



International Department GmbH
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)

Inside Carl Benz School

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Student Voice
France



Adrien Wack,
CBS Intake 2003

Interviewer: Nice to meet you, Adrien. You were born in France, but you have lived for four years in Barcelona, Spain where you went to primary school, and six years in Saarbrücken, Germany where you went to secondary school. Would you please let us know about your experiences?

Adrien: Due to my father's work commitments we went to live abroad. My mother is Spanish and she always tried to teach me her mother language. Once we arrived in Barcelona it took me five months to speak the language fluently. Because of family ties, the climate and mentality, I adapted very easily to Spain. Germany was initially much more of a cultural shock to me. It is less lively compared to

Spain and it was hard to make friends at the beginning. But once I went to the German-French School (DFG) in Saarbrücken, I felt much better and started enjoying my new environment.

Interviewer: After you had moved back to France, where you completed your A-levels, you took part in a "classe préparatoire" in Strasbourg. Could you briefly explain to us what this is about?

Adrien: If you are interested in becoming an engineer in France you have different options. The best possibility is to attend a "Grande Ecole". This type of school represents the top elite schools in the country and gives you the best opportunity to start off a successful career in the engineering business. To be accepted by a "Grande Ecole" you have to initially take part in a "classe préparatoire". It can last up to three years. The "classe préparatoire" concentrates on one of the three following subjects: Maths, Chemistry/Physics and Technical Engineering. I chose Technical Engineering



which puts an emphasis on mechanical design and offers the greatest opportunity for creativity. The classes took place from 8am-6pm during the week, and every Saturday we had written or oral exams. This schedule was very stressful and there was time for neither sports nor social activities. The studies were abstract and there was not enough practical approach to the topics. There was also no opportunity to work in a team on a joint project. To be honest, I did not enjoy this period in my life. After two years you enter the "National Concours" where you compete with all the other students in France for a study place at a "Grand Ecole". In my field of studies there was an average of about eight hundred applicants but only between 3 and 30 places available per Grande Ecole. The students who fail to be accepted have the choice to go to university or to one of the less prestigious engineering schools. I was not accepted by one of the top ten schools, but was offered a study place at an engineering school in Grenoble. In my opinion the concept of the "classe préparatoire" is too restricting. This is not just because the students have no time for themselves but the tightly organized program does not allow them to do internships or even to discover exactly which field interests they like most. The whole environment is too similar to school and the structure of the classes is too

uniform. Every student is learning exactly the same which kills the students' motivation.

Interviewer: Did the experience of living abroad influence you to opt for an engineering course in an international environment?

Adrien: Yes, it definitely did. I feel that I am more tolerant and open to new experiences in life. For example, in Strasbourg the prejudices between Alsace and Germany were very apparent, I found this very unpleasant. Living in Germany was great and when I read an article in a newspaper about the International Department, I thought that this would be the ideal solution for my situation and applied for the course.

Interviewer: You have recently completed your bachelor degree at the International Department. What are your general impressions about the course?

Adrien: For me, studying at the International Department was a unique opportunity and I would recommend it to everyone who is interested in mechanical engineering. Although the English-taught classes are challenging, they are extremely beneficial. It is exciting to meet and study with people from all over the world. What I especially like about the German education system is that it teaches you to become responsible for mana-



ging your studies successfully on your own. The lectures at the International Department emphasize how the effort involved in reaching a goal is just as important as the final result. The bachelor course offers a very good combination of theoretical and practical approaches to the education of mechanical engineering.

Interviewer: During your studies you got involved in a project which is called "Formula Student". Could you please tell us more about it?

Adrien: "Formula Student" is an international competition for students with the task to build, manufacture and service a single seat formula style racing car. The competition is not solely won by the team with the fastest car, but rather by the team with the best overall package of design, performance and financial planning. The decision is made by a jury of experts from the motorsport, automotive and supplier industries. I was chairman of the Student Association of the International Department (SAID) when I heard, during one of our regular meetings, about a Formula Student workshop organized in Munich. I was very interested in the subject and decided to found the KA Racing team with eight friends. More and more people joined the team as time went on and now we are more than fifty.

Interviewer: How much time did you spend working on the project?

Adrien: The whole project was very time consuming. We started in November 05 and the car was finally presented to the public at the Universität Karlsruhe during the rollout on 28 June 2007.

Interviewer: What exactly did you work on during the realization of the car?

Adrien: I developed the frame of the racing car together with Aram Cho, who is also studying at the International Department. It was an extremely challenging task since no one from the University of Karlsruhe had ever designed a racing car before and normally formula student teams who are re-entering the competition optimize their former racing car models. We, however, were starting from scratch with the aim of becoming the formula student Germany 2007 best newcomer. The frame is the interface between all other components, and normally you design it when all the main parts of the car have already been completed. In our case we had to develop the frame with just the fixing points of the engine and suspensions. Initially, I read all the literature that is available on car frame design. A lot of intense team work with the other KA Racing members was necessary to get all of the information needed. The entire project was very interesting

and exciting because we were involved right from the beginning to the very end: from the building of the team structure, to the search for sponsors and the definition of the racing car specifications, and finally reaching the finishing touches - the testing and tuning of the car. It also gave us all a very good insight into our future jobs because we were working in a real team towards the same goal, produce a real racing car. This project was a fantastic practical experience.

Interviewer: Was the creation of the car's frame also the topic of your bachelor thesis?

Adrien: No, I did not combine the Formula Student project with my bachelor thesis. It would have been less stressful for me, and actually a really good idea, but I had already made plans to do my bachelor thesis in cooperation with the ITS, the Institute for Turbines, where I already had a student job for nine months. My bachelor thesis concentrates on the combustion process in turbines and engines and I started working seriously on the topic in December 2006.

Interviewer: What are your plans for the future?

Adrien: My plan is to stay at the International Department until February 08. During this time I would like to attend some lectures at the university

in "Lean Production" and "Kraftfahrzeugbau" (Automotive Engineering) and simultaneously apply for an internship at an automotive or aeronautical company. In the long run I could see myself working for a consulting agency for operations management and lean manufacturing.

Interviewer: Well, I can only congratulate you for all the hard work you have done in the last two years and I have no doubt that you will be very successful in the future.

Editors note:

The Formula Student competition took place in Hockenheim, Germany from August 8 to 12, and Adrien was team leader for the frame division as well as one of the four drivers. The KA Racing Team won the prize of the "Best Newcomer 2007" of the International "Formula Student Germany" competition. In the overall ranking they came 10th (54 teams in total) and joint 2nd place in the "Dynamometer Event" (most powerful drive train).

Adrien himself was awarded the prize for „Extraordinary Student Achievements“ by the Dean of the Universität Karlsruhe on 26.10.07

Bachelor Program Key Facts

Degree	Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Mechanical Engineering
Majors	Production Management, Energy Engineering and Rail Systems Technology
Scope	With globalization it is becoming increasingly important to provide international students with excellent opportunities to study in Germany. This trend was addressed in collaboration with the industry in 1999 within the KIT. The degree program in Mechanical Engineering is offered by KIT and the supplementary courses are offered by the Carl Benz School (CBS) will provide the perfect platform for students to benefit from a proficient English-taught engineering education at a German elite university. The CBS as a college offers an optimal learning environment and in addition students will obtain assistance with industrial internship placement.
Language	Since courses are presented in English, foreign applicants must pass the TOEFL Examination with a minimum of 560 points pb, 220 points cb and 85 points ibt. TOEIC with 720 and IELTS band 6,5 are also accepted. Basic knowledge of the German language eases integration into general student life on campus, but is not a prerequisite for admission to the degree programs. German language courses are offered on campus.
Admission	German university admission to a B.Sc. program requires that applicants must have completed a secondary education, i.e., the German high school diploma. The admission requirements will decide on the eligibility of students joining the CBS. The final admission will be based on the results of an entrance examination which will take place at the end of pre-semester.
Pre-Semester	9 week preparatory course in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and English which will ensure that applicants are equipped with all the quantitative skills to start their engineering studies at an elite university.
Fees	A tuition fee applies.
Starting Dates	August for each given year (Presemester)

International Student Origins



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