Pathways to internationalization – Exchange of „Best Practices“

AC21 Working Breakfast held already for the 7th time on the occasion of the NAFSA 2015 in Boston

Based on the initiative of Technische Universität Chemnitz, in the year 2009 the idea was generated to make use of the NAFSA as the largest conference in the higher education sector worldwide for holding a meeting of the already present representatives of nearly all AC21 member universities in order to discuss themes and trends which are of great interest for the network.

From this time on, the AC21 Working Breakfast has become a yearly good tradition and was now held already for the 7th time on the occasion of the NAFSA happening this year at Boston. Technische Universität Chemnitz was very delighted to welcome on the 27 May 2015 delegates from i.a. Nagoya University, North Carolina State University, University of Minnesota, University of Freiburg and Gadjah Mada University Djakarta to the 7th AC21 Working Breakfast dedicated to the overall topic of the exchange of “best practices” of pathways towards internationalization among the AC21 members.

The chancellor of Technische Universität Chemnitz, Dr. Eberhard Alles, opened the 7th AC21 Working Breakfast with the description of the status of progress of the preparations of the university for hosting the upcoming mega-event of the network in the next year – the 8th AC21 International Forum which will happen from 29.04.-04.05.2015 at Chemnitz and be captioned by the overarching topic “Networks of Innovation for the Transformation of Society through Science”. The chancellor explained that the concept developed by the Rector of Technische Universität Chemnitz, Prof. Dr. Arnold van Zyl, aims at the exchange of “best practices” of bringing together universities with partners from industry, politics, science and society in order to jointly generate revolutionary progress having the potential to transform the society. A special characteristic of the 8th AC21 International Forum will be the combination with the celebrations of the 180-years jubilee of Technische Universität Chemnitz. At the end of the presentation of the chancellor, the subsequent discussion lead to a variety of fruitful ideas especially concerning the use of this event for the further development of cooperation within AC21.

Then, the Head of the International Office of Technische Universität Chemnitz, Dr. Wolfgang Lambrecht, gave an input-presentation treating the rapid growth of the share of international students at the university which more than doubled within the last years and reached nearly 20% this year. He explained resulting challenges and ways of Technische Universität Chemnitz to overcome them. The comments of the audience showed that also a lot of other AC21 member universities face the same challenges so that a very constructive exchange of ideas of alternative ways for solutions could take place.

Finally, Prof. Jiro Takai from the Graduate School of Education and Human Development of Nagoya University held a very informative presentation treating the “Top Global Universities Program” initiated by the Japanese Government having for objective to place a greater number of Japanese universities on leading positions within the most famous world university rankings. An important component of this program is the provision of additional funding for internationalization aiming at e.g. doubling the share of incoming and outgoing students as well as the number of courses taught in English until 2020. Prof. Takai discussed in a very sophisticated way from the perspective of a practitioner outcomes but also unexpected challenges of these kind of programs like that the objective of promotion of studies abroad to Japanese students
might be contradictory to the simultaneous goal of gaining additional highly qualified young workforce for an ageing society.

This AC21 Working Breakfast proved once more that this format itself may be designated with total justification a “best practice” of the AC21 network and that it has developed to an indispensable platform of discussion and exchange between the members for the future-oriented enhancement of their cooperation within AC21.