

University of Illinois Partnerships

Ali Asghar Mirarefi

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Abstract

By creating the Office of International Research Partnerships in 2006, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Illinois) took a major step to contribute more extensively to global research and education. The University decided to expand the already successful “Study Abroad” programs to cover graduate students and graduate education by developing MS and PhD programs that allow collaboration with other institutions around the world. Among the most successful programs are broad engagement of the University with research and educational institutions in Singapore and China. These programs were based on a desire of the University to build a strong presence in Southeast Asia to further educational and economic development opportunities for students and companies, especially those in Illinois.

Following this desire, in China, in collaboration with two major universities (Tsinghua University and China Agricultural University) and along with corporate sponsorship, Illinois developed a professional Master degree program (referred to as 3+2 Program). Through this collaborative program, students from Chinese universities come to Illinois during their senior year and finish their course requirements for both BS and MS degrees. They satisfy their research component of the MS degree working on projects that are relevant to sponsoring company’s interest under the joint supervision of their academic advisors and industrial project managers. At the time of graduation, they have been exposed to both academic as well as corporate cultures in US and thus employable by MNCs.

In Singapore, the principle underlying all developed programs was that each element to be seen as a partnership between Illinois and various agencies and universities. The four basic elements we focused on were: a) To establish educational opportunities for students from Illinois to experience the culture and economic developments in Southeast Asia, b) To offer Illinois educational opportunities for students in particular from Singapore but more generally from Southeast Asia, c) To create expanded research opportunities for faculty and staff of Illinois to develop collaborative research programs

Oral Presentation

with research institutes and universities in Singapore, and d) To encourage and engage in economic development activities that benefit Illinois and Singapore.

Through this initiative, to-date, Illinois has launched a research center in IT area in 2009, the Advanced Digital Sciences Center (ADSC) funded by Agency of Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR), a Joint PhD Degree Program in Chemical Engineering with National University of Illinois (NUS) in 2009 that was an expansion to the previously created Joint MS Program in 2002, and a campus-wide PhD Program, A*STAR-University of Illinois Partnership (AUIP) in 2005.