

16th Annual IFPSM Summer School: Strengthening the Global Supply Chain

When Mr. Charles Holden, Director General of IFPSM, asked me to write a brief summary of my experience as a doctoral student from the United States attending the 16th Annual IFPSM Summer School in Salzburg, Austria, the first word that came to mind was “*perspective*.” Defined in Webster’s II dictionary as, “the relationship of aspects of a subject to each other and to a whole,” *perspective* is the single word which I believe most accurately captures my experience gained during the week-long forum.

There have been several defining moments in over the course of the last eighteen months as doctoral student. First, of course, is having been selected to attend the prestigious United States Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) to pursue a Ph.D. in Logistics. I consider being selected to attend the IFPSM Summer School a very close second. Furthermore, I believe the summer school experience would make the short list of defining moments for any doctoral student seeking to advance their understanding of purchasing and supply management.

The IFPSM summer school has a long-standing reputation of excellence and this year’s forum built on this strong and stable foundation. Professor Attila Chikan, Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary, has been leading the summer school program since its inception and has expertly refined the forum to provide the attending doctoral students an opportunity to engage in dynamic discussions concerning the advancement of purchasing and supply management theory, the critical importance of innovative research, and the ever evolving academic – practitioner relationship. Collectively, these discussions helped me develop a new appreciation of the important role academics and practitioners, together, have in strengthening the global supply chain. While it is difficult to capture all of the forum aspects which have helped to refine my perspective, I believe there are at least three key enabling elements of this year’s summer school program which significantly contributed to the overall value:

1. Sponsorship by the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) and the International Purchasing and Supply Education and Research Association (IPSERA);
2. Insights shared by visiting professors and practitioners;
3. Relevancy of dissertation research presented by the doctoral students.

ISM and IPSERA are each internationally recognized organizations which are committed to increasing the global understanding and value of the purchasing and supply management function. These organizations award scholarships (ISM: 2, IPSERA: 1) to doctoral students who have demonstrated an ability to address current and future global supply chain issues through rigorous research. As a recipient of one of the ISM scholarships, I can definitively say that having my research on influential factors which may significantly change global sourcing strategies accepted for presentation at the summer school was a tremendous honor. In talking with Mr Steven Carnovale, Rutgers University (USA), who also received an ISM scholarship, he too understood the significance of the sponsorship. We were both very honored to represent the United States and our respective institutions.

Although I had not attended an IPSERA-sponsored forum prior to summer school, I was somewhat familiar with the Association. Back in March of this year, I had the opportunity to present a research paper at ISM’s North American Research Symposium in San Diego, California. It was here that I first met Professor George Zsidisin, Bowling Green State University (USA), and had the pleasure of talking with him about his role as co-editor of the *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management* as well as his involvement in and support of IPSERA. I

did not realize at the time that just four months later at the summer school I would meet Professor Alessandro Acarani, President of IPSERA and the other co-editor, *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*. As I have so often said, “what a small world!” During the forum, Professor Acarani shared his vision for IPSERA and the supporting partnership with IFPSM. His ability to convey a tireless passion for the field of purchasing and supply management, coupled with his consistent pursuit of relevant research, were enviable characteristics which young scholars would do well to strive to emulate.

Professor Acarani was one of several distinguished guests, professors and practitioners, who graciously (and patiently) listened to the doctoral student’s research presentations and provided constructive feedback to assist the student in accomplishing their personal research objective. While it is not practical here to identify each distinguished guest and their individual contributions, I would like to extend my personal appreciation to Professor Michiel Lenders, The University of Western Ontario, and Mr Giovanni Atti, Chief Executive Officer, Italian Association of Purchasing Management (translated). It would be impossible to overstate the value they added to the discussions based on their years of experience.

Lastly, I would like to close this out by addressing the tremendous quality of the doctoral students who were in attendance. I was truly impressed, personally and professionally, by the caliber of students selected to represent their countries and institutions. Each one consistently demonstrated a strong desire to better understand the complex issues of global supply chains and how their individual research would add value to the purchasing and supply management body of knowledge. As discussed in the introduction, this summary article is really about perspective. To that end, I owe a debt of gratitude to IFPSM, ISM, IPSERA, the distinguished guests, and my fellow doctoral students for the lasting impact attending the 16th Annual IFPSM Summer School has had on forever shaping my perspective on the truly global nature of purchasing and supply management profession.

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