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## **South Dakota Trade Leads Two-Track Germany Mission, Showcasing State's Global Ambitions at Interzoo 2026**

*South Dakota Businesses and University of South Dakota Students Unite Abroad, Demonstrating the Power of In-State Partnerships on the World Stage*

**SIOUX FALLS, S.D.** – South Dakota Trade (SDT) led a two-track international mission to Germany in May 2026, uniting South Dakota businesses and the University of South Dakota (USD) under a shared commitment to global engagement. What began as a trade show opportunity evolved into a comprehensive trade mission; one track focused on business development at Interzoo 2026, one of the world's premier international pet industry trade shows held in Nuremberg, and a second university track in which USD students gained firsthand exposure to international business, diplomatic operations, and global academic partnerships.

The business track was led by Kallie Ruland, Trade Specialist with South Dakota Trade, who guided three South Dakota companies — Houdek, Parker Freeze Dry, and RuffLand Kennels — through the trade show, facilitating connections with international buyers, distributors, and industry leaders from around the world. Simultaneously, a delegation of USD Beacom School of Business students and faculty attended Interzoo, visited the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, participated in educational tours, and strengthened an existing academic partnership with Ostfalia University in Wolfsburg.

The dual-track structure reflects SDT's broader strategy of deepening South Dakota's international footprint not just through commerce, but through education and institutional relationship-building; a model that strengthens the pipeline of globally-minded business leaders emerging from the state.

### **South Dakota Companies Make Their Mark at Interzoo**

Interzoo is widely regarded as the global benchmark trade show for the pet industry, attracting tens of thousands of trade visitors from over 100 countries. For South Dakota's participating companies, the event offered a strategic platform to introduce their products to an international audience and to test and expand their export markets.

For Houdek, the Nuremberg show validated the international appetite for their fermented pet food ingredient. *"Interzoo and Petfood Forum proved further opportunity for Houdek in Europe! Our fermented petfood ingredient, Protéger, was well received, especially for its support of pet's gut health and South Dakota grown quality,"* said **John Mollison of Houdek**.

For Parker Freeze Dry, attending Interzoo for the first time marked a pivotal shift in the company's international growth strategy. *"This was the first time the Parker Freeze Dry team attended Interzoo, and we were genuinely excited to participate alongside so many industry leaders. Although Parker has previously sold a few international units — specifically in Australia, Canada, and Mexico — we are now prioritizing international expansion near the EU as a key focus for our sales team,"* said **Jerad Ducklow of Parker Freeze Dry**. *"The Parker team regularly participates in numerous trade shows each year, but our fortuitous connection with SD Trade truly made this trip stand out. We were thrilled to connect with SD Trade, whose support began with the initial booking of the show and continued throughout the event, right up to the last day, when key SD Trade staff provided invaluable assistance in our booth. Their unwavering dedication was instrumental in our successful Interzoo experience. The connections we made at Interzoo, thanks to SD Trade's involvement, have already led to promising business opportunities. We are sincerely grateful for their commitment to the SD business community and greatly value our ongoing partnership. We look forward to future collaborations as we build on this momentum and pursue new international markets together."*

For Tea, South Dakota-based RuffLand Kennels, the mission reinforced the critical role that international distribution plays in the company's long-term growth. *"Participating in Interzoo 2026 was of tremendous value for us,"* said **Alisa Turner, CEO of RuffLand Kennels**. *"We were able to connect with existing dealers and prospective new retail partners from around the world. Trade missions like this provide so much value when it comes to conducting business internationally. International distribution is a major component of our growth plan, and the support offered by SD Trade for missions like this is incredibly helpful with those efforts."*

### **University of South Dakota: Learning International Business in Real Time**

Alongside the business delegation, the USD Beacom School of Business participated in a structured university track that placed students at the intersection of global commerce, diplomacy, and academic collaboration. Students attended Interzoo, visited the U.S. Embassy in Berlin for a firsthand look at the diplomatic infrastructure supporting American trade, and strengthened the school's existing relationship with Ostfalia University in Wolfsburg; a partnership that opens doors for future student and faculty exchanges.

*"This trade mission to Germany provided our students with an exceptional, hands-on opportunity to experience international business in action,"* said **Klaus Beckmann, Interim Dean of the Beacom School of Business at the University of South Dakota**. *"By engaging directly with German companies, attending the Interzoo global trade show and interacting with South Dakota businesses, visiting the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, and strengthening our partnership with Ostfalia University in Wolfsburg, our students gained invaluable insights into global markets, cross-cultural collaboration, and the importance of international trade for South Dakota's economy. These kinds of experiences are critical in preparing the next generation of business leaders to compete and succeed in a global environment."*

### **The Power of South Dakota Partnerships**

The Germany mission stands as a testament to what becomes possible when South Dakota entities align around a common purpose. The collaboration between South Dakota Trade, South Dakota businesses, and the University of South Dakota created a multiplier effect; one where companies benefited from institutional support and relationships, students learned directly from the businesses they accompanied, and South Dakota's brand as a globally engaged, export-ready state was amplified on an international stage.

The mission also reflects SDT's evolving approach to trade promotion: moving beyond transactional trade show participation toward relationship-centered engagements that build sustainable export pathways for South Dakota businesses and instill global competency in the state's future workforce.

South Dakota businesses interested in future trade missions, trade show support, or export assistance should contact South Dakota Trade at [info@southdakotatrade.com](mailto:info@southdakotatrade.com).

South Dakota Trade is a 501(c)(6) association that navigates international trade for South Dakota, with offices in Sioux Falls and Rapid City. For additional information, please visit [www.southdakotatrade.com](http://www.southdakotatrade.com).

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STEP 11

Federal Share: 75% - \$225,000

Non-Federal Share: 25% - \$75,000

Total Program Cost: \$300,000

STEP 12

Federal Share: 75% - \$250,000

Non-Federal Share: 25% - \$83,333

Total Program Cost: \$333,333

*\*STEP Grants fund multiple events, over multiple years.*

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