Nicaraguan Universities Visit NCCU to Enhance Academic Partnerships

KU Leuven & UCLouvain Visit NCCU Seeking Further Cooperation

What Will the Future Hold? Graduation Plans of NCCU International Students
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Senior officials from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN) and Universidad Católica Redemptoris Máter (UNICA) were invited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to learn more about Taiwan’s higher education climate. Representing 58 universities in Nicaragua, rectors Ramona Rodríguez of UNAN and Michelle Rivas of UNICA met with NCCU President Ming-Cheng Kuo and visited the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan.

Established in 1812, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua is the oldest university in Central American country and the last one built by Spain during its colonial period in the continent. In 1947, it was designated a national university and became part of the higher education system. Almost a century after, Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, then Archbishop of Managua founded the Universidad Católica Redemptoris Máter in 1992. Despite differences in age, sectors, and orientations, both schools are outstanding educational institutions in Nicaragua.

In 2012, NCCU signed a memorandum of agreement with UNAN, but it had not been explored to its fullest potential. Ms. Rodríguez acknowledged that Taiwan has greatly contributed to Nicaragua’s development with its abundant resources. Therefore, it is beneficial for both universities to bring back student exchange programs and enhance academic partnerships in further developing diplomatic ties. Ms. Rivas of UNICA added that the universities should endeavor to strengthen youth interaction between the two countries, fostering not only political cooperation but also cultural and business-driven collaboration.

President Kuo is positive towards this future possibility. Aside from completing their academic studies, he believes that Nicaraguan students come to Taiwan for language and cultural immersion as well. They can learn not only from their professors in the classroom but more so from the entire Taiwanese society. President Kuo pointed out the rising importance of being able to speak Chinese in the modern world, as China becomes stronger and more influential. Nevertheless, it is advantageous to study in Taiwan, where traditional Chinese cultural heritage has been preserved well.

To realize the vision of academic cooperation, President Kuo promised more scholarships for Nicaraguan exchange students in the future. He also announced that NCCU would launch improved programs to provide a unique and professional Chinese-learning environment for foreign students.

By sharing their thoughts and experiences on better implementation of higher education programs, NCCU officials and the delegation from UNAN and UNICA planted the seeds for mutually beneficial partnerships and watered the blossoming trust between Taiwan and Nicaragua.
Delegations from Belgium’s Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven) and Université Catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) visited National Chengchi University (NCCU) on June 18. KU Leuven Rector Luc Sels and UCL Rector Vincent Blondel met NCCU President Ming-Cheng Kuo (郭明政) to enhance and promote further bilateral academic and research cooperation.

KU Leuven is a research university in the Dutch-speaking town of Leuven in Flanders, Belgium. With an international reputation for excellence in teaching and research in the sciences, engineering, humanities, medicine, law, and social sciences, KU Leuven consistently ranks among the top 100 universities in the world. NCCU and KU Leuven established sister school relations in 2001 and more than 15 NCCU students have since studied at KU Leuven through a bilateral student exchange program.

In 1968, UCLouvain split off from the Catholic University of Leuven and moved to Louvain-la-Neuve in Wallonia, becoming Belgium’s largest French-speaking university. With its internationally regarded management school, UCLouvain also frequently ranks among the world’s top 50 centers for the study of philosophy and among the top 20 for theology and religious studies. The current exchange program provides NCCU students access to UCLouvain departments including the philosophy, arts at letters, economics, social and political science, and communications, along with the Louvain School of Management. The three schools share a common focus and reputation for research and instruction in the fields of social studies, law, economics, commerce, policy studies, and international affairs.

During the meeting, President Kuo shared his vision of enhancing collaboration in student exchange through the establishment of dual degree programs and expansion of the Erasmus+ program and urged both KU Leuven and UCLouvain to send more students to NCCU.

KU Leuven Rector Sels proposed increasing research collaboration and faculty exchange to help faculty further broaden their cultural and academic horizons.

Having established a clear focus on internationalization, President Kuo proposed expanding opportunities for academic exchange for the university’s Belgian partners through NCCU’s partnerships with universities in Beijing, Singapore and elsewhere, creating a program in which students enrolled at one university could spend a semester at each campus.
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Graduation Plans of NCCU International Students

International undergraduate, graduate and post graduate students graduated June 15 and 22, 2019 from a broad range of colleges at National Chengchi University.

The graduation ceremony at each college started with an opening speech from the college’s Dean. The Dean of the College of International Affairs, Dr. Ren-Rang Ciou, told graduates that “With your help and support in the coming years, our department will be ranked within the top 50 worldwide!”

According to Isaac Ambruso, graduating with a Master’s degree in International Studies (IMPIS), his education in Taiwan was a good investment due to the expertise of his NCCU professors. He plans to return to the United States to teach and pursue a post graduate degree.

While some IMPIS graduates are looking towards careers in academics, others are looking at opportunities in the non-profit and government sectors. Raymond Pagnucco is applying to join non-government organizations working in Latin America, while Aurel Lewis has a position lined up at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belize.

Graduating from the International Master’s in Asia-Pacific Studies (IMAS) program, Argentinian Fernando Sambrini praised the program’s wide range of classes and openness to allowing students to customize their studies according to their own interests. He also stressed that NCCU provides top-notch facilities and great opportunities to network with faculty who are among the best in East Asia. Currently, he’s interning at the Argentinian Trade and Cultural Office in Taiwan, researching Taiwan’s import and export regulations in order to boost bilateral trade.

International Master’s Business Administration (IMBA) student Neeti Dixit from India said the IMBA program helped her achieve cultural and social enrichment. She’s currently working in a Private Equity firm in Taiwan and plans to move to Europe. Fellow IMBA student Victoria Pixabaj from Belize will use the knowledge and experience gained in the program to develop programs that empower youth in back home. “I’ll find ways for young people to become goal setters and problem solvers,” she said.

Assistant Professor and NCCU alumnus Dr. Alex Hsieh advises graduates to “seize time to travel in as many places as possible when studying in Taiwan, and pursue more methodology-based classes. The world changes fast and methodology helps us learn to learn, allowing us to keep up with the pace of change.” Learning does not stop with graduation, and education continues as we march towards the next phase in our lives.