

“When we know better, we can do better”

Different generations and expectations in German academic science

for the CRC 1540 EBM community on 11. October 2024 from 13:40 to 15:40

Universities are unique sites of work designed historically for particular kinds of people. The kinds of people and types of work in academic science have changed, but the institutional and cultural setting has not necessarily kept pace. Our academic system still rewards and supports people who offer exclusive, intensive devotion to science with no other commitments, or at least make it look like they are burning for the science. German labor laws, however, promote regulated work-time and workplace boundaries. We also experience generational change: differences among generations regarding orientations, values, priorities, based on lived experiences and socialization emerge and transform as careers unfold, as people retire and new ones join the system. These differences sometimes create clashes. As if that were not enough transformation and conflict potential, family and partnership systems have changed over recent decades in ways that mean fewer of us have someone who “has our back” in the private sphere that is necessary for living out an academic science career the way prior generations did. This talk will inspire reflection and generate conversation within and across the generations currently in our labs and universities, looking at how we influence and sometimes misunderstand each other, and offers some frameworks to reduce friction and increase positive experiences.

About the speaker: *Prof. Heather Hofmeister, Ph.D.*



Heather Hofmeister, American, is Full Professor for the Sociology of Work at the Goethe-University in Frankfurt and co-director of the interdisciplinary Center for Leadership and Behavior in Organizations (CLBO). She served three years as Vice-Rector of Human Resources Management and Development at RWTH Aachen University (at the time, the most male-dominated university environment in Europe) as the first woman in the Rectorate and while holding a professorship of Sociology with the specialty in Gender and Life Course Research. Hofmeister has served on several boards of trustees, editorial boards and Advisory Councils, including the University Boards (Hochschulräte) of the Technical

University of Munich, the TUM-Institute for Advanced Studies, and the University of Bamberg.

Hofmeister obtained her Ph.D. from Cornell University (USA) in 2002 and is a graduate of Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management in Cambridge, MA (USA) and the CTI Coaches Training Institute in London (UK) and holds other professional trainings. Topics in Hofmeister's research and public speaking include work, family, gender, leadership, careers, and science with a special focus on international comparisons in the sociology of work, life course and gender. She sets a priority on applying research into policy and practice. Her clients include many large research institutions including Max-Planck Institutes, Special Research Areas of the German Science Foundation, and many German and Swiss Universities, including their leadership teams. Hofmeister draws from a wealth of experience for leading workshops for academic audiences:

- 30 years of research experience in the sociology of work, gender, and life courses
- PI, Co-PI, and Senior Researcher on numerous grants, many with budgets from 1 Mio. -3 Mio Euro
- 22 years in German academia working 17 years as a professor, 13 of these as chair
- 18 years researching on academic careers
- 13 years on University Boards of Trustees
- 12 years as co-director of an interdisciplinary research institute
- 6 years as a professionally trained coach
- 3 years as vice Rector
- 2 years as Dean of Studies for a faculty of 40 professors and 6500 students in 12 fields of study
- 2,5 years as Department Chair (20 Professors)
- 2 years as the chair of the Board of Examiners for the Faculty
- 4 years on the University Senate Committee for Diversity and Equality
- 2 years on the University Senate Committee for Reaccreditation
- 9 years on the Faculty Ethics Board
- 3 years in the selection committee for Masters degree programs
- Numerous search committees, also as chair