



Graduate School Alumni Newsletter 2021

Dear Reader,

Once again, we look back on a year that was marked above all by the Corona pandemic. In January and February this year, freshmen of the Graduate School were still arriving in Offenburg for the winter semester 2020/21 as they were delayed due to closed consulates and the resulting backlog of visa approvals. The entire winter semester 2020/21 and the summer semester 2021 took place online, with the exception of some labs, or similar. With great enthusiasm we therefore started again with the face-to-face classes in October, but had to limit them again after only two months. This has been a great challenge for our students as well as for professors and staff. Despite of all difficulties, we managed the year together very well with a lot of flexibility and commitment. We hope that your look back at the year 2021 is also marked by positive things and for the New Year 2022, we wish you above all health and many happy moments both at work and in your private life.

We are now pleased to give you a small insight into the year 2021 at Offenburg University and are happy to share with you some impressions from the life of fellow alumni too.

Wishing you a joyful and peaceful Christmas time,

The Graduate School Team

Change in the Rector's Office



On the 1st of June, Prof. Dr. Winfried Lieber handed over his office as rector to Prof. Dr. Stephan Trahasch. With Lieber, the longest-serving rector of a German university is retiring. Under his 24 years of leadership, Offenburg University developed into a renowned teaching and research institution whose significance extends far beyond the borders of Baden-Württemberg. Lieber developed the

Offenburg University into a new dimension: additional study programs were created,

including the media faculty. International exchange was stepped up, and the number of students tripled to currently around 4200.

As a member of the board, Lieber helped the Higher Education Alliance for SMEs, founded in 2015, achieve nationwide significance and at the European level, he shaped cross-border university structures together with institutes from France and Switzerland in the Trinational Metropolitan Region Upper Rhine (TMO) from 2010. In October 2014, Lieber received an honorary doctorate from the University of Olsztyn for his commitment to the cooperation between Offenburg University and the Polish University of Warmia and Mazury.

"Professor Winfried Lieber leaves behind a model university in Offenburg. We are shaping the future of our region together with partners from business and society. We offer our students excellent perspectives. Thanks to Winfried Lieber, Offenburg University is a driving force in the Upper Rhine region and beyond. He deserves our thanks and respect for this achievement," said Dr. Ulrich Kleine, Chairman of the University Council.

The new rector of the Offenburg University is Stephan Trahasch. The computer scientist and Germanist has worked at Offenburg since 2012. As a professor of computer science, he became dean of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Medical Engineering and Computer Science in 2019. There, he established the Applied Artificial Intelligence degree program in 2020. In February 2021, he was elected to succeed Winfried Lieber.

New members in the Graduate School's Advisory Board



The Graduate School's Advisory Board was established in 2000 and since then regularly advises the university on matters concerning the six international, English-taught Master's degree programs at Offenburg University. The Advisory Board meets twice a year to ensure that the programs are geared to the needs of the economy and to allow graduates a smooth entry into the German and

international labor market.

Christian Poetsch joined the board in 2003 as a representative of Burda AG. Chairman since 2005 he initiated, for example, the Emergency Fund in cooperation with the Association of Friends of Offenburg University and was thus able to make a considerable contribution to supporting students in need, not only of the Graduate School.

Since July 2021 Mr. Stephan Schwietzke (former Head of Business Unit, August Koehler AG) is the new chair. Along with the founding members, Dr. Jürgen Joseph (Energie Consulting GmbH) and Dr. Georg Schöne (LS telcom AG), they have been committed for many years. With the two new members, Dr. Quittek (NEC Laboratories Europe GmbH) and Mr. Georg Klopfer (Hiss Diagnostics GmbH), the Advisory Board gets two new members who come from the fields of life sciences and IT security. Together with Ms. Bleher-Dietrich (Georg-und-Maria-Dietrich Foundation), they will support the continued development and future of the Graduate School's from now on.

Franz Roser Receives Medal of Honor of the University



After four years, Offenburg University has awarded a medal of honor for the first time again in 2021. It was awarded to Franz Roser, who is managing and developing the Senior Service since 2010.

"A medal of honor can be awarded to personalities who have rendered outstanding services to the university for their longstanding and selfless commitment. And you meet these criteria

completely," explained Rector Prof. Dr. Winfried Lieber in his laudation. "This is why the Senate unanimously approved the award. The fact that the Senior Service has developed so well over the past ten years is due to your personality and engagement. Since the university brings together students with very different cultural backgrounds, a great deal of empathy, helpfulness and open-mindedness is required," he continued to explain. "In addition, Franz Roser has recruited many new members for the Senior Service in recent years and the cooperation with the university couldn't be any better," added Lydia Schindler, person responsible for the Senior Service at Offenburg University.

Most recently, around 80 members were active in the annually recurring activities of the Senior Service. The joint project of the Offenburg University and the Senior Service Office of the City of Offenburg has been making it easier for international students to arrive and settle in Germany since 2002. Besides being involved in the organization of the regular activities and events of the Senior Service, Franz Roser is also always available as a confidant for the international students. Together with the Senior Service team, he also organizes reasonably priced second-hand bicycles, assists in the search for part-time jobs or interview partners for master's theses, proofreads bachelor's and master's theses or letters of application, or accompanies students on visits to the doctor. This often leads to friendships that last far beyond the graduations.

Alumni of Offenburg Collaborating in Finland



Dr. Carolina Islas and Björn Fink ask: "How likely is it that two alumni of Offenburg University will meet by chance in a project to promote European innovation in Turku Finland? Probably, if you would have asked us while being students at Offenburg, our response would have been that this is very unlikely. However, today we are an example that alumni of the Offenburg University meet and collaborate even in places where you

expect it last."

Dr. Carolina Islas, joined the Communication and Media Engineering (CME) back in winter

2000. She graduated and worked at the multimedia lab, later she moved to Finland in order to pursue her PhD in the research group Educational Technologies at the University of Eastern Finland. Today she works at the University of Turku focusing on bridging knowledge between academia with local industry, and she has a spin-off named Ubium.

Mr. Björn Fink started his studies in Industrial Engineering at Offenburg in 2013. He joined Valmet Automotive in 2019 and today he is product manager in this company.

In September 2020 Dr. Islas and Mr. Fink had their first online meeting exploring the possibilities of collaboration between the University of Turku and Valmet Automotive. Together they organized an industrial seminar session in the University of Turku entitled: Conceptualizing a flexible plant through its digital Twin with Valmet Automotive. During the organization process of this seminar session, they discovered that both of them are alumni of Offenburg University. "This discovery brought us a special feeling of connectivity," they said. "Next, we decided to share this experience with the Offenburg University alumni community, to escalate the sentiment that emerges when one connects with our alma mater through other alumni. We are evidence that we do not know when and where we will be able to collaborate with another talent graduated from the Offenburg University."

MPE Alumnus back at Offenburg University



"It is now more than 16 years ago that I took on the challenge of studying in the newly established Bachelor's degree program in Process Engineering at Offenburg University," Fabian Haitz explains. "It was clear to me that I was fascinated by Biotechnology. Directly after completing my Bachelor's degree, I was able to do "student pioneering work" at the UWM Olsztyn (Poland) in 2009 as one of the students of the first batch in

the cooperative Master's degree program in Process Engineering (MPE).

It was this Master's degree that gave me the opportunity to pursue a doctorate at the University of Stuttgart and a subsequent position as a research associate at the Fraunhofer Institute for Interfacial Engineering and Biotechnology.

In the middle of 2020, I decided to make my way back to Offenburg and took the opportunity to rejoin the University. Since January 2021, I am supporting the Master's program in Biotechnology, which is run jointly with UWM Olsztyn, in practical laboratory training and teaching on topics related to Bioeconomy and Biobased Industry. In the future, I will additionally take over the course of Design of Experiments (DoE) in the Bachelor's program in Biotechnology. And this is how the circle closes. I am looking forward to the upcoming challenges at Offenburg University and the further development of the study programs in the field of Biotechnology."

ECM Alumnus Successfully Defends Dissertation



Congratulations to Parantapa Sawant, alumnus of the Graduate School of Offenburg University, who, in 2021, successfully defended his dissertation in the field of advanced control of building energy systems. This applied research is necessary for the future energy grid with a high share of renewable energy and decentralized prosumers.

With the increasing share of renewable energies and the nuclear phase-out in

Germany, the energy transition is accelerating. From the perspective of building technology, there is great potential to support this transition given its large share in total energy consumption and the increasing number of flexible and controllable components and storages. However, a question often asked at the plant level is: "How do we use this flexibility to support the regional grid?".

In this doctoral thesis, the graduate of the international master's degree program Energy Conversion and Management, developed a grid-supportive controller of a real-world building energy plant using mathematical optimization methods. Additionally, the technical feasibility of this controller was demonstrated. The results could convince actors from the energy industry and academia about the practicality of these methods and offer tools for their implementation.

The cooperative doctorate with Technische Universität Dresden was supervised by Prof. Dr.-Ing. Jens Pfafferott at Offenburg University.

Sustainable Studies Lead to Sustainable Jobs



Has your study been sustainable? This is a question often asked by international students. Anas Abuzayed can answer the question with "YES".

In March 2021, he took up the position in the Energy Systems and Energy Economics Research Group at the university. Together with Prof. Niklas Hartmann, Anas is conducting research on the topic of "energy transition".

Through his studies in the international

master's program in Power and Data Engineering, he was able to successfully qualify for this job.

Anas already recognized the growing role of renewables and data science during his bachelor studies at the German-Jordanian University. That's why he was explicitly looking for a master's program in which both topics are taught.

Anas considers his studies at Offenburg as "sustainable" because, in his profession, he is

now able to apply directly what he learned during his studies, and he enjoys working in such an international team. Currently, 30 students from 15 countries are enrolled in the program Renewable Energy and Data Engineering.

Mix and Match



Connecting with students of other nationalities and study programs is the main thought of the new offer “Mix and Match” at Offenburg University. Inspired by a similar offer at the University Reutlingen, the idea was brought up to connect students with each other in times of online teaching, social distancing and other restrictions due to the Corona Pandemic.

All students who are interested can sign up for the dates they are free without knowing who else may have signed up for the same day. A couple of days in advance they receive the contact details of their match(es) so they can find a place and time where to meet.

The interest among the students has been immense: until now more than 130 people signed up to meet new fellow students. The last meet ups took place in groups of 2 to 4 people. Preparing a typical meal from their home country together or going out for local food was a common and popular way to get to know each other.

Thank you for being part of the Graduate School's international alumni network.

If you want to keep in contact with us and with your fellow alumni, visit our Alumni Portal:

<https://www.hs-offenburg.de/alumni-portal-gs>

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