

New advanced course underlines importance of public perceptions and policies for innovation in a biobased economy

From July 21 to 25, 2014, a new advanced course titled “Communication & Policy for a Biobased Economy” was held at the University of Campinas (UNICAMP) in Campinas, Brazil. The course was jointly organized by UNICAMP’s Institute of Economics and its Dutch partner Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) supported by BE-Basic. The hands-on training proved a great success with students: “awesome experience”, said one of the students.

Graduate and post-graduate students were offered a unique opportunity to learn about the role and nature of public perceptions and policies in innovation for a biobased economy and to experience hands-on what it takes to be actively engaged in (public and stakeholder) communication, regulatory committees and policy making. Lectures also demonstrated the importance of ethics and risk perception, while students were trained in strategic communication, writing about science for non-scientists and media relations.

In teams, the students made a communication plan for a virtual company and were challenged to quickly respond to ‘a nasty situation’ related to their company. Responsible professors Jose Maria da Silveira and Patricia Osseweijer underline the importance of the course: “successful innovation hugely depends on societal implementation. Understanding societal issues and being able to strategically communicate is crucial”, says Patricia.

The students were very positive. Carlos Correa said “compliments to Unicamp/TU Delft staff and BE-Basic Brazil for this unique and exhilarating learning experience. I dearly appreciated this chance for sharing perceptions and expressing our views on very important issues related to bio-based economy with very bright people.”. Also the guest lecturers Zenaide Guerra from DSM, Mateus Batistella from EMBRAPA, Maurem Lima Alves from CMPC and Merel Laroy from SkyNRG, who were specially flown in to present real-life experiences in communication strategies, enjoyed the new approach. Zenaide, Director Public Affairs Latin America DSM: “a great course and very important!”.

The joint course is supported by the BE-Basic education program and part of the joint academic program of UNICAMP and TU Delft.



Prof Patricia Osseweijer and Dr Laurens Landeweerd posing with invited speakers and enrolled students at UNICAMP's Institute of Economics.