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Profiles in Management: Focus on German Institute of Science and Technology

Smooth and Sustainable

(Singapore) – An institute was born in a uniquely opposite cultural setting almost a decade back and it has well adapted to this, and is thriving in an increasingly challenging, competitive and demanding Asian environment. The Technische Universität München (TUM) entered the Singaporean education sector in a guarded manner instead of a bang which according to the University President, Mr. Wolfgang Hermann is the ‘*German way of doing things*’ and is now celebrating a decade of success.

It all began thirteen years ago when the interest of the University President in Singapore was aroused during an education conference in Indonesia where other Universities suggested bringing European education to the Asian economy. His willingness to set up a university here combined with an invitation from the EDB (Economic and Development Board) of Singapore led to the establishment of the first German Institute to have a campus outside of its parent country in the year 2002.

One of the most prestigious science and technology institutes of Germany broke ground in Singapore with only one Master Degree Program in collaboration with the National University of Singapore (NUS). From 2005 onwards, they have progressed to include more programs in their curriculum and currently they are offering five master programs and two bachelor programs. In

addition, they have experienced a phenomenal increase in their enrolment strength from just twenty students to around eight hundred.

Unique marketing strategies

According to their marketing executive, the



unique selling point for attracting foreign students is the basic nature of the university – ‘*the prestige of being a German institute*’. Also, the reputation of producing thirteen Nobel Laureates provides prospective students a sense of belief in the University’s ability to offer quality – assured education. Despite being a worldwide famous and trusted institute, the University does not rely on its traditional methods that have worked well for it in the past. TUM is a dynamic institute that understands the need for innovation and diversification. Hence, the University decided to create a completely new academic structure that offers courses which are unique only to Singapore and are not offered by the German branch. This enables the University to attract foreign students,

even Germans themselves and hence facilitates the creation of multicultural student environment which is an indispensable characteristic of transnational education.

Also, the institute tries to cater to the basic needs of the students in order to improve their academic experience. For instance, most of the professors teaching at the institute are flown in from Germany so as to ensure that the students in Singapore receive a teaching experience that is parallel to the parent university. Also, the students are placed in a compact class setting to allow them to have adequate face time with these renowned professors who encourage research and beyond the textbook learning.

Enjoying a decade of achievement

‘To be in Singapore for a decade offering premium education was a success in itself’ – The institute considers this as its biggest achievement in the past decade. According to them, Singapore being a hotspot for foreign universities is not an easy place to survive in. Due to the rich influx of various nationalities into the country and its easy accessibility, many higher education institutes from around the world want to attain a concrete market share in the transnational education sector. Also, engineering – a TUM speciality - was not a very popular course in this city and it took time to gain momentum.

Despite these challenges, TUM Asia Pte. Ltd managed to reach a stage where it does not feel threatened by upcoming education hot spots like Hong Kong, Malaysia and South Korea. The institute has been able to attract twenty eight different nationalities and four of its five master programs are designed in joint collaboration with NUS and NTU. Also, it has attained this stage of stability due to financial support and funding from the EDB as

well as major support from its industry partners in the form of scholarships, internships, hiring and permanent placements of their students in these companies.

Student satisfaction over monetary gains

Unlike many other institutes that measure success on the basis of returns, recognition and awards or high student numbers, TUM Asia’s measurement of success relies and revolves around the most important entity of their institute – its students. The institute feels proud of the fact that every year it produces *‘employable graduates’* that are highly desirable by many companies offering them permanent placements in Singapore. According to the institute, the fact that the education provided by them enables its students to acquire a strong knowledge base that fulfils their career aspirations and ultimately contributes towards this city – state’s economy is the best measure of their success.

A steady future ahead

The institute still relies on its original mantra of doing things in a steady way and is going to continue in this fashion for the upcoming years as well. Since it does not feel threatened by any of the upcoming education hubs, the institute wants to create a stronger and a more diversified base for itself here. It is planning to do this by launching more unique region – specific courses such as Energy management. On the whole, TUM Asia is satisfied with its growth and has immense confidence in Singapore’s capabilities of becoming an unbeatable education hub in the future.

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