

Friedrich Schiller University of Jena

General Research Mission Statement



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Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

Mission Statement of the Research Development at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena, with commentary

Over the last five years, the FSU has focused and reorganized its priority research areas. Five priority research areas were established in 2006 and equipped with an organizational structure in 2008. They define the interdisciplinary research profile of the university. With further reinforcement and promotion of the interconnectedness of priority research in terms of its content as well as its organization, additional internal funding measures have also been introduced for the support of project proposals beyond or on the margins of the priority areas. The same high standards of quality apply across all research at the university. The aim is to balance out top-level research both inside and outside of the priority research areas, such that the development of profiles in research and instruction can react to new, challenging research topics in a flexible manner and optimally utilize the university's research potential.

12 Theses with commentary:

1. *One precondition for top-level performance is creative engagement with challenging research questions. Solving problems and answering research questions take place in a “**research triangle**” consisting in fundamental research, application-oriented fundamental research and product-oriented applied research. The FSU sees its mission primarily geared toward fundamental research.*

Research has to be able to move freely within this triangle. Of utmost priority to the development of research at the FSU is the guiding idea that this triangle is a dynamic structure that does not restrict research to either fundamental research or to questions of applicability and product development. The development of preliminary research in challenging areas such as high tech, key technologies and IT, and that of preventive research in global meta-fields such as the environment, climate, health and energy, are both very important for the FSU. Just as important is research development in areas that pertain to important social challenges, which are addressed in particular in the humanities, social sciences, economics and legal studies. This includes research in cultural and social strategies that are linked to the reflection on cultural and social structures and goals from the past and present. It also includes research on the effects (and possibilities for compensation) of social and economic change, the globalization of markets, the geographical inequality of the distribution of vital resources, technological advances, climate change, increasing destruction of the environment, the aging society, and so on. The “innovative triangle” finds its structural expression in the close interconnectedness between the university, non-university research institutions, and research in the private sector. This network has its basis in the extraordinary successes of the university's cooperation with the companies Zeiss and Schott.

2. ***Profile building** is the result of a combined effort by all the members of the university. All scholarly disciplines are to generate ideas for trend-setting innovation and thereby contribute to the strengthening of top-level research.*

Progress in research is an essential component of a continual process of social intellectualization and of innovation. All disciplines at the FSU have equal right to participate in this process. The way in which each discipline participates in this process is determined solely by the quality of scholarly performance. Every scholarly discipline can potentially generate ideas for innovation or be the site for one; their goals are oriented toward scholarly and thereby social progress (or toward compensating for the societal “harms done by modernization”). Everyone involved in research and instruction must work toward shaping and differentiating the scholarly profile of the university in the best possible way. The general conditions and the possibilities for supportive measures required for this new quality of cooperation are already present and will be tailored to current needs.

3. *The rank of “top-level research” only has meaning on an international scale. Local strengths and their integration into **international research networks** will increase the university’s effectiveness in the international competition for the best research ideas and results.*

In addition to national funds, European research funding also plays a decisive role. The quality of research can only be determined on an international level and the status of “top-level research” can only be earned in international rankings.

4. *Problems to be solved and the research questions that arise from them are interdisciplinary. **Interdisciplinarity** is the guiding principle for research at the FSU. Interdisciplinarity demands the highest degree of expertise and disciplinarity. Interdisciplinary research networks make a vital contribution to profile formation and the competitiveness of research not least for the individual fields and disciplines.*

The FSU is a medium-sized university located in a region of highly innovative research and high-tech industries. The special quality of interdisciplinary cooperation between university, regional, national and international research networks is a trademark of Jena and allows it to compete with larger universities and regions. The character and extent of current and future research topics naturally intensify and expand cross-disciplinary research. In addition, scientific innovations often take place at the margins or interface of disciplines. Inter- and transdisciplinary research are among the traditional strengths of the FSU. These strengths are to be augmented and implemented and institutionalized wherever necessary on a structural level. Interdisciplinary collaboration necessarily goes beyond the confines of the university. The FSU integrates Jena’s non-university research institutions and research in the private sector as partner institutions and regards itself as the motor of interdisciplinary networking on a national and international level. In this way the FSU plays a crucial role in the creation of a joint profile of research undertaken in the region of Jena.

5. *The **institutional set-up**, structures and organizational forms of research are oriented toward research development and advance along with it. The priority areas of research have been and continue to be the crystallization points of the interdisciplinary research profile at the FSU.*

The nodal points for this symbiotic collaboration and network formation are defined by the five priority research areas, which have been supplemented by three cross-disciplinary areas. Priority areas provide an institutional framework for grouping resources as well as the potential for temporary networks of cooperation. Thus the Area of Excellence “Microbial Communication” was able to develop out of the priority areas in the natural sciences. The formation and establishment of this Area of Excellence eloquently speaks to the developmental dynamic and associated differentiation of the research profile.

6. *The **balance between excellent priority research and individual research** guarantees that there is enough time and flexibility for the planning of research processes that allow for new research questions to be addressed as well as for interdisciplinary creativity.*

The basis for building the university’s research profile is the balance and interaction between excellent individual research projects and research in priority areas. Research organizes itself independently of administrative directives. On the one hand, the priority areas are to provide certain developments in research with a framework for reliable planning. On the other hand, they must also remain highly adaptable in terms of structure and content. Their content changes depending on the results from the research itself and the goals and ideas it generates. Moreover, they change when researchers and research groups external to the priority areas are integrated, bringing along additional potential, new questions and methods. Finally, they adapt when pioneering fields of research are opened up and when social changes produce an increasing pressure to innovate.

7. *Interdisciplinary research networks within and beyond the priority research areas are the structural expression of the close **collaboration** within the university and with its non-university partners. By forming centers and clusters for limited periods of time, they avail themselves of a framework with which to plan their existing activities and future development.*

The formation of networks within and between priority research areas can be institutionalized if needed. Networks on a low institutional level and for limited periods of time are suitable if the entire system is to adapt to research development. The formation of center within the university is one way to do justice to the increased organizational and communicative necessities of interdisciplinary research. These will be instituted for a fixed term and their continuation will depend on the results of a scholarly and organizational evaluation. Centers reaching across schools are simultaneously centers for priority research areas as well as cross-disciplinary areas. Coordinating research across the schools can thereby take place more efficiently between the schools as well as

between the schools and the university leadership. The formation and support of research clusters is viewed as an efficient way to institutionalize the research networks in accordance with the dynamics of research and interdisciplinary principles, as well as to give them a limited framework with which to plan their existing activities.

8. *Research follows its own rules and creativity is not only a matter of organization. However, the general conditions for bringing about innovation need nonetheless be set up in the best possible manner. The necessary **measures for reform and reorganization** in terms their content and structure have been and will continue to be supported by adapting forms of organization, communication and leadership suitable for research.*

Communicating between the schools and the university leadership is of utmost importance due to the priority research that takes place across disciplines and has therefore been institutionalized in the form of the Extended University Leadership. Extensive and drastic reform and reorganization made it possible for the university to concentrate on priority areas of research, to build a profile with unique selling points, as well as to strengthen its national and international networking, all as part of its planning for the future. The university has changed, reorganized and increasingly integrated performance-based distribution of funds within the university, research support within the university and services for applicants, public relations and marketing, the reporting system, and IT planning and management. Indispensable for increasing the efficiency of research and its organization, these measures must continue to develop in accordance with the changing demands and requirements of science and research at the FSU.

9. *Innovation in research is based on new ideas and solutions of those who are engaged in research. The FSU wishes to continue to improve its competitiveness in the search for the best minds by means of a **hiring policy** oriented to the university's profile that includes non-university research institutions and takes into account the German Research Foundation's standards for equal opportunity. The university also employs an integrative strategy for **supporting junior researchers** that encompasses all stages of the academic career.*

The continued development of priority research areas and orientation toward top-level research are aimed at creating an international distinct and recognized profile that will attract the best researchers and students to the university. The hiring initiative of the FSU, an integrative strategy for supporting junior researchers, and the family-friendly environment of Jena further increase the university's appeal. The stagnation of disciplines should and can be avoided in this manner. Consistently hiring internationally renowned top-level researchers in view of the university's profile will increase the quality of research and simultaneously satisfy its needs. At every step of the hiring process, the initiative involves the close cooperation between schools, the university leadership and the priority research areas, as well as the fulfillment of criteria for quality control that is oriented to research insofar as they rely exclusively on top-level performance in instruction and research. In order to attract the best national and international junior researchers to Jena, the FSU will provide the best general conditions for every stage of

academic qualification so that they will be prepared for academic and non-academic careers in the best possible manner. Moreover, the FSU will continue to strengthen these general conditions and modify them according to demand, such that the best junior researchers will be able to develop in a straightforward manner. Already in practice, the promotion of women and high standards of equal opportunity specific to the university are essential elements of the hiring policy and support for junior research.

10. *The FSU's measures for **quality control** are suited to the needs of research and help increase its productivity, organizational capacity, ability to change and integrate, as well as capacity for risk management. The new quantity and quality of interconnectedness within and beyond the interdisciplinary priority research areas, the formation of centers and clusters, the profile-oriented hiring policy and the integrative support for junior researchers require new forms of quality control that are interwoven with the research structures to a higher degree.*

In the priority research areas, centers, clusters and coordinated research groups, quality control is guaranteed by research councils and / or by advisory boards that work closely with the university leadership. Quality control by "peers" is a proven and necessary principle for the development of scholarship. This principle of peer review is to be adapted to the current developments and thus the current structure of research undertaken at the FSU. The FSU's goals are to ensure quality in scholarly work and to prevent institutional research groups from becoming systematically independent. Quality control for scholarship and its organization orients itself strictly to the "standards for good scholarly praxis" on all the various levels of research and research management. The levels of research management include counsel for applicants, the solicitation and project allocation of internal support programs, the implementation of research projects, and preparation for project evaluations and accounting, the award of research prizes, the reporting system and formulation of research strategies. The quality control network consists in the Rector, the Vice-Rector for Research, the Senate, the Senate Research Committee, the Office for Research Support and Communication, the Office for Equal Opportunity, the scientific councils, ad hoc evaluation boards, the group of ombudsmen at the FSU and the group of leaders for coordinated projects and leaders of priority areas who have a seat in the senate. The network is defined by direct responsibility on all of these levels and the possibility for close communication and integration between them. Decisions are made in a unified manner in accordance with internal standards of quality and guidelines for quality control, which also help reduce the level of quality management occurring for the sake of self-legitimization alone.

11. ***Research-oriented instruction** is a prerequisite for sustainability of the university's profile. Research strategies and teaching philosophies must therefore be brought in constant dialog and developed with one another.*

An expose entitled "The Specifics of University Education" was formulated at the Rector's initiative to serve as a guideline for implementing the legally mandated restructuring of courses of study along the lines of the Bologna formats. The university's unique selling point is its training of junior scholars for research and instruction as well

as its research-oriented training of those in positions of responsibility and leadership in preparation for careers in politics, the economy and social institutions. At the center of a university education is the process of independent thinking that is both reflective and prescriptive. Such thinking presupposes a mastery of facts (disciplinary expertise) and requires methodological and social competence as well as powers of discrimination. Reducing the goals of education to satisfying the demands of the job market contradicts the university's understanding of what an education is, especially since the capacity for independent thinking already fosters the ability to meet with middle and long-term professional demands. Research-oriented instruction reflects the dynamics of research and processes of transformation. Only such instruction can produce the capacity to perform in professions that rely on the latest scientific and scholarly discoveries. It also forms the basis for a rapid transfer and application of the latest scientific knowledge, and is the prerequisite for understanding, persisting through and planning processes of change.

*12. Research is bound to **ethical principles** that are stipulated in the constitution of the Friedrich-Schiller-University. In reflecting on them on a permanent and professional basis, the university is able not only to orient itself toward the normative foundations of societal development, but also to fulfill its task of serving as society's generator of ideas, forward thinker and early warning system.*

Article 5, paragraph 3 of the Basic Law, the "Basic Law of Science," reflects the fact that scholarship abides by the principles of responsible self-organization and self-determination. The scholar is responsible primarily (though not exclusively) for the strict compliance with scientific norms such as accuracy, "good scholarly practices," accountability and public disclosure. He or she is also responsible for abiding to the fundamental norms of peace, the constitutional state and democracy, as well as of healthy social coexistence. Scholarship must not, however, conceive of itself as an agent for a "stakeholder" in society; its independence is the only sure guarantee that it exercises its responsibilities.