The Alfred Wegener Institute (AWI), Germany, is excited to host the Year 5 NF-POGO Centre of Excellence (CofE). A complete description of the CofE-AWI was provided in the latest NANO Newsletter (Issue 5); details will not be repeated here.

For the inaugural year, the CoE-AWI received 84 applications from 32 countries. Ten scholars were selected from 10 developing countries, including seven countries that had not been represented in prior CofE programs. The new countries were Bangladesh, Cuba, Tanzania, Tibet, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and Togo. A picture and brief bio of the 10 new CoE-AWI Scholars is provided on the POGO website (http://ocean-partners.org/training-and-education/centre-of-excellence/phase-2-year-1).

The CoE Scholars arrived in Bremerhaven, the home and largest campus of AWI, in early December. The CoE coordinator Dr Gerry Plumley, and his assistant Dr. Rebecca Störmer, introduced them to the Northern Climes; given that most Scholars are from tropical regions, the first day in Germany was spent in the AWI Logistics Warehouse, procuring winter clothing. Tours of the library and the Ice Core Lab rounded out the time in Bremerhaven. A few days later the Scholars traveled to Berlin and took part in a Cultural Exchange Event by visiting the Berlin Wall Memorial. They then traveled to Dahlem, a suburb of Berlin, to attend the NANO Meeting and meet representatives of the Nippon Foundation. This represented a wonderful means for the incoming CoE Scholars to learn the details about POGO’s long-term strategy for enhancing ocean observation on a global scale and for extending the global ocean network through NANO.

The CoE Inauguration Event was held on the night of 6 December in the Museum of Natural History, Berlin. Guest speakers included Prof Johannes Vogel, General Director of the Museum, Prof. Dr. Johanna Wanka, Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Mr. Ogiue Kentaro, The Nippon Foundation, Tokyo, Dr. Shubha Sathyendranth, POGO Secretariat, Prof. Dr. Karin Lochte, Director of AWI, and Prof. Dr. Karen Wiltshire, Deputy Director of AWI and Director of the Biological Station Helgoland, and Director of the NF-POGO CofE.

The Scholars headed to Helgoland the next morning with the first day of classes on 9 December. The Scholars finished a module on General Oceanography at the beginning of January and started the module on Bio-Chem Oceanography in early January. The Scholars will spend in total five months on Helgoland, take a brief tour through select European marine labs, and then head to the Waddensea Research Station on Sylt for their final five months of training.