

universität freiburg

Alumni Magazine 2024/25





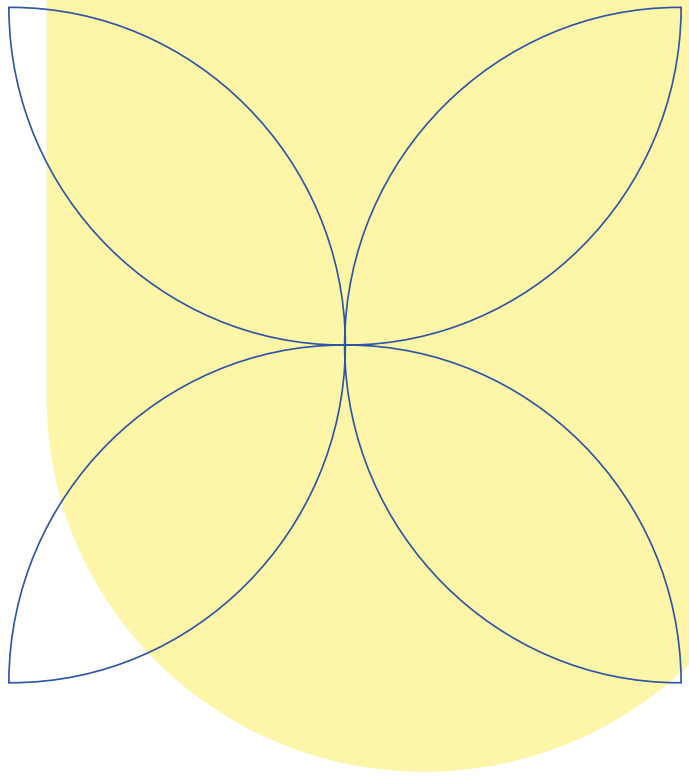
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Foreword by the Rector



Prof. Dr. Kerstin Krieglstein,
Rector of the University of Freiburg
Photo: Sandra Meyndt



Dear alumni,
Dear readers,

The year 2024 is drawing to a close – also at the University of Freiburg. It was a year in which students, researchers, and employees took on challenges and overcame them together.

Numerous tasks and projects await us in the new year as well. We will continue to press forward with the processes already set in motion in 2023 and 2024 in connection with the University's overall strategy '*University of Freiburg 2030*'. Individual elements, such as the introduction of a new and modern *corporate design* in 2023 and the *relaunch* of the central University website under www.uni-freiburg.de in 2024, will be integrated into a coherent whole. Our newly formulated mission statement is also part of the overall strategy. According to the mission statement, the University of Freiburg sees itself as a place of fact-based dialogue, academic freedom, democratic values, and humanity. We are part of a global scholarly community united by the conviction that we can contribute with our work to international understanding, scholarly knowledge, and reflection. It is an extraordinary piece of good fortune that we can exercise these tasks on the foundation of the Basic Law, which assures us freedom of inquiry and opinion. We see it as our duty to strengthen and to protect this space. These topics challenge us all as members of a democratic society.

Turning inward to the University itself, we find a second major element that challenges us and spurs us on to achieve further excellence. A defining issue at the University is our submission of two renewal proposals and two new proposals for Clusters of Excellence. All eleven faculties of the University of Freiburg were involved in preparing the seven originally submitted draft proposals. The high degree of inter- and transdisciplinary content demonstrates the outstanding networking within the University of Freiburg and testifies to our research strength. Read more about our planned and existing Clusters of Excellence in this issue.

Another trailblazing project at the University of Freiburg is the *Sustainability Innovation Campus*. The initiative is a collaboration between the University of Freiburg and the *Karlsruhe Institute of Technology* and focuses on the socially relevant topic of sustainability and related issues surrounding the creation of a sustainable society. The 2024/25 issue of the Alumni Magazine reports on the *Sustainability Innovation Campus* and introduces the newest member of our rectorate, Prof. Dr. Melanie Arndt, vice rector for internationalization and sustainability.

The 2024/25 Alumni Magazine also offers you a little virtual tour through the University of Freiburg's Uniseum, which exhibits milestones of the University's history. Our aim is to preserve this historical heritage together and hand it down to future generations of students to be shaped further.

Interviews with our alumna Anna Alex, founder of several successful start-ups in various branches, and our alumnus Dr. Dirk Boll, professor of art management at the *Hamburg University of Music and Drama* and active in a managerial role at the auction house *Christie's*, give you fascinating insight into their time as University of Freiburg students.

In the column 'Alumni Freiburg e.V. Funding Projects', we report on two student projects from 2023 as well as the initiatives launched by the winners of the *2024 Alumni Prize for Social Involvement*. Thanks to your generous donations, the booster association has provided targeted support to selected student projects and initiatives for many years. In this regard, I would like to thank all donors supporting University of Freiburg students. Your commitment is valuable and makes a difference!

I hope you enjoy reading the 2024/25 Alumni Magazine!

Sincerely,



Kerstin Kriegelstein



University of Freiburg Applies for Four Clusters of Excellence

The Cluster of Excellence initiatives ConTrans and Future Forests have submitted full proposals in the current round of the Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments. The existing Clusters of Excellence CIBSS and *livMatS* submitted renewal proposals.

In August 2024, two University of Freiburg Cluster of Excellence initiatives, Constitution as Practice in Times of Transformation (**ConTrans**) and **Future Forests** – Adapting Complex Social-ecological Forest Systems to Global Change, submitted full proposals to the German Research Foundation and the German Science and Humanities Council in the Clusters of Excellence funding line of the Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments. They were thus among the forty-one cluster initiatives eligible to submit full proposals. A committee of experts selected them from a total of 143 draft proposals, seven of them from the University of Freiburg. At the same time, the University of Freiburg submitted renewal proposals for its two existing Clusters of Excellence, Centre for Integrative Biological Signalling Studies (**CIBSS**) and Living, Adaptive, and Energy-autonomous Materials Systems (**livMatS**). ‘Our four proposals put us at the forefront

statewide in the Clusters of Excellence line of the competition’, says Rector Prof. Dr. Kerstin Krieglstein of the current state in this funding line.

Funding decision in May 2025

International experts are reviewing the total of ninety-eight cluster proposals in Bonn from October 2024 to February 2025. The Excellence Commission, composed of members of the committee of experts and the federal and state ministers of science and research, will decide in May 2025 which Clusters of Excellence are to receive funding. ‘I’m firmly convinced that the University of Freiburg’s existing and newly proposed Clusters of Excellence will prevail with their research excellence, their great dedication, and their socially highly relevant approaches’, says Krieglstein. The funding is to begin on 1 January 2026 and will run for seven years.

The *livMatS* Biomimetic Shell @FIT is a lightweight wooden pavilion on which researchers test out new materials and methods of construction.
Photo: Sandra Meyndt



Second funding line: 'Universities of Excellence'

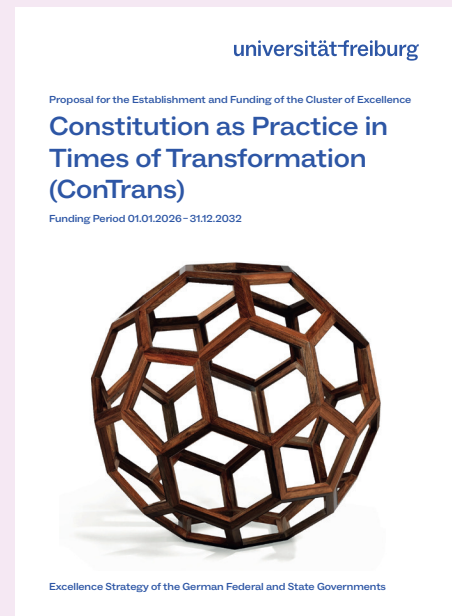
At the same time, the University of Freiburg is also preparing for the second funding line, 'Universities of Excellence', which focuses on the quality of the institution as a whole. 'The University of Freiburg is a permanent fixture in lists of the top ten research universities in Germany', Kriegelstein emphasizes. This should provide a basis for working out a vision that strengthens a university's capacity for renewal in all of its performance dimensions. Universities are only eligible to submit a proposal in this funding line if they have also applied for at least two Clusters of Excellence, or three in the case of university consortia. Proposals for the second funding line must be submitted by November 2025. Funding will begin on 1 January 2027.

Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments

The objective of the Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments is to strengthen Germany as an international research hub and further improve its international competitiveness. It thus continues the development and strengthening of German universities already begun with the Excellence Initiative of the German federal and state governments. The programme is administered jointly by the German Research Foundation and the German Science and Humanities Council. It includes the two funding lines 'Clusters of Excellence' and 'Universities of Excellence' and is set to run indefinitely.

Constitution as Practice in Times of Transformation (ConTrans)

Constitutions are at the centre of sociopolitical hopes and conflicts. But they can be conceived neither in their particular nature nor in their impact if we view them primarily as legal texts. The **ConTrans** initiative will therefore investigate constitutions as a network of social practices, ranging from rituals and symbols to processes and institutions. To this end, researchers from twelve disciplines will develop an analytical framework allowing them to describe the role of constitutions both as a driving force and as an object of processes of social change across space and time. The project will thus provide answers to the question of what holds societies and political systems together or causes them to erode. The aim is to establish an international constitutional research programme in Freiburg in a collaboration between humanities and social sciences. **ConTrans** is part of the interdisciplinary focus area 'Cultures and Societies in Space and Time' in the University of Freiburg's research profile.



Future Forests – Adapting Complex Social-ecological Forest Systems to Global Change

In the face of rapid climate change, new ecosystem disturbances, and the introduction and loss of species, large expanses of forests are evolving towards novel ecosystems that are unprecedented in evolutionary history. Parallel to this development, major societal changes are to be expected, resulting from processes such as urbanization, globalization, and land use change. Forest ecosystems and society are closely interlinked and interact in complex ways. They therefore present risks that are new and difficult to quantify. The **Future Forests** initiative aims to generate new ideas for analysing forests as social-ecological systems. The objective of the cluster is to use these approaches to lay the foundations for a transformation towards more sustainable forests. **Future Forests** is part of the interdisciplinary focus area 'Pathways to Sustainability' in the University of Freiburg's research profile.



Centre for Integrative Biological Signalling Studies (CIBSS)

The cells of complex organisms constantly exchange biological signals – including signalling molecules, metabolites, physical stimuli, and combinations thereof. This dense network of dynamic signalling processes enables cells to coordinate their tasks, form complex tissues, and adapt to environmental conditions. **CIBSS** aims to understand this ‘language of life’ and generate new knowledge in the field of biological signalling studies by taking a new approach that focuses on the integration of biological signals, that is, the mechanisms by which different signals are processed across spatial and temporal scales. Building on the growing understanding of signal integration across scales, research groups in **CIBSS** are also developing methods to precisely control biological signals – allowing us not only to understand but also to communicate in the ‘language of life’. To achieve these objectives, **CIBSS** combines innovative approaches and interdisciplinary collaboration and brings together cross-institutional expertise from the life, physical, and engineering sciences as well as ethics and law.

CIBSS’s fundamental signalling research provides the basis for identifying the causes of disease, developing new treatments and opening up opportunities to make agriculture more robust and sustainable, thus providing approaches to tackling global challenges in the areas of health, agriculture and food security. **CIBSS** is part of the interdisciplinary focus area ‘Signals of Life’ in the University of Freiburg’s research profile.

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Renewal Proposal for the Cluster of Excellence

CIBSS – Centre for Integrative Biological Signalling Studies: Communicating in the Molecular Language of Life

Funding Period 01.01.2026 – 31.12.2032



Excellence Strategy of the German Federal and State Governments

Living, Adaptive, and Energy-autonomous Materials Systems (livMatS)

The **livMatS** Cluster of Excellence has been significantly shaping scientific work on materials research at the University of Freiburg and beyond since 2019. This includes, for example, the areas of energy storage, multi-material 3D printing, glass printing, and soft robotics, as well as the assessment of technology acceptance. The cluster has established two professorships and five junior research groups, which strengthen materials science in Freiburg by providing new impetus. The cluster has been particularly successful in the area of third-party funding: its scientists have raised an additional twenty-five million euros for projects. The publication of over 400 articles in more than 180 scientific journals and the registration of several patents reflect the achievements of the research team.

livMatS has promoted interdisciplinary exchange in collaborations with Penn State University in the USA and the Stuttgart Cluster of Excellence ‘Integrative Computational Design and Construction for Architecture’. The collaboration with Stuttgart has resulted in two innovative and highly acclaimed biometric pavilions that make **livMatS** research issues tangible to the public. **livMatS** is part of the interdisciplinary focus area ‘Pathways to Sustainability’ in the University of Freiburg’s research profile.

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Renewal Proposal for the Cluster of Excellence

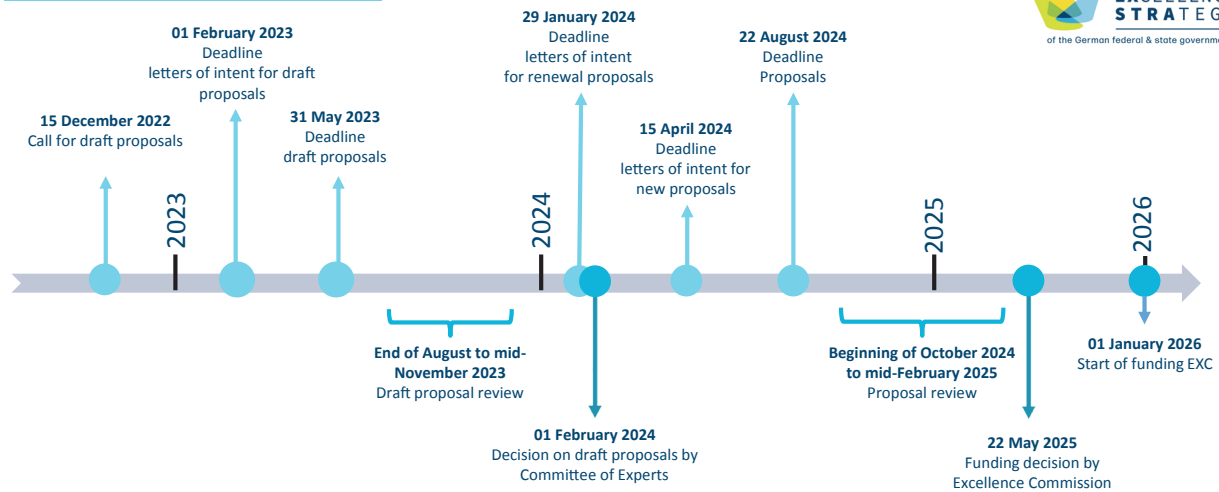
Living, Adaptive and Energy- autonomous Materials Systems (livMatS)

Funding Period 01.01.2026 – 31.12.2032

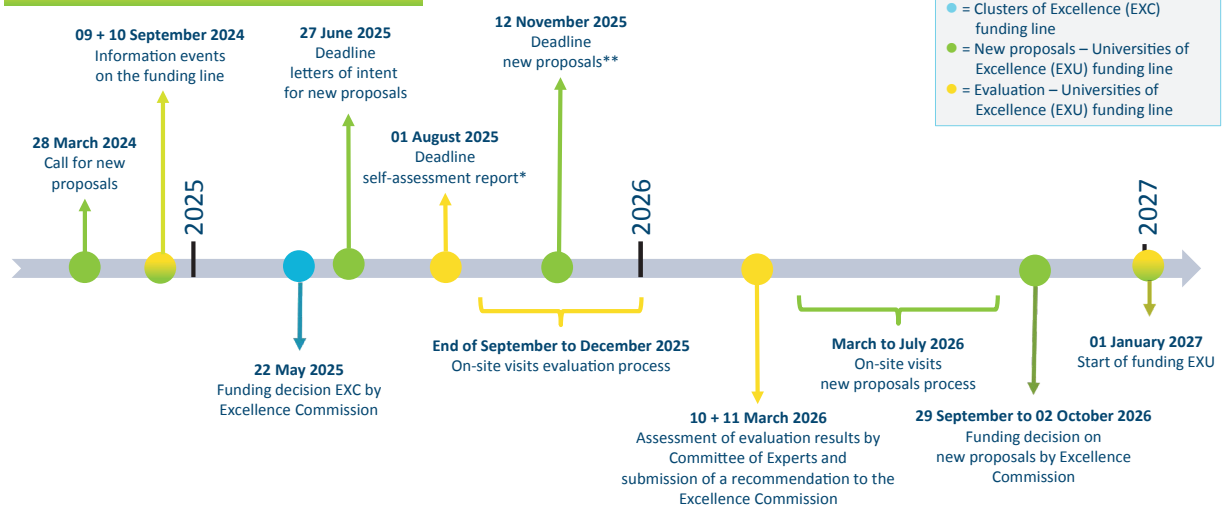


Excellence Strategy of the German Federal and State Governments

Clusters of Excellence funding line



Universities of Excellence funding line



* Further information on the cut-off deadline can be found in the guidelines for evaluation.
** Further information on the cut-off deadline can be found in the proposal template.



View of the Freie Universität Library
Photo: Sandra Meyndt



Photo: Katja Hentschel

‘The Most Valuable Thing for Me Is the Friends I Made’

Anna Alex is a successful serial entrepreneur and manager. She co-founded the personal shopping service OUTFITTERY, the former climate tech company Planetly, which developed tools designed to help companies calculate and reduce their carbon footprint, and the start-up

Nala Earth, which helps companies to visualize their own interactions with nature and thus to reduce their negative impact on biodiversity. Anna Alex studied economics, sociology, and psychology at the University of Freiburg from 2004 to 2008. She has received several awards for her outstanding achievements and commitment in the course of her career. For example, she is one of Europe’s ‘Inspiring Fifty’, the ‘most inspiring women in the technology sector’, and has a place in the ranks of the ‘Young Elite – Top 40 under 40’. Today she lives in Berlin.

Ms Alex, why did you decide to study at the University of Freiburg?

Anna Alex

I fell in love with the city of Freiburg. I wanted to live in a typical university town. So I took a trip with my mother through several cities, also including Münster and Jena. Freiburg had the additional advantage that it’s far away from my hometown Hamburg. Then I took an entrance exam for sociology at the University of Freiburg. It was pretty difficult, so I initially thought that my dream of studying in Freiburg would remain just that: a dream. When it

turned out I had passed and was admitted to the degree programme, I was very pleased. My decision was made.

What advice would you give students today?

My life story is a bit unusual, because I don’t use what I studied, namely sociology, in my daily work. My studies of course had a big influence on my world view, but I don’t work as a sociologist.

What I would therefore recommend to students is: study what you’re interested in! It’s possible to

work in other fields later with most degree programmes. That's of course not true of subjects like dentistry, but it is of all subjects involving a broad spectrum of knowledge, such as political science, economics, and sociology. I believe that one should take this liberty and not just think strategically about the best way to plan one's career. I did a minor in cognitive science, for example.

How did your time as a student in Freiburg influence your career?

I realized already during my time studying in Freiburg that I don't like being put in a pigeonhole. I studied in a magister degree programme with a

What contacts were particularly valuable for you?

I recently had a chance meeting with my friends from my time studying in Freiburg. We are six women and did many things together back then. The friends I made back then are the most valuable thing for me. They're more valuable to me than any professional contacts.

Where do you see the University of Freiburg in 2030? What are your hopes for it in the future?

The different worlds of humanities and economics were decisive for me. I hope the University of Freiburg keeps this interdisciplinarity and remains

'I hope the University of Freiburg keeps this interdisciplinarity and remains excellent in teaching'

major in sociology and minors in economics and psychology. I found interesting aspects in all three subjects. Freiburg was where I began my existence as a wanderer between worlds. I've always held to this understanding that we shouldn't think too much in rigid categories and allow ourselves to be defined by them.

excellent in teaching. At the same time, I hope it continues to offer the students a great time and the freedom to enjoy themselves. Life gets serious early enough. Your time as a student should also be a nice time.

The interview was conducted by Lynn-Katrin Haug, Alumni Coordinator

What was your favourite place to study in Freiburg?

My favourite place to study was the library in Collegiate Building II. I wasn't fond of studying at home.

What's your best memory of your time studying here in Freiburg?

Sitting on the university quadrangle with my friends and a latte macchiato and looking out into the world.

Suggestion for reading from Anna Alex:

Rutger Bregman
Moral Ambition

Anna Alex's favourite place in Berlin

The water tower in Prenzlauer Berg is my favourite place in Berlin. It's a very nice place to sit, read, and enjoy the sunshine. Sometimes art exhibits are organized there, and there's always a market on Saturdays.

Research, Teaching, and Tradition: A Visit to the Uniseum



Photo: Sandra Meyndt

It's hard not to be overwhelmed when entering the premises of the Uniseum: more than 500 years of University of Freiburg history open up between vaulted ceilings and walls. Many of those who have studied and researched at the University have left traces and still contribute to the stories told at the Uniseum today – and perhaps you do as well. Come join us on a little tour through the Uniseum.

A trip through history

Our tour begins with a historic year for the University of Freiburg: 1457, the year of the University's founding. The students' sphere of activity was small. Sleeping, eating, and studying were all done in the same place, at student hostels known as Bursen. There were two such hostels at the location of what is now known as the Old University, which now accommodates the Uniseum: Pfauenburse and Adlerburse, which were structurally connected to each other. It's still possible to identify traces of them today in the cellar of the Uniseum, which was used as an air-raid shelter centuries later during the two world wars. After World War II, the historic cellar was again repurposed and converted into a dance hall.

The stories we experience in the course of our tour through the Uniseum do not only focus on the University of Freiburg. They also offer a trip through German history: from the University of Freiburg's historical relevance as the first university in what was then the German Empire to admit women to studies in 1900 and its role during National Socialism to the student protest movement of 1968 – the display panels presented in the Uniseum shed light on the closely intertwined history of Germany and the University of Freiburg.

A curiosity of the University of Freiburg that is interesting from a contemporary perspective is the Karzer. These detention rooms were used to lock up students who had violated University rules.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, many students regarded this disciplinary measure more as a distinction than as a punishment. For example, they used bribes to circumvent the ban on alcohol in the Karzer and organized pub nights there with their friends. Detained students often left slogans, quotations, and even more elaborate paintings on the walls. Dismissed at the time as scribbles, these messages in the two detention rooms in Collegiate Building I were initially painted over in white. In the 2000s the University was able to restore the two Karzer thanks to alumni donations. The walls and the students' messages were uncovered in the course of the restoration work and opened to the public.

In the further course of our tour through the Uniseum, it becomes clear that housing shortages, university sports, and cafeteria lunches have long been issues at the University. Likewise, the cafeteria's rice pudding can look back on a long tradition. Announced on the weekly menu in neat handwriting, the 'sweet rice' was already enticing University of Freiburg students into the cafeteria each Friday in 1976.

A place shaped continuously by the entire University

In addition to presenting the past, the Uniseum also sees itself as a platform for research findings. Departments, institutes, and other University institutions have the opportunity to present themselves or their research. In summer 2024, for example, the Uniseum offered an exhibition on the diversity of endangered languages worldwide with the Department of General Linguistics. For its autumn exhibition, organized in cooperation with the Cluster of Excellence **CIBSS**, the Uniseum documented 100 years of signalling research in Freiburg: In 1924 Hans Spemann and Hilde Mangold

discovered the *Spemann-Mangold organizer*, the signalling centre that coordinates early embryonic development.

These examples of special exhibitions demonstrate that the Uniseum presents research from all fields: from history, politics, and linguistics to natural science, engineering, and medicine. The exhibitions are organized not only by professors and researchers but also by students, thus giving them their first practical experience in curating exhibitions.

A place to meet

The Uniseum's location in the heart of Freiburg makes it an ideal place to meet: seminars and lectures are held, anniversaries and graduation ceremonies celebrated. University members from all faculties and departments enter into contact with each other at these events. Particularly enriching are visits from alumni, who often get into conversations with the student guides during tours. Alumni and students alike profit from this exchange about the University's development as well as personal memories and the latest news.

An integral part of Freiburg's museum landscape

It's hardly possible to imagine Freiburg's museum landscape anymore without the Uniseum. It participates in the *Freiburg Museum Night* and the *Day of Open Monuments*. It is thus a place for all of Freiburg's citizens and visitors from around the world to meet and get to know the city from the University's perspective. Guests big and small are particularly fascinated by the miniature model depicting Freiburg in 1920. During your next visit to the Uniseum, perhaps you'll also discover the Haus zur Lieben Hand, which also houses the Department of *Relationship Management and Alumni*.

Did you know...

- **that the Uniseum is the first university museum of its kind in Germany?**
- **that the University once expelled a well-known football functionary?**
- **that the University is named after two different people: Archduke Albert VI, Archduke of Austria, and Ludwig, Grand Duke of Baden?**



In the Middle Ages, this cellar served as a place for students to live and study.



Women were admitted to studies at the University of Freiburg for the first time in 1900.

'Sweet rice with apple sauce' was already listed on the weekly cafeteria menu in December 1976.

All photos: Jonas Schneider

DEZEMBER	6 MONTAG	7 DIENSTAG	8 MITTWOCH	9 DONNERSTAG	10 FREITAG
30. Woche Süßkartoffel Apfel, Salat 950	Ta. Nudeln Süßkartoffel Apfel, Salat Süßkartoffel 946	Putenleber, pik. Purée, Salat Dess.: Eis 985	Rinderzunge in Mushroomsauce Paprika, Salat Dess.: Obst 948	Süßkartoffel pur. gem. Salat 916	Nudelsuppe mit Pindf.
Süßkartoffel Apfel, Salat 1120	Halbbraten Paprika, Salat 868	Baconbraten Sauerkraut, kart. Dess.: Eis 1023	Wendehals So. Rindfleisch Kart., Salat Dess.: Obst 1085	Süßkartoffel in Kartoffel, kart. Rote Beete 873	
Irish Stew	Kartoffeltopf mit Klops	Serbisches Rindfleisch	Heiße Bohnensuppe mit Hirs	Süßer Reis mit Apfelmus	
Süßkartoffel Apfelmus	Eisbein, Sauerkraut, Purée	Leberkäsegeb., gem. Salat	Bockwurst, Rindfleisch, Spätzle	Truthahnrolle in Champignonsauce, Reis, Salat	

DEZEMBER ANMERK.

Studierend

Mensaspeiseplan von 1976

Winter Donation

At the end of this virtual tour, we would like to point out that the Uniseum is currently planning on renovating a few exhibition areas and restoring its collection. We are requesting donations to implement these plans in this year's winter donation campaign. More information on the planned projects and purchases is available in our winter donation flyer and on the *Alumni Freiburg e.V.* website.

Uniseum Freiburg

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79098 Freiburg
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info@uniseum.de
www.uniseum.uni-freiburg.de

Opening times

Thurs. 2–6 p.m.
Fri. 2–6 p.m.
Sat. 2–6 p.m.

Free admission!

Rector Kriegelstein, Minister Olschowski, Representative Saint-Cast, and Mayor Buchheit at the kick-off event for the *Sustainability Innovation Campus* in January 2024
Photo: Jürgen Gocke



Sustainability Innovation Campus: Together towards a Sustainable Future

The *Sustainability Innovation Campus* (ICN) at the University of Freiburg was officially launched in January 2024. This joint initiative of the University of Freiburg and the *Karlsruhe Institute of Technology* (KIT) is the newest of five innovation campuses funded by the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research, and the Arts. The ICN aims to find and translate into practice effective solutions to urgent sustainability challenges together with partners from science, business, politics, and administration.

How can urban regions and small municipalities mitigate the consequences of climate change? How can university and company canteens offer healthy and resource-efficient meals? And how can citizens be motivated to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle? ICN projects provide answers to these and other central questions. Under the guiding theme 'Transformations for Urban Regions of the Future: Climate Protection, Resource Conservation, and Well-Being', researchers at the two universities

are investigating comprehensive social, technical, and economic innovations that are transforming urban planning, the food system, and inner development goals, among other areas.

The ICN was funded by the Eva Mayr-Stihl Foundation in its initial phase. As of 2024, the ICN is receiving one million euros in funding from the State of Baden-Württemberg for its development phase. The kick-off event in January 2024 featured a

welcoming speech by Minister of Science Petra Olschowski and a presentation of the first six projects, which are now being implemented.

In the ZUKAMAS project, researchers are investigating how green spaces and urban trees can help urban regions adapt to climate change. This includes identifying suitable tree species and getting together with citizens and urban planners to find measures for preserving green spaces. Another outstanding project deals with the transformation of the food system. It is studying how cafeterias and canteens can offer climate-friendly, resource-efficient, and healthy foods.

Visions of Sustainability

In the *Visions of Sustainability* project, citizens are invited to watch solution-oriented documentaries on sustainability issues free of charge at Harmonie Arthaus Kino Freiburg and attend accompanying free courses at the Volkshochschule Freiburg (VHS). The aim of the project is to find out together with the project partners and the audiences what motivates people to engage with such films, what they contribute to the discussions, and how they become involved in transformation processes towards a more ecologically sustainable society.

The contribution of cultural narratives – especially documentary films – to transformation processes towards a more sustainable society is an aspect that has received very little scholarly attention, although such films are often perceived as providing

impetus for changes in awareness or behaviour. Likewise, science communicators and politicians often assume that the emotionalizing effect of films holds great potential for initiating changes towards a sustainable lifestyle.

Inter- and transdisciplinary research on the role played by cultural narratives and storytelling conveyed by media in transformation processes towards a more sustainable society is a new and innovative research approach that includes the *environmental humanities* and the associated humanities and cultural studies perspectives. The project goes beyond the assumption that social transformations can be achieved merely by communicating scientific findings or making new technologies available.

Visit the project website to find out more about the films and VHS courses included in the project and for initial research findings:

visions-of-sustainability.de

Please contact the VHS to register for film screenings and courses. The office of the ICN would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Email: info@icnachhaltigkeit-bw.de

Telephone: +49(0)761 2039 6811

VISIONS
OF SUSTAINABILITY



Towards a Sustainable Future: New Vice Rector for Internationalization and Sustainability

Melanie Arndt has served as professor of economic, social, and environmental history at the University of Freiburg since April 2020. She has headed several international research projects and examines questions concerning the interactions between societies and nature in her research on environmental history. Another integral part of her research is the social and the economic dimension of sustainability, currently the history of energy and heat supply in particular.

‘My goal is to keep searching together for ways to make our University even more sustainable and international’

‘I have big shoes to fill and am very grateful for the chance to build on the important work of my predecessor. The progress in the field of sustainability in the last term of office was particularly impressive, as shown not least in how well our University did in the *QS World University Ranking: Sustainability 2024*’, says Melanie Arndt. ‘My goal is to keep searching together for ways to make our University even more sustainable and international. At the same time, I see it as our responsibility to continue working with our external partners to provide impetus that reaches far into our societies. It is particularly important to me to press ahead with the process of internationalizing the University of Freiburg – also in the area of sustainability.’



Prof. Dr. Melanie Arndt, Photo: Sandra Meyndt



Students at the Institute of Psychology
Photo: Sandra Meyndt



Alumni Freiburg e.V. Funding Projects

Daria Petrovska and Alexander Svirin awarded 2024 Alumni Prize for organizing German courses for Ukrainian refugees

In April 2022, Daria Petrovska, a University of Freiburg medical student born in Kiev, and Alexander Svirin, a doctoral candidate at the University of Freiburg's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures born in Moscow, organized a voluntary German course for Ukrainian refugees in the Freiburg suburb of March. The goal of the course was initially to offer Ukrainian refugees an alternative to state-organized integration courses, which often have a waiting list of up to six months.

In the second half of 2023, Petrovska and Svirin moved their course to Freiburg and adjusted it to the growing needs and demands of the participants. Now the course is geared especially toward Ukrainian refugees who do not get along well in the state-organized courses due to a slow learning pace. The A1- and A2-level courses, both held twice a week,

currently have more than thirty participants, including older people and people with physical disabilities. The courses organized by Petrovska and Svirin offer the participants several advantages: They can also communicate in their native language while practising in the course and receive the attention they need to learn the German language at a suitable pace. In addition, the courses are a good place to meet new people.

Petrovska and Svirin were awarded the 2024 Alumni Prize from the booster association Alumni Freiburg e.V. for their social involvement. They received the prize from Rector Prof. Dr. Kerstin Kriegelstein and Dr. Christine D. Althaus, deputy chair of Alumni Freiburg e.V., at the official opening of the academic year on 16 October 2024.



Prizewinners Daria Petrovska and Alexander Svirin
Photo: private

Members of the German course studying
Photo at lower left:
Alexander Svirin

Presentation of the Alumni Prize at the official opening of the academic year 2024/25
Photo: Jürgen Gocke



Students of the *Geography of Global Change* master's programme take study trip to Ghana

The master of science in *Geography of Global Change* is an interdisciplinary degree programme offered by the University of Freiburg's Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources. The curriculum includes a yearly study trip abroad, which gave University of Freiburg teachers and students the opportunity to visit the West African country of Ghana. The thirteen-day trip in August 2023, which also included teachers and students of geography from the *Department of Geography and Resource Development*, had the thematic focus *Postcolonial Resource Economies in the Context of Global Change*. The trip led the participants more than 1,200 kilometres through Ghana's interior and along its coast. The itinerary included stops in cities like Accra, Kumasi, and Tarkwa.

The trip's thematic focus and its itinerary gave the participants insight into the economic circumstances of Ghana's population as well as the working conditions in the resource sector in different parts of the country. The main emphasis was on a critical analysis of current realities in a local and global perspective. One of the most well-known examples of Ghana's global networking is Agbogbloshie, a

district of the capital Accra where electronic scrap collected from all parts of the world is processed manually under unhealthy and ecologically questionable conditions. Like the electronic scrap recycling in Agbogbloshie, the local cocoa cultivation and tropical timber industries in Ghana are closely associated with global demand. In addition to analysing the current political and economic conditions in the country, the participants undertook a critical examination of the historical perspective. In particular, this meant focusing on German and European colonialism as well as the associated Atlantic triangular slave trade.

Thanks to the support from *Alumni Freiburg e.V.*, University of Freiburg students were able to take this trip along with students from the *University of Ghana* and gain valuable experience from the cultural exchange. There is still contact between students of the two universities today. In addition, several students have now completed master's theses on topics directly related to the study trip. At the same time, the study trip also provided a basis for further in-depth collaboration between the University of Freiburg and the *University of Ghana*.



Photos from left to right:
At Samartex, a timber processing company in Samreboi (Western Region)

The participants at a cocoa plantation near Asankragua (Western Region)

At a mid-sized open-pit gold mine near Asankragua (Western Region)

Along the severely eroded coast of the Volta Delta near Fuveme (Volta Region)

All photos: Friedrich Neu



The Schall & Rauch theatre collective

Schall & Rauch is a theatre collective in the Freiburg student theatre scene. The collective has contributed to the cultural offerings of the University and the City of Freiburg for more than ten years. Young people with a passion for the stage have come together to create a space to grapple with current topics of (contemporary) theatre in artistic processes, try out different roles, and learn from another while performing.

Thirty young thespians participated in acting roles and behind the scenes in the production of Kleist's *Penthesilea*, enabling a complex interpretation of the play. By means of acting, dance, and digital forms of narration, the troupe raised questions concerning role, body, and gender images reflected in the Amazonian queen Penthesilea and her self-conception as well as her relationship with Achilles and the Amazonian people. The character struggles with herself and her role as a leader judged by the people around her on the basis of patriarchal conceptions.

The play staged by *Schall & Rauch* also explored the current issue of the part social media plays in the reproduction of these social images. The conflict over one's own body and one's own identity is a debate that is both private and relevant to society as a whole and that is often omnipresent particularly in the lives of young people.

The seven performances put on in January 2024 were an out-and-out success, attracting an audience of around 1,250. The theatre collective would like to thank the booster association *Alumni Freiburg e.V.*



Schall & Rauch during a performance of *Penthesilea*
Photo: Augustin Berghof

and its members for the financial support they provided. The support enabled the collective to invest in technical equipment, which was already used for the production of *Penthesilea*. The support also made it possible to realize another project, the production of Svenja Viola Bungarten's *Garland* in July and August 2024.



Photo: Augustin Berghof

Quality, Responsibility, and Openness in Student Funding at the University of Freiburg

One's time as a student is an important phase of life. Students do not only acquire knowledge; they also learn to take on responsibility – for their own lives, for their individual talent, and for society. The University of Freiburg pursues its social mandate and assumes an active role in this phase of life, also in order to learn from the differences of its students. After all, diversity in the talents, the social backgrounds, and the personal stories of students offers great opportunities for our society. The University is therefore called upon to promote young people individually. In addition to promoting excellence, this also means ensuring an equitable course of study that is as unencumbered as possible by obstacles and fears. It is essential to provide assistance at the right moment, because even small, imperceptible obstacles can be enough to doom a course of study to failure. The University of Freiburg's student funding is organized into three complementary scholarship programmes with different foci. They are based on demand, are linked to each other, and accompany the students through their entire course of study: the Starting Scholarship, the Student Emergency Grant, and the Deutschlandstipendium.

Would you like to support our students?



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All donations are tax-deductible.

More information and examples under:

<https://www.alumni-foerdern.uni-freiburg.de/jetzt-spenden/>

Thank You Deutschlandstipendium



Awarding of certificates to scholarship holders and donors on 4 April 2024. Four students spoke on behalf of all recipients of the Deutschlandstipendium. Bert Sutter, executive partner of Sutter Medizintechnik GmbH from Emmendingen and new president of wvib Schwarzwald AG, motivated the students to seize the day in his keynote address.

Photo: Jonas Conklin

Starting Scholarship Showing openness and overcoming obstacles together

The Starting Scholarship supports students taking up a course of study. It serves a bridging function, making it easier for them to get started and promoting equal opportunities. It thus recognizes and strengthens students for their courage and ability to make their way amidst difficult circumstances.

Student Emergency Grant Taking and sharing responsibility

The Student Emergency Grant supports students in precarious economic circumstances with the goal of preventing them from dropping out in their plight. The Student Emergency Grant bridges the gap to other, more permanent funding opportunities.

Deutschlandstipendium Showing quality and developing potential

The Deutschlandstipendium supports the highest-achieving students of the University of Freiburg on their journey. It gives them the freedom they need to concentrate on their studies, providing them with a fixed monthly sum of €300 until the end of the standard period of study. The federal government matches all private donations 1:1.

‘The opportunity to study Forest Sciences in Freiburg after completing my training as a forester enables me to achieve precisely the professional goal I wish and envision for my future. Working in the *forest* is an absolute dream for me. The Deutschlandstipendium is a big help in covering the expenses.’

Francine Fortagne, Forest Sciences



‘I would like to thank you very much for the support and especially for the appreciation that the Deutschlandstipendium conveys. For me in particular, the Deutschlandstipendium has created an additional incentive to keep making an effort in my studies and to persevere in times of low motivation, especially in the examination phase.’

Nico Gassert, Microsystems Engineering

‘The Deutschlandstipendium helps me to stay motivated to maintain my academic performance. I’m especially fond of discovering Freiburg with the children of the aid organization *Stadtpiraten*. Thanks to the Deutschlandstipendium, I can take part in a weekly programme with children and youths there with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. A big thanks to all who donate to the Deutschlandstipendium!’

Pauline Hägele, Medicine

All photos: private





Prof. Dr. Dirk Boll and Sonja Jost in front of the London auction house Christie's on King Street
Photo: BMA

‘Enjoy this Openness and Exchange with One Another’

Dirk Boll is professor of art management at the *Hamburg University of Music and Drama* and has worked for more than twenty-five years for the renowned auction house *Christie's*. He studied law at the University of Freiburg starting in 1991, concluding his studies with the First State Examination in 1995. During his studies Boll lived in the Wiehre neighbourhood; today he's at home in London and Berlin.

Why did you decide to study at the University of Freiburg?

Dirk Boll

I initially began studying law in Göttingen, in the broader environs of my home town Kassel. I welcomed this proximity at first. You might say it was the start of a process of breaking away from the parental home. After completing this process, I wanted to roam further afield. Back then there was a very strong north-south divide in the reputation of law faculties, so it seemed like a good idea to turn to the south. I went to Freiburg and liked both the city and the university: not only the reputation of the

faculty – in other words that which you can judge about the teaching staff from afar as a student – but also the layout of the campus, the charm of the city, this southern atmosphere, the life in the streets and the alleyways, the Bächle. So I decided to spend a couple of years here.

What advice would you give students today?

What I liked in Freiburg was the vibrant public sphere and the openness. Your time as a student is a phase in life in which you find yourself and build up your own network for the first time after your school years. In my opinion, that works very well in

Freiburg. It's a relatively small metropolitan area, and the campus is in the heart of town. I would therefore advise students to meet with other students, mix with the locals, and enjoy this openness and exchange with one another.

How did your time as a student in Freiburg influence your career?

That's difficult to judge. Above all, my law studies in general influenced my thinking and thus my career. Likewise, my years studying in Freiburg influenced my attitude towards life. After passing the state examination in 1995, I moved from Freiburg to Stuttgart for my legal traineeship. I've always lived in southern climes since my time studying in Freiburg. I've lived in Zurich, and now I live in London, which is farther south than many German cities north of the Main River. What I learned to like

In addition, studying regularly at the library rapidly made me part of a community. The sense of belonging was a great experience. We saw each other every morning and went out for coffee together, because the bustle of city life took place right next to the university. The library was like a second home for me.

What is your fondest memory of your time studying in Freiburg?

Many of my fondest memories of my time studying in Freiburg took place outside of the university context. When I think about Freiburg, I of course think of the culinary art of this place. That might sound a bit romanticized and historicized, because the interesting, sometimes exotic foods we bought at the start of the month at a large supermarket in France can be bought at every large supermarket

‘I would therefore advise students to meet with other students, mix with the locals, and enjoy this openness and exchange with one another’

above all during my years studying in Freiburg was life in a delimited area where it's easy to find your way around. My predilection for studying in towns that aren't metropolises with millions of inhabitants is certainly what led me to Göttingen and Freiburg in the first place and confirmed me in that preference. Another thing I'm fond of to this day is the public life with all the public squares and the restaurants with their tables and chairs by the Bächle.

What was your favourite place to study in Freiburg?

Honestly, I was quite consistent about studying in the law library, because studying at home is often distracting. My comparably strict daily routine included regular bouts of studying in the library. In addition, I was very fond of the building where the law library was located. The straight lines of the post-war architecture signalled a certain coolness and seriousness and provided a contrast with the romantic streets of Freiburg with their medieval and early modern buildings. For me, the library's architectural design clearly made it into a place for knowledge and the dissemination of knowledge.

today. Life in a winemaking region was a real discovery for me as well, because I don't come from one myself. I also look back fondly on this fabulously beautiful landscape. We often took outings to *Blauen*, to Alsace, or to *Hexental*. During my time studying in Freiburg we even went on hikes – something none of us particularly enjoyed doing as children.

We went to Basel regularly for a change of scenery and went to the opera, the theatre, or a museum. But what I loved most was daily life in Freiburg, meeting with friends at a wine tavern after a long day at the library or going out into the country on the weekend and enjoying the nice, sunny weather. I also have a fond memory of the moment when I got back to my flat in Wiehre and found the notification that I had passed the First State Examination. I associate this memory with Freiburg as well.

What contacts were particularly valuable for you?

The contacts I made during my time studying in Freiburg were and still are particularly valuable for me. They were important for getting my bearings

in my studies, for academic exchange, and also for my personal development and for becoming an adult. I made friends for life while studying in Freiburg.

Where do you see the University of Freiburg in 2030? What are your hopes for it in the future?

On the one hand, I think that the competition between educational institutions is growing due to the increasing privatization. On the other hand, I think that the University of Freiburg is well positioned to prevail in this competition. The University has a high reputation in terms of the degrees you can earn there. In my opinion, the attractiveness of the location is also relevant, because prospective students are not only interested in rankings and

other lists. And that brings me back to what I said at the beginning of the interview: Thirty years ago there was a perceived north-south divide in the reputation of law faculties, but there were also several other universities to choose from in southern Germany. You often chose the place you found most attractive personally, and for me that was Freiburg. These advantages that won me over back then are still there today, because they're structural advantages. I can also imagine that this idea of a romantic student town has an even stronger pull for international students. Naturally, I wish the University of Freiburg only the best.

The interview was conducted by Linda Rüger,
Alumni Coordinator

‘Studying regularly at the library quickly made me part of a community. The sense of belonging was a great experience’

Dirk Boll's suggestion for reading – read during his years in Freiburg

Mikhail Bulgakov
The Master and Margarita

Flann O'Brien
The Third Policeman

Dirk Boll's favourite place in Berlin

What I find really great is the *Teufelsberg* in Grunewald, a truly mystical place of the twentieth century. During National Socialism, a university was being built on the site where the *Teufelsberg* now stands. The shell of the building was destroyed during World War II. After the war the site was used as a dumping ground for rubble. This led to the formation of the rubble hill known today as the *Teufelsberg*. Today ruins from the 1960s can also be found on the *Teufelsberg*, namely those of a former US government listening station. The *Teufelsberg* does not offer the visual softness of the Markgräflerland, but it tells the story of the city of Berlin in one particular detail. That's what I really like about this place.



Walking path in the High Black Forest
Photo: Sandra Meyndt

univers freiburg

Prof. Dr. Kerstin Krieglstein (right) confers the title of honorary senator on Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Leena Bruckner-Tuderman. Photo: Jürgen Gocke

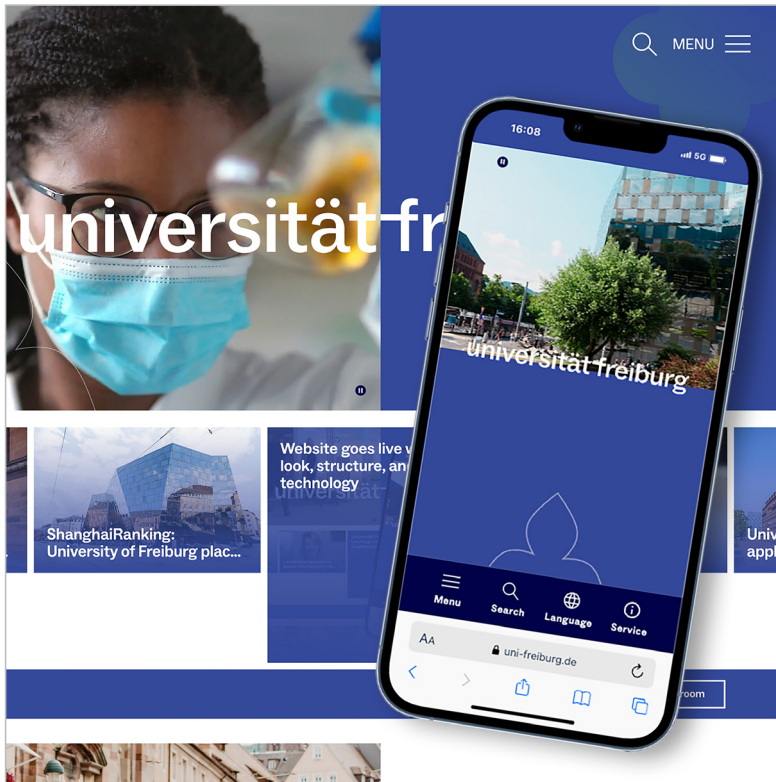


Newly enrolled students kick off the 2024/25 winter semester at Europa-Park-Stadion. Photo: Jürgen Gocke

Christa Rinklin from *Relationship Management and Alumni* in academic regalia at the *Market of Possibilities*. Photo: Linda Rüger



Impressions 2024



The revamped University of Freiburg central website went online in August 2024 at www.uni-freiburg.de.



Cellist Yves Scheuring moves the audience at the 2024 Alumni Day in the Peterhof Cellar. Photo: Sebastian Reiter



The University of Freiburg Faculty of Biology conferred an honorary doctorate on Nobel Prize in Chemistry recipient Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Joachim Frank in June 2024. Photo: Klaus Polkowski



At the Opening of the Academic Year 2024/25, Rector Prof. Dr. Kerstin Kriegelstein conferred the title of honorary senator, the highest distinction the University has to offer, on alumnus Prof. Dr. Hagen Pfundner. Photo: Jürgen Gocke





FIT – Freiburg Center for Interactive
Materials and Bioinspired Technologies
Photo: Sandra Meyndt

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Natural sciences campus in summer
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