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Braude International Relations Office

IRO News

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Our IRO:

Meet the Director: Dr. Shmuel Gazit



Dr. Gazit, can you tell us something about yourself?

My name is Samuel Gazit. I am a faculty member in the department of Mechanical Engineering, and I am also the Director of the International Relations Office (IRO) of Braude College. Braude College of Engineering has recognized the value of Internationalization as an important element of the institution's strategy. To effectively implement this strategy, we place a special focus on:

1. Student and staff mobility,
2. Participation in educational and research programs,
3. Networking and expanding our relationships internationally,
4. Membership in European associations and organizations,
5. Collaborative links with stakeholders.

Braude College has established the IRO to manage these important objectives, and I have been managing these activities since 2016.

What do you see as the main objectives of the IRO at Braude?

Braude College has identified three major objectives for the IRO:

1. To raise and advance the reputation of Braude College in Israel and abroad.
2. To promote the teaching and learning of engineering courses in English by Braude College students



3. To expand the mobility of students and faculty to Braude College, with the hope that the incoming students and faculty will be, upon their return to their homes, ambassadors of goodwill for Israel. Outgoing faculty and students are also expected to honorably represent Braude College and Israel while abroad.

I believe that through international relations and activities, Braude College will gain values both for the institution and for the individuals (students, faculty and administrators).

The IRO was set up in 2016 - what do you see as your greatest achievements so far?

The most important achievement has been raising the awareness among students, faculty and administrators of the value of the international activities at Braude College. In the past five years, we have added about 50 English-taught courses to the repertoire of our engineering training curriculum, which makes it possible for international students to study a wide range of courses in English. All the departments of Braude College have contributed English taught engineering courses to this growing pool of academic assets. Since 2018 it has become mandatory for every Braude College student to study at least one engineering course in English to fulfil the academic requirements for graduation with a B.Sc. degree. Another important achievement is the establishment of a Study Abroad Program, which has been hosting international students at Braude College continuously since 2013. Students from China, Europe and the USA participate for one semester in these programs, taking courses and performing research projects.

What are your IRO goals for the future?

Internationalization of Braude College can best be promoted through more faculty members, students and administrative personnel, accepting and recognizing the value of this goal. It is my objective to share my vision with more people at Braude College, and to motivate more students, faculty members and administrators to take part and support the internationalization activities. To date, the IRO has mostly been involved in convincing students and faculty to participate in international activities. My goal is to reach a time when students, faculty members and administrators will approach the IRO themselves with requests to participate in international programs. In summary, my goal is to achieve a state of “hunger/appetite” in Braude College students and faculty to participate in international activities. I also want Braude to become the preferred college of engineering for international students and faculty who compete for an Erasmus+ learning and teaching opportunity.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

I would like to thank Braude College management for supporting the IRO, by allocating personnel and budgets for its activities. Most people who are involved

in managing and supporting the IRO are partially volunteering their time to the objective of internationalizing Braude College. Among others, Ms. Liat Shmueli, Dr. Linda Weinberg, and Ms. Keren Berkowitz, contribute their time, primarily because they care and see the value of the IRO in promoting the goals of Braude College.

FOCUS:

In this and coming issues, the FOCUS section will highlight different partner institutions. In this issue, we focus on the [University of Innsbruck](#).



With a population of approximately 132,000, Innsbruck is the capital of Austria's western state of Tyrol, known for its imperial and modern architecture and as a popular destination for winter sports. Innsbruck hosted the 1964 and 1976 Winter Olympics as well as the 1984 and 1988 Winter Paralympics. Innsbruck also organizes the following annual events:

- Innsbrucker Tanzsommer
- Bergsilvester (New Year's Eve)
- Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik (Innsbruck Festival of Early Music)
- Christkindlmarkt (Christmas fair)



Innsbruck Airport is located in the suburb of Kranebitten, approximately 4 kilometres from the city centre. It provides services to airports including Frankfurt, London, Amsterdam and Vienna. It also handles regional flights around the Alps, as well as seasonal flights to other destinations. Almost anything in Innsbruck is within 20 minute walking distance or a 10 minute bike ride.

The **Leopold-Franzens University Innsbruck** was founded in 1669 and is currently Austria's leading university. Its main mandate is to focus on research and

development, teaching and continuing professional education and training. The University has 16 faculties and 81 institutes including business and management, biology, engineering sciences and mathematics, and physics and computer sciences. For the 2017-18 academic year, there were 27,769 students, including 11,359 international students and more than 4,500 staff and faculty members.

The University of Innsbruck also accommodates museums, archives and a botanical garden, as well academic associations and scientific societies committed to the promotion of science and the transfer of knowledge. Given its location, it is no surprise that the university hosts the Innsbruck Academic Alpine Club and the local Austrian Alpine Association.

The Erasmus+ program:

The Erasmus+ program is not just for students. With Erasmus+, opportunities are available for faculty to spend time teaching at an institution of higher education abroad. In the last year, a number of Braude lecturers have traveled to our partner institutions. In each issue we will hear from one of them.

Dr. Aviv Gibali:



In December 2017, thanks to Dr. Shmuel Gazit, I was awarded and AINAI Fellowship (Austria-Israel Academic Network Innsbruck) which enabled me to visit the University of Innsbruck in Austria where I collaborated with Professor Dr. Markus Haltmeier in the field of iterative methods for solving inverse problems. During this visit, Markus and I came up with some promising

research projects in the field of photoacoustic tomography and also decided to organize a joint Braude-Innsbruck Study Group with Industry (ESGI). The European Study Groups with Industry (ESGI) bring together industrialists, students, post-docs, and young academic researchers to work for a week in mathematical modeling and to enhance their collaborative and communication skills in a multinational and multidisciplinary environment. During the week, researchers from all over the world work together with industrialists on several intriguing problems in order to model and solve them.

In July 2018, Professor Haltmeier organized a [Deep Learning workshop](#) in Innsbruck and I was invited as a key speaker. This event was both interesting and



inspiring, and enabled me to strengthen my relationships with the Applied Mathematics Department in Innsbruck and with Professor Haltmeier's colleagues. We also managed to market our idea of a joint Israeli-Austrian Study Group with Industry. We applied for support from the Mathematics for Industry Network (MINET) as well as the European Consortium for

Mathematics in Industry (ECMI) and won 7500 Euros to organize our Study Group with Industry in Innsbruck which took place in early March, 2019. The official website is <https://esgi-innsbruck.uibk.ac.at> where you can find general information as well as a taste of the industrial problems investigated during the event.

The University of Innsbruck is located in a surreal location in the city of Innsbruck (capital of the Austrian state of Tyrol). It has excellent study facilities as well as a very conducive academic atmosphere and great winter sports. Based on my short experience, this is a wonderful place to visit and if possible to get a chance to study.



STUDENTS:

Studying abroad is a central part of the Erasmus+ program. Participation in the program has been shown to have a positive effect on later job prospects. It also provides the opportunity to improve language skills, gain self-confidence and independence while becoming immersed in a new culture. In 2018, 16 students from Braude participated in the Erasmus+ study abroad program. Let's hear from one of them.

Gal Swisa is a final year student in the Department of Industrial Management and Engineering. She tells us here a little about her experience:

Through the Erasmus+ program, I spent the second semester of 2018 studying at the University of Bergamo in Italy. I know some people think it is better or easier to



travel with a friend, but I embarked on this exchange by myself. That may not suit everyone, but for me, I think it was good idea to be alone, as I made a lot of friends with the international students within the program, and at the university with Italians. Perhaps, had I been with another student from Braude, I might not have made such an effort to make friends among the other students.

Bergamo:

Bergamo is a walled city in the Lombardy region of northern Italy, nestling in the foothills of the Alps. It is some 40 km northeast of Milan, with a population of approximately 120,000. The Città Alta (“upper city”) is the medieval hilltop town, surrounded by defensive walls from the 16th century; and the Città Bassa (“lower city”) is the newer part - the two parts of the town are connected by a funicular as well as roads and footpaths. Today the city’s economy is largely based on banking, retail and services for the industrial sector of the province (including steel as well as power and automation industries). There are many restaurants and pubs and the surrounding area is exceptionally beautiful. It is very close to the lakes (Lago di Como and Lago di Garda) and I managed to do a lot of traveling with my international friends, not just within Italy, but as Bergamo has the 4th busiest airport in Italy, with many low cost carriers operating from there, I took advantage of this to visit lots of other places – I even went to Morocco.

Studying in Bergamo:

The University of Bergamo was founded in 1968 and has approximately 20,000 students. They have some 120 incoming Erasmus students and send out around 400. The university has 8 campuses in and around the city. The engineering faculty is in Dalmine, which is approximately 8 kilometers southwest of Bergamo, which you can reach by bus.

Courses in English are taken with Italian students in the engineering faculty, but I also took some courses in other faculties in Bergamo itself. To study on both campuses is a bit of challenge because of the distance between the two, so you have to think carefully about your schedule. Sometimes, when students study abroad, it is a bit of a challenge to find sufficient relevant courses and to build up enough credits for the semester, but I found plenty of for-credit courses in management. There was also one obligatory course, which was also required in Braude, which was good. In this mandatory course I also learned two software programs, (MS project, and PTB), interestingly enough



with a professor from the Technion who was teaching there for a few weeks. In another course, I had a professor from Bar Ilan University, also for a few weeks. A lot depends on which semester you are taking and it seems that the most relevant courses are in the second semester. In the Start-Up course, I was able to teach some of the subjects as part of the course, but I also used the opportunity to talk about

Israel. People were very interested to learn about Israel, and very positive about it too.

Studies were enjoyable and relaxed. Sometimes the professor arrived late, but when in class, the teaching was effective, very interesting, very relevant and up to date. When I got back to Braude, thanks to the courses I had taken, I was able to help my friends to study for their exams.

Where to live:

I lived with other international students in the city. The university provides an accommodation service through the Erasmus office to help students find flats, but based on my experience, I don't recommend it. Bergamo Erasmus has its own [Facebook page](#) where students advertise for flatmates, and while it might be a little more expensive, you can get better apartments in better areas.



Social aspects:

Socially, this was a great experience. The Erasmus+ program arranged many social events so it was great fun. You should take extra money because you don't get all of the grant while you are there, and there are quite a few things you need to pay for such as deposits and immigration issues. Of course if you want to travel (and you should), or if you want a fancier apartment, well you need to pay for that out of your own pocket.

To sum up:

I highly recommend this program for other students. There were challenges, but it was a worthwhile experience, and I'd love to go there for another semester. Studying abroad has been very important for my self-confidence, for my life and for my future



career. This experience has been very useful in job interviews (Gal is now working in a company where she is putting her knowledge acquired in Italy to good use. She credits her participation in the Erasmus program with her selection to work on a large-scale international project in the high-tech sector in cooperation with an American company, where professional English is required). I've found out that it impresses potential employers, and of course it helps to improve your language skills. My English has improved a lot. It's much easier to talk and to read now (I had to read a lot in my courses). In the Start-Up course, I had to present in English every week. And although some people might worry about being an Israeli abroad, I had no bad experiences during my time there, and developed good relations with all the international students.

If you are interested in studying at Bergamo, I recommend that you get as much information online as you can and that you do so early enough to ensure you can register before all the courses fill up. I am more than happy to provide information and advice to future students. You can contact me via the IRO.

Incoming students:

This spring semester we welcome 6 students from the Beijing Union University, and one student each from the University of Bergamo in Italy, Innsbruck University in Austria and ORT Daniel Mayer High in France. Look out for them on campus, help them feel at home and take the opportunity to practice your English!!

In the next issue of the IRO News:

- **Profile:** Prof. Arie Maharshak, President of Braude College of Engineering
- **News from the field:** Students and lecturers abroad
- **Focus:** Cluj-Napoca, Romania
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