Dear Reader,

I find it hard to concentrate on everyday business in the University in the light of the terrible news about the earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Japan. This is even more so because I like probably many colleagues, but also students and coworkers on campus, have several close personal contacts to Japanese colleagues. Moreover, as an international institute Ruhr-Universität Bochum maintains numerous institutional contacts with Japanese Universities, including student exchange programmes and joint research projects. We count among our partner institutions in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya as well as from Germany by now or from overseas as well. These courses are either back in Japan on behalf of all members of the University, the RUB Rectorate offers support and solidarity to the Japanese people. As a first measure, allocation of funds in all Japan-related programmes will be more flexible because it may not be feasible to adhere to the planned schedule in the light of this dramatic situation.

In this new edition of RUBENS International, you will find a report on an extraordinary internship programme for future medical doctors leading our students to opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean, providing equally positive and enriching experiences far east in Japan and far west in Chile. RUB is also continuing to expand the number of Master courses in English. Several faculties have recently moved to teaching all their Master courses in English by default, such as Chemistry and Biochemistry as well as Geosciences. In addition, several new courses will be available as of autumn 2011, for example “Lasers and Photonics”, “Molecular and Development Stem Cell Biology”, and “Molecular Science and Simulation”, all covering hot and interdisciplinary topics in Natural and Life Sciences.

We hope that these courses will attract ambitious students from overseas as well as from Germany. A recent survey on international student satisfaction provided some interesting results. On the bright side, the Ruhr area is considered a safe and welcoming area of Germany, with relatively low cost of living. RUB in particular was praised for its rapid and efficient handling of international applications, which is due as much to the services offered by the International Office as to the flat hierarchies and hands-on approach of our administration. While international students value the competence of lecturers at RUB and the quality of our tuition in general, they clearly need more guidance through the many opportunities and choices.

On the other side, we can certainly improve our international marketing, and raise awareness of the strengths of our University. Internally, the hints from this i-graduate survey are well taken, and will lead to appropriate actions. Along the same lines, we also rely on all members of the University to spread the word about the qualities of RUB. For example, the high quality of Research@RUB has just been reconfirmed by the recent very positive results from the nation-wide „Excellence Initiative“, which aims to foster excellent research and strengthen the institutions that provide it. As a kind of “warming-up” the RUB Rectorate has launched the new funding line „RUB International“ with the intention to invite RUB’s researchers to come up with innovative project ideas. All projects should combine research and teaching with aspects of internationalization – a great opportunity to receive funding for unusual ideas. Beyond the actual quality of teaching and research, we need not be shy about the quality of everyday life in Bochum. Looking out from the campus into the natural resort of the Ruhr valley, which is in walking distance from the university and my way home on the bicycle, I am already looking forward to spring in Bochum to enjoy the beautiful lands around our city. That, also, is good news about RUB that deserves to be spread.

Thanks for reading,
Nils Metzler-Nolte, Vice Rector for Early Career Researchers and International Affairs

"MY FLAG!"

Dozens of small flags in the map mark the countries and places around the world where visiting scientists at the Ruhr-Universität are from. Carlos Villalba stands in front of this colourful map in the International Lounge, showing the yellow flag marking Honduras. The graduate student is the only person at RUB who comes from the Central American country. In RUBens International (page 3) he speaks about his home country, Bochum, and the Research School of RUB, among other topics.

RUB ON THE MOVE
Growing interest in study abroad

Students at the Ruhr-Universität are more internationally mobile than the average. These were the results of the “Graduate Study” conducted by social-scientists with students graduating from bachelor’s programmes in 2008. According to the results, every third RUB student spends part of their studies abroad. This is contrast to the average result for a nationwide project with more than 42 collaborating universities: only one in four. In general, the time to graduation was not extended by having spent time abroad.

The International Office at the Ruhr-Universität has seen a growing interest in study abroad for some time now. “The number of those who went abroad with an Erasmus scholarship was still below 200 in 2002/03—now it is around 400,” said Jutta Schmid, Deputy Director of the International Office. Also, the number of students “sent” abroad through key international university partnerships has more than doubled since 2002, from roughly 15 to 40 students this academic year.

“This shows that our efforts to increase international mobility are bearing fruit and further distinguishes us as a truly cosmopolitan university,” says Professor Urs Williams, Vice Rector for Teaching, Continuing Education, and Media at RUB. Activities such as the student fair “Without Borders” and info events with various faculties and departments have helped awaken interest in study abroad. Student fees have enabled the International Office to hire an additional staff member, which, in turn, doubled the number of weekly office hours for advisory services on study abroad. In recent years, RUB has increased the number of available places for students at partner universities all over the world. There are also new funding programmes for study abroad such as the Erasmus Placement internship programme and the PROMOS program from the DAAD to increase student mobility. The expansion of the International Office website has also attracted more students considering a stay abroad. “Plus, the opportunities to get academic credit for study abroad has significantly improved,” says Jutta Schmid.

Makia Deglax

The University of Strassburg, one of RUB’s international partners (picture: Le Palais Universitaire)
FROM THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE

The International Team at the Chair for International Politics

"More international than our Chair of International Politics is impossible," wrote Aukje van Loon, Ph.D. candidate at the Chair for International Politics of the Faculty of Social Sciences. She was writing in response to the first edition of Rubens International and suggested we feature the Chair in a future edition.

"We have students and researchers from the Netherlands, the U.S., Taiwan, Peru, China, and the Czech Republic, and Germany of course. Our Chair, Prof. Dr. Stefan Schirm, is currently a senior research fellow in the UK. This was an opportunity Rubens could not pass up!"

PROF. DR. STEFAN SCHIRM, CURRENTLY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

What are your research topics on which you and your researchers at the Chair work?

Our research focuses on reforming global economic governance, on globalization in industrialized countries (such as Germany and the US), and on emerging powers' international relations (such as Brazil, China, and India). In examining those topics we look at societal ideas and interest groups in order to explain the policies of governments. I have been working especially on the question of why national reactions to the global financial crisis have differed so much (compared Germany and the US). Domestic interests and societal ideas have been at the center of explanations for the considerable divergence in national preferences towards a reform of global economic governance, particularly towards the International Monetary Fund. Currently I am researching the ad hoc coalitions of countries in the G20 as a potential new steering committee for the world economy.

At the moment you are in the US. How do you manage to do many things at once? Especially in an international context? How does one organize it?

I work and travel a lot, and get addicted to Skype! I find it actually quite demanding to simultaneously participate in an international project here in Washington, attend conferences in several countries, stay connected to my life in Germany, continue attending dissertation as well as deal with faculty matters at RUB. While it is interesting and also necessary to spend a lot of time researching about globalization in industrialized countries, I do look forward to returning home in summer in order to re-establish a normal professional and private life again. How do you communicate with one another at your Chair? (All of the interviewees spoke very good German.)

At your Chair in Bochum we actually speak English probably as often as German, since many members of the team are not native German speakers and we do have three native English speakers.

Did the international team at your Chair develop by accident, or do you intentionally try to hire diverse nationals?

Yes, that was a coincidence - there is no quota for foreigners. On the other hand, since I teach and publish often in English, it is probably attractive for internationally-minded researchers to apply to my Chair.

What do you see as the most enriching aspect of international diversity of your team?

While we all strive for analytical excellence, I guess our work is particularly enriched through our cultural and educational diversity, since several members of my team graduated abroad - for example, in the US - and many grew up in very different parts of the world.

How can RUB put its best face forward internationally?

RUB is one of the largest German universities and can proudly offer many interesting possibilities for interdisciplinary cooperation in our fields, for example, collaboration between political science, economics, and law is a great opportunity in Bochum, given the large departments with internationally-minded colleagues.

What do you do here in Bochum?

I am a Ph.D. student in political science and work as a researcher and lecturer at the Chair for International Politics.

What do you miss the most here?

My family (four siblings and my parents), the Dutch light-heartedness, and the Scottish landscape (the Highlands).

What would you most like to take home with you?

I do have three native English speakers. Of the team are not native German speakers and we probably as often as German, since many members of the team work on international relations, I do look for opportunities to spend time teaching and the translation, attend conferences in several countries, stay connected to my life in Germany, continue attending dissertations as well as deal with faculty matters at RUB. While it is interesting and also necessary to spend a lot of time researching about globalization in industrialized countries, I do look forward to returning home in summer in order to re-establish a normal professional and private life again. How do you communicate with one another at your Chair? (All of the interviewees spoke very good German.)

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The ONLY HONDURAN

PhD student Carlos Villela

On the map is the International Lounge, there is a yellow flag stuck in Honduras. “That’s mine,” says Carlos Villela. “I am the only Honduran at RUB, mostly from the South.” Here in Bochum the doctoral candidate at the Research School is particularly enjoying the international contacts, the interesting work at the Institute of Development Research and Development-Interactions (IEE), and riding his bike to and from campus.

“Germany was my gateway to the world,” says Carlos Villela, who came to the Ruhr Region six years ago after graduating from a bilingual school in Honduras and completing a bachelor’s degree in business administration. He always knew that he wanted to continue his studies abroad, so he applied for programmes in America, Asia, and Europe. He eventually had to decide between an offer from a university in the US and a DAAD scholarship for his master’s programme in Development Management at IEE. “I wanted to see Europe, and I also wanted to learn German,” says Carlos Villela, explaining his choice. Smiling, he recalls some initial language problems: “The first small I wrote I addressed to ‘Dear Ms. Frau Rücker’ because I thought that ‘Frau’ was a first name.”

Learning First-Hand

Today, Carlos Villela speaks fluent German and does not regret his decision. “In Latin America, many people believe that the people here are machistas and that the country is grey. I was amazed at how green Germany is – 40 percent or so are forests. For me, Germany is freedom – the freedom to do what you want. Every morning, for example, I ride my bike to the university. In Honduras, you cannot do this. It’s too dangerous because of the high crime rate. There you are living behind protective walls.”

Not just in Germany, but also at RUB Carlos Villela feels at home. He extremely enjoyed the master’s programme mainly because he made many new international contacts: “In Honduras, you hear a lot about America and some about Europe, but most Latin Americans rarely come in contact with African migrants.”

Over the past eight months Carlos Villela travelled through North America and Mexico interviewing the former governor of Zacatecas and talking to many Mexican migrants. “I want to explore the real meaning of this cooperation for the migrants and the government,” said the Honduran.

Interpretative Sociology

For example, Carlos Villela is interested in how important the recognition from the government is to the migrants and what type of political influence the migrants might have in their home country. Unlike in his master’s thesis, he is not using structural questionnaires for his doctoral research, but is focusing on methods drawn from interpretive sociology: “I always felt that people wanted to say more than what we wanted to know in our questionnaires. Now I spend a lot of time with the migrants and ask: ‘What is your life story?’ But analysing the results is very hard!”

Carlos Villela financed his research trips with funds from the Research School, where he has recently taken over the role of deputy doctoral representative for the PhD student. He currently enjoys other aspects of the Research School: “It’s not just international, it’s also interdisciplinary. That means you meet totally different worlds there.”

In addition to the financial support, the PhD student enjoys other aspects of the Research School: “It’s not just international, it’s also interdisciplinary. That means you meet totally different worlds there.”

What will come after the doctorate? “That’s mine,” says Carlos Villela. “I am in my final year of medical training and will be doing my medical training at the Catholic University in the North in Coquimbo and La Serena in Chile. These students need to pass a very good knowledge of Spanish, since they are fully engaged in the work with patients.”

The exchanges with Chile and Japanese RUB students offer a unique opportunity to not only experience working in the health care systems of both countries first hand, but also to come into direct contact with their students, people, and unique culture. “The international contacts that the students make and the experiences that they have while abroad and they are still un- dergoing their medical training can also help make a small contribution towards improving international understanding. The following reports by RUB medical students show what all of this really looks like on the ground.”

Independent in Chile

Marte Monier is currently in Chile: “I am in my final year of medical training and am now two months into a programme at San Pablo Hospital in Coquimbo. For me, this is a very important experience, both in terms of my medical training and personally. I am learning a lot and would wholeheartedly recommend this exchange programme.”

In the beginning it can be a bit hard to get used to the Chilean hospital system, but the other final year students do not have this problem. They have their practical training very helpful and the doctors also support you. The doctors really trust the trainees and feel responsible for our work. The surgeon who is responsible for the students, Dr. Marco Roca, takes his job very seriously. He even takes the time to explain things to me in Spanish, when I did not understand something in the Chilean dialect.

The hospital has a special room for the students. It is equipped with four computers and you can easily access the Internet via a wireless connection.

There are also three seminar rooms where you can use the PowerPoint to present on courses from their station. Overall, our study conditions are quite good. And you can get "la residencia", the place where students eat and sleep.

In the daily work at the hospital, the students function as "mini-doctors," so to speak, working with three to four patients and prescribing tests and medications. So you really do learn a lot. After the consultation we are also allowed to assist in operations. You might be able to give someone stitches or serve as the second assistant during a cholecystectomy (gall bladder removal). I started with TEVO, which stands for "thoracic, endoscopic, vascular, 'atraumatic' (others)."

After that I spent two weeks in an anaesthesia, where I was able to occasionally administer a local anaesthetic. Now I'm in the "digestive" (abdominal surgery) section.

Every sixth day we have to do a night shift. We start at 10 pm in the emergency room and work until the next day—there is no day off! On every seventh day, there is the called "turno de tarde," a shift from 5 pm to 10 am. The service is very busy, and you often care for several patients, but there is always a lot of humour. Sometimes you don’t even notice that the day is over! Cultural I.Enumeration in Japan

Juliane Kruppa reports from Japan: "Hiroshima" – the word triggered pictures of a destroyed city and radiation for my friends and family. ‘That’s where you want to go?’ And, yes, during my six week stay, I was supposed to learn about how beautiful this city is – ever since I was little I wanted to visit the interesting city and how wonderful and hospitable the residents are. Part of the training as a medical student includes four months as a trainee that can be completed during semester breaks or hospitals or clinics. I was lucky enough to spend part of this time at the Hiroshima University Hospital as part of their exchange programme with RUB. I lived with a family and was able to get a real glimpse into the traditions and customs. One particularly special experience was taking part in a traditional tea ceremony. This took place in a room where the floor was lined with traditional Japanese straw tatami mats – in the floor a kettle was sitting on top of a little fire. After two hours—and filled with the green tea and light dishes that were prepared according to specific rules and with graceful ritual movements—I felt completely relaxed and very comfortable. It was just the right way to spend the evening before my first day in the hospital.

In the hospital I was officially welcomed by the Dean in a welcome ceremony and was treated as a guest during the whole period of the internship. I felt really comfortable and truly welcome, and the Japanese students and doctors were interested to learn about Germany from me. I was greeted often with "Guten Tag", and many medical students learn German during their studies. I’ve also come across many German words during my day-to-day work at the hospital such as: "Karte" for the patient record or "Schaukasten" for the X-ray screen. It is very exciting to watch the Japanese doctors at work—after all, Japan is known for its high life expectancy.

The time after work was always very nice, as the team from the hospital met frequently at night to get something to eat or to go to the baseball stadium. The evenings were very long and pleasant in Hiroshima, and Germans here is very popular. I can only say that the journey to a distant country with its unique culture was very worthwhile and has definitely inspired me!”

Juliane Kruppa, Marie Monier, Marcia Coimbra, Mate Monier, an RUB student with one of her Chilean supervisors
Perfect Papers

Proofreading Office for International Students

It’s no wonder that this idea received DAAD funding. There are benefits on all sides from the new Proofreading Office in the International Office: international students at RUB can have their research papers – including master’s and bachelor’s theses – corrected for free. The office also benefits teacher training students who gain practical experience while they earn a bit of money. And, of course, securing the DAAD funding in itself is also a great accomplishment for the International Office.

Above all this hovers a larger goal: a DAAD programme to improve the integration of international students called PROFIN. The Proofreading Office for international students at RUB is an important part of this initiative. It was developed and launched by the RUBis (RUB International Student Services) team in the International Office. “Now we just provide the necessary infrastructure, but the project itself is entirely in the hands of the students,” said Elena Díaz (Díaz). This is the reason why two students have sat in the Proofreading Office (PNO) since the end of 2010 supervising the project as tutors: Arlette Tcheko (Management & Economy) and Trang Tran (Civil Engineer).

They process the registrations, carry out initial consultations with the international “authors”, and maintain contact with the proofreaders, students who work on the writing projects of their international counterparts. The proofreaders are usually teacher training students completing a Master of Education.

Target Group

The rules about who can come to the two tutor offices are set by DAAD: “The offering is aimed solely at international student enrollees in full-time degree programmes, of which there are currently 4,525 at RUB,” said Sarah-Amelie Stücken (Rubiss) after looking at the latest statistics. The target group is therefore quite large, yet thanks to the funding from DAAD, the project, which was initially started on a relatively small scale, can now be expanded.

The types of written work that students can bring to the Proofreading Office, from full-time degree programmes, of which there are currently 4,525 at RUB, are mostly clearly defined: master’s and bachelor’s theses, as well as and research papers for courses in all fields. “The offering to expand the outreach and explore various aspects of the exhibition will also be extended until July 10, 2011. A new online offering to expand the outreach and explore various aspects of the exhibition will also be extended during the Summer Semester. As soon as it is finished, it will be posted on the website of RUB’s art collection: http://kunst.rub.de/imag a. The picture shows NEW POT student Elmar Stücker from Germany in his living room.