Old ties and new initiatives were on the agenda for the presidential delegation to Berlin last fall.

The old ties date back to 1948 when Herman B Wells listened. Berlin had been divided. The venerable Humboldt University was in the Communist sector. Wells, on a six-month hiatus from IU, was in Berlin to advise the Allied occupational forces on educational and cultural matters. Allied officials knew about the university problem, but could not decide among several proposed solutions. In the fifth month of Wells’s tour, a group of students approached him with the radical and unlikely idea for a new university, one that was not tied to tradition or ideology, a reform institution with a different legal and administrative structure from any that had existed in Germany before.
A workshop on the privacy and security of data transfer between countries provoked a lively discussion by experts on both sides of the Atlantic.

President McRobbie (second from right) and Vice President Zaret (right) toured the lobby of the performance hall at Berlin University of the Arts, which specializes in fine arts, architecture, media and design, and music and the performing arts.

The presidential delegation met with officials of Humboldt University to discuss their mutual commitments to increasing study abroad and joint international research.
In Bloomington, Wells had proved his ability to recognize a good idea and to act quickly. In Berlin, he did just the same, carrying the radical proposal forward with Allied officials and advocating for this most unlikely of solutions. In the fall of 1948, just a few months after Wells had spoken with the students, Freie Universität Berlin opened its doors. By the early 1950s, IU had established informal exchanges of scholars. The two institutions signed a formal agreement in 1962. During the fall 2015 visit, IU President Michael A. McRobbie and Klaus Mühlhahn, vice president for international affairs of the Free University, renewed the partnership through 2020.

Among the new initiatives for the delegation was the opening of the Europe Gateway Office. Located in a cultural center of Berlin, the Europe Gateway provides a home base for all of IU’s activities in Europe, from recruiting students to keeping in touch with alumni, from study abroad and student and faculty exchanges to conferences and joint research meetings.

The opening brought together a hundred IU alumni and friends to hear from the president and others on IU’s continuing efforts to assure that all IU students graduate with a global perspective. Vice President Zaret awarded IU’s Distinguished International Service Award to Mark Renner, native of Berlin, 1994 IU graduate in journalism, and president of the IU Alumni Chapter in Germany. A concert by Nadine Weissmann, mezzosoprano (Master of Music 2000) and Andrew Crooks, piano (Master of Music 2007) concluded the ceremony.

The gateway opening coincided with the annual conference and the opening of the Global Institute of the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), which hosts IU’s gateway facilities. IU has sent 2,500 students abroad on CIEE programs over a 40-year period. President McRobbie at the opening session emphasized the “shared long-term commitment to international exchange, to the promotion of international understanding, and to opening wider the gates of opportunity to students from all backgrounds.”

The activities of the gateway began even before the formal opening with a panel discussion that included experts from both sides of the ocean. The issue was the “Data Dilemma,” the conflict between individual privacy and governmental activities on the behalf of national security, and the steps the U.S. government is taking to establish standards that respect both private and public interests.

While in Berlin, the presidential delegation met with John Emerson, U.S. ambassador to Germany, with officials at Humboldt University and the Berlin University of the Arts, and with the German Research Foundation.

“We have never had greater need for individuals with global cultural understanding and experience and the ability to work productively with people from different cultures and traditions.” —President Michael A. McRobbie, the Huffington Post
President McRobbie spoke at the opening of the new CIEE Global Institute: Opening wider the gates of opportunity.

IU Jacobs School of Music Alumni Nadine Weissmann and Andrew Crooks performed at the opening of the IU Europe Gateway.

Mark Renner (Journalism’94) received the International Affairs Distinguished International Service Award for his work on behalf of Germany’s IU alumni and for the establishment of the Europe Gateway.
IU Associate Professor Christopher Atwood (right) has maintained close ties with the National University of Mongolia for many years. Atwood’s Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire is a key reference for the area.

MONGOLIA

During World War II, the U.S. government turned to IU to develop language courses in Central Asian languages. In the decades that followed, those language efforts led to the campus being an important U.S. center for the study of Mongolia. The Mongolia Society headquarters is on the Bloomington campus. IU offers all levels of instruction in the Mongolian language, rare in the Western Hemisphere, and a Ph.D. in Mongolian Studies.

As part of its long commitment to this part of the world, IU has established ties with two Mongolian universities. A university-wide agreement with the National University of Mongolia has meant close collaboration in anthropology and archaeology as well as faculty and student exchanges through the School of Global and International Studies. Both the IU Kelley School of Business and the School of Education have established links with the American University of Mongolia.

Vice President for International Affairs David Zaret visited Ulaanbaatar in November to explore ways to expand these academic linkages. With the National University, Zaret discussed IU’s efforts to enhance its Mongolian Studies program through closer cooperation with the National University’s Institute of Mongolian Studies and its new initiatives in diplomacy and public affairs. A joint effort is under consideration for a workshop that addresses Mongolia’s relations with South Korea, Japan, and other countries outside China.

Economic recession has slowed but not halted the efforts of the American University of Mongolia to link with the Kelley School for an executive M.B.A. program and with SPEA on water and air pollution studies. Zaret assured university officials of IU’s continuing commitment to the project.

The vice president also met with business leaders. He talked to IU alumni about adopting a local high school as part of IU’s recruiting efforts and shared a moment with an Asian eagle.
The Asian eagle was the smallest of the birds offered to Vice President Zaret as he stood near a 131-foot stainless steel statue of Genghis Khan.

Beginning to the End, oil on canvas by Chinzorig Sumiya. Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Indiana University.