



# **International Business Collaboration gives SIUE graduates competitive edge, supports local company**

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EDWARDSVILLE - When Italian students Pietro Beimer and Gabriele Fancelli arrived at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville in August 2017, they expected to complete a one-year partnership program and receive their bachelor's degrees in business from the American institution.

While they fulfilled that expectation, they graduated in May 2018 with not only expanded knowledge, but also hands-on experience that has given them a competitive edge in the business world.

Beimer and Fancelli took part in the SIUE School of Business's exchange program with Italy's University of Torino. While at SIUE, School of Business Associate Dean Janice Joplin, PhD, connected them with the International Trade Center (ITC) at SIUE Director Silvia Torres-Bowman, to see how the students may be able to collaborate with her and support ITC clients.

Torres-Bowman connected the students with long-time ITC client Craig Eversmann, president and CEO of Marsh Shipping Supply Co, LLC (MSSC) in Collinsville. The manufacturer was looking to re-energize its presence in Italy and identify a new, excited industrial distributor for its products in that marketplace.

"We meet with Eversmann and the MSSC to learn their needs and objectives, and we tried to translate them, with the help of Silvia, and produce a strategy for the company to find an Italian distributor," explained Beimer.

"This collaboration offered us a taste of consulting work, not only the office side, but also the research side," added Fancelli. "We went to their facilities and talked with them, which was both challenging and very interesting. It was rewarding to put the pieces of the puzzle together and help MSSC work toward its goals."

According to Eversmann, the business students did tremendous research to identify approximately 25 potential distributors. Together, the company and students narrowed the list to five strong candidates.

"Pietro and Gabriele spoke excellent English and were fluent in Italian and other languages," explained Eversmann. "We started writing form letters and had the students translate them into Italian, which was by far and away our best chance to penetrate the Italian market."

"During our last meeting, after we had sent the messages out, they went on to coach us on some of the cultural uniqueness's of Italian business. Now, for the first time in several years, we have the possibility of re-entering that marketplace. There is just no substitute for their local knowledge and diligence."

The students' genuine commitment to this international business collaboration allowed Torres-Bowman to offer them autonomy as they built their professional experience.

"These students' initiative and self-motivation, really set them apart," Torres-Bowman said. "I was able to build trust in their work. Their ideas and approach to how we could best serve the client were outstanding. Proof of that is a pleased client. This is still a work in progress as MSSC awaits responses, but I'm confident that it will result in a successful distributor search for the company."

"Silvia believed in us," Beimer said. "It was a two-way relationship that motivated both myself and Gabriele to achieve positive results. This international experience has put us in a competitive position. Having an American degree, and the opportunity to work in the U.S. for months for a real company and client, versus only looking over case studies on paper, will help us as we look for jobs."

"Our relationship with the ITC is strong and this experience was extremely positive," Eversmann concluded. "It's incredibly valuable to have access to the ITC and be in close proximity to SIUE."

The [International Trade Center at SIUE](#) serves businesses in Southwestern Illinois by providing individualized, no-cost export consultation to Illinois businesses: identification of foreign buyers, agents and/or distributors through trade leads; international market analysis and more.

The ITC is funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. It has a longtime partnership with the Illinois Office of Trade and Investment (OTI), which maintains a full-time staff of both foreign and domestic-based international trade and marketing experts. OTI also manages 7 foreign trade offices located in Belgium, Japan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, Mexico, Canada and Israel.

[SIUE's School of Business](#) and the accountancy programs are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, representing the highest standard of achievement for business schools worldwide. The Princeton Review lists SIUE as one of the top 294 business schools in the U.S. for the 11th-consecutive year. Undergraduate and graduate degrees are offered in accounting, computer management and information systems, economics, finance, management and marketing. More than 27,000 alumni have earned degrees from the SIUE School of Business. For more information about the School of Business, visit [siue.edu/business](http://siue.edu/business).