Intro – #00:18#

Melanie (M): Willkommen zurück zu unserer zweiten Folge von unserem Podcast #UniStuttgartInternational! Welcome back everybody!

The last time we have spoken about loneliness, what it is in general, and we showed you possibilities to meet new people via the International Office. This episode, we talk about the offers at the University of Stuttgart based on your study field, offers independent from your study field and offers outside from the University. Before we start a little note: as you might already know, we record the podcast in either English or German. But don’t worry, we give you a little summary in the respective other language at the end of each chapter.

Offers from the university based on your study field / Was bietet die Uni fachspezifisch?

Student groups/Fachgruppen – #01:00#

So let’s start with our first topic: how you can meet other people at the University based on your study field. One possibility are the student groups, or in German Fachgruppe or Fachschaft. Theresia from the student group for environmental engineering came to the International Office in order to tell you more about how to get connected via a student group. So first of all thank you for being here and let’s start with a short introduction, so please tell us about yourself.

Theresa (T): Thanks, Melanie, for having me here. I am Theresia and I am studying material science in my master. Before that, I finished my Bachelor in environmental engineering and during my Bachelor, I have spent a lot of time in my student group. And I just liked it that much – there – the people and everything, that I just decided to stay there even though I am not studying in this field anymore.
M: What is a student group in general?

T: A student group or association takes care about the problems and the fears of student, so we always have people sitting in communities together with professors and there they can even decide about our study plans and any studying affairs and if you have any problem in the studies or in university, you can just come and tell them about your problems and then they will take care of it and furthermore, maybe even more important thing, they organize a lot of events, for example some parties, some freshmen weekends and also some smaller events during the year like we had a table soccer tournament or a clothes swapping party or a beer tasting. Just that you come together and have some fun together. We also have a meeting once per week about one hour and in this event, we discuss about decisions, which are important for the student group, and there are some reports about things that are going on at university and you just get up to date.

M: That sounds really nice. So from your point of view, why is a student group a good way if someone wants to get to know new people?

T: It is really easy to find friends there, because they are all motivated to do some stuff and to get to know new people. So you can just come there and the student group is the connection between the students and STUVUS, so the students union and also other student groups. So it is easily to even get to know more events and more people and you stay up to date about the events.

M: So you have already mentioned the events and can somebody get to know new people with your help without being an active part of the student group?

T: Yes, definitely. You do not have to be an active part to participate in the events. You just can subscribe the newsletter, the email newsletter and then you will get to know what is up and where you can come to and really everyone is welcome even when you are not an active member.

M: That is good to know and if someone wants to be an active part of the student group, are there any rules about you can participate and are they allowed to participate, even if they are an international student, especially an exchange student?

T: Well there is this rule that you have to study or have to have studied in the field, where you want to participate in the student group, so an environmental engineering exchange student, of course can participate in our group and then you can just come
to our weekly meetings and join the parties. But thing is, that our main language is German, also in the newsletter and everywhere, so if you are not able to speak German, it might be a bit more difficult to get involved, but we also had a student who mostly spoke English and she felt really well at the parties. There were always people willing to speak English to her and mostly everyone is capable of speaking English, but it might be a bit harder. All the events are announced in a WhatsApp group with all the student members of environmental engineering and if you want to become a part of this because you are not a part of it now, then you can just ask a member of the student group and they will add you and also just become part of the newsletter and then you will be up to date about everything.

M: So a student group seems like a very good way to get connected, because you are very open for people to participate. If someone wants to join you, how can they do that?

T: First of all, you can subscribe to the newsletter. Just visit our website Umweltschutztechnik Stuttgart Fachgruppe and there you will find a link to subscribe, then you will be up to date about everything. The second, maybe even better option, is just hop by the Fachgruppenraum, so the room for the people for student group people. It is the green door in my case in building nine and mostly all over the time, there are people there and you just knock the door or open it and enter and we will be happy to help you out and if you really want to become active, just say yes, if there is a job offered. In the beginning of the semester we are distributing kind of jobs like taking care of drinks and stuff like this and if you are not slow enough to say no, you will get the job, so it is really easy to be active and you are always welcome.

M: That actually sounds like a quite easy way to participate. That’s great! That was my last question. Do you have anything else to add?

T: Yes, I think it is important, that you are not afraid to just randomly speak to people and ask them if you have any questions. Because most of students are really happy to help you out.

M: That is a very good advice to keep in mind. Thank you very much again for being here today.

T: Thank you for having me.
Study field / Studiengang – #07:52#

**M**: That was one way to get connected at the University based on your study field as you can only join a student group from your study field. Alisa and Fabienne, I have a question for you: where have you meet your closest friend during your studies? I can go first: I met my closest friend at the very first lecture of my studies. She literally just sat next to me and said ‘hi’. And by chance we also had a very similar way to the University. So for the first semester we drove together to the University every time we had lectures and as well have been learning together for exams. And then covid-19 came and since everything was online, we started texting the whole time. And we even had a separate group chat only for the lectures because we were texting so much. We also met via Zoom in order to learn for example. So the end of the story is that we built a very good friendship, that also continues now even though we do not study together anymore and it all started because we were sitting next to each other.

**Alisa (A)**: So I met my closest student buddy here on my first day at the University of Stuttgart and it was a lucky coincidence actually, because I only came here for my masters and was not really familiar with the buildings yet, so while I was searching for the right room, I stumbled upon a girl just as confused as me, so I just asked her if she was looking for the same room by any chance and it turned out she was. So we talked a bit and kind of connected over the fact that we both went to different universities before and that we were around the same age and since then we basically did everything at the university together.

**Fabienne (F)**: Okay, my story is pretty similar to yours. I met most of my friends in lectures and study groups during my first semester and as everyone was trying to figure out how studying at the university works we started talking and learning together. So bit by bit, we became friends and then people started bringing other people along and the group of friends just grew and my best friend from university I met when we had to give a presentation together and the students were put into groups by the professor and we were just really lucky. So a belated thank you to the professor.

**M**: Thank you for sharing your stories. And as you can see, we met people in a quite similar way by just talking to others at the beginning of our studies, so our tip is to be open to talk to others and also to be open if someone wants to talk with you.
Voices from the community / Beiträge aus der Community – #10:43#

And we have also asked you to send us a short voicemail via WhatsApp and Instagram with your story how you met your closest friend. So let’s listen to them.

**Student 1:** How did you get to know people during your studies? Connecting with people during my studies has been a wonderful experience. I actively participated in events outside the classroom, this includes taking part in intercultural meetings, group excursions, alumni meet-ups and networking events. Furthermore, the German language courses are a platform to meet people from around the world, trying to learn the same language and I made a number of friends there. In the classroom, I engaged in discussions and collaborated on projects allowing me to build meaningful relationships with fellow students and faculty. Through these interactions, I have been able to form lasting friendships that enriched my academic experience.

**Student 2:** So I started my semester during the covid time. So it was pretty difficult for me to find connection with other students. But we had this buddy program where students from a higher semester told newbies ‘we form a group’, so they can answer our questions and we could hang out and things like that and it helped me, it was super helpful and through that program I found my friends. And the second way, I connected with the other students, was through the events that take place from the Fachschaft of my major and we just made some small talk and, yeah, were hanging out.

**Summary / Zusammenfassung Kapitel – #12:38#**

**M:** Wenn ihr an der Universität andere Leute aus eurem Studiengang kennenlernen wollt, dann ist die Fachgruppe eures Studiengangs auf jeden Fall der richtige Anlaufpunkt. In manchen Fachgruppen müsst ihr aktiv dabei sein, in der Fachgruppe Umweltschutztechnik, aus der unsere Interviewpartnerin war, könnt ihr auch so an Partys und Events teilnehmen und Leute kennenlernen. Am besten schaut ihr dafür auf der Internetseite eures Studiengangs nach. Und natürlich könnt ihr ganz klassisch in euren Vorlesungen oder Seminaren andere kennenlernen, die mit euch zusammen studieren.
Offers at the university beyond study fields / Was bietet die Uni fachübergreifend und anhand Interessen? – #13:17#

In the next chapter, we want to focus on the possibilities how to meet people beyond study fields. You can get involved in different groups or get to know people based on your hobbies and interests. There are so many possibilities to get connected that way at the University of Stuttgart, that we won’t talk about all of them. You can have a look in the show notes. There we have listed a lot more offers at the university. So let’s start with STUVUS, the students union of the University of Stuttgart.

STUVUS – #13:44#

STUVUS stands for Studierendenvertretung Universität Stuttgart in German and they stand up for the students in matters of studying and teaching. You can reach out to them if you have any questions or problems. They are working on the one hand on the improvement of studies, for example how an optimal exam period could look like, and on the other hand, they are dealing with the social life around the studies. They offer working groups and departments where you can get involved like the campus beach or the department for sustainability. If you are interested in knowing more about this, stay tuned for our episode that will be all about sustainability at the University of Stuttgart, because there we will have someone with us from STUVUS.

University Sports / Hochschulsport – #14:32#

Based on your interests you can also take part in courses offered by the University Sport, the Hochschulsport. They offer about 500 courses each semester in more than 100 different kinds of sport. Some of them are established sports like football or basketball, some are new sport trends and the registration can easily be done online. For some courses, you have to be really fast, because they are quite popular. But don’t worry, if a course is fully booked you can put yourself on the waiting list!
And if you want to do something more creative, join the universities choir or orchestra. Students from all faculties join there to make music together. They perform even internationally. Highlights from their work are the opera productions every two to three years, where they have already performed Strauss or Mozart.

Summary of the chapter / Zusammenfassung Kapitel


Wenn ihr Lust habt, die Universität aktiv mitzugestalten, könnt ihr der Studierendenvertretung STUVUS beitreten. Sie setzen sich in verschiedenen Bereichen für die Interessen der Studierenden ein. Es gibt auch Arbeitsgruppen, zum Beispiel für Nachhaltigkeit, über die ihr in einer weiteren Podcastfolge mehr erfahren werdet, und Abteilungen, die zum Beispiel den Campus Beach organisieren. Wenn ihr Lust habt, Leute mit dem gleichen Hobby kennenzulernen, dann schaut doch zum Beispiel mal in das Angebot vom Hochschulsport rein oder tretet dem Unichor oder Uniorchester bei.

Ihr seht, es gibt viele Möglichkeiten an der Uni Stuttgart, wahrscheinlich könnten wir damit eine ganze Podcastfolge füllen. Deswegen nochmal der Hinweis: Werft einen Blick in die Shownotes, da findet ihr noch viele weitere Angebote.

Possibilities outside of the university / Möglichkeiten außerhalb der Uni

Shared apartments and student jobs / WG Leben und Studi Nebenjobs

Our last chapter in this episode covers the possibilities to connect outside of the university. Therefore Alisa and I want to start by talking about living in a shared apartment and student jobs.

M: So let’s start with the shared apartments: Alisa, you have been living in several shared apartments, right?
A: Yes, I have actually. I think shared flats are a very good option to meet new people, especially when you are moving to a new city. You’ve got to be a bit lucky though. I have lived in a couple of different shared flats throughout my time at the university and of course, I’ve had some roommates that I got along with better than with others.

M: I can see that. So what should someone look for if it is important to them to connect with people in their shared apartment?

A: My best tip would be, to definitely take your time if you are able to, while looking for accommodation or new roommates. I’ve learned that it really helps to be open about what you look for in a roommate and what you don’t like and if your honest about that, you’re more likely to find people that match your idea of living together.

M: So looking for accommodation includes also those castings. Do you have any tips for the casting?

A: I think you should definitely try to be yourself as much as possible. Of course it can be a little awkward to be casted as a potential roommate, but as long as you are open and honest about what you are like, what your interests are and so on you, I think you will be able to find a good match. As I mentioned before I actually met someone in my first shared flat in Stuttgart, who is now a really good friend of mine and we even moved into a new flat together.

M: Okay, that is a great tip. Do you have anything to add right now?

A: Well, apart from a shared accommodation, student jobs can be a good opportunity to meet new people and eventually find new friends as well.

M: Student jobs is a good keyword or part-time jobs as well. Where did you start working?

A: When I first came to Stuttgart for my masters in literary studies, I quickly needed to find a job to pay for my accommodation of course. So naturally, I started looking for open student jobs in my field of studies and ended up working at the Literaturhaus Stuttgart, where I met lots of people with similar interests.

M: That is really good that they were in same profession as your study field.

A: Yes, in addition to that, shortly after I also took on a student assistant job here at the International Office, where I basically helped out as a online editor for our websites.
And here I met a ton of people from different study programs, which made my start here in Stuttgart a lot easier and a lot less lonely, because I was able to see familiar faces on a regular basis. That can be quite comforting when you don’t really know anybody yet.

M: Yes, that is true. I also started my studies as a student assistant in the IO and that is also where we met.

A: Yeah, luckily. In conclusion I would really recommend new students to be very honest and very open while looking for accommodation and try to maybe find a student job which is of course manageable alongside your studies that will give you some sense of community.

Hobbies – #20:16#

So besides shared apartments and work, there are also other possibilities, if you want to meet people outside of the university life and as we already mentioned before, it is always a good strategy to look for someone who shares your interests. So you can for example join a sports club in your city, an orchestra or a choir that are not necessarily organized by the university. And if you want to find out if and where there is something that suits your interests in your area, the best would be to start by researching on the Internet. And last but not least the very brave among you can of course also approach people directly at events in the city, parties at the university or get to know them in the city life.

Summary / Zusammenfassung Kapitel – #21:07#

M: Dann kommen wir zur Zusammenfassung unseres letzten Kapitels, wie man außerhalb der Universität andere Leute kennenlernen kann. Ein guter Weg ist über eine WG andere kennenzulernen. Bei der Suche solltet ihr dann darauf achten, dass es keine Zweck WG ist, also eine WG die im Prinzip nur dafür da ist, um sich die Miete zu teilen und nicht um wirklich miteinander zu leben oder sich kennenzulernen. Außerdem hilft es, wenn ihr beim Casting schon auf gemeinsame Interessen und Hobbies achtet. Eine andere Möglichkeit sind Nebenjobs, da dort meistens auch viele Studierende arbeiten. Wir im IZ haben ja auch viele Hiwis und so haben Alisa und ich uns zum Beispiel auch
kennengelernt. Ansonsten könnt ihr auch in Sportvereine gehen, in Chöre oder Orchester die nicht von der Universität sind, oder wenn ihr ganz mutig seid, bei Partys an der Uni oder in der Stadt viele andere Leute kennenlernen.

**Outro – #22:08#**

Und damit sind wir auch schon am Ende unserer Folge angekommen. Diese wollen wir mit einem Beitrag der Beschäftigen der Dezernats Internationales abschließen. Wir haben sie nämlich gefragt, was ihr erster Tipp für die Studierenden wäre, aus dem Bereich, den sie betreuen, um neue Leute kennenzulernen. Ihre Antworten sind auf Deutsch und Englisch, je nach ihrer Zielgruppe. Wir hoffen ihr konntet aus dieser Folge viel mitnehmen. Falls ihr euch einsam fühlt, kommt bitte gerne zu uns. Eure Betreuerin oder Betreuer im Dezernat Internationales hilft euch immer sehr gerne weiter.

And once again in English: If you have the feeling of loneliness, please do not hesitate to contact us. Your coordinator at the International Office is always happy to help you.

**Tips from employees at the IO / Tipps der Beschäftigten im IO – #22:57#**

So let’s hear from our colleagues and their first tip for the students from their area of responsibility on how to get connected. Goodbye from our side and see you at the next episode!

**Anu Dohna:** I’m Anu Dohna, I’m the head of subdivision for international degree students and my tip is to get involved in student organizations and help out for example, organizing events for other students. Working together is a great way to create community and there are numerous student organizations at the University of Stuttgart. There are subject groups, environmental activism, student [parishes], you can even run a student bar with other students. So I’m sure there is something for everyone. The next tip is from Claudia Schubert, the coordinator of our Intercultural Mentoring Program.

**Claudia Schubert:** You could join sports groups like the Hochschulsport. They offer different classes for every taste, like yoga or ball sports or whatever you like. If you play an instrument, you could join the mentoring band or the university orchestra.
Sarah Walz: I am Sarah Walz, one of the three coordinators of the Intercultural Mentoring Program. Join the Intercultural Mentoring Program, you will meet new people from around the world and every study field. Join a Fachschaft or student clubs, you can meet a lot of new people.

Verena Stegmeier: Mein Name ist Verena Stegmeier und ich betreue die Outgoings nach Asien, Australien und Südafrika. Und mein Tipp, um vor allem Locals im Ausland kennenzulernen, ist sich über die Clubs und Societies der Partnerhochschulen zu informieren, denn diese basieren überwiegend auf Interessen und gemeinsame Interessen schaffen hoffentlich Freundschaften.

Marion Hanssen: Hello, my name is Marion Hanssen and I am an advisor for international double master students. I would say, have a look at the university’s sports program and join sessions there. This is a perfect balance to your studies and you will get to know other students.

Josephine Mothes: Hello, my name is Josephine Mothes. I work at the Welcome Center of the University of Stuttgart. Why don’t you just invite your colleagues to a traditional feast of yours or public holiday or even simply to a typical meal of your country? This means, that you are not alone on a special day and your colleagues will surely find it very exciting to get to know other traditions and food. For longer stays, we always recommend just to get involved. Help prepare the institutes Christmas party or company outing. Take on small volunteer tasks like cleaning the coffee machine regularly et cetera. Usually we always just say: Ask questions. According to the German motto “it costs nothing to ask”. Meet people with open mindedness and curiosity and the rest will surely work itself out.

Larisa Petrescu: Hi, everyone! My name is Larisa Petrescu and I am the advisor for incoming Erasmus students as well as the coordinator of our university’s buddy program. My advice for you would be to actively make time for your social life. Reach out to people you have met even briefly. Step out of your comfort zone as much as you can, because you need a clear balance between studies, self-care and social life.