

“How does FRIAS influence the university?” FRIAS Speaker Werner Frick searches for answers to this question with Prof. Dr Bernd Becker, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Prof. Dr Hans-Helmuth Gander, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Prof. Dr Bernd Kortmann, Dean of the Faculty of Philology, and Prof. Dr Gunther Neuhaus, Dean of the Faculty of Biology.

Werner Frick: Gentlemen, as Deans you command a view of the entire university. What effect do you perceive the foundation of FRIAS to have had on your faculties?

Bernd Kortmann: Well to begin, we are naturally extremely privileged that the Faculty of Philology already has its own research school. When FRIAS was founded it was met with complete scepticism among my colleagues, and in some cases this even extended to the entire Excellence Initiative. Nevertheless, over the last three-and-a-half years the School of Language & Literature has recognised the importance of instigating lively exchange with the faculty and, thanks to its multidisciplinary approach, has actively involved a great number of colleagues in its work. This has created a very broad, enthusiastic base of advocates within the faculty and has borne fruit in both research and teaching.

Hans-Helmuth Gander: The situation was certainly quite different in the Faculty of Humanities. From the very beginning, FRIAS was perceived to be a project for a privileged few. The faculty was not particularly involved in planning, which provoked a lot of scepticism. This was compounded by the fact that, in contrast to the School of Language

“FRIAS HAS UNLOCKED TREMENDOUS FORCE”



& Literature, the School of History’s research centred largely on one field – that of modern and contemporary history. However, this is no longer an issue. Acceptance of FRIAS within the faculty is unequivocal. It has become clear that the School of History strives to select fellows in a manner that gives the school great breadth, which is backed up by the disciplinary core. Furthermore, the involvement of both the Faculty of Humanities and that of Philology in the Excellence Initiative is chiefly documented by FRIAS itself. We are neither present in clusters nor in graduate schools. It is nevertheless important for we arts scholars, representing traditional subjects at this university, to become visible to the outside world for our research achievements – and we achieve this through FRIAS.

Bernd Kortmann: FRIAS has unlocked tremendous force in two respects. It not only makes the humanities visible within the Excellence Initiative, but has also stimulated the development of new applications for special research areas and research training groups. Here, Internal Senior Fellows have been able to take the time to devise appropriate applications, which have so far resulted

in four SFB (collaborative research centre) initiatives and two research training group initiatives.

Werner Frick: Yes, it is precisely those effects that were desired. Indeed, credit must be given to the Freiburg institutional strategy, “Windows for Research”, for designing a cleverly-balanced model which was intended to benefit both the humanities and natural sciences equally. That the Albert Ludwig University is a full-range university, steeped in tradition, whose identity should also find expression in the structure of FRIAS was never at issue.

Bernd Kortmann: And that is also the reason behind the strong slogan of a “New Universitas”.

Werner Frick: Exactly. The basic idea from the very beginning was, in fact, to reflect the particular research strengths of the university and to create new synergies from interactions between them. Readjustments were then made by FRIAS to create scope for areas not represented in the institute’s four schools to be involved, which is how the interdisciplinary research group programme came to be established. These groups enrich FRIAS immensely. This tool has en-

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abled us to attract a range of highly-desirable projects, which in the majority of cases continue to run even once the funding period has ended.

Bernd Becker: Looking at the Faculty of Engineering, the influence of FRIAS is complex. Microsystems technology has extremely close ties with FRIAS via Jan Korvink and the junior research groups. There has been less contact in computer science, and I always regretted that a little. Things have now changed, however, thanks to the interdisciplinary project that computer scientist Bernhard Nebel undertook at FRIAS with the psychologist Brunna Tuschen-Caffier. For myself, I wish that such interdisciplinary collaborations took place more often from our faculty, as I am a firm believer that truly exciting things happen once the initial barrier is overcome.

Gunther Neuhaus: The Faculty of Biology has benefited greatly from the external funding secured by fellows in the School of Life Sciences – LifeNet. Collaboration is particularly good between LifeNet's Junior Fellows and many scientists in our faculty. And it is also espe-

cially important that collaboration with other groups in the Centre for Biosystems Analysis (ZBSA) works extremely well.

Hans-Helmuth Gander: I would like to just highlight a point where I believe difficulties remain. FRIAS is truly a paradise for External Fellows, but for those within the university there is a structural problem, and I am not sure how it can best be resolved. Freiburg-based colleagues who take up Internal Fellowships at FRIAS are not able to withdraw themselves fully from their faculties. They do have deputies for teaching, and I believe that this works. Despite this, compared to External Fellows, Internal Fellows are only able to use their own research time to a limited degree.

Werner Frick: Many of our local colleagues really do sometimes find themselves confronted with conflicts of loyalty. The university wheels continue to turn, nothing in Freiburg is very far away and the expectation – be it real or imagined – that a FRIAS fellowship will not imply a complete withdrawal from the fellow's home institute is a factor for many colleagues. A certain conflict persists for which there is no magic cure. We need to give this point further consideration.

Bernd Becker: That's simply the way things are. If a big SFB or something similar is ongoing, the FRIAS fellow must continue to look after the project.

Werner Frick: At least the fellows are relieved of their teaching duties. We all complain constantly that our teaching loads are too high, and in-

deed, nine hours a week is a huge amount when you look at the large quantity of supervision we have to do. This load, at least, is removed when undertaking a period of research at FRIAS – and we need have no guilty feelings about it as our deputies are outstanding.

Bernd Kortmann: I think it would make sense if there were something such as a part-time fellowship for Internal Fellows that would allow them to spend half the week at FRIAS and also take on a teaching load of four hours. That would probably come fairly close to the reality experienced at the moment by Internal Senior Fellows with full-time fellowships. There are some who really do not teach at all, but others still give bonus lectures, despite the fact that they are deputised, teach at least one course and somehow find themselves in their faculty for a day-and-a-half a week. If they were able to think, I can continue to be involved in the faculty in all good conscience and then have the second part of the week free for my research work at FRIAS, it could do a lot of good, and could even bring similarly great research successes.

Gunther Neuhaus: We particularly welcomed the short-term memberships in the science schools, which allow members of the faculty to spend a month working intensively on preparing new research projects. At the same time, FRIAS gives our academics great support in attracting internationally-renowned colleagues to come to Freiburg for joint projects.

Hans-Helmuth Gander: Securing Hans Joas as a Permanent Fellow of the School of History was surely also a significant accomplishment for FRIAS. It is proof of how appealing FRIAS now is to someone who has directed the Max Weber Centre in Erfurt for many years.

Werner Frick: Yes, we are indeed proud of the calibre of our fellows. During this winter semester alone, several Leibniz Prize winners and other leaders in their fields are spending time at FRIAS, either in the context of fellowships or shorter visits.

Bernd Kortmann: And FRIAS also makes an entirely positive contribution to appointments procedures. At times when the university is perhaps unable to quite offer everything expected by top potential applicants in terms of equipment and funding, FRIAS steps in. After all, it is eminently possible that a top researcher will later be able to work for a time at FRIAS. FRIAS has really now become a reason for many to apply to the Albert Ludwig University.

Hans-Helmuth Gander: I can only emphasise this. It is definitely a factor in appointment negotiations today. Some candidates even already have an idea of the project they would like to apply to FRIAS with, although they first want to socialise within the institute to which they are being appointed. FRIAS therefore helps us to attract first-rate academics to Freiburg.

Werner Frick: It seems to me no less important that, in view of the disciplines represented within FRIAS, we have managed to gain an extremely large presence of international spe-

cialists in Freiburg. Many come as fellows, more still come to our colloquia, conferences and symposia. That was part of our mission statement: that in the academic fields selected for the institute, Freiburg should have an influence on research discourse worldwide and become a top-class establishment. We have made considerable progress in this.

Bernd Becker: The prospects that FRIAS offers to junior researchers are also excellent, particularly in the natural sciences. Karen Lienkamp and Maria Asplund spring immediately to mind, both of whom work at IMTEK (Department of Microsystems Engineering). Freiburg creates scope, and if this scope is exploited efficiently it is hugely advantageous. Not least the students who are actively involved in these projects as assistants also benefit greatly from them. If you want to have a career in research it is essential to start researching early, especially in the Faculty of Engineering.

Gunther Neuhaus: The Staudinger Lectures organised by the Soft Matter and LifeNet schools arouse great interest among students in all natural science faculties, and are always well-attended. Ten Nobel Prize winners, in categories ranging from medicine to physics and chemistry, have spoken to date. That is definitely a highlight.

Bernd Kortmann: I would find it a fundamentally good thing if FRIAS were a little more clearly visible within the university, perhaps through a series of interdisciplinary lectures held by different speakers. This would also extend an invitation to younger students in their sixth or

seventh semesters who do not dare attend a colloquium at FRIAS. Masters or PhD students no longer fear entering such unfamiliar territory.

Hans-Helmuth Gander: And perhaps there could be more collaboration with our graduate schools in future as well.

Gunther Neuhaus: I think that for students, the most important thing is that they are able to learn through FRIAS that research can give pleasure and that professors are more than just teachers and administrators!

Werner Frick: Well there we have it, I can think of no better closing remarks...! Gentlemen, thank you very much for your helpful comments and ideas! We will give them much consideration.

