

*How can we make our research understood in society?
What is the relevance of universities in today's world?
What is the Third Mission?*

These questions, and many more, were the focus of the 2017 International Dialogue on Education, held on 27 June 2017 at the Freie Universität Berlin. Experts and university personnel from Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands came together to discuss institutional strategies for integrating technology and knowledge transfer, as well as societal engagement into higher education. The Third Mission, the main topic of the conference, encompasses the somewhat lesser-known third component of university missions, along with *teaching and learning* – throughout the panel discussion, the Third Mission was further defined to include collaboration with business and industry, community engagement and knowledge transfer. In introductory remarks, Ulrich Grothus (DAAD) stated, “we want to bring international experience and international insight into what is mainly a domestic debate.” Through panel discussion and Q&A sessions with the audience, insights from four major global players were shared and built on one another to further highlight the importance of the Third Mission in enhancing higher education.

National Backgrounds

The United States, with its tradition of high tuition fees and an affinity for the *alma mater*, has long been a shining example of alumni relations in higher education, with whole departments devoted to engaging in and developing relationships with alumni in order to cultivate gifts of finances, time and resources to the school. Carolyn Campbell-Golden, the American panelist, works primarily in development and alumni relations at Auburn University at Montgomery. She and a team of development professionals raised over \$560 million in a 5-7 year campaign at Auburn University, and the Regional Campaign effort for which she was responsible raised over \$28 million through engagement of alumni in 28 regions throughout America. While working at Auburn University at Montgomery, she also founded the university's *corporate and foundation relations* unit, developing a network of relationships between the university and firms through high-placed alumni or a long history of internships and cooperation. Unlike in Europe, American universities are funded to a much lower extent – many less than 30% – by the state, so tuition fees, federal support and other sources of revenue and alumni support fundamentally constitute funding.

The situation is quite different in Europe. **Germany** hosts over 400 *Hochschulen*, or institutions of higher education, which includes approximately 100 universities and 300 others, including *Fachhochschule* (universities of applied sciences), cooperative institutions and art and music schools. Education is funded to a much higher degree by the state, as two-thirds of the Hochschule are public, financed by the federal states and only one-third are private. However, the federal states tend to only provide basic funding, while the Bund (federal government) provides project funding, which leads to a strong concentration on research.

The university of Andrew Disbury, the Scottish panelist, is funded 80% by the government of the United Kingdom, and by a Funding Council, which promotes internationalisation, innovation in research and the Third Mission. Disbury (**UK**) also addressed the societal relevance of universities in Scotland, with the 4 institutions of his university, UWS, serving as the “sole higher education provider” in the cities where they have campuses. Alumni relations are also far less present in **the United Kingdom**, where education is largely perceived as a governmental responsibility, although Disbury did mention the current recruitment of an American colleague to promote alumni advancement in Scotland.

Hans Amman of **the Netherlands** addressed a recent reduction in federal funding of universities, from 100% to a current standing of 70%, with the federal government now offering more funding only on the basis of projects. As the Dutch government contracts its support of universities, Amman addressed the need for outreach to more stakeholders, including private companies and non-governmental institutions, to fill this monetary gap. Alumni relations are along the same lines as the UK, comprising only 0.5% of university funding, with higher education largely seen as a “government task”.

Key Challenges

The current presidential administration in the **United States** and its rejection of the Paris Agreement and of the substantial scientific evidence behind climate change, can be seen as an “attack on science.” Campbell-Golden remarked that this can all create a “climate of uncertainty” in the university research community, but noted that American universities benefit from diversified funding, enabling them to continue to focus on their missions without complete reliance on political trends. Politically, Disbury (**UK**) mentioned the similar uncertainty facing internationalisation of British education after the Brexit vote, stating that policy might tend to take on an “internal focus” in the next few years.

The historical tradition of large public universities in **Germany** translates both to weak or nonexistent alumni relations and large difficulties for professors due to a steep ratio of professors to students, on average around 1:60. This puts substantial pressure on teaching staff, forcing them sometimes to focus entirely on their teaching without enough focus on innovation or research. Stark (**Germany**) also discussed the challenge of incorporating service learning and technology transfer into higher education, where German universities tend to keep the two separate conceptually when they “need to be brought together.”

In addition, Stark (**Germany**) addressed the difficulties associated with generational gaps in professors, where the older set tend to be “trapped in their routines” of sticking to teaching and research and the younger category are willing to experiment with more innovative strategies. The generational gap is also seen in **the Netherlands**, as Amman described the younger set as more invested in entrepreneurial activities and the older contingent as more reticent and in the **United States**, where Campbell-Golden recalled the reluctance of some academics to focus on the first two missions without incorporating the Third.

The Third Mission in Practice

Campbell-Golden (**USA**) explained her university’s role in technology transfer and community service through an institution called the **Research Park** at Auburn University, which connects technological firms and university researchers. Promoting partnerships in industries like agriculture and engineering, the Research Park has “developed an incubator to allow entrepreneurs to work with university faculty, promoting research”, according to Campbell-Golden. The Park also exemplifies community engagement, bringing together research faculty and entrepreneurs. The Third Mission is also fulfilled at Auburn University at Montgomery with outreach and service provided by faculty, staff and students at local and national schools in underserved communities. In addition, Campbell-Golden explained the importance of **advisory councils** as part of universities in the United States, comprised of local community members and industry professionals as part of a top-down approach of societal engagement.

A **German** federal initiative called **Innovative Hochschule** (*innovative institutions of higher learning*) was introduced this year, investing 550 million euros for a 10-year project, from 2017 to 2017, promoting excellence in innovation and research. The initiative offers project funding for 20-30 competitive institutions that can prove their commitment to the Third Mission through institutional strategies that exemplify technology transfer and cooperation with industrial and societal actors. The winners of the competition will be announced on July 4.

Furthermore, Stark (**Germany**) highlighted the importance of the university network **Bildung durch Verantwortung** (*education through responsibility*), of which he is the chairman. The network focuses on social responsibility through *service learning*, an educational strategy that includes, along with academic learning, extensive community service to engage with the local public. It brings together institutions that can represent their commitment to service learning, exchanging best practices and materials in biannual meetings and through the creation of working groups. Since its founding in 2009, the network has grown from nine initial Hochschule to 45, comprising of more than 10% of the total German institutions of higher learning. “We need to develop responsible personalities for the future of our society,” said Stark, who reiterated the goal of the network as “increasing the societal role of universities by...integrating social responsibility into teaching.” The network has brought about a more solid link to local communities, and a newfound higher commitment to alumni relations.

Disbury (**UK**) emphasised several ventures through the University of the West of Scotland that concentrate on community engagement, innovative research and knowledge transfer. He highlighted a project with an aquatic vaccination company called AquaLife partnering with university researchers, as well as a collaboration between Alzheimers researchers in the medical school with local charities and song-writing courses to allow the patients to express themselves artistically. Finally, Disbury explained the **innovation voucher** program used throughout Scotland, which are used by businesses to buy services from the university, promoting collaboration between university research and industry firms.

Amman (**the Netherlands**) defined the Dutch Third Mission as *outreach*, through knowledge transfer, community engagement and influencing public perception. His organisation, **Innovative Exchange Amsterdam**, is a partnership of five higher education institutions, including medical schools, in Amsterdam, that promotes knowledge transfer between university research and firms, investors and governmental organisations, “bringing innovation from outside into the universities.” As part of “long-term commitment to collaboration with business”, IXA serves as an interface connecting academic research with external partners. Amman additionally described the importance of knowledge transfer through organisations like IXA to guide public awareness of the societal role of universities, as “the role you play in your local community can help you reach your strategic or organisational goals.”

Panellists of the 14th ID-E Berlin Conference

- **Hans Amman**, Director of Innovation Exchange Amsterdam (IXA) and Professor of Computational Economics at the University of Amsterdam (NE)
- **Carolyn Campbell-Golden**, Vice Chancellor for Advancement, Auburn University at Montgomery, Alabama (USA)
- **Andrew Disbury**, Vice-Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement), University of the West of Scotland (UK)
- **Wolfgang Stark**, Professor for Organisational Development and Community Psychology, University of Duisburg-Essen (DE)
- Chair: **Jan-Martin Wiarda**, Science and Education Journalist

Further Information

www.ID-E-Berlin.de

<http://www.bildung-durch-verantwortung.de/> (Bildung durch Verantwortung, DE)

<https://www.bmbf.de/de/innovative-hochschule-2866.html> (Innovative Hochschule, DE)

<https://www.uws.ac.uk/business-services/innovation-voucher-scheme/> (innovation vouchers, UK)

<http://www.auburnresearchpark.com/> (Research Park, US)

<http://www.ixamsterdam.nl/en/home.html> (Innovation Exchange Amsterdam, NE)

The series INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON EDUCATION BERLIN (ID-E Berlin) is a joint initiative of the British Council, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German-American Fulbright Commission and Freie Universität Berlin.