

## Graduation Ceremony 2023

### June 29th, 2023 | Graduation Speech

Dear fellow graduates of the University of Potsdam,  
dear staff members,  
dear guests,

when I applied for the master's program in Potsdam in the summer of 2020 - from my childhood home that had actually been orphaned for a long time - I hardly knew what to expect in this place or when I would even get to know it. It was not until the following year that faces joined the many voices I got to know. And quite a few faces I had to assign new voices to, because they sounded so different than in 1.75 times the speed.

Many of you who are celebrating your graduation today, on the other hand, have known Potsdam for a long time, did your bachelor's degree here, or even grew up here. But what we have in common: We made it. Some of it with bangs and trumpets, some of it with completely unreasonable self-doubt, some of it with nothing more than a lot of trouble. And some of them we failed with flying colors. (In any case, I would not want anyone to have to work with my age determinations of star populations.) As a result, however, we now hold degrees in our hands that we can all be proud of in the face of exams that aimed to kick you out, Corona blues and rising cafeteria prices.

The paths to this degree, however, may have been as varied as the paths that led us to Potsdam. Some chose the direct path to their destination despite all the ups and downs. But for most of those I have talked to in my rather contemplative environment at the Institute of Physics and Astronomy, the path was by no means so straightforward. For myself, it is now almost nine years since I came to the supposedly irrefutable conclusion: physics is not for me.

But even though my path was not necessarily the clearest, it was an easy one. Others had already removed hurdles and had built bridges: The children's room I mentioned at the beginning - I still had it. My friends and relatives supported me instead of depending on me for support. I had parents whom I could ask about their college experience and who let me have my way with my life-unfit subject choice. I even got a scholarship for this subject and still got the indulgence of the conductors every time I forgot my semester ticket at home because of all the excitement about hyperfast runners, hot underlights and other stars with great names. I never had to worry about who I might run into on the dark Golm campus at night on my way to that home. And I could choose between different ways home, because I could rely on others to wrestle with VBB (transportation company) and SPSG (Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg), on others to fight for the reclamation of open spaces for students instead of a historicizing city center. For all this I say from the bottom of my heart: Thank you!

However, it seems presumptuous to assume that I could express this gratitude on your behalf, dear fellow graduates. For the fact that I am allowed to speak on this occasion is based on an honor that I owe only in part to my lack of steadfastness in my choice of subject and also only in part to the excellent supervision that I was privileged to experience at the University of Potsdam. To a good extent, I owe it to privileges I have enjoyed and struggles I have not had to face. But if you recognize yourself in some of the things I've listed, I encourage you to

formulate your own personal thanks to the people who have accompanied you this far. And where you do not recognize yourselves, I would like to encourage you all the more to be proud of what you have achieved all by yourselves.

With one conviction, however, I hope to be able to speak on behalf of everyone present: When I meet people in my future life who are faced with the choice of which universities to apply to, I will gladly recommend Potsdam to them.

Henrik Rose

Winner of the 2023 Graduate Award