

Aktuelle Meldung

HPI: First International Research „Branch“ opens in Cape Town

April 7, 2009

Potsdam/Cape Town. The Research School of the German Hasso Plattner Institute (HPI) has just established its first branch abroad. The “HPI Research School at the University of Cape Town” was opened on Tuesday, April 7th, when HPI-Director Prof. Christoph Meinel admitted three South-African PhD students to the circle of the thus far 22 research school members. These highly talented young computer scientists jointly investigate issues from the field of Service-Oriented Systems Engineering. The PhD students in Cape Town will primarily dedicate themselves to information and communications technologies that are important for developing countries and emerging markets.

On the South-African side, Professor Kathy Driver (Dean, Science Faculty) Sonia Berman (Head of CS Department), Professor Edwin Blake (CS Department) and Gary Marsden (Director UCT ICT4D Centre), participated in the opening ceremony. Prof. Andreas Polze, head of the HPI Research School in Potsdam, had also come from Germany to participate in the opening. “We are pleased that the University of Cape Town joins our graduate research school in the training of young and promising scientists,” said HPI-director Meinel. He expects an “intensive and fruitful research cooperation”.

The HPI Research School at the University of Cape Town follows the original model of the HPI Research School in Potsdam (established in 2005) where post-doctoral researchers and doctoral students are jointly supervised by several professors, not just by one primary dissertation advisor. The scholarship holders work in the overall research area “Service-Oriented Systems Engineering”, approaching it from the various perspectives of their respective specializations. Once a week they discuss their work and research results in a joint research seminar. Twice a year they get together for two-day retreats where they present their research in more depth. They also participate in scientific workshops and symposia.

“Our cooperation with the University of Cape Town is an opportunity to expand our research focus. Considering African infrastructure problems, internet access via radio networks or satellite are particularly important, as is working with mobile devices. This presents new research questions surrounding software services,” Meinel said. UCT scientist Gary Marsden emphasized the prospect of close scholarly exchanges and access to HPI’s top-notch international research networks as singular advantages of the cooperation: “Working with the HPI Research School in Potsdam provides a unique opportunity for students in Africa to work with and learn from some of the best computer science researchers in Europe”.

The young scientists will work from Cape Town, but receive their scholarships from HPI in Germany. Jointly supervised by their South-African professors, they will be integrated into the research activities of the HPI Research School in Potsdam and participate in joint conferences and symposia. Both partners also plan an exchange of young scientists as well as the joint acquisition of new research projects, Polze added.

HPI-Director Meinel announced that a similar research branch will be established in Israel. A corresponding agreement with Technion, the renowned technical university in Haifa, is currently being prepared. The main focus of the research cooperation with the young Israeli computer scientists will be the so-called multi-threading, referring to the simultaneous processing of multiple threads within a single computing process.

Short Profile: Hasso Plattner Institute

Hasso Plattner Institute for IT-Systems Engineering (HPI) in Potsdam is Germany's university excellence center for IT-Systems Engineering. It is the only university institute in Germany that offers an undergraduate (bachelor) and a graduate (master) course of study in IT Systems Engineering – a practice- and engineering-oriented alternative to conventional computer science studies. Current enrolment is at about 450 students. HPI employs 50 professors and contract teachers. HPI conducts excellent research, not least for high-level industry and business partners. The primary area of research is the basics of and applications for large, highly-complex, and cross-linked IT systems. Since October 2005 HPI has featured a graduate school, the HPI Research School "Service-Oriented Systems Engineering." In October 2007 the "HPI School of Design Thinking" opened its door to the first group of students. Here, forty students from many different academic disciplines are trained to develop user-friendly IT-related products and services in multidisciplinary teams. In this field HPI cooperates closely with the US elite university Stanford. In November 2008 the two started a joint innovation research program. Hasso Plattner Institute also has close research cooperations with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States, the Technical University of Beijing in China, and with various universities in Europe.

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