The Würzburg Centre for Modern India is flourishing

In its fifth year, the Würzburg Centre for Modern India (WCMI) could intensify its work due to an extra budget from DAAD. Furthermore, in mid 2014 the funding organization (DAAD) granted an extension to WCMI until the end of 2017. The exchange of faculty with Indian partner institutions has been quite intensive, in both directions. In total thirteen guest professors from India came to Würzburg for teaching and workshops, for some of them it was the first time (Prof. A. Biswas, Mumbai, Dr. S. Sengupta, Jamia Milia Delhi, host Political Sciences & Sociology; Profs. M.S. Babu & M. Brahme from IIT Madras, host Special Needs Education; Prof. G.N. Jha, JNU Delhi, host Computer Philology; Prof. G.S. Bajpai, Delhi, host Law Faculty; Prof. N. Vohra, IIM Ahmedabad, host International Management Erlangen). Others have by now become an integral part of academic teaching and research in their host institutions (Prof. B.A.V. Rai, Mangalore, Prof. J. Nair, JNU Delhi, host Indology; Prof. U.S. Bava, Prof. V. Rodrigues, both JNU Delhi, Prof. S.S. Nair, UoHyd, host for all Political Sciences & Sociology; Prof. A. Kundu, Delhi, host Business Administrat.)

From the University of Würzburg, Prof. G. Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet and P. Gieg visited Mangalore University and JNU Delhi, as well as Manipal and Mumbai University for lectures and cooperation talks. Dr. M. Melcher taught as short term guest lecturer at JNU (all European Research & International Relations).
Prof. M. Becker (Political Theory) visited Mangalore University and JNU for lectures and a workshop, Dr. T. Müller (Special Needs Education) gave lectures and a seminar at IIT Madras.

In June, the newly established „India Forum“ at the Würzburg Institute for Political Sciences & Sociology organized a workshop under the title „Exploring Emerging India“ with contributions from Würzburg faculty (Political Sciences, Indology) and Indian guest professors. Topics were elections, democracy, economic & social development, gender issues and foreign policy. (http://www.politikwissenschaft.uniwuerzburg.de/en/einrichtungen/india_forum/)

The Student’s Mobility Programme became bidirectional

Starting with the turn of 2013/2014, we could eventually also invite master students and doctoral researchers from our Indian partner institutions to join the University of Würzburg in the framework of the DAAD “A New Passage to India” mobility programme. They stayed for 2-3 months each, and collectively they covered almost the full range of disciplines at our university, ranging from German Studies, Political Studies, Mathematics, Management to Chemistry, Material Sciences, Life Sciences and Aerospace Engineering.

Several members of WCMI are involved in an important new initiative under the auspices of the German Federal Ministry for Education & Research (BMBF). The ministry will be funding an „International Centre for Advanced Studies (ICAS)“ in India and a large consortium, which also includes faculty from the Würzburg Centre for Modern India as well as from some of its Indian partner institutions, got a positive evaluation for their proposal regarding the establishment of ICAS. The final grant application is under way.
The other direction, sending students from Würzburg to India, became more and more popular at our university and is now firmly established in many research areas. Particular hotspots exist in the political sciences, education sciences and life sciences. The number of students studying and performing research in the context of their bachelors, masters or doctoral thesis at different partner institutions increased from 10 in 2013 to 21 in 2014. The majority went to JNU Delhi, but IISc, NCBS, TIFR-CAM, IIT Madras, UoH and Mangalore U were destinations as well.

From the student’s reports it is obvious that they derived a tremendous benefit for their academic endeavors and subsequent careers from staying in India. Equally important however many lasting friendships were forged.

In sum, the bi-directional student’s mobility programme run by the University of Würzburg Graduate Schools turns out to be of great importance for the sustainability of the India Initiative. It creates planned and sometimes serendipitous contacts between research groups on both sides, paving the way for joint research projects, some of which are already in progress, others being in the planning stage. The mobility programme is currently funded until the end of 2015, but a new call by the DAAD is expected.

**Scientific contacts and collaborations in life sciences, natural sciences and mathematics intensify**

More than twenty scientists doing research in life sciences, mathematics & natural sciences at the University of Würzburg have contacts and cooperations with colleagues from a multitude of universities and research institutions in India. A new and intensive collaboration has been started between the Dept. of Animal Ecology & Tropical Biology at the Biocentre of the University of Würzburg and the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) Bengaluru: In January 2014 Assoc. Prof. J. Spaethe plus a postdoc, a PhD and a Master’s student from the Dept. of Behavioral Physiology & Sociobiology stayed for two weeks in the lab of Dr. A. Brockmann at NCBS, starting a joint research project.

In the second half of February 2014 Prof. W. Rössler (Dept. of Behavioral Physiology & Sociobiology) and Prof. T. Schmitt (Dept. of Animal Ecology & Tropical Biology) travelled to NCBS too. They were invited faculty at the first „SERB School for Chemical Ecology“ and began joint projects with Dr. A. Brockmann and other colleagues from NCBS. Prof. Schmitt continued this work during a second stay in October 2014.
The close cooperation between the group of Prof. C. Klingenberg (Dept. of Mathematics) and the Tata Institute for Fundamental Research – Centre for Applicable Mathematics (TIFR-CAM) in Bengaluru has been continued very successfully. Prof. P. Chandrashekarappa from Bengaluru became a regular guest faculty in Würzburg, a number of joint publications with colleagues from TIFR-CAM appeared in the meantime and PhD theses with co-supervision from Würzburg and Bengaluru are in progress. These activities were financed by fellowships from the Alexander-von-Humboldt foundation and also from DAAD. In September Prof. Klingenberg was staying in Bengaluru, together with two PhD students from Würzburg. On this occasion an extension of the MoU – concluded in 2012 - with TIFR-CAM could be signed.

Networking activities - contact and coordination travels

In April, on his way to and from a conference in Srinagar, Prof. J. Kreft, representative of the Vice-President for International Relations of the University of Würzburg, spent two days in Dehli. During talks with officials and colleagues from JNU, information about recent developments in the two partner institutions was exchanged and joint projects, e.g. scientific meetings, were discussed.

In a meeting at the DFG India Office in New Delhi, information about current and upcoming activities of the DFG office as well as of the University of Würzburg was exchanged. At the Delhi office of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) the new office director, Ms. H. Mock, and programme officer Ms. P. Midha were updated about the progress made in the implementation of the „A New Passage to India“ programme.
At the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU - MoU since 2010) in Delhi the progress of the ongoing cooperation and future new activities were discussed with the two Rectors and the Chief Advisor International Collaboration. It was agreed that the organisation of joint workshops should take place in the near future, as well as other efforts to bring together faculty from both universities.

The strengthening of research collaborations was then also discussed in separate meetings with faculty from the Special Centre for Molecular Medicine, the School of Life Sciences and the Centre for Political Studies.

At the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, a discussion with IISc faculty from different departments and centres about the present status of the collaboration and options for further development was followed by signing an extension of the existing MoU.

An extension of the MoU, which now includes „inStem“ (see below), was also signed at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), an Indian partner having quite a number of joint activities with the University of Würzburg.

During a visit to the Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine (inStem) and to the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) information was gathered on their many fields of research and on their instrumentation.

NCBS, inStem and University of Würzburg renew MoU
Friday, November 28th, 2014

After the renewal of the MoU, with Prof. S. Mayor, director NCBS & inStem

In a C-CAMP lab, with Dr. M.A. Alam

Website & link „Würzburg Centre for Modern India”
www.indienzentrum.uni-wuerzburg.de/en/home/

Link to DAAD Mobility programme
www.graduateschools.uni-wuerzburg.de/uwgs/funding_opportunities/uwgs_funds/mobility_india/mobility_india_eng/

Link for download of this report and all previous ones: http://tinyurl.com/lf9o8lc