



## Letter from the President

dated 13 October 2006

addressed to the Members of the Technische Universität München

*Dear Members of our Technical University,*

The German Science Council and Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft have today awarded us the status of an *Elite University*. In this national contest for the best concepts, the following projects achieved recognition:

- *Excellence Cluster "Cognition for Technical Systems"*
- *Excellence Cluster "Origin and Structure of the Universe – Fundamental Physics"*
- *"TUM International Graduate School of Science and Engineering" (IGSSE)*
- Concept for the Future *"TUM. The Entrepreneurial University."*

In addition, we are also heavily involved in the LMU's initiatives

- *Excellence Cluster "Munich Center for Integrative Protein Science"*  
(speakership alternating between LMU and TUM),
- *Excellence Cluster "Nanosystems Initiative Munich"*
- *Excellence Cluster "Munich Centre of Advanced Photon Science"*
- *"Graduate School of Systemic Neurosciences"*

in some cases as much as 50%.

Following on from our performance to date, we can now realise our ideas with a budget of about 150m Euros over the next five years and compete against some of the best universities in the world. At the same time, our most loyal, powerful industrial partners will be increasing their commitment: BMW AG is to shoulder the investment costs for the construction of the "TUM Institute for Advanced Study" building in Garching, Wacker Chemie AG has agreed to provide the equipment for an Institute for Silicium Chemistry, and numerous other companies and foundations have pledged to sponsor our work with substantial donations.

On this happy occasion, I wish to express my sincerest thanks to all our students, staff and fellow professors. As I write this letter, I am filled with great respect for the tremendous services that each of you renders in his/her own personal position at our university. It was our teamwork, the inner solidarity and the dynamic development that ensued which impressed the jury. I would like to include a word of thanks to our predecessors, our alumni and our emeriti. I feel sure that they now share in our jubilation, and throughout the day I have already received numerous tokens of support and congratulations. In our role as an entrepreneurial university, we pin our hopes on many different talents and the collective inspirational spirit of all the people who have contributed towards the esteem enjoyed by the Technische Universität München today.

First and foremost, I wish to thank those members of the university who played an active role throughout the proposal and assessment phases. This not only applies to the creative forces within the faculties but also to the bright individuals in my immediate environment, the vice presidents, all the executives and the administrative staff with their months of continual hard work and dedication. I also wish to extend my sincere thanks to our students and junior scientists who contributed towards this success by virtue of their outstanding, original achievements.

I also wish to take this opportunity to encourage all those who fell short of winning an award in the first round, despite their proposals reaping favourable votes from the assessors. How difficult it must have been for the international board of experts and the panel of judges to distinguish between the 90 (!) highly qualified proposals!

We are proud of our TUM. Ever since it was founded as the "Royal Bavarian Polytechnic School " (Kgl.-Bayerische Polytechnische Schule) in 1868, many generations, through their own exertions, have played their part in transforming it into an acclaimed university and, more particularly, in accompanying Bavaria throughout its transition from an agricultural region to a modern, high-tech state at the heart of Europe. When we present the double-volume "History of the Technische Universität München" to the general public in the next few days, the presence of the newly acquired designation in the Champions League appears to be a logical, albeit particularly significant step away from our past.

Having reached this threshold to the future, our hearts are filled with pride. We have no intention of getting over-excited, however. Because tomorrow, down-to-earth as ever, we will be continuing our efforts. Tomorrow things begin in earnest! Tomorrow we will start to seize and implement the chances given to us by our success in the Excellence Initiative. For this reason, my thanks are coupled with a sincere plea to demonstrate real community spirit by rallying round to carry on the good work. This commitment applies to all members of the university, regardless of whether they were directly involved in the award-winning projects of the Excellence Initiative, or not. Even those who have not submitted any proposals so far are likewise important for the advancement of our university through their work. Those, on the other hand, who have been particularly successful are under an obligation to open up future opportunities for some of the less developed areas of our seat of learning which, when exploited, will enable them to attain a similar top status. Far from being a university of possessions, ours is the "university of opportunities". Those who

exert themselves move up. Those who are simply content to make themselves at home in the system fall behind. Nobody is entitled to waste his or her talent. Competitiveness is a fundamental human trait that dates back to primitive mankind. Nonetheless, strong, successful individuals also show consideration for weaker ones.

Through the Excellence Initiative, politicians have acknowledged the principle of competition. By the same token, the policy that has recently enabled our university to take the lead has also won the day:

It was our "Proposed concept for the inner organisation of the university" – that unanimous resolution passed by the Senate on 28 May 1997 – which has been credited with propelling the TUM towards its role as an entrepreneurial university in Germany. Despite some raised eyebrows at the time, by demonstrating our belief in the contest, internationality and subsidiarity, we proceeded to create a university constitution whose principles form the basis of the new Bavarian Higher Education Act that came into force in 2006, as well as significantly influencing the latest higher education legislation recently enacted in many federal states and Austria. The Technische Universität München has accordingly acquired immense, conspicuous political power way beyond its individual scientific achievements. Undaunted and full of determination, we have managed to overcome conventional trains of thought and create the basic conditions for an up-to-date international university. We were considerably aided by the fact that the doubts, and even opposition, that were voiced during the course of our internal communications were heard and taken seriously. It was only in this way that our Corporate Identity was able to emerge as strong as it is today. This aspect did not escape the judges of the Excellence Initiative either.

Now I would also like to express my gratitude to the Free State of Bavaria and the political decision-makers who accorded science a high, often preferential priority status over many decades. Through the consolidation of the Bavarian

state budget, the political powers have established the prerequisites for an adequate funding of entrepreneurial universities along the lines of performance and counter-performance for the years ahead. With the launch of the Excellence Initiative, at the latest, differentiation within the university landscape became an irreversible process. It has been recognised that unequals should be treated unequally, including – and in particular – in the fields of education, science and research. This attitude is consistent with a true grasp of what is meant by democracy.

I also wish to thank the numerous cooperation partners from the commercial sector and the communes. These alliances, coupled with rock-solid pledges for funding, have shown how dependable our extramural partners are. The judges recognised our multiple anchorage in industry and in the Bavarian communities and acknowledged this factor as a special seal of quality on the part of the TUM. So we can already look forward to using the TUM Raitenhaslach Study & Residence Center in Burghausen in the South-East part of Bavaria, to name an outstanding example of our home base!

We have accordingly prepared ourselves in good time for a differentiation within the university sector. Where others are still full of doubt and lost in a maze, we are able to pursue our course cheerfully and optimistically, self-assuredly yet modestly, with fresh spirit and a spring in our stride. The outcome of the Excellence Initiative has put us in a truly unique position, and we must now put it to best advantage. The public sector is entrusting us with a great deal of money. We will use it judiciously and diligently to achieve the goals we set out in our proposals. It is our aim to create lots of new positions at our university, because everything basically depends on the people, their skill and their passion.

Let us celebrate this gratifying accomplishment while stepping up our personal efforts to do justice to the trophy and make sure it does not slip through our

fingers! On this day of rejoicing, please accept the tokens of my appreciation, which I hope to convey to you through this letter.

At home in Bavaria, successful in the world – that is our motto, dedicated not only to our roots but also to the challenges of tough international competition. TUM is forging ahead: Engineering the future!

On behalf of the university board and myself, I extend my sincere personal greetings to one and all.



Wolfgang A. Herrmann  
President