



Speech at the

First Years' Convocation Ceremony 2021: Welcome@TUM

18. October 2021

Prof. Dr. Thomas F. Hofmann

Präsident der Technischen Universität München

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Dear students, parents, colleagues and friends - Welcome to TUM !

My name is Thomas Hofmann, President of the Technical University of Munich.

This welcome day is one of my favorite days of the year. It brings all of us back on campus – after a long time of digital learning, remote work and social distancing – an exile that has been without parallel in our lives.

Sure, we still have to wear a mask and have to follow the 3G rule when entering TUM buildings – meaning you have to be either vaccinated, recovered, or been tested.

I deeply rely on our common sense of civil responsibility and mutual respect. Only together, we can protect our safe learning environment.

For those who did not get a vaccination offer yet, we offer free vaccination for students again tomorrow, Tuesday, in the Mechanical Engineering Building. And for those, who cannot be vaccinated for special reasons, we offer tests in the City Center, Garching, and Weihenstephan.

But most importantly: We all are back on campus! I know this is an exciting time for you – it is the time of moving, getting oriented, learning your way around campus and meeting people who 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! 48,000 students in total – another historic maximum!

We are by far the most international university in Germany: 38 % of students are international citizens from more than 140 countries. Again, the number of female students has risen to reach an incredible 37 %.

Each of you – with your own visions & aspirations – will enrich our TUM community. You generate the heartbeat of our university. You make TUM a special place and help us see the world a little differently.

And to all parents, family members and friends who join us today virtually, I thank *you* for entrusting your loved sons and daughters to us. I want to assure you that we will support them as much as we can, while they are exploring, connecting, and contributing here at TUM.

And we are proud of our students – and their engagement and activities. One of the Student initiatives is the TUM Boring team. Just a month ago, this student team became the undisputed champion of Elon Musk's "Not-a-Boring Competition."

Almost 400 student teams from universities around the world participated. Eight were invited to Las Vegas to compete against one another, drilling a tunnel into the sand stone with huge boring machines they had constructed themselves.

Our TUM Boring team build a 22 ton boring machine and managed to drill a >20 meter long tunnel. They left behind all their competitors (EHT, MIT), who did not get their machines to work properly or only reached a distance of less than 3 meters.

Let's have a look at their success story!

These students make us proud! And that's why we support such initiatives intellectually, financially and by giving them access to our entrepreneurial support.

We do this, because we are convinced that once you have this passion in your blood, it will carry you on to top-performance everywhere - in research, innovation and your entire professional life.

There are several lessons and experiences from the TUM Boring team that are directly relevant to all of us. These might be helpful to you as you embark on your journeys here at TUM:

My first lesson from TUM Boring is that they are a team of authentic individuals: 60 students from 16 nations – confident, and true to themselves!

So be authentic – be an original – be yourself. This may not always be easy – but it is ultimately rewarding! So, I encourage you to be true to yourselves, to cultivate your personality, follow your passion, and express those qualities that are uniquely your own.

Whether you feel a strong commitment to an identity, a special talent, a religion, a political party, or a specific life philosophy. On this event today, each of you has different strengths and weaknesses, different experiences and perspectives. This Diversity and a Culture of mutual respect, equity and inclusion – will open your mind and broaden your horizons.

Although the TUM Boring students were individualists, they took advantage of the growth and opportunities that come from being a team member. Research is a team sport – So, I encourage you to connect and get to know your fellow students, work with each other, learn from each other, support one another, make room for new ideas, and add to a team's success.

And even, when your ideas do not square with those of others, learning means to be exposed to new perspectives, to having our own ideas challenged, and to be pushed to sharpen our arguments.

Without any doubt, this will broaden your horizon, will help you accomplish more, and allow you to develop new relationships within our TUM family and beyond.

The second important lesson from the TUM Boring team is: Be curious, follow your passion, and embrace adventure!

Oh yes, these winning students were amazingly curious! And because they were curious, they explored and combined knowledge from people of different disciplines and institutions: 16 departments.

So, my advice to you: Have a look beyond what you already know and beyond your own field of study. Use your time at TUM to freely explore a broad variety of interests.

And be curious, with the enthusiasm and determination of the TUM Boring team.

Take advantage of this enormous disciplinary breadth of TUM: Engineering, Natural & Life Sciences, Medicine, Business Management, and Social, Political and Educational Sciences.

And do not stick too narrowly to your chosen field of study: whether you are interested in the fundamental origins of life, in maintaining health & targeting diseases, in how to responsibly shape the technological sovereignty of Europa, or in making our living environment more sustainable - embrace learning across disciplines!

Employers want to hire graduates with unique experiences, in-depth knowledge in a field, but with the ability to think and act across disciplines – helping them to see the world for all of its complexity.

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

And leaders in tech firms are looking for employees with a broad background that includes the arts, humanities or social sciences. This can help them to better develop human-centered products and services and anticipate ethical and societal impacts of their work.

Therefore, we offer countless activities helping you to explore your interests:

Take advantage of the course offerings of our new TUM School of Social Sciences and Technology, which we launched 2 weeks ago. Find out what responsibility in research & innovation really means, or how we can make communication between science 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, and learn what you truly believe.

Grow your personality as a member of the TUM: Junge Akademie. This is a scholarship program for exceptionally talented and dedicated students on their way to reach positions of responsibility in our modern society.

Engage in one of our student initiatives, like TUM Boring, the Hyperloop Team, or the TUfast-Student Racing Teams. Find the ones that spark your curiosity or start up a new one!

Get involved in university sports, participate in athletic events such as the running event “Campuslauf”, or join the TUM Orchestra or Choir, or the TUM Jazz Band. They are always looking for new talents! So if you are interested to join, feel free to connect.

Follow our offerings in intercultural learning. Take advantage of the TUM Language Center and develop new language competencies. And if you are an international student, enhance your German while you are here at TUM.

Get involved in the programs of our EuroTech Universities Alliance. You can benefit from the offerings of our partners: TU Denmark, EPFL Lausanne, Ecole Polytechnique Paris, Technion/Israel, and Eindhoven Univ. of Technology.

And if you want to combine scientific excellence with entrepreneurial ambition and value creation, then our TUM Entrepreneurial Masterclass is waiting for you! We give you access to

our entrepreneurial support, like the TUM Venture Labs which are designed to boost start-ups in DeepTech Areas.

So, explore and make TUM becoming your laboratory. And then, your time at TUM will become a unique moment in your life!

The third lesson is the way TUM Boring experimented and then continually adapted and improved their work.

Be assured, like everyone they also experienced disappointments, e.g. the hot temperatures in the desert around Las Vegas caused unexpected problems to their computing system. But they adapted and managed to overcome these.

So my third advice is not let obstacles dampen your spirit! Experience is what you get when you don't get what you wanted. Always try new things, and then adapt and improve. With hard work, you can accomplish much more than you can imagine.

Faculty, staff, advisors, coaches and mentors and many others are here to support you! We all are here to support you – But we need your support as well! So if you have visions and ideas how we can further improve your unique learning and life experience here at TUM, feel encouraged to apply for the TUM Presidential Student Lunch. These lunches are offered regularly on our TUM campuses to enable a direct dialogue between you and myself.

And I can tell you, these lunch events have already sparked many good ideas.

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

Albert Berger – SVP Human Resources, Administration & Finance

Gerhard Müller – SVP Academic & Student Affairs

Gerhard Kramer – SVP Research & Innovation

Juliane Winkelmann – SVP International Alliances & Alumni

Jürgen Weichselbaumer – VP University Development & Planning

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

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

Christoph Gehlen – Dean, new TUM School of Engineering and Design

Hans Bungartz – Dean, Department of Informatics - and Graduate Dean

Christian Liedtke – Vice Dean, Department of Mathematics

Wolfgang Utschick – Electrical and Computer Engineering

Reinhard Kienberger – Vice Dean, Department of Physics

Tom Nilges – Dean, Department of Chemistry

Renate Oberhoffer – Dean, Department of Sport & Health Sciences

And I want to introduce you to Henry Winner, student representative in our academic senate! He will give you a warm welcome in a minute! But first, let your student colleagues take us on a campus tour! Welcome to T U M and enjoy your time!