The delegation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK) visits Charlotte (center of 1st row from left to right): Dr. Peter Kulitz, President of the Baden-Württemberg Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWIHK); Peter Friedrich, Minister for Federal Council, Europe and International Affairs, Stuttgart; Robert W. Huber, Chairman of the Foreign Economic Affairs Committee for the IHK Karlsruhe; Prof. Hans-Peter Mengele, CEO of IHK Karlsruhe
The region of Charlotte in the US state of North Carolina has already attracted a great number of renowned German companies with its excellent infrastructure and exceptionally well-trained specialists. During this now third visit of IHK delegates to the other side of the Atlantic, representatives of the companies who have located there, such as Bosch Rexroth, Hawe Hydraulics, groninger USA, Huesker and Chiron met at a ‘business round table’ with their guests from Baden-Württemberg.

Of the 200 German companies who have located to Charlotte a total of 60 come from Baden-Württemberg alone. This is reason enough to meet with top-level visitors, including Peter Friedrich, Baden-Württemberg’s Minister for Federal Council, Europe and International Affairs, BWIHK President Dr. Peter Kulitz, President of the Baden-Württemberg Association of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWIHK) as well as Prof. Hans-Peter Mengele, CEO of IHK Karlsruhe. The IHK Karlsruhe has been in close contact with the Charlotte Region since the start of the millennium. The participation of Minister Friedrich and Peter Kulitz as representatives of the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg shows that activities in Karlsruhe have now awoken wide interest on a state level. A follow-up visit of the state government to the region of Charlotte has already been planned.

**Major interest in cooperation**

In addition to the Consul General of the state of the Federal Republic of Germany in Atlanta, Christoph Sander, the Honorary Consul of North Carolina, Klaus Becker, was also amongst the delegation participants. This also demonstrates the Charlotte Region’s interest in strengthening the cooperation between the regions Karlsruhe and Charlotte or Baden-Württemberg and North Carolina in the development of technologies and business models in the energy sector.

Another important and brand new topic of conversation was the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the EU and the USA, in short TTIP. The companies emphasized the fact that definite savings could be made if the agreement was successfully completed. Lothar Burger, Managing Director US Operations of the company groninger USA LLC, explained that the machines produced...
at the site in Charlotte were specially designed for the requirements of the US market. By harmonizing the norms and standards, TTIP could lead to a reduction of the production costs for machines produced in the USA by 20 to 30 percent.

The German delegation with experts from the fields of energy and education was greeted by Dr. Tony Zeiss, President of Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) and other representatives from the business and political communities in the region. Upon the initiative of Dr. Zeiss and other executives from the region, Charlotte aims to become the new industrial center of the US east coast. As part of its visit, the IHK delegation took part in a meeting of what is referred to as the 'Global-Vision-Initiative': Create it – Make it – Move it – Market it’. This event, which can now boast around 130 representatives from the region, only takes place three times a year. Prof. Mengele has invited representatives of the initiative to the TechnologieRegion Karlsruhe, in order to discuss possible further cooperation between the region of Charlotte and Karlsruhe.

‘Transatlantic Energy and Education Bridge’

In addition to talks with representatives of the energy sector from the region of Charlotte as well as the visit to the regional energy conference ‘Energy Inc’, the program also included a visit to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) and their Energy Production and Infrastructure Center (EPIC). Currently eleven students from the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology are studying at the UNCC as part of a cooperation agreement between KIT and UNCC which was made in May 2013. The students spend a semester abroad in combination with a professional internship on the subject of energy. They were met by the IHK delegation as part of their visit.

The starting point of the trip was the ‘Transatlantic Energy Bridge’ agreement which was signed in September 2012 as part of a US delegation visit from Charlotte to the TechnologieRegion Karlsruhe. Since then the agreement has been extended to include the areas professional education, science and research as well as industry and TTIP.

Vocational Education: The German role model

Meanwhile the ‘Transatlantic Education Bridge’ has gained another important pillar: IHK CEO Prof. Hans-Peter Mengele has been appointed as a full member of the President’s Council at the Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC). This makes him part of a top-class
consulting team of companies, education experts and government employees, whose goal is to expand the CPCC’s strategic partnerships. The cooperation between the IHK, the IHK Education Center and CPCC is based on a regular constructive exchange of specialists on the subject of international dual education and training. It was only November when the most recent delegation from Charlotte were guests in Karlsruhe.

The aim of the cooperation is, on the one hand, to train qualified personnel for German companies in the USA, but also to increase transparency of the graduates’ levels of qualification using a standardized IHK certificate which is recognized by the German companies.

CPCC President Tony Zeiss and Vice-President Richard Zollinger also discussed the subject of digitalization in didactics as well as a restructuring of teaching against the backdrop of Industrie 4.0 together with the German delegation including Minister Peter Friedrich, Prof. Mengele and the Deputy CEO and Manager of the IHK Education Center and the Department of Education and Training at IHK, Alfons Moritz.

Plans for an international trainer qualification certification were born. A meeting with representatives from German companies who provide training in the USA (groninger, Huesker, Hawe, Chiron and Bosch Rexroth) led to initial talks on a possible training program to organize exchanges for German and American apprentices.

TTIP was an important topic of conversation for the German companies who have located to Charlotte (from the left): Chris Paynter, CPCC; Mark Rohlinger, Director Technical Operations, Rexroth, Bosch Group; Lothar Burger, Managing Director US Operations, groninger USA, and Dirk Zikeli, CEO, Chiron America, Inc.

Telephone +49 (0)721 174 449
christina.metzger@karlsruhe.ihk.de

Chairman of the IHK Karlsruhe’s Foreign Economic Affairs Committee Robert W. Huber and Dr. Tony Zeiss, President of the Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC)

Eleven scholarship holders from KIT are currently on an internship at the UNCC in order to carry out their own research at the university’s laboratories on the topic of energy. They are shown here together with Dr. Johan Enslin, Director EPIC, UNCC and Minister Peter Friedrich (3rd and 4th from the left) as well as IHK CEO Prof. Hans-Peter Mengele (2nd from the right).