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Transatlantic Alliance in Marine Research and Education Kiel, Germany and Halifax, Canada establish a transatlantic research school in ocean system science and technology

3 May 2012/Kiel, Halifax. International cooperation is important not only for research but also, increasingly, for training of the marine scientists of the future. The Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel (GEOMAR) and the University of Kiel together with Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada and the Halifax Marine Research Institute have an ambitious plan to join forces across the Atlantic Ocean in training the next generation of marine scientists. The plan crossed its first hurdle with the recent award of €1.8 million (CA\$2.4 million) by the Helmholtz Society in Germany to establish a Helmholtz School for Ocean System Science and Technology. The support will finance the school on the German side for the next 6 years and the plan is to match this with corresponding support on the Canadian side.

The moving waters of the ocean not only divide but also connect the countries of the world and recognize no political boundaries. These waters, and the seafloor beneath them, are full of opportunities and risks for mankind, including food and mineral resources and natural hazards. They also play a major role for our climate and weather. Research into these topics takes place at ocean basin and global scales and requires international cooperation in order to make progress. This means that ocean scientists and managers need to create and work within international teams of researchers. This will be both taught and practiced by German and Canadian scientists within the new, transatlantic graduate school “Helmholtz Research School for Ocean System Science and Technology”.

The graduate school is a cooperation between the Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel (GEOMAR) and the Christian-Albrechts-University, both in Kiel, northern Germany, with Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia and the recently founded Halifax Marine Research Institute. The graduate school forms a transatlantic connection between two world-leading centres for research and education in marine sciences. The Helmholtz funding will support up to 25 young scientists and trainees working on the school’s core themes: “4-dimensional ocean dynamics”, “hotspots of the marine ecosystem” and “seafloor structures”. The overarching goal of the school is to improve understanding of how the ocean system responds to both natural and human influences as a basis for improved ocean management. The school will have a strong emphasis on application of new technologies to observe the ocean and will interact with a number of ocean technology companies. Given the broad research themes, interdisciplinary cooperation within the school is of special importance.

“We’ll use the new international connection to improve training for the next generation of marine scientists. Our overall goal is to develop the best possible scientific foundation for sustainable use of the ocean ” says Prof. Dr. Christian Dullo of GEOMAR who leads the school, noting further that “with this goal, it was of special importance to connect with an excellent international partner. Together with our Canadian colleagues at Dalhousie and the Halifax Marine Research Institute, we’ll study a wide range of important issues facing the Atlantic Ocean”. The partners will also investigate ocean-related issues facing developing countries, and will make use of new research facilities that are being established by GEOMAR on West Africa’s Cape Verde Islands.

On the Canadian side of the Atlantic, there is also excitement about the new initiative. “The Helmholtz Research School opens up some completely new opportunities for training of our graduate

students” says Professor Doug Wallace of Dalhousie and Scientific Director of the Halifax Marine Research Institute. He notes that the research themes, the networking and the built-in international cooperation are especially important aspects of the training program. “The research school builds on decades of informal cooperation between scientists in Kiel and Halifax and will bring the research institutions and universities even closer together” says Wallace. The Canadian partners are applying for funds to support c. 22 Canadian graduate students to participate in the program. Professor Martha Crago, Vice-President of Research at Dalhousie University welcomes the German-Canadian cooperation: “This graduate training program is a very welcome addition to Dalhousie University's ocean science program. This will create the next generation of highly qualified personnel with industrial and international experience for the ocean and marine science and technology sector on both sides of the Atlantic.”

The Christian-Albrechts-University in Kiel has a similar viewpoint: “We can see that our University is on the right path with its strategic emphasis on marine research and our strategy of internationalization” says the University’s vice-president Prof. Dr. Thomas Bosch, who is also a partner in the project. “The latest initiative builds on Kiel’s 6-year-old “Future Ocean” Excellence Cluster and “Integrated School of Ocean Sciences”.The cooperation with Dalhousie and Canada, and with other international partners, can be intensified even further in the 2nd Phase of the Excellence Cluster”. The new “Helmholtz Research School for Ocean System Science and Technology” (HOSST) will open for business in October 2012.

Links:

www.geomar.de - GEOMAR | Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Rsearch Kiel
www.uni-kiel.de - University of Kiel
www.hmri.ca/ - Halifax Marine Research Institute
www.dal.ca/ - Dalhousie University

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