 2016, we have never even participated in a German university championship, and now we have just won it and get to go to the European Championship. Just think about it - you will be able to say "I played in a European Championship". That is crazy. Actually.

Challenges and their solutions

Amid all the excitement over achievements and fun evenings out, we must also address the challenges facing university sports, using handball as an example. That is because TU Dresden does not really have much money to spare for the DHSZ and, consequently, for its sports programs. Due to the difficult situation following the pandemic, the handball classes, for example, had to be held for a while in the gym on August-Bebel-Straße, which is far too small, has hardly any equipment, and lacks goals. Orders for equipment placed through the DHSZ were either rejected or would have taken years to process, so Nicole and her colleagues often had to pay out of their own pockets to ensure the courses could take place and continue doing so.

As a coaching staff, we get together regularly and just browse through whatever deals are out there. What does Decathlon have on sale right now that's still within our budget?

And even the absolute highlight of the year, the EUG is not a done deal yet. Participation is expensive, and the university can't cover the costs. There's talk of nearly €22,000 so that everyone can go. But here, too, Nicole and her team have gotten creative again. They are actively seeking sponsors and launching a fundraising campaign. Still, the costs are not fully covered yet.

But as anyone involved in sports knows, even though just participating would be a huge success, when traveling to Salerno in beautiful Italy, the men still want to bring the championship home!



Aurelius Reich

Contributors

