The IARU Alliance

The International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU) was founded in early 2006 when the presidents of ten of the world's leading research universities signed a cooperation agreement known as the Memorandum of Understanding.

The member universities are: the Australian National University; ETH Zurich; the National University of Singapore; Peking University; the University of California, Berkeley; University of Cambridge; University of Copenhagen; University of Oxford; the University of Tokyo and Yale University.

The IARU Secretariat is based at the Australian National University in Canberra (ANU) and IARU itself is chaired by Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ian Chubb of ANU.

Vision and Goals

The vision of the Alliance is to raise international cooperation between universities to a new level by drawing together a select group of research-intensive universities that have similar values and share a global vision and commitment to educating future world leaders. The Alliance should add value by providing opportunities for international research, teaching and learning that would not otherwise arise, allowing member universities to achieve objectives they would be unable to achieve on their own.

The purpose of the Alliance is to give both researchers and students from member universities the opportunity to participate in globally oriented research and educational programmes, as well as a forum for lobbying for research and for research-based education globally.

More specifically, the Alliance encourages and supports activities such as: joint research programmes, summer internships, summer schools, key conferences with participation/contribution from Alliance academics, student exchange at undergraduate and postgraduate level, development of joint/dual degree arrangements, and arrangements at each university to support faculty exchange.

The Global Change Research Programme

In early 2006, the Alliance established a framework for a joint research programme entitled the Global Change Programme. During 2006-2007, IARU researchers participated in thematically organised workshops in order to define research themes within this framework, as well as identifying how to develop these ideas further within specific research projects. As a result of this process, a number of detailed research project proposals have been elaborated and the IARU universities have decided to focus on the following projects:

- Global Security
- Ageing, Longevity and Health
- Energy, Resources and Environment
- Women in Universities

One of these projects – Ageing, Longevity and Health – was formally accepted by all member universities at a meeting in Tokyo in September 2007, where it was presented by Dean Ulla Wewer from the University of Copenhagen. The other projects are expected to receive approval during 2008. Once the projects are accepted, the next step is to prepare funding strategies so as to be able to approach the large national and international funding agencies. The expectation is that projects carrying the IARU brand will have a good chance of being funded by wealthy funding agencies, nationally as well as internationally.
The Ageing, Longevity and Health Research Project

The Ageing, Longevity and Health project is coordinated by the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Copenhagen. Researchers from all ten IARU partner universities are represented in this project, which embraces three subprojects:

- Health Policy Challenges of Ageing Populations, including Life Course Issues and Methods
- Neurodegeneration: The Role of Oxidative Stress
- Evolutionary Medicine

Further information on the project and on researchers involved in each of the three subprojects is available on the website http://ageing.iaru.ku.dk/

As the Ageing project has already been officially approved by the Alliance universities, the Faculty of Health Sciences has started to prepare a fundraising strategy for approaching the national funds. At the same time, each partner university can and is urged to apply for national funding on basis of the approved Ageing project outline, using the IARU brand to further the project. With regard to international funding, Yale University will be seeking funding through additional sources.

Future Workshops

The research teams on the Ageing, Longevity and Health project are engaged in a number of workshops. Within the field of Evolutionary Medicine, three workshops are planned: One in Copenhagen in October 2008, another in Cambridge in connection with the 200th anniversary of the birth of Darwin and finally, a workshop at Yale in 2010.

Within the field of Health Policy Challenges, a workshop is to be held in January 2008 at the Oxford Institute of Ageing. Researchers investigating Neurodegeneration are planning a two day workshop in Denmark in 2008.

Public Engagement with Medical Science – the “Oldetopia” Exhibition

The effects of preventive medicine are dependent on the communication of research results to the public at large. To address the need for greater public awareness in the area of Ageing, Longevity and Health, Medical Museion at the Faculty of Health Sciences has produced an exhibition called “Oldetopia”, which opened in Copenhagen in October 2007. After closing, the exhibition concept will be offered to other universities in the Alliance. The exhibition provides a cultural and historical perspective on current research into age and ageing, and comprises four interdisciplinary subthemes: The Age of Life, The Long Life, Signs of Age, and Eternally Young or Too Old? The exhibition is supplemented with a richly illustrated catalogue in English and Danish, as well as a website: http://www.museion.ku.dk/udstillinger/saerudstillinger/oldetopia.aspx

Educational Collaboration

So far, the Alliance has largely focused on the IARU research projects. However, the IARU Presidents have now decided to expand their activities to include student programmes and, in this way, bring IARU initiatives in global education to attention.

Global Summer Programme

As of this year, IARU will launch the Global Summer Programme (GSP), which is to be the flagship of IARU’s educational activities. At the 2007 IARU meeting in Tokyo, it was agreed that there should be greater flexibility within the existing summer programs, so as to remove unnecessary constraints, expand opportunities for students, and allow staff to work together and simplify management processes. The GSP should be seen as an umbrella, under which a wide variety of courses will be made available to students.
The idea is to identify the GSP with the exclusive IARU brand and it is therefore important that the GSP is unique and offers courses of top quality. The IARU Secretariat will create a central Website, and a meeting will be set up in Cambridge in February 2008 to discuss the future of the GSP and the 2008 offerings. Yale University has taken the lead in the development of the GSP.

**Educational Opportunities arising from IARU Research Projects**

The Alliance has also decided to focus on the relationship between teaching and research and the benefits and consequences of “research-led teaching”. Graduate students, including PhDs, should be more involved in the IARU research projects. Accordingly, representatives from a number of member universities – including the University of Copenhagen – are developing a draft activity plan to be considered by the IARU presidents at their annual meeting in 2008. Activities could include a workshop at Berkeley in Autumn 2008.

**Educational Initiatives within Sustainability**

Another IARU focal point is Sustainability. To demonstrate the educational possibilities within this area, a pilot project will be set up between Australian National University, the National University of Singapore as well as perhaps Tokyo University. Each member university is encouraged to identify researchers who might be interested in participating.

The Alliance has also agreed to establish an exchange programme between sustainability offices at IARU institutions *(Interns for Sustainable Campuses)*. At the University of Copenhagen this initiative is coordinated by campus manager Hans Halvorsen. The programme is aimed at staff as well as students, and a paper detailing the program proposal and its financial implications will be prepared for consideration at the President’s annual meeting in 2008.

**Other IARU activities**

**Campus Sustainability**

Another issue the Alliance will address in this area is the identification of appropriate sustainability measures (metrics). IARU will develop a sustainability index based on models developed by Yale University and the University of Cambridge. This will recognise that member universities are at different stages in the development of campus sustainability measures. This programme does not commit the member universities to immediate action, but a flexible approach would be followed, with each university evolving its own action plan. The Australian National University and Yale University will circulate a survey for completion by all IARU members in January 2008.

**Office Facilities at the Yale Campus**

Owing to a generous offer from Yale University, all IARU partners can use office facilities at Yale to promote their own interests, forge networks and advance research cooperation, e.g. through the posting of academics and/or senior staff for a shorter or longer period of time. The Australian National University has already taken Yale up on this offer and has posted senior managers to Yale to learn about their fundraising and endowment strategies. It has also been suggested that the Yale office facilities could be used to promote international careers, enabling the universities to learn from each others career offices. The University of Copenhagen welcomes the opportunity to take advantage of the office facilities at Yale University, and in 2008 will concentrate on education.

**Scientific Conference on Climate Change**

As the UN Climate Summit is to be held in Copenhagen in 2009, the University of Copenhagen has been entrusted with the task of convening a planning committee for scientists. The committee will organise a conference in March 2009, in preparation for the Climate Summit. The presidents of IARU universities will form the steering committee, while researchers from IARU universities will be the planning committee. Researchers from all over the world are expected to participate in the conference, preparing their input for the political decision makers.

**Building Research Capability**

The IARU secretariat is drafting a proposal to support the development of research environments at selected universities in developing countries. The draft is to be put forward for consideration at the presidents’ annual meeting in April 2008.

Further information on IARU is available on the Websites:

- www.iaruni.org – official IARU website, including links to member universities
- www.ku.dk/iaru – IARU website at the University of Copenhagen (in Danish only).

With best regards,

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