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Osnabrueck University enhances its profile

Millions to be invested in future key research areas

OSNABRUECK.- Global and national competition, new fields of research, and innovative teaching formats – there are a multitude of challenges facing universities. Against this backdrop, it is essential that Osnabrueck University develops long-term teaching and research strategies, highlighting its course for the future. The measures presented today (June 20) range from establishing a clear research profile and creating research centers and research training groups to restructuring the research pool. To ensure the success of these developments, the University will invest almost €10 million in total from its own reserves over the next five years.

Osnabrueck University initiated a strategy process at the beginning of 2015, which was followed by the adoption of the “Future Concept UOS 2020” by the Senate in July 2016. This document sets out the key fields of action. The time has now come for the measures identified to be implemented, providing support to research and further enhancing the profile of the University. “Armed with these specific development objectives, the University is carving out its position for the years ahead,” stated President Professor Dr. Wolfgang Luecke. “Many different players were involved in drawing up the Research Strategy Program. That was important to us from the outset.”

“We see ourselves as a research university, and face our competitors as such,” added Thomas Bals, Vice President for University Development and Strategy. “We are proud of our achievements in research, from individual research to collaborative research centers. Students, too, benefit greatly from these research achievements,

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namely in university teaching.” Drawing on the many years of experience in interdisciplinary research and taking up societal issues, it is now a matter of “taking the unique opportunity to combine competencies beyond the customary boundaries of departments.”

Enhancing the research profile

In a bottom-up process, academics at the University have identified six profile lines for joint, interdisciplinary research projects. These are:

- Digital Society – Innovation – Regulation
- Integrated Science: From Single Molecules to Systems
- Cognition: Human-Technology Interaction
- Mathematical Structures and Models
- Human-Environment Networks
- Migration Societies

In a bid to develop the University’s potential, individual plans have been devised in workshops and with external experts over the past few months. These plans spell out the best way to develop these proposals for enhancing the profiles, helping to raise the University’s visibility and competitiveness at the national and international level, University President Luecke explained. At the same time, he and all other members of the President’s Cabinet fully understand that it will take time to flesh out each profile in terms of content and human resources. “Excellent research evolves from the intelligence, inquisitiveness and imagination of scholars. The aim is to give Osnabrück University a distinctive face,” stated University President Luecke.

University’s own research training groups

Another cornerstone is the advancement of young academics. “We are committed to providing systematic support to young people seeking to plan their careers. After all, young academics are a catalyst for research,” explained Professor Dr. Susanne Menzel, Vice President for Research and Student Development at Osnabrueck University. The intention is to create a “campus for young, talented academics whose careers are to be actively promoted.” To this end, there are plans to create up to three additional research training groups at the University in summer semester 2018.

Each of the supported research groups will be responsible for training up to six doctoral candidates. These research training groups are expected to have an interdisciplinary orientation. The objective is to thoroughly prepare doctoral candidates for the complex market for jobs in science and at the same time to help them gain academic independence at an early stage. The establishment of the research training groups will be closely accompanied by the Volkswagen Foundation. “This outstanding external evaluation will be a further cornerstone in ensuring excellent academic quality,” stated Menzel.

Central research pool

Another measure for supporting research involves restructuring the central research pool. Systematic financial support is to be provided to research networks, research-intensive scholars, and young academics in their endeavors to acquire external funding.

Academic programs and teaching will also benefit from the enhancement of the University’s profile. In the same vein as the “Research Strategy Program”, a “Teaching Strategy Program” for implementing the future qualification and quality objectives that have been identified for academic programs and teaching will be presented before the year is out.

“Our Future Concept and the current endeavors to enhance the University’s profile have evolved in accordance with all its status groups. I am particularly grateful to all members of the University for their good ideas and suggestions, as well as for their critical observations. The strategy process in itself was a beneficial process of discourse,” stated Luecke. Ultimately, the “Osnabrueck spirit” has also helped ensure the success of these endeavors.

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