

New Year's Reception 2021 | Interview Universitätsgesellschaft (university society) Film Transcript

Chairman of the Advisory Board, Jann Jakobs

Moderator:

Of course, there is another area that is enormously important for implementing ideas and projects at the university, for generating helpers and employees from outside - and that is the Universitätsgesellschaft (university society). It is important because it spans a large network around the university. This network brings together friends of the university, former sponsors and people who want to do something good for the university and its students. That's why I'd like to ask Mr. Jann Jakobs, Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Universitätsgesellschaft, to take the stage, because he can give us an insight into what's been going on at the Universitätsgesellschaft in recent months, whether operations have been able to continue or whether all the projects have come to a standstill. What's been going on?

Jann Jakobs:

Well, a university society knows no standstill, not even in times of the pandemic, and of course that was a huge challenge for us as well, but I think we managed it quite well. We have also adapted to the digital environment. We essentially communicate from home. We also communicate digitally with our sponsors and supporters, and that works very well. But in the long term, it won't replace face-to-face encounters, and this should come to the fore again next year, as soon as the framework conditions are such that we can do it again.

Moderator:

We'll see some more pictures later. But the University of Potsdam has been around for 30 years now. How long has the Universitätsgesellschaft actually been around?

Jann Jakobs:

The Universitätsgesellschaft has been around for 29 years. That means that the Universitätsgesellschaft was founded one year after the university was founded. It then grew slowly, so to speak, and I think it is now quite respectable. We have over 1000 members. We also have 80 corporate members and we now want to take a firm course towards the 1500-member perspective. Of course, that's a big challenge, but I think we'll get there. It is important for us to find students and even more professors. We now have 180 professors as members. That includes alumni, but of course also current members of the faculty. You are all called upon, if you are not already, to become a member of the Universitätsgesellschaft Potsdam. So that we can offer you a platform to do good for the University of Potsdam.

Moderator:

And what projects are you currently pursuing?

Jann Jakobs:

At the moment, the focus is on structuring the work of the Universitätsgesellschaft. We want to do this in a way that is organized by department. We are founding so-called chapters. We now have five and we will establish more, so that we are always very close to the respective subject-oriented study programs. I think

this will bring a lot of benefits, because identification with specific projects will be better. Next year, we will establish a chapter in the sports area and in Jewish studies. Then I think we will be on the right track. The goal is that we also want to set up a so-called mentoring program for students in 2021. That is also going to be chapter-based. That is a big challenge, but we will tackle it and I am quite sure that we will succeed with broad support.

Moderator:

How can one image it: Do the projects come to you or do the projects come out of you?

Jann Jakobs:

It's reciprocal. Sometimes we come up with something, but that work has been presented and structured in these chapters very well. For example, the mentoring program is an idea that came from the nutritional sciences. And they've done some good groundwork there, and now we'd like to transfer that to other areas.

Moderator:

Can you already foresee what will take place thematically in the future? Where is the journey going? Which chapters will be addressed?

Jann Jakobs:

In terms of content, it has a lot to do with the pandemic. For example, we looked very intensively at the topic of "Digital sovereignty and digital resilience" as part of a lecture series. We found a lot of very well-known personalities who made their contributions there. I also believe that our relationship to work, to the organization of work, will undergo a change. The topic of "new work" will play a major role. Here, too, we are planning to hold an event. An important topic in Potsdam is, of course, housing, not only for students, but also for everyone else. Here, too, we want to deal intensively with this topic. I believe that the university can also provide a good platform for discussing future concepts of living together and housing. We have university expertise, but also expertise from outside, so I believe that very fruitful discussions can be initiated here.

Moderator:

Now I know that as a university society, you also have events where you put your ideas and your request out there and you put together the team that wants to participate in the implementation. If that all goes away now, how do you do that?

Jann Jakobs:

We're doing it digitally. For example, this lecture series will be conducted exclusively digitally. We had planned it differently at first. We wanted to do real face-to-face events, then we wanted to do hybrid events - those didn't work either. So the only option was the exclusively digital form, but we've adjusted to that quite well. What really surprised me is that this has since met with a huge response. So I think these new formats offer an opportunity for people who otherwise wouldn't be able to come to our events.

Moderator:

We are also curious to see what kind of feedback the viewers at home give afterwards. Did it work with the virtual New Year's reception or is it nothing? We don't know.

Jann Jakobs:

I can only warn against making the New Year's reception exclusively digital in the future. Because then afterwards, the reception sponsored by the Universitätsgesellschaft falls flat (laughs).

Moderator:

(Laughs) I know. And that would be very important for you - the get-together. Yes, and I think the exchange is also so immensely important. We've heard that in many places here. You can't have a university without meeting, without exchanging, without seeing each other, laughing and spinning ideas.

Thank you very much, we wish good luck for the projects and many sponsors and supporters.