



PRESS RELEASE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, YOUTH AND CULTURE IN THE FEDERAL STATE OF RHINELAND-PALATINATE

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Minister of Science Doris Ahnen congratulates successful universities in Mainz and Kaiserslautern

With its institutional strategy "The Gutenberg Spirit: Moving Minds - Crossing Boundaries," Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) has chances to become one of Germany's so-called Universities of Excellence. The initial decisions in the second phase of the Excellence Initiative by the German federal and state governments, made by the Joint Commission of the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Strategy Commission of the German Science Council (WR), have opened the door for Mainz University to convert the draft version of its institutional strategy into a full proposal which is to be handed in early September 2011.

The judges have also approved the draft proposals for the establishment of the following Clusters of Excellence to promote top-level research at Mainz University: "Earth and the Anthropocene," "Precision Physics, Fundamental Interactions and Structure of Matter," and "Molecularly Controlled Non-Equilibrium." This means that four out of the seven project plans submitted by JGU have been successful. The Technical University of Kaiserslautern was also able to progress to the next phase, with its draft proposal for the cluster "Kaiserslautern Center for Advanced Spin Engineering." Doris Ahnen, Minister of Science of the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate, congratulated both universities wholeheartedly and said: "The universities in Rhineland-Palatinate have managed to demonstrate that they are among the top players in the research league."

The following figures show just how fierce the level of competition was: For preselection in the second phase of the Excellence Initiative, the German Research Foundation and the German Science Council received a total of 227 new applications from 65 different universities. Out of the 205 draft proposals for graduate schools and clusters of excellence, only 52 are being invited to submit definitive proposals, while of the 22 drafts for institutional strategies, only seven have been approved.

"Over the past few years, the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate has invested considerable effort in making its universities more competitive in the areas of research and teaching," said Minister of Science Ahnen. In her view, the state has created the necessary preconditions for significantly enhancing the national and international competitiveness of its universities. It has achieved this by allocating more resources to the special program "Knowledge creates Future" ("Wissen schafft Zukunft"), by instigating its research initiative for universities and universities of applied sciences, through the provision of other support measures, and, not least, by amending the federal state's University Act. "All of the draft proposals that have now been submitted by the universities within the scope of the Excellence Initiative are a product of the state of Rhineland-Palatinate's current research initiative, which has been ongoing since 2008," specified the Minister. This, she believes, proves that the state has set the right course by promoting profile-enhancing sectors at the universities.

"It has been a long time since Rhineland-Palatinate has experienced a similar trend in the area of research," added Doris Ahnen. And there is further evidence of this: New research institutions are being set up in the region, such as the Institute of Molecular Biology (IMB) and the Helmholtz Institute in Mainz, while efforts to obtain third-party funding and attract internationally renowned top-level personnel to research institutions in Rhineland-Palatinate have proved highly successful. "The recent results of the Excellence Initiative show that universities and the federal state government are on the right track when it comes to improving the quality and attractiveness of Rhineland-Palatinate as a research location," concluded the Minister of Science.