

By **RONALD S. LIM**
Photos by **MICHAEL VARCAS**

THE German European School Manila (GESM) has had 23 years to cultivate that feeling of being in a second home.

Established in 1983 as the Jose Rizal Schule, named as such in honor of Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal, its name was changed to German School Manila in 1992, and together with the Ecole Française de Manille, formed the Eurocampus, sharing the grounds with the British School Manila and the Dutch School Manila.

By 2001, British School Manila and the Dutch School Manila had both moved out of the campus, prompting another name change into the European International School. The German School introduced its European Section in 2007, and by 2010, the German School Manila changed its name into their present one.

All throughout those changes, the GESM has maintained a standard of excellence.

For instance, its German Section was recently awarded the Exzellente Deutsche Auslandschule, a certificate awarded by the German government to German schools abroad that offers the same quality of education as schools in Germany.

Its European Section, on the other hand, has been recognized by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) as an International Baccalaureate (IB) school in its Primary Years Programme (PYP).

The excellent standards are also reflected in the 31 percent growth in enrollees that the school has enjoyed year after year. As of the moment, the school is serving 250 students, from kindergarten to the tenth grade. Students in the German Section are

German standards, Filipino campus

taught in German, while students in the European Section are taught in English, with an option to study German as a foreign language as early as kindergarten.

"We really have a European ambience and we can teach the children in the European tradition and help them study foreign languages at the very highest level," says Astrid Martinez-Lopez, the GESM's head of school.

SEALS OF EXCELLENCE

Acquiring the Exzellente Deutsche Auslandschule certification and the IBO recognition required years of preparation, teacher training, and reams and reams of paperwork.

The Exzellente Deutsche Auslandschule certification, for instance, required positive results in at least five out of 11 of the 15 quality characteristics indicated by the inspectors of the German government.

"This is a sign of quality management that the German government started years ago to introduce an inspection for all the schools, to make the quality of schools more comparable. This is mainly for the German schools in Germany, but five years ago they introduced the same procedures for the German schools abroad," explains Martinez-Lopez.

The requirements for the IBO certification, on the other hand, were



THE GERMAN EUROPEAN SCHOOL MANILA (above) is fully equipped to produce students ready for universities around the world, with libraries (far left) and a Primary Years Programme accredited by the International Baccalaureate Organization.

equally as stringent. Nicholas Lea, head of the European Section, says that acquiring the certificate usually takes somewhere around four to five years. "The inspector will come to the school in the early stages to see the feasibility of the school and if it's set up with the right environment and the right atmosphere to be successful with the PYP. Then we're inspected twice more before we get accreditation," says Lea.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The GESM has also been recognized for the work it does for the community around it.

Last year, the GESM placed third

in the German International Chamber of Commerce (GIHM) "Students Building Bridges Worldwide" competition for their efforts during the aftermath of typhoon Ondoy in 2009. GESM students voluntarily gathered themselves to bring food, clothing, and other basic necessities to affected families in Marikina City. The GESM students also hold an annual "Spaghetti Party" for impoverished communities around the metropolis.

Martinez-Lopez says she is looking forward to bringing together the school's German and European Sections so as to foster a healthy balance between the two.

"What we are doing now is we try to get a balanced curriculum between

the German Section and the European Section. We are doing German as a foreign language in the European Section, and we would like to have a final certification for the English student in German and the German student in English so they can reach very good level in foreign language," says Martinez-Lopez.

All of these, she says, are in order to produce students that can compete in any university around the world.

"After they acquire the IB diploma, they can have access to diplomas all over the world, in Germany or other countries. Finishing in this school would make it possible for them to start university studies all over the world," she says.