



Speech at the

First Years' Convocation Ceremony 2022: Welcome@TUM

17. October 2022

Prof. Dr. Thomas F. Hofmann

Präsident der Technischen Universität München

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Welcome to T–U–M dear students, colleagues, and friends.

I am Thomas Hofmann, president of this great university.

This welcome day is one of my favorite events. Because it is so wonderful to celebrate your arrival on campus. Welcome to our TUM family.

TUM is a remarkable university in many ways because of its remarkable family: From founders to faculty, students and staff, alumni and parents, partners and friends.

In this family, each of you – with your own visions and aspirations – is essential to TUM's impact and legacy. You truly enrich our community.

I know this is a tremendously exciting time for you – it is the time of moving, getting oriented on campus, and meeting new people – many of them will become your friends in the coming weeks and months.

Over 14,000 ambitious new students have enrolled at TUM in Munich, Garching, Freising, Straubing and Heilbronn. Over 50,000 students in total – again a historic maximum – like the number of female students: it has risen to reach 37%.

We are considered the best university in Germany: We made the triple, number one in all three major university rankings. Thanks to you, students, faculty, and staff.

And we are by far the most international university in Germany: 41% of students are international citizens, from more than 140 countries.

And this diversity of people creates our strength. You come from all walks of life, from all corners of the globe, each of you with different strengths and weaknesses, different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

I am sure, this diversity and a culture of mutual respect, equity and inclusion – will open your mind, broaden your horizon, help you to see the world a little differently.

I send my welcome to all parents, family members, and friends. For them, this may be a day of mixed emotions: of deep pride, good hopes for the future and a healthy portion of nervousness about you – as you are leaving home.

I want to assure you that we will support you as much as possible – while you are exploring and refining your own path here at TUM.

Today is the moment to consider what truly gives you fulfillment, purpose and meaning. Use this as an inspiration to shape your time here at TUM.

In the past 3 years, the world has been facing increasing challenges, uncertainty, and disruption: • from a global disease to racial and economic inequities • from misinformation to

fake news • from the attack on universities in Iran to the war in Ukraine • and the energy crisis to the unbroken climate challenge.

What can we learn from such recent experiences? A university is a place to re-engage with one another and the world – to re-new our sense of purpose. And not to let such challenges dampen our spirit.

So, although Europe’s energy crisis is not mastered yet: this semester will be taught in physical presence –enriched by digital/hybrid formats. Because the “digital only” Covid-19 time showed us how valuable it is and how wonderful it is to exchange personally, to discuss perspectives and ideas, and to network with friends and colleagues, or just enjoy some pizza and beer together.

Being on campus, I urge you to take advantage of TUM’s breadth – in three ways:

My first recommendation is... Explore broadly and engage deeply.

So, engage deeply within your own field of study in Engineering and Computer Sciences, Natural and Life Sciences, Medicine, Business Management, and Social, Political and Educational Sciences.

No matter what your discipline is: I strongly encourage you to join a team working on faculty-led research to make real contributions to human knowledge.

This will help make you a better critical thinker, you learn how to ask and answer precise questions, and how to assess the strength and limitations of conclusions.

And explore broadly. Discover interests you did not know of before. Embrace learning across disciplines, develop new skills and grow your personality.

This can sometimes be harder than just doing what you know you are good at. However, it is also a lot of fun – and it will enrich you deeply as a person.

There are plenty of opportunities to get involved outside the classroom, e.g.

- Become a member of the TUM: Junge Akademie. This program supports you while working in diverse teams to address real-world problems on your way to reach positions of responsibility in our society.
- Or get involved in the programs of our EuroTech Universities Alliance. You can benefit from joint offerings with our partners: TU Denmark, EPFL Lausanne, Institute Polytechnique Paris, Technion/Israel, and Eindhoven University of Technology.

Such programs will give you unique experiences. You will get in-depth knowledge in a field, as well as the capability to think and act across disciplines. This will help you see the world for all its complexity.

I can assure you, future leaders are devoted to active citizenship. They think deeply about the world's problems, and contribute to the advancement of human society.

I encourage you to take advantage of the course offerings of the new TUM School of Social Sciences and Technology. Find out what responsibility in research and innovation really means, or how we can make communication between the sciences and the public more effective.

Explore our courses in Philosophy, which we offer jointly with the Munich School of Philosophy: Learn how to strengthen your arguments. Learn what you truly believe.

This is important, as future leaders will draw from a broad scope of competences:

Future physicians will have a command of science, but also have exposure to the humanities. This can help them to communicate more empathetically with patients.

And if you ask leaders in tech firms? They look for employees with a wide background that includes the arts, humanities or social sciences. This will help to develop better human-centered products and services. It will enable you to anticipate ethical and societal impacts of your work.

So, exploring broadly and engaging deeply is the best way to prepare yourself for a future that is very uncertain. It makes you adaptable in times of change.

Secondly, I want to encourage you...

To follow your passion and embrace adventure by working in student teams.

Each of you should stay curious and authentic. Be true to yourself – be an original. At the same time, take advantage of the growth and opportunities that come from being a team member.

Therefore, my advice to you is to connect and get to know your fellow students, work with each other, learn from each other, support one another, have your own ideas challenged and make room for new ideas, and add to a team's success.

There is no doubt it will broaden your horizons, will help you accomplish more, and allow you to develop new relationships within our TUM family and beyond.

So, I encourage you to engage in one of our vibrant student initiatives. We currently have 140 TUM Student Clubs: I am sure there is one that sparks your curiosity, or start up a new one – this will further enrich your experience.

Later, three TUM student clubs will present themselves on stage:

- Luca Hohenacker will present the "TUM Carbon Removal Initiative"; they are working on a technology that will remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in air contactors.

- Fanny Rößler is part of the “WARR Space Labs”: they study the effects of microgravity on brain cells. And they aim high: In early 2023, their experiment will be brought to the International Space Station (ISS).
- The "TUM Horyzn" team will be presented by Balázs Nagy. They develop an autonomous drone that can quickly bring a defibrillator to help save lives.

I am sure once you have their passion in your blood, it will carry you to top-performances everywhere – in research, innovation and your entire professional life.

And this spills over to the members of our TUM Association of Alumni and Friends: students, staff, alumni, and friends – they support such initiatives intellectually, financially and by opening doors to partners.

One of these successful alumni is Samantha Cristoforetti: She is a TUM alumna, ESA astronaut, and the first European female commander on the International Space Station – ISS.

A month ago, 250 miles above Munich she tweeted greetings down to our TUM students on Twitter, wishing them all the best for their upcoming exams.

And she posted a photo of our “TUM logo” in space, which she brought from Munich.

You can see Samantha on the posters at the fence, with the TUM logo floating next to her in zero gravity.

She is a fantastic example that our alumni have blue blood.

Connecting such alumni with you – our students – is so important; it is a win-win.

I encourage you to become a student member of this cross-generational network of friends.

Just scan the QR-Code on the posters and find out more.

This brings me to my third point: Make our “Can-Do”-culture your very own.

Our world has been seriously challenged by the pandemic. However, the Covid-19 storm may be minor compared to what we could face in the decades to come, if climate change continuous unbroken – with all its impact on resources, biodiversity, food security, energy and infrastructure, as well as human health.

Like the Covid-19 pandemic, many of these challenges transcend borders, countries, and continents. They are global. They put our own future at risk, just in slow motion when compared to the virus.

Over the last years, our TUM faculty has made tremendous advances in research on climate change and in developing greener technologies across the various schools.

And your fellow students have established many initiatives like the Green Offices in Straubing and Weihenstephan – helping to make our campuses greener. If you are interested, contact them, they are waiting for you.

However, let us be honest with ourselves: the scale and the time frame of the climate challenge demands more. We can do more – and we will do more.

Almost a year ago, we started to engage our entire TUM community – including hundreds of students, staff and partners. Together, we developed the TUM Sustainable Futures Strategy with concrete goals, effective measures and KPIs, helping us to reinforce our firm ambition for sustainable change.

We will officially launch this strategy at our TUM Sustainability Day. It will be held for the first time on October 27.

We will start with a central opening event in the Audimax in the city center. Moreover, during the day, there will be plenty of activities on all campuses and opportunities for you to network and get involved.

I invite you to adopt our entrepreneurial “Can-Do”-culture. Make TUM your laboratory; develop effective solutions, scalable innovations and new economic models with the potential to make our world more sustainable.

You can draw on TUM’s unique ecosystem in entrepreneurship and value creation. We support you in developing business ideas into successful enterprises, which push for sustainable change.

We give you access to our entrepreneurial support, like the Maker Space to develop and construct prototypes. Or the new TUM Venture Labs. These are entrepreneurial innovation hubs, jointly driven by TUM and UnternehmerTUM, to boost start-ups in DeepTech domains. They offer technical and social infrastructure, venture training and support, all the way up to our top-class industry and investor networks.

There are plenty of unique opportunities for you to combine your studies with sustainable thinking, entrepreneurial ambition and value creation:

In the 2-week course THINK.MAKE.START. you will work in diverse teams to develop solutions to real life-problems, then pitch your game-changing projects on a demo day – and frequently in the past, this has led to the foundation of new start-ups.

In the TUM Entrepreneurial Masterclass you create your scientific thesis and, at the same time, you pursue your entrepreneurial ambitions and create real benefit for society.

So, adopt this “Can-Do”-culture. And if you have further ideas on how we can make things better here at TUM, feel encouraged to apply for the TUM Presidential Student Lunch.

We offer these lunches regularly on our TUM campuses to enable a direct dialogue between you and myself.

Please allow me to introduce you to some members of the TUM Board of Management and the deans:

Vice Presidents

Albert Berger – SVP Human Resources, Administration and Finance

Alexander Braun – SVP Digitalization and IT systems

Gerhard Müller – SVP Academic and Student Affairs

Gerhard Kramer – SVP Research and Innovation

Helmut Schönenberger – VP Entrepreneurship

Jürgen Weichselbaumer – VP University Development and Planning

Deans

Johannes Barth – Dean, TUM School of Natural Sciences

Hans Bungartz – Dean, TUM School of Computation, Information, and Technology
– and Graduate Dean

Gunter Friedl – Dean, TUM School of Management

Urs Gasser – Dean, TUM School of Social Sciences and Technology

Ingrid Kögel-Knabner – Dean, TUM School of Life Sciences

Matthias Richter – Vice-Dean, Department of Sport and Health Sciences

And now, let your student colleagues take you on a virtual campus tour.

Afterwards, Isabella Hennesen, student representative in our academic senate, will give you a warm welcome.

Welcome to T–U–M and enjoy your time at our university.