

Roundtable discussion: Diversity, Internationalization, and University Culture

The afternoon roundtable discussion focused on the topic “Diversity, Internationalization, and University Culture”, and explored the role of cultural diversity in shaping academic institutions and fostering innovation and creativity. Our expert panel consisted of - Prof. Dr. Tessa Flatten, Vice President International Affairs at TUDo, Reena James, Advisor for Internationalization at RUB and Tramont Smith an exchange student at TUDo from the United States. Prof. Dr. Karen Shire, Vice President University Culture, Diversity & International Affairs at UDE served both as a panelist and the moderator for the roundtable discussion. Panelists examined the challenges and opportunities of creating inclusive and equitable campus environments that promote cross-cultural understanding, international collaboration, and diversity of perspectives in research and teaching. The discussion revolved around the current trends at UA Ruhr institutions for inclusive university culture and internationalization.

Prof. Dr. Karen Shire opened the discussion by providing a historical context, highlighting Germany's history as an out-migration country and how it transitioned from a homogeneous nation during the industrial age to becoming dependent on migration. All four speakers underlined in their statements the importance of creating inclusive and equitable campus environments to foster diversity. Nevertheless, all participants pointed out the challenges that occur from that. Challenges related to creating an inclusive university culture sometimes may be exclusionary. Reena James shared that to overcome these challenges, UA Ruhr has implemented diversity monitoring practices to increase diversity even further. During the panel, strategies for addressing and increasing equity and inclusion within university culture were discussed. Building personal relationships and talent scouting programs specific to NRW and the program “Studienbrücke/Study Bridge”, with UA Ruhr being a founding member, were important topics of the discussion. Also included in the discussion was the influence of state laws on supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as well as the impact of the post-pandemic campus environment on DEI efforts, comparing the situations in Germany and the United States.

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