

LMU plans to aggressively recruit new faculty members and strengthen ties with researchers at other universities and at Max Planck institutes. The university has a "gigantic chart" showing plans for restructuring, says Axel Schenzle, LMU's dean of physics. "It's largely bureaucratic things [to make the] university more independent from the state." Faculty will feel the changes more than students will, he adds.

A chunk of TUM's strategy funding will be used "for gender issues and to support bright female scientists and students," says university president Wolfgang Herrmann. The university will pay for several days of childcare when a mother attends a conference, say, or hire someone to take care of lab administration when a woman is on maternity leave. "We want to become the technical university in Germany that is most friendly to talented women," says Herrmann.

The University of Karlsruhe is joining forces with the nearby national Karlsruhe Research Center to form the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. The first steps will be to merge the computer centers and libraries, recruit joint research groups and lecturers, and install a shuttle system, says biochemist Anne Ulrich, who already holds positions at both institutions. "We hope that the strict separation between universities and extra-university centers can be softened so that these equivalent partners in size and funding can work in scientific synergy," she adds. KIT—if the name reminds you of MIT, it's intentional—will start by emphasizing nanotechnology, materials science, astroparticle physics, and grid computing.

Academic coup

The selection of three universities in Germany's south, two of them in a single city, was considered "politically impossible," says Schenzle. It occurred because academics on the reviewing committee outwitted the politicians on the committee by unanimously dividing applicants into categories of "fund" and "don't fund," leaving nothing open for discussion. "The politicians couldn't do anything," Schenzle says.

Researchers applaud the unexpected turn the process took, while "politicians think it's a scandal," says Michael Grunze, a physical chemist at the University of Heidelberg, which was awarded one graduate school and one research cluster and, along with the University of Aachen (one graduate school and two research clusters), was widely expected to make the elite cut. "I think it

Gift puts private university in Germany in the black

Not being a state school, the International University Bremen isn't eligible to compete for funding through Germany's excellence initiative (see the story on page 28). But the country's only nonspecialized private university has won big with what may be the largest-ever philanthropic donation to higher education in Europe. As a thank-you for €200 million (roughly \$265 million) from the Swiss-based Jacobs Foundation, IUB will change its name next spring to Jacobs University Bremen.

The Jacobs Foundation announced on 1 November that it will give the university €15 million a year for the next five years to balance its €40 million operating budget, plus €125 million in 2011 for its endowment. Klaus J. Jacobs, whose fortune comes from the coffee of the same name and who is originally from Bremen, said in a statement that his foundation aims to provide young people with an education that "has practical relevance and which has been developed with society's future in mind."

Not surprisingly, that goal meshes with the university's plans, which the new president, theoretical physicist Joachim Treusch, describes as "educating global citizens to take over responsibility. They should learn how to solve the grand challenges the world is coping with now." Energy, communications, education, health, and water are among the research focuses at IUB.

With initial funding from the Bremen state government and advice from scientists at the University of Bremen and Rice University in Houston, Texas, IUB opened its doors in fall 2001. Currently, the university has about 1000 students from nearly 90 countries—75% come from outside of Germany—and 100 faculty members. Classes are taught in English, and the university uses the US system of bachelor's, master's, and PhD degrees. Unusual for Germany, all undergraduates live on campus.

IUB's physics and astronomy "have a very good standing," says Matthias Bartelmann, the dean of physics at the University of Heidelberg. "I am really happy they managed to attract this additional funding. There were disturbing rumors [about the difficulties facing IUB] in the newspapers." As a private university, Bartelmann says, IUB "is an exciting experiment. They are more free to define their own rules—to appoint professors and set their salaries, to design their study plans." Adds Treusch, "State universities and even the government can learn what reducing state influence on universities will bring."

Toni Feder



The International University Bremen is seen in Germany as an experiment in higher education.



Treusch

was the brave and proper thing to do."

"What Karlsruhe did was ingenious," Grunze adds. Research centers "are flourishing. Universities are struggling to cope with increasing student numbers while staff is reduced and budgets are decreasing. We have an ongoing discussion [in Germany] about how [research centers and universities] can work together."

Indeed, no one disputes that the Munich and Karlsruhe universities deserve the kudos they got. Still, says Ulrich Schollwöck, a theoretical physicist at Aachen, "for many people, the fact that we were not successful in the third benchmark has overshadowed the joy of how successful we were on the other two."

Decades of comparatively robust state funding gave the three elite universities a leg up in the competition. "A well-equipped university has better visibility, and bigger and better faculties," says the German Physical Society's Umbach. In contrast to the success in Munich, take, for example, Berlin in the north, where three universities were awarded a total of three graduate schools—and no research clusters. But no one will be surprised if in the next round of the excellence initiative the winners are distributed more evenly around the country.

No longer taboo

"If we compare our university system to the US, on average our universities