SUPPLEMENT: CAMPUS WITHOUT BORDERS

UAMR OFFICE IN SÃO PAULO

INAUGURATION

The Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Guido Westerwelle (FDP), inaugurated the German House of Science and Innovation (DWIH) in São Paulo on February 14 (DWIH), where the University Alliance Metropolis Ruhr (UAMR) is likewise represented. The office in São Paulo is a branch of the liaison office “ConRuhr Latin America” in Rio de Janeiro, located on the premises of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), that had commenced operation in 2011 (see RUBENS international November 2011).

During their tour through the DWIH, the “ConRuhr Latin America” coordinators – Prof. Dr. Christoph Käppler in his capacity as office manager – pointed out the diversity and strength of the science and research hub UAMR to the Minister, supplying him with both information and original Ruhrgold chocolates. Guido Westerwelle stressed the crucial role Brazil plays with regard to scientific and technological research - first and foremost the São Paulo region, which boasts the highest number of German research organisations outside Germany. He considers the DWIH the foundation stone upon which future German-Brazilian collaborations will be based and commends the special “Ciências sem Fronteiras” (CSF) of Science without Borders programme launched by the Brazilian government, under the umbrella of which 10,000 Brazilian students and scientists are to participate in exchange programmes to Germany within the next three years. Within the CSF, the UAMR universities are currently providing the largest number of exchange opportunities.

DAAD President, Prof. Dr. Margarete Wintermantel, also President of the German Rectors’ Conference and member of the Foreign Minister’s delegation, additionally visited the UAMR office in Rio de Janeiro. She pronounced the dedication of the UAMR with its two offices in Brazil, which, moreover, are active in Spanish-language countries in Latin America, to be exemplary, and noted that German-Brazilian relations are of great importance for the UAMR.

TWOFOLD COOPERATION

The Ruhr-University and the National Taiwan University (NTU) in Taipei are now collaborating across two levels: following the partnership between the universities that was agreed upon in 2009, the law departments of both universities have now launched extensive cooperation.

The occasion presented itself when legal academics from Taiwan came to Bochum: a six-man delegation from the College of Law at the NTU, Taipei, paid a visit to the RUB Faculty of Law and the District Court Bochum. The visit centred on a conference focusing on the Taiwanese and German civil law and civil action issues. The conference took place in the department’s forensic lab and was opened by the Chairman of the German-Taiwanese Lawyers Association, Dr. Jan Constanze Dr. Volker Brüggemann, President at the District Court Bochum, welcomed the delegation to the Court and introduced the attendees to the judicial organisation in Germany. The NTU thus paid a return visit to the RUB, following Prof. Dr. Peter A. Wolters’s (Chair of Procedural Law and Civil Law) research and lecture tour to Taiwan in March/April 2011.

In order to further strengthen the collaborative bond between the two universities which has existed since 2009, both deans, Prof. Dr. Ming-Cheng Tsai und Prof. Dr. Achiruddin Puteri, signed a cooperation agreement on faculty level. It provides for the establishment of a joint Doctoral Programme in Law as well as for scientist exchange and collaborative research and teaching programmes between the faculties. Exchange programmes for law students are not addressed in this agreement, but they can be easily organised in accordance with the general agreement between the RUB and the NTU, which focuses on student exchange. It was outlined in detail in 2009, making it very easy for students on both sides to spend one or two semesters at the respective partner university and to have their credits recognised.

GLOBAL CAMPUS

Prof. Dr. Horst Fischer (Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict at the RUB) was elected Chairman of the “Global Campus” in Venice at the end of January. Prior to the election, 85 universities from all four corners of the globe had founded the Global Human Rights Campus at the Venetian Human Rights Institute (European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation, EIUC).

This “Campus” is meant to intensify and harmonise the academic programmes of all participating universities. The “Global Campus” — it brings human rights master’s programmes in Asia, Africa, Americas and Europe in line – commenced operations in April 2011; participants include the universities of Pretoria, Sydney, Buenos Aires as well as the RUB.

“Happily, the European Commission in Venice put forward the proposal for financial support that will back the collaboration until 2020,” explains Horst Fischer. He was elected unanimously by the universities’ representatives. The scientist from Bochum has been heading the Human Rights Institute in Venice since 1997. As an important partner, the RUB conducts its own activities under the umbrella of the Venice Campus. The EIUC is to take charge of the managerial duties at the Global Campus, planning and implementing its activities. The centre in Venice offers “Human Rights and Democratisation” courses as well as a wealth of other programmes.

MR. SAIGON

Gerhard Schröder was the guest of honour in the Vietnamese-German University in Ho Chi Minh City in the winter semester, where the RUB Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering reported its international success “ConRuhr” at the “German House of Science and Technology” in 2009. From September 2009 to January 2012, Dr. Matthias Baitsch (on the right) fulfilled the function of the RUB programme coordinator in former Saigon. Here, he introduces the former Chancellor to the ins and outs of this extraordinary university. You can read up on the role the Ruhr-Universität played in Vietnam on page 3.

Visitors and hosts in the Law Faculty’s forensic lab

ConRuhr Latin America in São Paulo (left to right): Office Manager, Dr. Stephan Holzentainer, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Guido Westerwelle, Director, Prof. Dr. Christoph Käppler
Interviews: Julia Wöhr; Photography: Marleen Selle

SEVEN RESEARCHERS, SIX NATIONS, FIVE QUESTIONS

The Department of Anatomy and Molecular Embryology – About us

Internationality is the order of the day in Prof. Brade Brand-Saberi’s department. As members of the working group “Anatomy and Molecular Embryology” at the Faculty of Medicine, 20 employees from twelve different countries are in charge of researching and teaching. They study, for example, the way muscles, skin, eyes, and kidneys develop.

Beate Brand-Saberi moved from Freiburg to Bochum in 2009; many of her lab members relocated with her. Recently, she has brought into life the international master’s degree programme “Molecular and Developmental Stem Cell Biology”. “Differences in mentality and working approach of an international group can sometimes be a challenge”, says Brand-Saberi. “However, my international academic activities and the international background of my own group have helped me to better understand some of the requirements of visiting scholars and students. Pursuing a common goal overcomes national and cultural borders.”

Dr. Ajwad Balkashim-Romeda (35) has been in Germany since 2009. As a postdoc, she studies a specific protein important for muscle formation.

1) I chose a graduate school in Freiburg to do my PhD because the lab of Prof. Brand-Saberi is very well known in the field of myogenesis. Then, the lab was moved from Freiburg to Bochum. Compared to Freiburg, Bochum has all faculties and everything in the same place. If I wanted to see a collaborator in Freiburg, I had to take the bicycle. Therefore, collaboration happens a lot more intensively here.
2) I was quite difficult for me to adjust in the beginning. But then I thought it is better to have an organized and disciplined system.
3) I don’t know... the weather is better in India. Also the food. Maybe, if you had asked me in the beginning, I would have told you more. But now I am used to the life-style here.
4) I would like to stay here for at least two or three more years. But, in future I’ll be moving back to India.
5) I like to be in both academical and research. But let’s see!

Dr. Baogang Wang (35) from China came to Germany in 2012. As a postdoc, he is concerned with the regeneration of cardiacmyocytes, the cells of the heart muscle.

1) Prof. Brand-Saberi was one of the reasons I came to RUB and the lab conditions were very nice. From colleagues I had also heard that the Rubinger is especially nice for researchers—that foreigners and native people are very well integrated. In my project, I can cooperate with other departments—because of the campus structure. Everything is organised, especially the parking garage! I cannot find any reason to complain... except perhaps about all the construction work.
2) Before I came to Germany, I did not know a lot about the country. But now I got used to everything. In July, I went on holiday last year and I think it would be difficult for me to move back there.
3) I don’t like the food here... and I don’t like the weather.
4) I do not have a plan for the next years. But at least for this year, I will try to get some results for my project.
5) As a researcher, it is good to publish a lot and to do it continuously. And the big dream of all researchers may be to change positions too often.

Carla Grade (28) from Brazil is on a “sandwich-type” DAAD scholarship. After starting her PhD in Brazil, she is currently in Germany for one year, and will then finish her work in Brazil.

1) I chose the university because of the professor. I was interested in her work. The RUB has a very good structure. We have all the equipment to easy work here. When I arrived, I was instantly in touch with the International Office. They organised everything for me: get me a place to live, provided all the information I needed, took me to get my visa. I was really improved how helpful they were. Also, I like the “mensa” very much!
2) The security, the tranquility of living here. Brazil is a little more dangerous. I like the fact that I can walk in the street at any time, I don’t have to worry about anything. And I like that things are so efficient. Everything works, everything is simple, no complications. It is easy to live like that.
3) Especially the warm—not just the weather, sometimes also from people. Although, I don’t have a lot of contact with Germans. I was hoping I would get more mixed-up with the German culture, but I have many, many foreigners in the lab. Of course, I also miss my family.
4) I will go back in Brazil in April.
5) First, finishing my PhD. And I have the intention of becoming a professor or having a position at a university in Brazil.

Gabriela Morocan-Pupello (40) from Romania came to Germany in 2002. As a postdoc, she is currently tracing the origin of a certain part of the skin, the so-called dermo-dermis, that generates hairs and feathers.

1) I came because of Prof. Brand-Saberi. She offered me to come here as a postdoc. I took the offer, because I liked the subjects in this lab, my colleagues, and the environment. It is a heterogenous group, we have many foreigners. Besides science, we also learn a lot about the rest of the world! I am very happy here, I have to say. 2) My dream was to be a scientist. In Germany, you have access to many things, the technical conditions are good. Ten years ago, my country was not prepared for this kind of research, so I wanted to go abroad.
3) Nothing. I have lived here for so long: I have my family here, my child, I am expecting my second child. I can visit my country every year. Also, in terms of food, there is not too much difference. I cannot say that I miss anything.
4) Germany is very nice. I can imagine spending my entire life here. I am happy with the people around me and with my boss, so I wouldn’t know why I shouldn’t stay here.
5) One big dream of mine has already come true. I finished my PhD in Germany and work as a post-doc. From the family point of view, I am also very happy. I try to keep things at this level, and, if possible, improve myself, maybe have good publications. I just try to be good at my job.

Dr. Jingchen Chen (29) from China arrived in Germany in 2009. As a postdoc, he studies the molecular mechanisms of muscle development.

1) I worked with Prof. Brand-Saberi in Freiburg and my project was not finished, so I followed her to this university. I think medicine is quite impressive here. So far, I have felt very comfortable living and studying in this country. The environment is good and there are nice people around.
2) I like the campus. It is similar to a Chinese campus—quite different from Freiburg, where the departments were scattered across the city. And it is very convenient to shop at the “Uni-Center”.
3) The mensa. In my Chinese university, there was one big cafeteria, the food was quite delicious and very cheap. To be honest, the food here is not too much to my taste. But it’s quite OK.
4) I may go to another European country or to the USA. I am a graduate student doing a bachelor’s degree. He is now doing his master degree attempting to figure out certain proteins determine the fate of neural stem cells.

Dr. Faisal Yusuf (39) was born in Dubai. Originally, he is from Pakistan, but he practically never lived there. In 2000, he came to Germany where he is now working as a postdoc on muscle and kidney development.

1) Prof. Brand-Saberi’s department had a good name in developmental biology and stem cell research. She invited me to do my doctoral work with her. This was an opportunity that was luring on the table. I thought: Why not go for it! And you can see I am still here. What I really enjoy is the proximity of the collaborators at RUB. I just have to go one floor up or one floor down.
2) My first exposure to Germany was in Romania. I was living in a student house and we got two German channels. Profy and Komet. When I listened to them, I said: This is a country I would never like to go to—being cause of the difficult language. When I came here, my opinion about the language and the country changed considerably. I have a very good impression of Germany.
3) That’s a difficult question! I lived in Dubai for 8 years and now I have been in Germany for 11 years. I consider Germany and Dubai more or less equally my home countries. But there is one thing I do not like here in Bochum. Many of my colleagues had big problems with the Aushilfeenschein! They, for instance, tell you their requirements, and when one comes back one hour later, they have new requirements.
4) This is quite uncertain. I still have a strong attachment to Dubai. But for the moment, I feel quite good here.
5) I believe in working on a daily basis and seeing what comes tomorrow. My dream would be to have a family and my community.
DEVELOPMENT AID FAR EAST
The RUB’s successful involvement in the Vietnamese German University

A beautiful and vibrant success story has been authored by the Ruhr-Universität in Ho Chi Minh City: this is where the RUB Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering exported its international master’s programme “Computational Engineering.” Since 2009, there has actually been a lively exchange between Bochum and Vietnam. Teaching and learning professionals involved in the CompEng programme in Bochum have visited Vietnam at least once. Moreover, a group of six and nine Vietnamese students respectively has come to Bochum to take part in a two-month research placement. Participating in black courses that were provided exclusively for them, they conducted small research projects; they were looked after by Jörg Salbmann and Julia Lippmann from the CompEng Coordination Office in Bochum.

The RUB’s successful involvement in the Vietnamese German University

Hannah Sommer is currently spending her final semester as a BA student in Ho Chi Minh City. The 22-year-old mechanical engineering student (area of specialization at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum) has enrolled for a six-month CompEng course at the VGU, where she is writing her BA thesis. Her study abroad was facilitated through the PROMO grants awarded to her by the International Office. Hannah talks about her experiences in an extensive interview with CompEng coordinator Julia Lippman.

What inspired you to go to Vietnam?
I have always been interested in Asia. Through its close collaboration with the RUB, Vietnam presented me with the perfect foundation for my studies.

Was it difficult to settle in?
The Vietnamese people are incredibly friendly and make strangers feel very welcome right from the start. I was welcomed to my new class instantly and was spending a lot of time with my fellow students from the very first week. On first, I stayed with a young host family who did all they could to make me feel at home. We spent a lot of time together and talked a lot.

Most of the time, I was too busy to miss Germany at all.

Do you interact a lot with Vietnamese people or are most of your acquaintances international visitors?
Both. During the first two months, I was mainly surrounded by Vietnamese people. I had the chance to socialize and to get a feel for the Vietnamese lifestyle and mentality. After two more months, I moved into a flat with a Canadian, a Frenchman, and a German and his Vietnamese girlfriend. My reason for moving house was the long distances I had been forced to travel before. From then on, I socialized a lot with people from different countries.

What’s your impression of the studying conditions at the VGU?
I am very pleased with them on the whole. The small classes make it easy to get to know your teachers. It is common to be taught by German lecturers.

Can the VGU and the RUB be compared?
With the exception of the academic programme, both universities are very different, I think. The VGU is much smaller than the RUB. Thus, the lectures are given in English; if required, native speakers supervise the programmes. All lectures are upon which the programme’s high reputation it enjoys in the research and economic world is founded,” says Prof. Dr. Klaus Hackl, course director of the master’s programme.

The graduates easily find jobs in the science and economic sectors worldwide. Some 50% enroll for doctorate programmes after completing four master’s degrees. “Computational Engineering is tailor-made to prepare students for the requirements of the international job market in the engineering segment and it passes the way into senior and executive positions in industrial and research organizations,” says Hackl.

Since a large number of foreign applicants come from Asia, Prof. Hackl and his colleagues considered it a matter of course to submit CompEng as a potential VGU pilot project in 2010/2011. Among an submitted degree programmes, CompEng came out on top as the “best submission” in the tender organized by the aforementioned association and, together with three other master’s programmes, was put forward for a direct grant. In October 2010, CompEng was eventually launched in Ho Chi Minh City. “At first, our Vietnamese students found it difficult to follow the English-language lectures; but thanks to the intensive language courses, this problem has been alleviated: the programme is now up and running,” as he sums up.

Lively Exchange
Since 2005, there has actually been a lively exchange between Bochum and Vietnam. Teaching and learning professionals involved in the CompEng programme in Bochum have visited Vietnam at least once. Moreover, a group of six and nine Vietnamese students respectively has come to Bochum to take part in a two-month research placement. Participating in black courses that were provided exclusively for them, they conducted small research projects; they were looked after by Jörg Salbmann and Julia Lippmann from the CompEng Coordination Office in Bochum. Research-related supervision was supplied by the RUB Chairs involved in the CompEng programme. The visitors, moreover, explored Bochum and its region. According to Dr. Batzke, the four VGU students who were top of their year in 2010 are currently back in Bochum to write their master’s theses. Trân Tulin Minh and Nguyen Van Hai are a step ahead, they have just commenced their PhD at the VGU. Trân Tulin Minh as a VGU graduate and Nguyễn Văn Hai as a graduate of the CompEng programme in Bochum; she had enrolled at the RUB thanks to a funding programme for emerging and developing countries and is now to assume the position of doctoral research assistant and teacher at the VGU.

As a result of the university partnership between the VGU and the RUB, the first German students have visited Ho Chi Minh City. Several of them have published comprehensive and entertaining reports on their experiences (see http://compeng.nhie.de (News)).

Merkel and Schröder
In 2012, the first three VGU students graduated. They were granted a great honour: they met German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who came to Vietnam during her Asia tour in October 2012 and visited the University. And that’s not all; on November 21, the academic year 12/13 was officially opened at the VGU. On this occasion, the three graduates were awarded their master’s degrees. The certificates were presented to them by their course director Prof. Hackl, a high-ranking Vietnamese politician, and former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. At the same time, the VGU’s new temporary campus was inaugurated in the Binh Duong province. The university will remain situated there until 2015; some 70 minutes by car from Ho Chi Minh City. Then, the new VGU campus is scheduled for completion. Financed with a World Bank loan exceeding the amount of 300 million US Dollars, a
MOBILE RUSSIANS
The RUB’s successful participation in Erasmus Mundus MULTIC

The RUB has been a member of the Erasmus Mundus MULTIC Consortium since 2005, which awards scholarships for mobility flows between the Russian Federation (RF) and the European Union (EU) in both directions. The consortium is comprised of 8 European and 2 Russian universities and is managed by the TU Dresden – the only other German university involved.

The scholarship program is financed by the European Commission and has been expanding rapidly since the first round in 2005/06, with the number of applicants increasing from round to round. The reason for this is obvious: the program is very flexible and offers great opportunities for the participants. Undergraduate students can apply for mobility from a to a semester, graduate students can apply for a full master’s degree program. Doctoral students have the choice between a short research scholarship of 3 to 6 months and a full PhD scholarship. The program also addresses postdocs and staff who may apply for short-term research visits. The most remarkable point, however, is that the program provides opportunities to RF nationals working in public administration. TheTU Dresden, for example, co-operates with enterprises with study, training or research opportunities in the EU.

The SC comprises of three elected boards: one for chemistry or of the Research Department (RF) and the European Union (EU) in both directions. For the most innovative approach to learning and teaching. This preparation seems to off, all Erasmus Mundus students as far as they have been very happy with their studies at the RUB and gave extremely positive feedback. So far, the IFSC internship has been a great opportunity to participate in contemporary research projects but also be a part of a scientific community including the presenting and reviewing of scientific results.

Students and researchers. Thus, the students were able to further practice and improve their scientific communication skills with respect to publishing, presenting, and defending their scientific results. The students fully mimicked the entire scientific process. This involved abstract writing, reviewing and conducting a peer-review process within the SC poster compilation, and presentation. During the SPS event of 2010, the work of the students was carefully reviewed by a reviewers’ panel consisting of the international researchers, representing the various topics covered within the IFSC Program. In addition, many of the local professors and post doctoral fellows joined the poster session.

The IFSC internship culminated with the publishing of a Proceedings Volume which contains the posters and peer-reviewed abstracts. Through the support of the Research Department IFSC, permanent poster displays have been provided, which enable a display of the posters of the current IFSC internship at Level NC 03 of the Faculty of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

Statements

STUDENT COMMENTS:
SSB: Professor Maximilian Gebhard and Anna Legler: “The IFSC internship provides us with unique experiences and provided us with valuable skills to face future challenges.”

SOF: Prof. Dr. Sabine Borgmann, RD IFSC Science Manager Dr. Sabine Broxtermann and Maxmillian Gebhard and Sarah A. Stücken, “I believe that one of the most innovative aspects of this internship is the development of a working network, enabling RF and EU students including organizing the SPS event with all the student community boards working hand in hand.”

The IFSC internship was a great opportunity to not only participate in contemporary research projects but also be a part of a scientific community including the presenting and reviewing of scientific results.

TEACHING STAFF COMMENTS:
IFSC Internship Coordinator Prof. Anjana Devi: “The coupling of lab rotation and training in scientific communication is the most innovative aspect of this internship. It is an ideal platform to enhance the skills of the students in terms of learning, outcomes and experience. This teaching approach enables students to gain early independence when it pertains to research or even working in industry.”

RD IFSC Professor Prof. Anjana Devi: “Learning is a life-long objective. The students can benefit from the experience and teaching. It was very popular and the poster session was a big success. There were many visitors, even several not linked to the internship. The students were surprised by the high level of scientific discussions and interest for the work the students presented. I was really impressed by the quality of the posters and the vivid discussions much better than on many international conferences.”

A “clear and convincing” proposal for carrying out the internship in Russia, which they presented their practical work by students organized in the winter term 11/12.

The IFSC internship gives students a unique opportunity to learn about the university, the library, the many different courses, its innovative concept cultivated interesting opportunities and a kick-off experience for each and every participant as an authentic taste of Russia.

“I believe that one of the most innovative aspects of this internship is the development of a working network, enabling RF and EU students including organizing the SPS event with all the student community boards working hand in hand.”

The IFSC internship was a great opportunity to not only participate in contemporary research projects but also be a part of a scientific community including the presenting and reviewing of scientific results.

So much for the theory, what’s much more important for the program is the people, and, as far as the RUB is concerned, our experience has been very positive. In 2009, when the program started, 20 students started, 1 students and 1 post-doctoral researchers came to the RUB for a period of up to 6 months – in the actual round, 30 scholarship holders came to the RUB, amongst them 6 doctoral students, a researcher and a student who will do his complete master’s degree at the RUB.

The RUB is committed to enhancing the quality of the learning experience of its students. This is based on a long-standing history of international exchange programs and teaching and training. One example of this is the “International Students Chemistry (IFSC) internship” which is a compulsory course for Chemistry Master’s students. The course language is English.

The IFSC internship provides us with unique opportunities and experiences for each and every participant as well as for the students and researchers. Thus, the students were able to further practice and improve their scientific communication skills with respect to publishing, presenting, and defending their scientific results. The students fully mimicked the entire scientific process. This involved abstract writing, reviewing and conducting a peer-review process within the SC poster compilation, and presentation. During the SPS event of 2010, the work of the students was carefully reviewed by a reviewers’ panel consisting of the international researchers, representing the various topics covered within the IFSC program. In addition, many of the local professors and post doctoral fellows joined the poster session.

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