

## **First-Semester Welcome**

### **Speech by the AStA (General Students' Committee)**

"Hello, dear first-semester students, dear students, I am happy to be here today. I am Angelo Camufingo and was supposed to be here with my AStA colleague Rasan Ali. We are both about to finish our term of office for the anti-racism department of the AStA and I will run again for the educational policy and teaching department. We did not want to miss this opportunity to welcome you today – even in this unusual format. Welcome to a semester that is off to an unusual start and also ended in an unusual way even before you got here.

It is still very important to us to show you again in this setting, that we as student body representatives are there for you despite everything, no matter if it is online or in person and we want to encourage you once again to network, to take the semester seriously and to embrace the situation. It's all a little different, but that doesn't have to mean that it has to necessarily be all bad.

I remember when I started out as a student that there were so many things that were new and exciting. What concerned me back then was mainly: what are all these new things, who am I meeting and how do I meet people, what do I even have to do, how well do I have to perform, what if I am not as good as I thought I would be. I think these worries are still the same, even with this pandemic. Even if it all seems even more complicated now.

We, the AStA, want to underline the fact that it is normal, it is human. The idea is not for you to arrive here and find that everything is great and there are no problems.

Of course there are problems and in addition to all the awesome things you experience, there will always be new problems and changes. You're becoming adults or are adults already, but it is a new phase of life nevertheless and we will be there for you right away. That is to say that AStA, the general students' committee, is committed to offering you free advice on many different issues, no matter if it is about financial things or social aspects. That is why it matters to us a lot, that you take notice. So please feel free to talk to us about anything. You can find us at [www.asta-up.de](http://www.asta-up.de), or if you just google AStA Uni Potsdam. At the same time we are not only responsible for advising, we also plan events, we help you carry out your own projects and get funding for them.

Among these projects and the things we offer, there is of course the Critical Introductory Week, which will take place from November 13, and we cordially invite you to join us, with many exciting events, on a variety of topics concerning discrimination, concerning the university. It will take place from November 13 to 27. Just feel free to check Facebook for the Critical Introductory Week or go directly to the website. Of course, it is also important for us to encourage you to really think about what it means to be active on your campus, and how you can get involved, how you can be politically active, how you can, for example, become part of the AStA or the student parliament, which after all elects the AStA. We really want to encourage you to do this - come to us, approach us, let us provide you with information about what you can do, what you want to do, and what else might be important. And do take it seriously that you have the opportunity to make your voice heard and change things at the university and also influence things at the university. Especially now that we are seeing times where it has become particularly important to raise awareness about how socially acceptable things like sexism, racism, or ableism are once again becoming. It is of particular importance for these matters, in particular, that students use their voices and get involved. We only recently had a situation in student parliament after an election where the AStA had to fight hard to make sure we have spots in an anti-discrimination department specifically for things like gender politics, against racism. And these are the issues for which we need your support.

Really think about it, don't just come here to the university to take a course. In this context, let me say that standard periods of study are surely a great thing, but that it is also important that you make yourself heard and make sure they know that the university is a space for you that you influence, that you shape for those that might come after you to this university. This is what matters to us, especially underlining the importance of your voice, the influence you have on committees, on the administration, on student body representation, on teaching - all these things are crucial. To understand that you do not only attend university, you also shape the university substantially and contribute in large part to how the university changes and what can happen here. In the context of internationalization, we were already told that we can be happy to have a larger number of students with a qualification obtained abroad and a higher percentage of women. And this is where I'd like to add some words in English: I'm very happy to welcome you at this university. It's super important to us, that you realize that you're a big part of the university, that you have the power to influence stuff and that you are very welcome and all the opportunities that you have at this campus, specifically for students. So, don't feel like you don't have a voice because you don't speak German perfectly. Don't feel like you don't have a voice because you don't speak German at all. So please feel free to contact us and talk to everyone that you feel like you need to, because your voice matters just as much as the one of German students.

With that said, we would like to welcome you! We look forward to meeting you. Join us at one of the AStA sessions. Google us, write to us - anything you can think of - Thanks!"