

Speech by Prof. Dr. Jutta Günther

On July 3, 2024 at the reception held by the universities in Bremen State for the members of the German Council of Science and Humanities' Scientific Commission¹

Dear Ms. Arlinghaus,

Dear members of the scientific commission,

Dear colleagues, Dear guests,

In my role as President of the University of Bremen and on behalf of the other university presidents of Bremen State, I would like to greet you all today.

It is an honor and a great pleasure to welcome you to Bremen, to the university, and to the university's Center for Marine Environmental Sciences (MARUM).

I would like to draw your attention to Bremen's role as a science location and I dare to say that the density of scientific institutions here, from the entire spectrum of the academic system, is unlike anywhere else in Germany, with

four Leibniz Institutes
three Fraunhofer Institutes,
one Max Planck Institute,
the AWI's Helmholtz Centre,
two DLR institutes,

¹ The spoken word is binding.

the DFKI and

the Research Center for East European Studies.

These 13 federal and state-funded institutes in Bremen, together with the university, have formally entered into a strategic alliance, the U Bremen Research Alliance (UBRA), and present themselves together as research-oriented institutions and collaborate in flagship projects.

There are other, additional, state-funded institutions at the site, for example, in the field of production and logistics.

Bremen is also home to several private universities.

This abundance is the result of a long-term, strategic design over the last five decades.

The university – founded only 50 years ago – forms the nucleus of this dynamically growing science system, which is embedded in a region that has had its share of experience with structural change and yet is still one of the largest industrial locations in Germany.²

There are five state universities in Bremen State – Bremen's City University of Applied Sciences, the Bremerhaven University of Applied Sciences, the University of the Arts Bremen, the Hochschule für Öffentliche Verwaltung, and the University of Bremen. More than 30,000 young people from the region, Germany, Europe, and the world study at the universities.

² <https://www.wfb-bremen.de/de/page/stories/bremer-erfolgsgeschichten/industriestandort-bremen>
<https://www.statistikportal.de/de/vgrdl/ergebnisse-kreisebene/bruttoinlandsprodukt-bruttowertschoepfung-kreise> (in German only)

If you put the number of graduates from Bremen State in relation to the number of academics of working age, also known as the “replacement rate for academics,” Bremen takes first place with a sizeable lead compared to other states, and this also applies for the STEM fields on their own.³ This means that we have a high intensity of academic training and that Bremen’s universities also contribute to meeting the needs of other states.

30,000 students at our universities signify 30,000 individual lifestyles with a great diversity of young people, which we experience as an asset. They are the future – the future of science as well.

What unites Bremen’s universities in a special way is their common path towards sustainability. Together, they form the BreGoS network, which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and stands for “Bremen Goes Sustainable.” The universities’ campuses are real-life laboratories. Research, teaching, and learning take place on campus, with the goal of making buildings more energy-efficient and green spaces more biodiverse, or developing new mobility concepts. In this network, universities learn from and with each other. Model projects will be created that should also be transferable to other university regions.

The Alfred Wegener Institute’s partnership in this network supplements the universities’ experience in sustainability management with that of non-university research institutions.

³ Source: INSM Education Monitor 2023, https://www.insm-bildungsmonitor.de/2023_best_bremen.html (in German only)

This is just a small but groundbreaking example of the countless collaborations and connections between the higher education sector and non-university institutes in Bremen.

Collaborative professorships play a key role in the cooperation between universities and institutes. This was new territory in Bremen in the 1980s; however, today more than 60 collaborative professorships form the backbone of our very well connected research landscape.

It would be impossible to give a comprehensive overview of the collaborations at this point, but I would like to give three examples:

1. In the “The Ocean Floor” Cluster of Excellence, which is located here at MARUM, colleagues from the AWI, the MPI for Marine Microbiology, and the Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research conduct joint research on equal footing. You will learn even more about MARUM and its research work from the director of MARUM, Michael Schulz.
2. The second example is the DFKI, a central partner in the Collaborative Research Centre EASE – Everyday Activity in Science and Engineering, which is located in the Faculty of Mathematics / Computer Science. This cooperation focuses on AI-based robotics, the development of learning systems, for example in everyday human situations.
3. My third example is the Leibniz Science Campus Digital Public Health. Here, the Faculty of Human and Health Sciences works closely with the Leibniz Institute for Prevention Research and Epidemiology – BIPS to address the question: How can responsible digitalization contribute to improved health care?

These examples represent different types of projects and topics for ongoing collaborations. Behind these joint projects are many committed scientists at all career levels.

We have been working for a long time at the university to create attractive, permanent, mid-level faculty positions in addition to the professorships. What began as a thought experiment culminated in working groups and discussions with Bremen State. In 2018, the Academic Senate decided on tenure-track positions for lecturers. Since then, researchers or (after receiving tenure) senior researchers and lecturers or senior lecturers at the university have been researching and teaching independently and successfully.

Universities and non-university institutes in Bremen are also pulling together when it comes to promoting knowledge and technology transfer. We want to be a driving force for both technical and social progress.

The recently published evaluation of the Center for Higher Education Development – CHE, attests that the University of Bremen is in first place in Germany with regard to the number of large transfer projects financed by the federal government.⁴ In this analysis, CHE already takes into account the ongoing competition for the locations for startup factories. The universities in Bremen and Oldenburg, together with the region's institutes of higher education, succeeded in qualifying for the concept phase in close collaboration with the private sector.

⁴ <https://www.che.de/2024/146-deutsche-hochschulen-in-third-mission-foerderlinien-erfolgreich/>
(in German only)

Another highlight that deserves to be mentioned is the “innovate! Center” for accelerated technology transfer, which has the goal of tackling sustainable solutions to the pressing challenges of our time quickly and purposefully. Its establishment at the University of Bremen will receive substantial funding from the Joachim Herz Foundation as of July 1, 2024.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I emphasized at the beginning that the participants in the German science system are not represented anywhere in such a complete and condensed way as in Bremen, and my remarks should have made this clear.

However, this statement can also be supported statistically.

If, for example, one puts the resources of non-university research in relation to gross domestic product, Bremen is in first place with 1.32% in comparison to the other federal states, followed by Berlin.⁵

In the future, the goal will be to keep this agile Bremen science ecosystem innovative. The lively, collaborative science landscape forms the basis for the successful further development of Bremen as an academic location in cooperation with state politics and the federal government.

Thank you very much for listening.

⁵ BMBF - Federal Report on Research and Innovation 2024: <https://www.bundesbericht-forschung-innovation.de/en/Numbers-and-Figures-1729.html?category=fue-ausgaben&indicator=fue-ausgaben-staat>