Communication and Governance in Thematic Networks

Prof. Dr. Bernhard Blümich, RWTH Aachen University
Prof. Jeffrey Reimer, PhD, UC Berkeley
ACalNet is a Thematic Network supported by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and funded by the BMBF (Federal Ministry of Education and Research). Its main objective is the exchange of students and researchers between the partner institutions in Aachen and California, with the purpose of establishing joint research projects and collaborations.

Objective

ACalNet interconnects core disciplines from the natural sciences and engineering, focusing primarily on Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) and catalysis. The interface of these two areas constitutes the main research focus of the network.

Research
Strengthen RWTH Aachen University as a competitive international player

- Joint research projects supported by exchanges
- Increase English-taught courses at RWTH
- Establish sustainability of the network to continue and expand the international collaboration between the partners
Partners in Germany and the USA

- UCLA
- UCSB
- RWTH Aachen University
- Berkeley University
- Jülich Forschungszentrum
- C&T Catalytic Center
- Schlumberger

Germany

USA
RWTH Aachen University

- ACalNet coordination office

- > 42,000 students including > 7,000 international students
- 9 colleges → 260 institutes
- German University of Excellence
- Close links to industry
University of California

Berkeley
- oldest campus of UC system
- 1st place among public universities in the USA
- > 37,000 students
- 14 colleges
- 29 Nobel prize winners

Santa Barbara
- since 1944 in the UC system
- member of Assoc. of American Universities
- > 23,000 students
- 5 colleges
- 6 Nobel prize winners

Los Angeles
- founded in 1919
- top places in USA and international rankings
- > 42,000 students
- 150 institutes
- 13 Nobel prize winners
Partner Institutes

**RWTH**
- Technical and Macromolecular Chemistry
- Experimental Physics
- Technical Thermodynamics
- Applied Geophysics and Geothermal Energy
- Inorganic Chemistry
- Chemical Engineering
- Organic Chemistry
- Biotechnology
- Applied Microbiology

**Berkeley**
- Plant and Microbial Biology
- Physics
- Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
- Chemistry

**UCSB**
- Chemical and Biochemistry
- Chemical Engineering
- Environmental Science & Management

**UCLA**
- Chemistry and Biochemistry
Academic Members

**RWTH**
- B. Blümich
- A. Bardow
- L. Blank
- H. Bluhm
- C. Clauser
- B.P.T. Fokwa
- A. Ismail
- J. Okuda
- F. Kiessling
- V. Schulz
- P. Kögerler
- F. Schoenebeck
- A. Spiess
- U. Schwaneberg
- K. Leonhard
- R. Palkovits
- W. Leitner
- M. Wessling
- J. Klankermayer
- S. Appelt

**Berkeley**
- J. Arnold
- A. Pines
- M. Pauly
- J. Reimer
- D. Toste
- E. Iglesia
- B. McCloskey
- D. Budker
- A. Bell
- J. Long
- J. Keasling

**UCSB**
- P. Ford
- S. Han
- B. Chmelka
- S. Scott
- S. Suh

**UCLA**
- L. Bouchard
- K. Houk

*Aachen-California Network of Academic Exchange*
Allocation of Funding

Target groups
- Undergraduates
- Graduate students
- Postdocs
- Professors

Exchanges
- Research stays
- Short stays
- Conferences
- Workshops

Publicity
- Publications
- Promotion

Allocation of Funding
Procedures

Formal application
- research stays
- short stays and strategy meetings
- conferences
- workshops
- admission of new members

Deadlines
- March 1
- September 1
- eventually also additional deadlines

Evaluation
- ACalNet-Governing Board
Members

**Prof. Bernhard Blümich** - Director
Chair in Macromolecular Chemistry, RWTH Aachen University

**Prof. Jeffrey Reimer**
Dep. Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, UC Berkeley and Fac. Scient., LBNL

**Prof. Song-I Han**
Dep. Chemistry and Biochemistry and Dep. Chemical Engineering, UC Santa Barbara

**Prof. Louis Bouchard**
Dep. Chemistry and Biochemistry, UC Los Angeles

**Prof. Marcel Liauw**
Vice-Dean of Studies Fac. for Math., Comp. Sci. und Nat. Sci, RWTH Aachen University

**Dr. Henriette Finsterbusch**
Head of International Office, RWTH Aachen University
Governing Board - Tasks

**Assessment**
- Evaluation of the applications of students and researchers
- Decision about acceptance of new academic members

**Steering**
- Planning of future measures
- Discussion about organizational issues
- Definition of the network’s thematic orientation
- Planning towards sustainability

**Evaluation**
- Analysis of the network’s development
- Recommendations for optimization

**Contact**
- Main contact persons at each partner institution
**Pros**

- transparent selection process leads to **quality assurance**
- whole Gov. Board bears **responsibility** for decisions
- fair **decision-making** with consideration of all involved partner universities
- contact persons at each partner university
- regular **communication** about the development and future of the network

**Cons**

- slow-down of decision-making
- increased **bureaucracy**
- evaluation of applications from other partner universities might be more difficult
- divergent time zones lead to odd times for video-conferences
In addition to having a Governing Board member at each partner university, it would be beneficial to have also an administrative contact person at each institution.

All partner institutions should be represented in the Gov. Board to ensure a fair decision-making and increase the involvement in the network.

Clear definition of the issues that will require the involvement of the Governing Board.

Flexible configuration of the Governing Board to provide for adaptation to the development of the network.
Communication – A Process in Flow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>preparation</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>initiators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funded period</td>
<td>personal + professional</td>
<td>growing network, Gov. Board, coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-funded period</td>
<td>extended professional</td>
<td>Selected network partners seeding new projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A: Coord.
- B: Coord.
- C: Coord.
Communication – Tools

Gov. Board

coord. office

academic members

exchange students
Communication – Tools

- regular Governing Board meetings
- strategy meetings
- personal communication

Gov. Board

coord. office

academic members

exchange students
Communication – Tools

- ACalNet Workshops
- strategy meetings
- short stays
- personal communication
Communication – Tools

- ACalNet website
- outreach events
- posters
- personal communication
communication lessons learned from ACalNet

at the government level...

at the university level...

at the personal level...
at the government level...

joint research would be affirmed!

NSF-DFG: Independent reviews from each side, with the content and context of NSF and DFG proposals being vastly different!

USA: Proposals submitted in annual cycles, or in calls that occur infrequently

USA: Health care
at the university level...

Vastly different financial models

UC enrollment is a critical revenue source.
- Visitors are a cost burden
- Visitors are a revenue stream
  - the ACalNet award (€925 per month)
  - UC “minimum income requirement” is $1600 per month
  - visa “processing” charges $860
  - University fee of $500/ACalNet 50%

USA Graduate student support while abroad
at the personal level...

Professor Reimer or “Jeff”?

email etiquette

humor

microaggression
Thanks for your attention

Contact:
acalnet@cmt.rwth-aachen.de
www.acalnet.com