



We are halfway through the 2012/13 academic year which marks the final year of the four schools that shaped FRIAS and are responsible for its high regard. The shock of June 15th, 2012, when the Freiburg institutional strategy was rejected in the second round of the Excellence Initiative is still palpable; nevertheless, FRIAS fellows are still publishing results that are making journal front pages and topping download statistics. The book series from the humanities schools continue to grow, high-profile conferences and workshops are being held in rapid succession, Nobel Laureates are giving talks within the framework of the Staudinger Lecture series, and a reduced yet equally enthusiastic crowd of new fellows are filling the seminar room, small amphitheatre lecture hall and lounge, pleased to participate in the last phase of the unique atmosphere created by a FRIAS school, with its rich expertise coupled with the time and leisure to explore new ideas. The lasting effects of FRIAS as we currently know it on the university can hardly be denied. After a long absence of large collaborative projects, two research centres (SFB) in the humanities were approved in the past year: “Helden, Heroisierungen, Heroisimen” and “Muße. Konzepte, Räume, Figuren”. Another SFB in the area of linguistics is in the final stages of the application process. The speakers of all three major undertakings as well as many of the principal investigators are or were FRIAS fellows. In the natural sciences, which in comparison receives far more external funding, the reasons behind the many new funding initiatives are certainly diverse, but even here external funding has risen disproportionately in the last five years and FRIAS fellows were and are heavily invested in many projects. And these are just a few examples of the fruitful interactions between the University of Freiburg and its research institute. It is these “productive interplays” that are referred to in the title of this issue.

The responsibility of the current FRIAS Board of Directors and, in turn, the focus of the research activities on four major areas will come to an end in October 2013. Following passionate and sometimes even controversial debates in the university as to the future of the institute, a project group headed by the Vice-Rector for Research has developed a concept that is widely supported by the university’s committees. FRIAS is to continue on a permanent basis. The four schools will be replaced by a more open structure which is to have a section for the humanities and social sciences and a section for the natural sciences and engineering as well as medicine. FRIAS shall continue to fund outstanding research projects through individual fellowships and

research groups. The tried and true combination of Freiburg faculty and international researchers and the mixture of junior and senior researchers will remain unchanged as well as the quality standards and the competitive selection process carried out by independent external assessors.

The project group has recently announced fellowships of up to ten months for the academic year of 2013/14. The response to this call for proposals, which is aimed at both professors and junior academics from all university disciplines, will show how Freiburg-based researchers strive to make FRIAS the research institute for the entire university. Without a disciplinary core and with, at least for the near future, far fewer fellows, it will certainly become more difficult to organise a spirited and ambitious academic programme with seminars, colloquia and workshops all generating intense discussion – however, these difficulties are not insurmountable. The many university-based institutes for advanced study that have now sprung up around the world, the most well-known of which have joined forces as part of the FRIAS-initiated global UBIAS network (University-Based Institutes for Advanced Study), include highly successful institutes with broad and diversified research agendas. The future success of the concept will be determined by the organisational skills of the yet-to-be-named academic leadership from October 2013 onwards and the necessary integration of research projects conducted by FRIAS fellows in outstanding collaborative projects at the university.

On the basis of external assessment, the program will be extended by two or three larger, more long-term areas of research focus from autumn 2014 onwards. As a result, the successful formula of the initial FRIAS – bringing together a vital number of eminent academics in a well-defined, profile building and enhancing area of research – is to be continued in a new format. The new concept, of course, requires solid basic funding from external sources. Only then will it be possible to continue the institute for the benefit of the University of Freiburg and the German research community as a whole. After all, meeting the demands of advanced studies does not come for free. The assurance of much hoped-for funding over the coming months will decide whether the academic year of 2013/14 will simply delay FRIAS's final chapter or signal a new beginning for FRIAS to once again take its place as one of the top research institutes in Germany.



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