

IDEA League celebrates ten years of applied geophysics teaching across international borders

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The IDEA-League Joint MSc programme in Applied Geophysics of TU Delft, ETH Zurich and RWTH Aachen celebrated its 10th anniversary this August. Compared with other MSc programmes in applied geophysics initiated over the past decade, this one has been special in that it is an international cooperation between leading European universities in science and technology.

The programme takes advantage of complementary expertise in earth sciences at these three universities. TU Delft is well known for its hydrocarbon exploration and management, and its close ties to major petroleum companies and geophysical service providers. ETH Zürich has its principal strength in engineering and environmental geoscience, in close cooperation with civil engineers. RWTH Aachen has

well-known expertise in basin modelling and geothermal exploration and management, and collaborates closely with industry.

It all started in 2006, after overcoming initial hurdles with respect to different cultures and in particular local rules and regulations at different universities. The main initial drivers behind the programme were Prof Alan Green of ETH Zurich and Prof Jacob Fokkema of TU Delft. Later, Prof. Christoph Clauser of RWTH Aachen joined in that effort, which turned out to be a highly successful endeavour. The initial group in 2006 included a mere six students, but over the years the numbers have grown to more than 40 last year.

The MSc Applied Geophysics is an international programme, in which stu-

dents spend one semester at each university and then choose an MSc-thesis subject to their liking with one of the universities, including possibilities with subjects brought forward by industry. The student population itself is highly international. About three quarters of the students come from Europe (three quarters of these from the host countries Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland). The remainder have come from outside of Europe, mostly from Asia but also Africa and the Americas. In order to support (particularly the non-EU) students with their expenses and tuition fees, stipends and scholarships are awarded to the top students. Several companies, notably e.on, Enel Green Energy, RWE Dea, Shell, and Wintershall, have been very generous in their support of the scholarship programme.

On 28 August this year, the tenth cohort of students started, providing an excellent occasion to celebrate the success of the programme. The end of the academic year is traditionally celebrated by a graduation ceremony of the past cohort of students.

This year the event was supplemented by a special symposium on 'Education of Earth Scientists in Europe: The next ten years'. Speakers from both industry and academia and also from representatives of EAGE and SEG gave presentations. Participants included two current rectors, Prof Sarah Springman from ETH Zurich and Prof Karel Luyben from TU Delft, as well as Prof Jacob Fokkema, a former rector from TU Delft, and Prof Wolfgang Bleck, a dean from RWTH Aachen. Other participants included



Dinner at Delft's Prinsenhof, with IDEA-League students, alumni, staff, and special guests.

Dr Dirk Smit, senior research manager from Shell; Dr Roald van Borselen from PGS, who is also a board member of the EAGE; Dr Francois Auzeais from Schlumberger; Profs John Bradford, the president-elect of SEG; Andrew Curtis from University of Edinburgh as well as Prof Harry Vereecken from Forschungszentrum Jülich, Germany.

The symposium was highly fruitful with valuable discussion and feedback on the programme and the way ahead for similar educational programmes. In particular, the value of the collaboration between university institutions on education was highlighted. Collaboration in all kind of fields is so common and taken for granted yet education programmes have a tendency to be kept within each university.

At the end of the symposium, there was a panel discussion where industry representatives were asked for their views on how the programme might be improved. They confirmed that the study and the management of the sub-



Students that obtained their IDEA-League MSc degree in applied geophysics.

surface will remain ever important in the future with applications ranging from the search for mineral, water, and energy resources to topics of agriculture and environmental protection. They agreed that society will continue needing academics with a geophysical background and an understanding of subsurface processes.

The symposium was concluded by the bestowing of the IDEA-League pin to the new and alumni masters of the programme by the rectors of ETH and TUD. The evening ended by celebrating the students and the past 10 years of collaboration in the scenic environment of the Prinsenhof in the 17th-century part of Delft.

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