

Summer Reception of Professors Speech by President Angela Ittel

05.07.2023

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for being here. I am pleased that you accepted my invitation to the second professors' reception. On the one hand, tonight gives us the opportunity to greet the new colleagues together and to say goodbye to our departing colleagues with dignity.

Tonight also gives us all the opportunity to get to know each other better across all faculty boundaries. In the context of our development talks, the desire for more exchange was expressed several times. I can only support this and would like to strengthen it. With informal opportunities like today and of course also within our structures for interdisciplinary research and work. Because only through exchange does trust develop and only then can we create a common identity. Away from the castles and kingdoms, towards a jointly designed university. Why is that so important?

A colleague recently told me, not entirely without pride, that we are the decentralized university in Germany. It would have worked for the last 277 years. That may be the case: times are different now. We are much more challenged not only to develop our subject cultures and disciplinary strengths but also the overarching strategic topics. Because these are what make us stand out as a university on the national and international stage, in addition to all the outstanding technical and disciplinary strengths. With the aim of being an attractive educational institution and a unique employer in the jungle of educational opportunities. As a result, strategic university development and management has become an indispensable task today. This means, above all, the orientation towards *superordinate* goals, the specification in the process of goal pursuit as well as the review and transparent presentation of goal achievement. In view of the special conditions of academic operations, some members may suspect, even more than with other organizations, that such management claims are exaggerated. However, it is precisely these overarching goals that set the universities apart from the rest and, for example, the universities that were successful in the last excellence competition are characterized by strong strategic university management. In essence, however, we are concerned with the question of how universities can actually act together as a unified organization.

We started the University Development 2030 Initiative 1.5 years ago and since then have taken many effective and correct joint steps on the way to the orientation of our university. We have laid the foundation for fundamental, necessary and forward-looking changes. The start of the process took a lot of strength and energy. Thank you very much for your input and commitment to this process!

We must be aware that the University Development Initiative is a unique and future-oriented but also urgently needed process: Just last week the Rector of RWTH Aachen University published a highly acclaimed article in which he described a large-scale initiative to define a "Next Generation University". He emphasizes the need to rethink the university and break away from old structures and attitudes. I have already emphasized this necessity in different contexts and I am glad that we have already started to define and shape the university of the future for our TU Braunschweig with the University Development Initiative 2030.

Our efforts are bearing their first fruit. We saw that last week at the University Development Days, which many of you also took part in: The concept of holistic development has become part of our university DNA. We have also seen how openly and critically we can reflect on ourselves. We are not afraid to put our finger in the wound when it comes to developing ourselves. That's a great strength. It shows that we are open to feedback and regular adjustments that the iterative university development process requires of us.

By consciously integrating these aspects into our university development, we also consciously work against our self-deplored (Northern German) impulse that we talk down in some situations, forget about our successes and strengths and approach new projects or processes with a sepsis or anxiety. We develop a self-image of the positive presentation of our successes. This requires our explicit awareness of our strengths, potential and common ground:

And here we have a lot to show for ourselves: In the past year alone, since the last professors' festival, we have achieved enormous things.

Of course, the very successful handling of the multiple crises, which are currently continuing to affect all of our lives enormously, is in the foreground here.

One cannot emphasize enough the enormous impact this confrontation had on our life, on everyday university life. Sometimes it pulled the rug out from under our feet. Sometimes we questioned our self-image. Thanks to our very thoughtful and reflective approach, we have found a way to find the necessary strength in the community and to continue to keep our TU on course in all our performance dimensions of research, teaching & studies, transfer and governance & administration.

- We have successfully continued or initiated many research and teaching projects
- Several new English language master's programs were set up
- We acquired a first Alexander von Humboldt professorship for the TU Braunschweig.
- We have developed a new recruitment and appointment strategy
- With the opening of the Climate Crisis Clock, we have documented our commitment to overcoming the climate crisis nationally and even internationally.
- Only recently, with the opening of the Great Wave Current Canal, we received attention at the highest political level.
- We had a great start in our university's student marketing with a Germany-wide online and offline campaign, which we are now going to expand internationally.
- We were able to set up a campus in Wolfsburg and are in the process of setting up a representative office in Singapore.

- We have signed two new strategic partnerships (Strathclyde and Rhode Island) as well as strengthened our partnerships with UNAM and Tampere.
- We have completed a new Collaborative Research Centre in the field of aircraft development, represented by Professor Langer, and a fantastic review of the Transregional Project in the field of additive manufacturing, represented by Professor Kloft and in cooperation with the TU Munich and are now keeping our fingers crossed for positive results in November.
- We have submitted an outline for a new cluster initiative - also under the leadership of Mr. Kloft, also with the Munich University of Technology and are now eagerly awaiting the first assessment in October.
- We are intensively developing our two existing clusters, Sea2 and Quantum Frontiers.
- We have opened the doors of the student house for our students and the doors of our university for refugee scientists from Ukraine.
- At least four scientists have started or completed their research visit at our university this year.
- We have recruited great new people to join us. Most of them are here and happy to introduce themselves to you!
- many other projects, which I cannot all mention now, have shown the strength of the TU Braunschweig.
- We started with central alumni work, with system crediting, and are developing a sustainability and transfer strategies. Place personnel development and internationalization at our university on a new strategic level. Just like teacher training.

Please allow me to say a big thank you to all members of the Executive Committee for the enormous work they do every day - in addition to their duties as university lecturers - to further develop these topics.

This list goes on and on and please forgive me if I haven't mentioned a success story or two. All of these successes show us how diverse, how productive and how creative we can be when we believe in ourselves and our strengths. I would like to motivate us all to use today's festival to simply celebrate these successes together!

Because we will continue on the path of progress in the coming years, be prepared for the crises of the future and continue to build on our strengths. For this, we should not be afraid of arguments and maybe even frictions/conflicts. Because: Friction generates heat and releases new energies.

Only through exchange, "friction" with subsequent agreement will we create a home for our members and us. This is the only way we can act in an identity-creating and community-oriented manner.

I am firmly convinced that if we deal more with each other, define processes and goals together, create transparency about our actions, we can develop into an institution that is more than the sum of the achievements of a single institute or faculty. This is the basic idea of our holistic development model.

To do this, we need to work even more together on content and consolidate our resources and expertise across hierarchies and decentralized structures in order to achieve our goals. This also implies a shift in our mentality: Our decisions are based on the common good of the entire university as

an organization with common development goals. We have to understand that this shift does not mean loss of power but added value. For the university and ultimately also for each individual member.

I am aware that this attitude requires a lot of inner work on ourselves, but also on the level of the organizational units. This principle is central to our strategic development model and a maxim that will determine whether we remain at the forefront of the university map in Germany and internationally.

I would like to name 4 topics with which I would like to briefly illustrate the relevance of this maxim:

1. Concentration of resources: With more transparency and shared resource allocation, such as for libraries, research and laboratory facilities and administrative and technical equipment, we can pool our resources and use them more efficiently and, above all, more sustainably. This creates undreamt-of synergies that we are not yet fully exploiting. Our partners in Finland or Scotland show us how. These synergies will create opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration that will offer students and faculty members easier and more sustainable access to shared resources and co-construction of knowledge.
2. Diverse range of studying programs: Cross-faculty, interdisciplinary programs that look beyond the linear order of subjects usually attract a wide range of students from a wide variety of fields and disciplines. This gives students the very attractive opportunity to choose from a large number of courses and to pursue interdisciplinary approaches. This encourages the diversity of knowledge and allows students to better explore their interests and talents. It enables us to train people who can face the global challenges of the future. This is where we come in, and I just want to encourage you to be even more courageous and to think "outside the box" in order to develop attractive study programs together and across faculties.
3. Larger network: If we jointly present our strengths and expertise in a visible manner nationally and internationally, we can attract a large number of students and lecturers from different regions and backgrounds and be an attractive global partner. Away from the beacons towards actual common content and values that we represent. We were encouraged to do this again by our "critical friends" during the University Development Days. What do we stand for? A consensus on this must be further developed and strengthened. This creates diverse, dynamic networks to which will our members will be grant access to and opens up a wide range of experiences and perspectives for us.
4. Infrastructure and facilities: I am always impressed and proud that international reviewers' eyes regularly shine when they visit our research facilities. Of course, there is also a lot to catch up and build up. I have seen this with my own eyes and take every opportunity to report these issues to the Ministry. Just last week, we invited the Ministry for Science and Culture so that Ministry employees could get an idea of the conditions in some of our laboratories. In addition, we are also active internally in finding unconventional solutions, addressing urgent concerns and finding solutions together with our partners in the ministry. That takes a lot of energy and time, taking into account the shortage of skilled labor, which I, which we are happy to invest in order to optimize the conditions for your research, for your teaching, for all of our performance dimensions.

Also, it will become very important to think a lot more about shared infrastructure. Universities that see their highly specialized infrastructure as a shared resource have much broader opportunities compared to universities where everyone does their own thing. They can have teaching and learning rooms,

laboratories and libraries together and set up spaces for personal interaction. This helps to support a quality education and research environment and offers all members a better learning, research, transfer and administrative and life experience.

It is important to note that universities that foster a close community and consciously integrate their activities in research, teaching, knowledge transfer, governance, and administration into the strategic framework of the university are much more successful in competing for research funding.

This is necessary because the current challenges in higher education development are immense. Effective collaboratively-led institutional development is crucial for the success and advancement of any institution, and universities are no exception. In the rapidly evolving higher education landscape, all leaders face unique challenges that require careful consideration and innovative approaches. I would like to delve into six of these challenges and outline potential solutions.

I. Volatile political environment and disruptive societal changes:

We live in a time of societal and technological transformations characterized by crises that upend our understanding of our social order. Political processes, both national and international, are more dynamic than ever before, with the rules of the game changing rapidly. Universities and research institutions are challenged to provide answers to the many questions of our time and actively shape these significant changes. It is no coincidence that science diplomacy and foreign education policy are directly addressed in the recently published security strategy of the federal government. This means that as a university, we should anticipate the changes in our environment and perhaps even be one step ahead. It also means actively participating in the discussions, being present, and playing an active role in shaping the landscape, including through active participation in TU9 with a strong voice.

II. Changing educational landscape:

The outlined conditions of external influences (as mentioned in Point I) result in an ever-changing educational landscape in which we must navigate. The traditional model of higher education is being questioned by technological advancements, changing student expectations, and global competition. Universities must adapt to these changes by fostering a culture of innovation, supporting digital transformation, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities. They must also proactively, rather than reactively, respond to societal needs and labor market demands, ensuring that academic programs, research, and governance processes remain relevant and impactful. It is crucial that we actively engage in shaping the science and education systems, leveraging our national and international networks and participating in cross-university structures and discourse. I encourage you to take advantage of the various opportunities to get involved, such as our faculty members actively serving as reviewers in decision-making bodies. The current demand in this area is substantial.

III. Financial sustainability:

Another urgent challenge is ensuring the sustainable financial support of higher education institutions in our country. In the face of increasing competition for research funding, we need to be much more creative and develop effective resource allocation strategies in collaboration with our partners. The historical hostility between universities is truly outdated. Additionally, it requires entrepreneurial thinking, forging strategic partnerships and alliances with other universities, networks, industry, and philanthropic organizations, as well as diversifying sources of funding. Those responsible must also reconcile

financial considerations with the preservation of academic quality and accessibility, ensuring that our educational offerings are lifelong and inclusive for all population groups. The era of isolation is over, and we must constantly remind ourselves of this and learn to embrace it.

IV. Governance and stakeholder engagement:

Effective governance and the involvement of stakeholders are crucial for higher education institutions in this process - yes, in this change management process. Whether at the institute, faculty, or university level, as leaders, we must navigate complex decision-making processes, bringing together the interests of various stakeholders/status groups, including faculty, students, staff, alumni, and the community. Building transparent and inclusive leadership structures, fostering and having the courage for open and transparent communication, and supporting collaboration are essential to gaining the trust and support of stakeholders. Furthermore, it should be seen as essential to establish networks and alliances and actively participate in them to advance common goals and secure necessary resources.

I am also convinced that the principles of holistic development of our university provide leaders at all levels of the university administration with a very specific framework. It enables them to set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound goals for their teams, thereby articulating clear expectations, increasing productivity, creating space for creativity, and establishing a positive culture that attracts and retains top talent in the long run.

In conclusion, the challenges that universities must face today are multifaceted and dynamic. Adapting to the changing educational landscape, ensuring financial sustainability, promoting effective governance, fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion, and prioritizing well-being are partly new to us, partly demanding and exhausting, but all crucial for the success of our university, TU Braunschweig. To overcome these challenges, we all, as leaders, need to be visionary, innovative, and cooperative. By embracing these qualities and pursuing a proactive and integrative approach, we can position ourselves as a thriving centre of knowledge, research, and social impact in the region, nationally, and internationally.

I thank you for your attention. I am confident that through the University Development Initiative 2030 and by jointly addressing these challenges, we can shape a promising future for our university and ultimately serve as a role model for other institutions as well as contribute to the improvement of society as a whole.

For today's celebration, I wish all of us a pleasant togetherness, and in conclusion of my speech, I would like to thank the Braunschweig University Association for making this event possible.

Dear Mr. Block, thank you for standing by our university for so many years and promoting cohesion and excellent research at TU Braunschweig. The floor is yours!