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What Goes Around

From Bulgaria to London, international students make connections that last.

Story by SARA (ZELLER) JULIAN '07



As an international student, Stefan Stoev (above) created a close network that continues after his 2010 graduation.

Stoev is now forming has come in large part from a friendship he developed while at Illinois Wesleyan. Arriving at IWU as an international student, Stoev connected with other international students, among them Stefan Filip '07. "When I came, I had no one here," Stoev says of his first year at IWU. "I had to start from the very beginning and create very close relationships with people who are going to be very close friends, like brothers, for the rest of my life."

Filip, an international student from Romania, felt the same way. "The international community at IWU was fairly small during my entrance to IWU. Therefore, it created a very strong relationship between all of us across all classes, first-years to seniors," he says. "I have kept in touch with them despite being across several time zones, from Nepal to San Francisco."

Stefan Stoev '10 is at an exciting point in his life. Just one year after graduating from Illinois Wesleyan, he is spending a whirlwind summer working two internships for international companies before returning to Boston this fall to complete his master's degree.

Growing up in his native Bulgaria, Stoev says he had one goal. "All I knew was that I wanted to go and get a good education in the U.S.," he says. From his first days on campus, International Student Advisor Reenie Bradley was impressed with the young man's work ethic.

"For him, it's not just the end of the project. It's about the learning along the way," she says. "Stefan kept plugging away and seemed to understand that learning happened as part of the journey, not just the end result."

Now an M.B.A. student at Brandeis University, Stoev credits his fascination with business to his first semester at IWU. "As soon as I took my first economics class, I knew that economics and business in particular is a field that really relates to my way of thinking," he says.

The wide array of possibilities and connections

Stoev was intrigued when Filip decided to pursue a master's degree in international finance from Brandeis University. Filip, who earned his master's degree in 2009, is now a funding analyst for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London. His team is responsible for financing the bank's operations, including issuing debt on the capital markets to fulfill a \$10 billion borrowing program. The bank's investments help build market economies and democracies in countries from central Europe to central Asia.



“Stefan was first to approach me regarding his plans to attend a business school,” Filip recalls. “He was very keen on finding out more about Brandeis as it was one of the schools that he was considering.”

Stefan Filip (above) helped Stoev in his education and internship decisions. Filip is a funding analyst for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London.

Stoev says he was attracted to Brandeis due to its international focus, the relatively new business program and the enthusiasm he felt on campus. “I thought it was a very cool combination for me. I feel like working hard is really not an issue there — that’s how everybody else is. It’s a good feeling.”

The connections he formed at IWU have already benefited Stoev. This summer, he is traveling to London for a 10-week internship with BlackRock, the world’s largest asset management firm. Filip’s connections helped Stoev land the job.

“I tried to help mainly by motivating him, advising him on what courses and activities would be valuable and tried to put him in touch with as many alumni as possible who could give him the extra push in securing an internship and a job in a top financial firm,” Filip says. Before he headed to London, Stoev spent six weeks in New York interning for Beekman Real Estate Investment Management, an international company dealing in commercial real estate.

This year, Stoev will pay forward the favors he has received from his classmate by mentoring incoming IWU first-year student Nikolay Karnev, a Bulgarian childhood friend who grew up on the same street. Like Stoev, Karnev has had a lifelong dream of coming to the United States for college. “I’m planning to guide him all the way through,” Stoev says. “I’m very excited.”

The dream continues for Stoev, who says the business world remains a source of constant fascination. “I’ve always been very curious about things, and I like to know how things work,” he says. “It’s addictive. It’s never-ending.”

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