

My life at NYMU: Research opportunities in Asia

By Wolfgang B. Fischer

My life in academia started as a student of Chemistry at Heidelberg University in Germany, where I also obtained my PhD in Chemistry. Heidelberg is located in the Southwest of Germany and close to major metropolises. Embedded into the Rhine valley it is in one of the warmest areas of Germany and also in the most humid one. Born in a smaller city close by I spent, as I like say, a substantial part of my life in a climate preparing me for the weather in Taiwan. Nevertheless, temperature changes are more pronounced in Germany and even in Heidelberg we experience snow ever so often during winter. Heidelberg hosts the famous university Ruperto Carola, which was founded in 1386 and is the oldest University in Germany.

After obtaining my PhD I moved to Boston University, USA, to pursue postdoctoral years in the field of biophysics. After a few years back in Germany at TU Dresden, Institute of Analytical Chemistry, my scientific career let me then settled in Oxford University, UK, specifically to the Laboratory of Molecular Biophysics. Back into the arms of biophysics and in a laboratory conducting computational modeling I became fascinated by this technique and decided to carry on with it. Finally, when the time came to decide where to continue, to

build up an own group an offer from NYMU came along, which I could not resist to accept. And here I am, at the Institute of Biophotonics, School of Biomedical Science and Engineering. Albeit some short visits to other Asian countries this is my first long term stay in Asia.

The entry into National Yang-Ming University was been nice and smooth. I obtained a lot of support from my colleagues and especially from the students which continues until today. With the few Chinese words learned from an 'Introduction to Mandarin'-CD allowing one to greet people and offer them a seat, one can hardly look for an apartment or deal with the administrative affairs within the University. Talking about the search for an apartment, when the agency called to introduce me to vacant apartments the student helping me offered me a ride on his motor bike to meet the agent. Unfamiliar with the Taiwanese traffic rules it was an exciting experience to be so close to the street. Overall, the support has been overwhelming from all sides so that I have felt very welcome. It is the warm hearted atmosphere amongst all of us at NYMU and the sparkling desire to push the horizon in science further which makes NYMU a very special place to be.



• 2010 during a summer vacation at Lake Maggiore in Italy steering an electric boat.



• 2011 Graduation Ceremony, WBF together with two of his students Tze-Hsiang Chien and Meng-Han Lin



• 2010 Chinese Year End party with the group



• 2007 At a historic site during the NYMU trip to Sun-Moon Lake.

The yearly event of taking a group photo with the members of the faculty is very special for me. I have never experienced such an uniting event before. Every faculty member and the students dress in their gowns to celebrate the success of the academic year. After my first 'group photo' I cabled back to my Alma Mater, Heidelberg University, asking about the gown which members of the faculty of chemistry should wear. Finally, I got my gown made with the respective colors. I think this event has induced an impressive positive feedback to Heidelberg. The couturier who fabricated my gown is very proud to have one of her gowns being worn in Taiwan.

What am I doing during the day at NYMU? My teaching proceeds in English, as well as all communication with the students. This is usually no problem. The style I like is to give the students the opportunity to take part in the class in giving short talks about selected topics. This should train them to express themselves in front of other people and also give the experience about what it means 'to teach'. Maybe they like it and become teachers themselves.

The research focuses on supporting drug development against viral infections. We use computers to get an idea of how putative drugs should look like and how they behave in our body by the means of biophysics.

After-hours I usually like to use our sports field on top of the mountain to do some jogging. The view across Taipei in the night is stunning. It relaxes my eyes from the daily sight of the computer models on our monitors.

A lot more activity is done for all international faculties and students to generate a comfortable and inspiring atmosphere on our campus. Beyond this, NYMU interacts with a large number of international highest ranked Universities, excellent research institutes and hospitals in closest neighborhood to ensure the best quality of research and teaching. NYMU is successfully on its way to transform 'today's students' into 'tomorrow giants'.

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• 2010 crossing Gotthard Pass in Switzerland