kieler anker

Excellence Clusters
Breakthrough in cell and development biology
Chinese spring festival in Kiel
The new tutors of the International Center

special edition
Dear Alumni, dear Reader,

Welcome to the third edition of the English »Kieler Anker«.

A few years ago, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel (CAU) started activities to establish and develop a network of our former international students and scholars. The idea is to stay in contact after our international guests leave Kiel, to get news from them after they have returned to their home countries, to inform them about new activities and projects at Christian-Albrechts-Universität, and to create a platform for the exchange of experiences, information and ideas that may even lead to new joint activities with and among our alumni.

The magazine "Kieler Anker" which appears twice a year shall support and facilitate that exchange. Since most of our former students are fluent in German, it is published in German. On the occasion of the establishment of the first official chapter of international CAU alumni, which took place in Schleswig-Holstein’s Chinese partner province Zhejiang in 2004, we decided to issue a special English edition of our "Kieler Anker".
We received a lot of positive reactions, and disposeed to release one English edition every year.

We hope that the articles find your interest and we look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions.

With best wishes from Kiel.
Sincerely yours,

Dr. Martina Schmode
Director of the International Center
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The new tutors of the International Center

Since the winter semester 2005/2006, the international center has offered a tutor program with international students.

Magdalena from Poland, Aristide from Cameroon, Ali from Turkey and Alexej from Russia are the four new tutors who want to make everyday life a little bit easier for the international students at the CAU Kiel. The first contact with the students occurs already at enrolment where they stand at the side with support and advice. Then they are together for orientation functions: the campus and city tours, the introduction evening, and they also spend an evening together eating.

Twice a week there are consultation hours in the international center where the tutors can address special questions and requests. Of course they are also glad to offer help with the government authorities and processes.

In addition, there will be an extensive introduction program every semester in order to make their study visit easier for foreign students.

In the winter semester of 2005/06, for example, they informed the students about labour law, work permits, and health insurance, as well as the new immigration laws. They also helped the students better understand the structure of the university and local voting system.

In addition, there was a discussion on the implementing of tuition and the effect it will have on international students, as well as the introduction of various means of integration that will make the transition into work life easier for international alumni.

Next to all these "dry" topics, there is also time for fun and socializing. For this reason, there is an intercultural evening that is organized every semester. The goal of the evening is for international students to meet together and to learn other traditions and practices, and also to meet new friends.

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In the nation-wide competition for the recognition of top research fields (also known as ‘excellence clusters’), the doctors, scientists, and oceanographers from the universities of Kiel and Lübeck, as well as from the Research Center of Borstel and the Institutes for Oceanography (IFM-GEOMAR), have received strong support from the state government in Schleswig-Holstein for their applications on the national level.

The Minister of Science, Dietrich Austermann, and the State Secretary of Science, Jost de Jager, announced on December 20 that a total of 19.5 million euros, which is 25% of the total spending from the “Schleswig-Holstein-Fund”, will be set aside for two hopeful and promising projects in Schleswig-Holstein. "With this Money, we want to, on the one hand, secure the chances of success for the two applicants and, on the other hand, we want to make it clear that the state government of Schleswig-Holstein gives top priority to the research areas of inflammatory disease and oceanography, independent of the success of the applicant," Austermann said.

The money is to be spent, among other things, on new equipment for the laboratory, as well as on new supplies and additional staff who will prepare the cluster’s project management and promote interdisciplinary cooperation.

The medical cluster functions as a cooperation between 70 different groups from Kiel, Borstel, and Lübeck who are concerned with the field of inflammatory diseases. According to Professor Stefan Schreiber, the inflammation of body surfaces is a medical problem that affects a lot of people. The skin and the mucus membranes of the lungs, mouth, and intestines are barrier organs that protect the body from the outside world. Professor Schreiber said when something goes wrong with this barrier, inflammatory diseases develop such as asthma, neurodermitis, psoriasis, or Crohn’s disease. He continues, "Until now, doctors have only been able to intervene when - like a game of dominoes - most of the blocks have already been knocked over. Then the progress of the disease can only be slowed down, but no longer be stopped. The first domino in this chain is especially shaky for people who carry a genetic predisposition for these diseases.

One goal of the research, for example, is to find out what conditions in one's living environment 'knock over the first domino', and then which dominoes are next to fall. The outcome of the cluster's research would not be to develop new methods of treatment, but rather to discover ways to stop the first domino from falling."

The second promising cluster applicant is concerned with the "Future Ocean" project, which is lead by Kiel’s Christian-Albrechts-University in cooperation with the Leibniz-Institute for Oceanography (IFM-GEOMAR, see p.8). According to Professor Klaus Wallmann, the oceans are being fundamentally changed due to industry produced carbon dioxide, global warming, and over-fishing. But on the other hand, materials from the oceans offer great opportunities for innovative new products.

Wallmann states, "Today, we are already noticing major changes in the ocean's circulation, the water composition, and the marine ecosystem. And we fear serious changes are in the near future." The ocean also offers mineral resources and other possibilities that have not been used in the past. With this in mind, the cluster applicant aims to investigate the changes in the oceans and evaluate the risks and utilize the opportunities which will emerge from the ocean in the future. With this they hope to develop a global management of the ocean and maritime resources and finally a new symbiosis between man
and the sea.
The Schleswig-Holstein scientists are competing against some tough competition, according to the Minister of Science, Dietrich Austermann. The German Research Community (Deutscher Forschungsgemeinschaft - DFG) had 157 applicants. There was a preliminary selection for these applicants in mid-January 2006. The proposals were extended until April 2006 and the final selection will take place in the autumn of 2006.
Successful applicants will be supported by the excellence cluster with 7.8 million euros a year for 5 years. 75% of this cost will be paid for by the national government and the rest by the state government. The total support per cluster amounts to 39 million euros.

More information:
Internet: http://www.uni-kiel.dewissenschaft/cluster-info.shtml
A new course of study at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität which spans many subjects and departments is offered - "Gender Studies". The Kieler Anker spoke about the new offer with the coordinator, Dr. Ester Leroy, from the department of European Ethnology and Folklore.

Dr. Leroy, please explain what exactly someone can expect from the subject "Gender Studies".

Gender studies looks at the way the sexes relate to each other. They examine the meaning of 'gender' in different societal contexts. They act on the assumption that there is a social and cultural definition of gender.

The graduate course of study, "Interdisciplinary Cultural Analysis: Gender Studies", responds to the discomfort that is often expressed from graduate students about the lack of communication during the graduate stage. The graduate course of study meets the individual work on a PC through an integration of structured, interdisciplinary work with a systematically designed course of study. In this way, an exchange of topics can be reached that extends beyond the specialty of the graduate. The initiative aims at being an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental graduate course that has the potential of including all graduate projects at the CAU that have to do with the gender studies theme. The responsibilities of the individual departments and advisers would then remain the same.

"Gender Studies" at the CAU is a topic in many subjects in different departments that consistently and more or less regularly appears during courses. Because of the interdisciplinary and interdepartmental aspects of the program, "Gender Studies" is a suitable topic to focus on.

While "Gender Studies" has already been implemented at many universities as a regular course of study with differing focuses, as of now there are very few similar offers for postgraduate courses of study, which are sparse anyway in Germany for the cultural sciences. The structure of the graduate program links subject-specific and interdisciplinary aspects and provides the framework for a multi-perspective dialogue. Therefore the extreme complexity of gender phenomena can be brought into view much better than with the highly specialized work of a graduate project. Of course, the program is open to doctorate students of both sexes.

Who is this course of study supposed to appeal to?

The course of study is meant to appeal to the postgraduate students of all departments at the CAU, as well as of other universities, whose studies include the topic of gender.

What has been the response to the offer up to now? Can you give an example of the practical work and the diversity?

Till now there have been 8 students who come from the different departments of the CAU. Right now there is work being done in the subjects of English, European ethnology, and law, as well as psychology and psychiatry. A few of the postgraduate students are just starting their work, and others are almost finished.
new study program at the cau

*Are there any international students in the program?*

No, not presently. The program is of course open to international students, but the course of study is still in the construction stage. We hope that with further institutionalisation, the international students will also seriously consider the offer.

*What plans do you have for the future?*

To securely anchor the graduate course of study as a possible study option at the CAU. To further develop the interdisciplinary side of the program, especially to attract more students from the natural sciences and from other universities so that the sensitivity towards gender questions will also be advanced.

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Understanding the ocean means shaping the future.

The Ocean. It covers more than two-thirds of our planet.

However, we know more about the surface of the moon than about the bottom of Ocean. The worlds oceans are where the future of mankind lies. They determine the future climate for the whole planet - and today they are suffering from the progression of global warming. New materials and energy sources are found on the ocean floor - How can we use them? Many sea creatures hold the key to healing diseases - if these creatures still exist tomorrow.

These are just a few of the aspects that the Kiel Research Network is exploring. The goal: to better understand the ocean's changes, opportunities, and risks in order to reach a new symbiosis between man and sea.

Who is researching the ocean of the future?

Experts from different fields combine their skills for "Ocean of the Future". For example, lawyers and geologists clarify the problem of how the resources on the ocean floor can be used and by whom. Meteorologists and economists work out under what conditions CO2 storage on the sea floor would be useful. Oceanographers, doctors, mathematicians, chemists, engineers, and sociologists work together on other questions.

Five departments and 26 institutes of the Kiel University are network partners, as well as the Kiel Leibniz-Institute for Oceanography (IFM-GEOMAR), the Leibniz-Institute for World Economics (IFW), and the Muthesius Arts College.

The rich history of ocean science in Kiel sets a background which opens up the horizon of possibilities for the new interdisciplinary research on new and urgent assignments. Therefore, a large group of scientist and researchers, who all want to explore the ocean of the future, have gathered together from a large variety of fields to form this network. With this network, ocean research will be established as an important, leading theme at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität in Kiel, and this aspect of the university will be strengthened.

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The faculty of arts and humanities at the CAU is using the internet in new ways in order to reach students and others interested in learning through an online literature portal: "Literaturwissenschaft-online".

The project began in the summer semester of 2002 with an introductory course in literature which was cooperatively led by representatives of the participating disciplines. Since then the classic German literature, English, Greek, Latin, modern German literature, Scandinavian, and Slavic departments have joined the project. The technical aspects of the project are handled by the ZFIM (Centre for Foreign Language, IT-, and Media Usage).

The goal of "Literaturwissenschaft-online" is to develop internet-based learning and teaching lessons that are created for many disciplines and can be used equally from the students of every type of literature.

Visit lectures online

The main component of "Literaturwissenschaft-online" is lectures that are displayed live on the internet and stored in archives that are available for download at different levels of quality. Written summaries then add to and strengthen this learning process.

Themed lectures are found on the website, for example, lectures on the literature of the 18th century or the logic of prose. There are also group lectures as well as introductory courses.

E-learning from at home

Another large component of the site is lessons covering specific topics that can be completed independently by the student. These are guided exercises (with automatic correction) that provide the opportunity for the individual to strengthen their knowledge in a practical way.

The important fields of "narration" and "deconstruction" or the difference between "histoire/discours" are available here for the interested user.

There is also the possibility to test one's knowledge with on the "Quizseiten" (quiz page), which can also be found on the web page.

Bibliographies, a glossary, and other material (for example, a links page) are offered to assist the user in further, independent study.

This program is supported by the professorship of learning and teaching psychology at the Institute for Educational and Developmental Psychology at the TU, Dresden, who provided the necessary software to create the learning program "Studierplatz2000".

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Students while E-Learning
Xuan Pan, from Jalin in northeast China, has lived in Germany since 2000. She studies geography and, because of airline prices and lack of time, only sees her family every two years. For this reason, she joined the Chinese Student Community.

**Why did you pick Kiel as your place to study?**

First I studied two semesters in China. But the competition there is too high, and an international degree is more prestigious anyway. Because of cultural difficulties, I chose Europe over America. The last decision was between Germany and France. Finally, I chose Germany.

**How did the first days in Germany go?**

I was sent with a group of 15 students to language school in Halle, a nice city in east Germany. It is supposed to be a little dangerous there for foreigners,

but nothing happened to us. It was actually just the opposite. There was even an article in the newspaper written about us. It said we were in the city and looking for host families. Many families volunteered.

**Were there a lot cultural differences?**

We arrived in Halle on a Saturday and the next day we wanted to go shopping. Then we found out that the businesses were closed on Sunday. Luckily a bakery was open. I got excited when I saw a loaf of dark bread on the shelf, because it looked like the chocolate bread that we have in China. But when I bit into it, I found out that it was simply dark bread. My teeth hurt the whole day.

You are a member of the Chinese Student Community.

**What do you do there?**

We organize two festivals a year for the Chinese students. We are supported financially by the Chinese embassy which pays our expenses up to 800 Euro.

**Which festivals do you celebrate in Kiel?**

In the beginning of the year, sometime in January or February, we celebrate our spring festival. Then in the autumn, we celebrate the moon festival and our national holiday together. The dates vary because they are determined by the lunar calendar. Only our national holiday is a fixed date - the first of October.
How is the spring festival celebrated in China?

The spring festival is the biggest holiday in China. Everybody has a week off, the mothers and grandmothers cook a lot of food, and families come together to eat and play games. The children get presents and most of the time money too. It is a traditional family holiday, so it is celebrated at home. The only time you go outside is for the fireworks.

However, society has changed a bit in China. Young families don’t celebrate at home anymore. Now they go out to restaurants.

And how does the Chinese Student Community in Kiel celebrate the spring festival?

The date is always set three weeks in advance. It’s normally different from the official date because the end of February is exam time. We normally celebrate on a Friday or Saturday. We advertise on the internet on our website and we pass out flyers in the student dormitories. A lot of advertising also happens mouth-to-mouth.

Earlier, someone from the Chinese embassy always came and brought us a Chinese movie. Now we organize the program ourselves and just send the embassy the minutes. We celebrate in the lounge of a building at the university. It’s a big room that we set up. The room is only for special events, but the university is very nice and lets us use it without paying for cleaning costs.

First, we watch a movie in Chinese. Most of the time it’s a movie from China, but sometimes we watch a blockbuster like "Lord of the Rings", also in Chinese. For the movie we have to obtain a sound system, a projector, lights etc.

Do you eat together too?

Earlier there were five of us who cooked for everyone. But since there are usually 100-150 people who come, that wasn’t usually enough. Now we order food from a restaurant. It isn’t that nice, but the important thing is to feel like we’re a community when we eat together.

One time, we tried to organize for everyone to bring something with them. This didn’t work too well because Chinese food needs to be eaten warm. A lot of people also brought the same thing. It was very disorganized.
Is there anything after eating?

After dinner, we dance, play games, and sing karaoke. Actually, the Chinese are very shy. For this reason, we have games so that they can liven up. Of course you can also win prizes. These festivals last until three or four the next morning. Then most of the guests help us clean up. The only thing we do alone is setting up. This is because the spring festival is an event that you can make yourself look nice for.

And how do you celebrate the moon festival and your national holiday?

At these festivals, there are only snacks to eat and there are less people than at the spring festival. But it is still really great to see everyone together.

Do students from other countries come to the Chinese festivals?

It’s primarily just a Chinese festival. The few others are mostly Korean or German students who study Sinology, or else friends of the Chinese students. When Germans come, they usually try really hard to wear traditional Chinese clothes. We are considering how to get more Germans to come to our festivals. The flyers that we hand out are not only in Chinese, but also in German. Of course, the Chinese movies must be really boring for a German, and the music is probably very strange for them to hear. But we are happy about anyone who wants to celebrate with us.
research in kiel

breakthrough in cell and developmental biology

Zoologists in Kiel succeed for the first time in transforming stem cells in freshwater polyps.

Stem cells are versatile all-rounders. In the medical field, high hopes are resting on these miracle workers. However, we still understand very little about them. Why adult stem cells sometimes begin to divide in an uncontrolled way is a mystery, as also is the fact that many stem cells lose this ability to divide under certain circumstances. Has man inherited these remarkable cells through an “invention” by his ancestors in the realm of the invertebrates? Zoologists at Kiel can now make the stem cells of a simple organism controllable.

An important breakthrough in stem cell research has been achieved at Kiel University: by microinjection into embryos of freshwater polyps, the scientists have been able for the first time to smuggle foreign genes into the stem cells of a simple biological organism. The fertilized egg cells that have been altered in this way produce offspring that all carry the foreign gene, which is then passed on from generation to generation.

The discovery has been announced on March 21 in the latest issue of the Proceedings of the American National Academy of Sciences. The zoologist Professor Thomas Bosch and his colleagues Jörg Wittlieb, Dr. Konstantin Khalturin and Dr. Friederike Anton-Erxleben of Kiel University, together with Dr. Jan Lohmann of the Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology in Tübingen, have thus opened up the possibility of exploiting completely new methods of analysis in research on simple organisms.

The research group of Thomas Bosch at the Zoological Institute of Kiel University has been studying stem cells in the freshwater polyp Hydra for many years. The scientists expect that their studies of the cells in this phylogenetically old and uniquely simple animal will give insights into the mechanisms that regulate the behaviour of stem cells, and have led to the development of complex cell systems in the course of evolution.

First of all, stem cells that are genetically labelled in this way, and which show green fluorescence (for example), make it possible to study in detail, in the completely transparent polyps, the ways in which the cells move about and become differentiated. The Kiel zoologists have already been able to show that these cells move actively into newly forming physical structures - such as the buds of the polyps - and thus enable them to form.

The stem cells altered in this way can also be used to “switch on” particular genes at a specific time and/or at a specific position in the body of the orga-
nism. If the genes that are thus activated are important, one can expect large effects on the organism. From such experiments one should be able to reach important conclusions about the functions of the genes concerned.

Furthermore, the altered stem cells of the polyp Hydra can now also serve as bioreactors, as they can produce animal or human protein molecules, such as antibacterial peptides, which can be used in research.

“This is a marvellous result, also for me personally”, explains Bosch, “because I began to work on this topic as long ago as 1985, as a young post-doc in the USA. This functionalisation of stem cells, with the ability to control them and use them as a research tool, will result in a great step forward. As Hydra possesses many of the genes that the human body also uses for development as well as pathogen defence, these new transgenic stem cells allow functional studies that cannot be carried out so easily in complex organisms and in humans. And last but not least, studies on the stem cells of lower life-forms do not present any ethical problems”.

Bosch is also involved in the two proposals of Kiel University for setting up of “centres of excellence”. One proposal, on the theme of “inflammation at interfaces”, is concerned with the defence mechanisms of the immune system, and the work reported here now makes it possible to study the evolutionary origin of genes involved in inflammation. In the proposed centre of excellence on “Future Ocean”, transgenic hydra will be used for functional studies of regulatory genes of marine organism. Both centre proposals have already passed through the first stage of approval by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG). The full applications were presented before the DFG in April 2006, and a decision is expected in October 2006.

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The International Center (IC) at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität in Kiel has a new dwelling: the ground floor of the building at 400 Westring is now the central headquarters at the CAU for international students and academics, as well as for German students that want to expand their study or training experience abroad. With this move, the room for information and contact has increased by at least 50 percent.

The 470 square meters are divided up between two meeting rooms, 16 offices, and a separable conference room that can hold about 90 event participants.

Director Dr. Martina Schmode is especially pleased about the new location: "Orientation, information seminars, opening ceremonies for summer and other special courses, or our new program with international tutors - everything can take place in this building. That makes it a lot easier for guest students to find their way here in Kiel."

Until now, the international center received and advised its visitors partly in the annex to the university high-rise and partly on the fourteenth floor. Events took place, depending on the size, at different places between Leibniz Street and Christian-Albrechts-Square. "A temporary solution that is now finally over," explains the leader of the 14 person team.

The information room at the IC is also new and can be reached from a different entrance Monday through Thursday from 9am - 4pm and Friday from 9am - 12.30pm. It's open to everyone who is looking for basic information on studying or internships abroad. Here they can find brochures, application forms, and information on the CAU's partner universities or scholarships. Plus they can read and research in peace.

CAU chancellor Oliver Herrman explains how important a prestigious international center is for the university: "We all know that the first impression of a place usually determines whether a person likes it or not. Therefore, it is a bonus for the university and for all of Kiel when we greet our foreign guests with a modern and friendly building like this one. Ultimately, we have to measure ourselves by international standards."

Presently, the international center advises more than 2000 students from over 100 nations that study at the public university. In winter semester 2005/2006, there were approximately 600 new foreign students enrolled. Every year, round about 2000 German students are counselled. From these, 400 travel abroad, most of them with a scholarship.

The university building at 400 Westring was renovated for severeral years; from the facade to the courtyard, from the lights to the carpet.
The building was the main library building until 2001. Now it still holds a base for the library, plus the Walther-Schücking-Institute for International Law and the Institute of Social Sciences.

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