



STUDENT ASSOCIATES HONORS PROGRAM 2025–26

CROATIA RESEARCH TRIP. MAY 19–JUNE 1, 2025



The Republic of Croatia has been through many changes in the past 100 years. The last country to enter the European Union (2013) and adopt the euro (2023), Croatia has become the biggest success of the Balkan countries. But its success has not come easy. One hundred years ago, Croatia's government was part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; it became a puppet state of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy during WWII; later, it became the Socialist Republic of Croatia, a constituent republic within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Then, it declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. Croatia survived a terrible civil war just 30 years ago.

The country's breathtaking beauty in landscape and architecture has assisted its rise to becoming one of the top tourist destinations in the world. Over 20% of the Croatian GDP is tourism. This has led to positive and negative outcomes for the country. Its entrance to the European Union and the adoption of the euro has led to the same mixed outcomes. What the Martindale scholars found during their trip was a paradoxical country with topics rich for research—a nation working to ignite an entrepreneurial spirit to broaden and strengthen its economy.

The 30 students, faculty, and alumni who joined the Martindale Croatia trip started their tour in Zagreb. Sessions included visits to Smion, Inc. and an overview of the

Croatian entrepreneurial landscape in medical, green, and agricultural technologies; the University of Zagreb and a discussion of the state of journalism, media development, free speech, and countering misinformation; World Wildlife Fund Adria on work they are doing to create a zero-carbon world and protect fresh water, landscapes, wildlife, and food systems; the Ministry of Economy; the Ministry of Science, Education, and Youth; PLIVA, the largest pharmaceutical company and largest exporter in Croatia; ZEJ, a community green energy cooperative; the Croatian Employers Association; and RIMAC Automobil, the Croatian car, each car worth millions. Martindale's final activity in Zagreb was at the Heart of Zagreb, a cultural center of music, dance, and handicrafts. Everyone was on their feet learning the Croatian dances!

Next, our group spent the weekend exploring Istria, the Pula arena, tasting olive oil, and swimming on Krk island. A highlight of the weekend was being in Rijeka the night their soccer team won the national championship (think...a smaller version of Philadelphia after an Eagles championship...but with live fire!)

In the next week, the Martindalers continued their exploration of Croatian topics. In Rijeka, at the PAR Business school, they learned about women in leadership in Croatia and the business of sports; at the

NGO Bez Granica/Without Borders, the students learned about the history of the community and border disputes. In Opatija, at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Rijeka, the students learned about tourism, health tourism, and the carbon footprint of tourism. In Gospić, we were hosted by the Razvojni Centar-Licko Senjske Zupanije, a rural incubator for food projects. There, a discussion was held with the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences regarding rural youth, brain drain, migrations, and connections of politics and entrepreneurship. We also visited the Nikola Tesla Memorial Center. In Split, our group stayed at a hotel within the walls of the Diocletian Palace. Sessions were held in the Digital Dalmatia Technopark for a review of the ICT sector and at the University of Split, School of Medicine and Health Studies regarding the health-care system in Croatia.

The group reached its final destination of Dubrovnik after a 5-hour cruise from Split. We were greeted warmly by the Mayor of Dubrovnik, Mato Franković, who addressed our group on arrival. As the final day of our visit was a Croatian holiday, the group spent the day touring the 7th century walled city of Dubrovnik (famous as the location set for Game of Thrones), swimming, relaxing, and making Martindale memories!

INDUCTION DINNER

The Martindale Center for the Study of Private Enterprise held the 2025 Martindale Student Associates Honors Program induction dinner on Saturday, March 22 at the Ben Franklin Technology Partners Center. Congratulations to newly accepted Croatia cohort members Hashem AlHattab '26, Laila S. Dages '26, Natalie Javitt '26, Olivia A. Lundquist '26, Joseph (Gus) Maass '26, Avery M. McGarry '26, Estefania Ravelo Reyna '26, Gideon D. Sobek '26, Sophia Emma Taskov '26, Aaron O. Williams '26, Claire E. Wilson '26, and Elizabeth M. Wolfe '26.

Todd Watkins, Martindale executive director, welcomed the Croatia cohort and Taiwan cohorts to the event along with parents, faculty, alumni, and Martindale friends.

Program highlights included an institutional welcome by Scott Koerwer, executive director of the Iacocca Institute, and an inspirational tribute to the power of the Martindale education and network by Ashley Pritchard '09 (New Zealand), Product Program Strategist, Meta.

Ella Rossetti '25, Taiwan cohort, reflected on her experiences in Taiwan and the Honors program. Dariia Tyshchenko '25 and Mansoor Mughal '25 presented Professor Watkins with the Taiwan poster they created to memorialize the Taiwan cohort Martindale experience.



Ella Rossetti '25, Taiwan cohort, delivers her remarks to faculty, students, parents, friends, and alumni at the induction dinner.

WASHINGTON DC



The Martindale Student Associates Honors Program spent a fantastic day of informational sessions with the Embassy of Croatia in Washington DC and the US State Department, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Western Balkans on Friday, March 28.

Many thanks to Croatian Ambassador to the US, Mr. Pjer Šimunović, for sharing his insights of the economy of Croatia and the US/Croatia relationship.

A bonus, we were able to lunch with Martindale alumni Jim Carty '90 (Michigan/Illinois/NJ) and his wife, Julia, Michael John Bellanco '08 (Benelux), Kristin Sargent '02 (Hong Kong), and Lindsay Wilson '18 (UK).

SPRING BANQUET



The Martindale Center held their spring banquet on April 22 to celebrate the Taiwan and Croatian Martindale Student Associates Honors Program cohorts.

Special recognition was given to the graduating Taiwan cohort: Sean M. Davis '25, Hannah Falatko '25, Muzammil Jawed '25, Mansoor Mughal '25, Anoushka Nambiar '25, Jonathan Osika '25, Nicole Pasterczyk '25, Trinity A. Price '25, Ella R. Rossetti '25, Nađa Stojanović '25, Dariia Tyshchenko '25, and Ying Wu '25. Dr. Watkins presented all with Martindale pins to be placed on their graduation gowns.

Thanks to Jon Osika and Anoushka Nambiar for coordinating the evening's fun entertainment!

MARTINDALE SHOUT-OUTS

Congratulations to

- Karen Konkoly '17 (Peru) for receiving the Marie-Curie fellowship for post-doctoral research on dreaming at the University of Cambridge next year.
- Nick Lynch '05 (Spain) for his new position as Department Manager, Electrical Engineering and Compliance for Warehouse Automation, Opex Corporation.
- Hanna Skinner '20 (South Africa) for acceptance to the 2-year MBA program, Northwestern Kellogg School of Management.
- Kat (Bahner) Caliguire '17 (Peru) on her marriage to Scott Caliguire on May 31, 2025.
- Laura Chan '17 (Peru) and David Danko '17 (Peru) on their marriage on February 16, 2025. Wedding party attendants included Kyle Fischer '17 (Peru) and Shaan Gurnani '15 (Portugal).
- Gideon Sobek '26 for winning the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, a grant from the US Department of State that enables undergraduate students to study or intern abroad.
- Todd A. Watkins for winning the MS in Applied Economics Class of 2025 Excellence in Teaching Award.

SAVE THE DATE

HARMONIE CLUB EVENT: NOVEMBER 20, 2025