

einblick

Study – Life – Research
Anhalt University

2026/2027



WORLD EXPLORERS:
Seven People shaping
Anhalt University.

4

Commitment

Nothing less than changing the world

8

Research

Grown on a moor, built into your house

12

Interview

Understand. Don't judge.

16

Studies

Making the earth a little healthier

20

Doctorate

Hands-on thinking, mind-driven design

24

Practice

Do it yourself, understand it yourself

28

Portrait

The woman who sees milk from a whole new angle



Publisher: Prof. Dr. Jörg Bagdahn
Head of Editorial: Pressesprecherin, Bettina Kranhold (v. i. s. d. P.), Telefon 03496 67 1010, presse@hs-anhalt.de
Editorial team: Bettina Kranhold, Katja Wallrafen
Translation: Hochschule Anhalt, Sprachenzentrum, Dr. Antonija Cavcic, Marcus Rau, Annika Rürup, Dr. Richard Slipp, Jana Loreen Sommer
Proofreading: Christiane Wichmann
Layout: formecho
Printing: GCC Calbe (Saale)
Note: The masculine form used in the texts refers to individuals of all genders — female, male, and diverse. In some instances, multiple forms have been omitted for the sake of readability. The editorial team reserves the right to shorten submitted manuscripts.



Prof. Dr. Jörg Bagdahn
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen

→ **Dear readers,**

Maureen Njaramba has brought her expertise from Kenyan climate protection programs to our university. Jasmine Tendo Mpoza from Uganda ensures that international students in Köthen, Dessau and Bernburg not only settle in well, but feel truly at home. Argentina's Alberto Iberbuden integrates mindfulness into academic pursuit. For this issue of "Einblick", we asked ourselves where Anhalt University of Applied Sciences would be without the people who come to us from all over the world. What would we be missing – in research, in the lecture hall, in Saxony-Anhalt as a whole?

Anhalt University of Applied Sciences has always understood cosmopolitanism as a stance. One which is practiced simply as part of daily interaction. The people featured here are researching the economic significance of peatlands, developing solar chimneys in international teams, and teaching food technology from a global perspective. Saxony-Anhalt needs this knowledge. Germany needs it. And the world that these people come from provides it.

We foster an international environment: in every seminar room, in every laboratory, in every conversation on campus. Take a look into our university cosmos and get to know the people who study, teach and research in Köthen, Dessau and Bernburg. We highlight what motivates them – and what would be missing if they were not part of our community.

We wish you a thought-provoking and inspiring read.

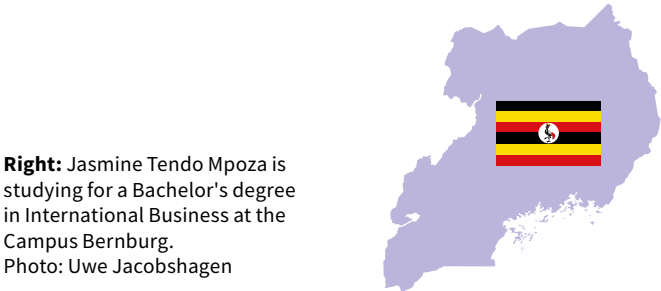
Prof. Dr. Jörg Bagdahn
President of Anhalt University of Applied Sciences

Department 2
Economics

Nothing less than changing the world

By Katja Wallrafen

Jasmine Tendo Mpoza came to Anhalt University of Applied Sciences from Uganda with big dreams, an even bigger drive, and a firm belief that change starts from within. A bridge builder - between cultures and continents, from dreams to reality.



Right: Jasmine Tendo Mpoza is studying for a Bachelor's degree in International Business at the Campus Bernburg.
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen





→ Uganda, lockdown, sometime in 2020. The schools are closed, many young people have no internet access, no structure, no prospects. Jasmine Tendo Mpoza was 16 at the time and founded an initiative with her siblings. Not because anyone asked her to. But because she sees what happens when young people, especially girls, are left to their own devices: depression, early marriages, disrupted lives. So she did something about it.

Jasmine is now 22, studying at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences. The initiative from back then (namely, “Teens of Positive Purpose”) still exists. Jasmine is the eldest of five siblings and came to Germany to study International Business. When she decided to study at Anhalt University, she had a clear goal in mind: Build businesses that not only generate profit, but also strengthen their community in Uganda. Children in Uganda often lack the most basic things such as schooling, prospects, and a safe environment. Jasmine wants to change that.

When a campus becomes one’s home

What she found at Anhalt University exceeded her expectations. It’s not because of big buildings or a bustling city life, but because of the people and the atmosphere. While the picturesque campus surrounded by nature was impressive in itself, she was even more impressed by the student-to-staff ratio: Professors who not only impart

knowledge, but also provide real support. They facilitate projects, establish contacts with companies, and take students seriously. She has also turned one of the projects into a start-up – sustainability and fashion –, which was her idea. When a university in Central Germany inspires someone to become an entrepreneur, Jasmine sees it as the perfect example of what good teaching should accomplish. Jasmine also felt Germany’s “Willkommens-

Suppose Jasmine Tendo Mpoza did not study at Anhalt Uni. What would we be missing out on?

Without Jasmine Tendo Mpoza, there would be no EMSO team of more than forty people, and no president who turned two enthusiasts into a movement. The university would not have a student who shows what it truly means to study internationally: not just gaining experience abroad, but building bridges – between cultures, between continents, between dreams and reality.

Left: Jasmine is committed to ensuring that international students at Anhalt University quickly settle in and feel welcome. Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen

International students are supported by a buddy program and can join clubs that actively promote diversity.

kultur” (the way of making newcomers feel welcome and supported) right from the very beginning. International students are supported by a buddy program and can join clubs that actively promote diversity. New students from across the globe – including Uganda, India, and Canada – quickly make friends here. “That makes Anhalt University an excellent choice,” she says.

From two to forty: An organization grows

In October 2024, Jasmine became a member of EMSO (the Erasmus Management Student Organization), an initiative launched by Anhalt University’s International Office. One month later, she was elected the initiative’s president. What began with two or three people grew under her leadership into a team of more than forty active members at all three campuses of Anhalt University. Their goal: welcoming Erasmus students, creating cultural exchange spaces, and firmly anchoring international networking at the university.

She learned a lot about leadership in the process: “The job of a leader is not to do the work for others, but to help others learn how to do it themselves.” At the end of March 2025, she handed over the reins to her successor team – not because she stopped shaping things, but because she felt the most important thing to leave the organization with was – independence.

Jasmine is about to complete her Bachelor's degree and then wants to go on to do a Master's. Incidentally, her dreams have not changed since she made the move to study in Germany, but they have become more concrete: Entrepreneur. United Nations. Strengthening communities. And somewhere in between remains her firm belief: “Change doesn't start with the whole world, but with one person – me.”

Right: Jasmine is an example for how a university education can lead to more: taking responsibility, connecting people, and initiating change. Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen



Department 3
Architecture, Facility Management
and Geoinformation



Grown on a moor, built into your house

By Katja Wallrafen

Where peatlands and ideas come together – Alexander Bieß combines climate protection, materials research and regional transformation. His dream: Turning a coal mining district into a carbon reservoir.



Left:
Alexander Bieß, researcher at
Anhalt University of Applied Sciences
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen



→ The name says it all: 'Paludi-Alex' (Alexander Bieß, certified engineer) is already two steps ahead while others are still googling what a 'moor' actually is. As a technical-strategic all-rounder, the 45-year-old turns complex interrelationships directly into projects. Technology, processes, people – he doesn't lose sight of any of the three, tries to keep all the balls in the air. What about rewetting peatlands? For him, this is not a conservation issue, but the signal for thinking about regional value creation and organic building materials.

Peatlands can do their bit in the 'revolution' of the building sector. Alexander Bieß does not dismiss ecological aspects. He takes a broader view. Combining seemingly different goals, such as climate protection, material innovation and regional value creation, is what interests him. The researcher is part of the berg research group at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences. His focus is on material innovation and tests, on the use of peatland mosses as a substrate for 'living walls' as well as on logistical and business management issues relating to biomass hubs. His work makes him part of three of Anhalt UUniversity's seven departments – a stellar example for how interdisciplinary cooperation can succeed.

Rewetting peatlands: A strategy for value creation

Peatlands are one of the key areas that determine the development of our climate. They store more carbon than all forests worldwide, yet they make up only about three percent of the land area. If they are drained, this effect is reversed. In Germany, around 95 percent of the peatlands have been drained. They are responsible for around 53

Above:
Alexander Bieß investigates the use of peatland mosses, among other things as a substrate for living walls.
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen

Below:
Peatland mosses – a renewable resource for sustainable building materials.
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen

»Peatlands can do their bit in the 'revolution' of the building sector.«

Alexander Bieß



million tons of CO₂ equivalents every year – around 7.5 percent of total emissions. This corresponds, roughly, to the emissions of Germany's cement industry.

"At the same time, there is enormous leverage here: Peatlands only make up around seven percent of all agricultural land, but are responsible for around 40 percent of emissions in the agricultural sector. Considering their size, that's a lot. Climate protection needs to factor in peatlands. It won't work without. Rewetting is the first step," says Alexander Bieß.

And this is where paludiculture comes into play – making use of wetlands. "Biomass grows on rewetted areas: reeds, typha (bulrushes), cotton-grasses, sedges or sphagnum mosses. These are regionally sourced, renewable, and have hardly been used in construction. I work on 'translating' these raw materials into building materials. Not as a simple copy of existing products, but as ones that follow a new material logic. Plant fibers undergo changes, in terms of structure, weight and behavior – thus opening up new possibilities," he explains. This could transform buildings into carbon sinks. "To me, paludiculture is more than just agriculture – it is a lever for establishing new links between the construction industry and climate protection."

The market structures are not there yet

Although much is technically possible, the market structures have yet to catch up. "The construction sector is responsible for around 40 percent of global emissions, yet bio-based building materials have hardly played a role to

date," says Alexander Bieß. "There is a lack of markets, value chains and clear framework conditions. It's a classic chicken-or-egg conundrum. The Paludi Media Lab's idea is to provide a link here, an interface between research, application and communication."

In the central German mining district, few peatlands are being rewetted. And this is where 'Paludi-Alex' sees an opportunity: The region can reposition itself by shifting from a source of raw materials to a hub for climate-neutral materials management. What used to stand for fossil energy can now become part of a new logic. A region formerly synonymous with fossil fuels is embracing a new era, where the transition away from coal meets the future of carbon storage. The biomass comes from rewetted peatlands and stays in the region to be processed there: "We turn landscape into material – and material into the future."

Suppose Alexander Bieß did not do his research at Anhalt Uni. What would we be missing out on?

Without Alexander Bieß, Anhalt University of Applied Sciences would lack the bridge between peatlands and the construction market. He is convinced that wet soils can be turned into climate-neutral building materials and a sustainable future for the region.



Photo:
Data collected by the drone is used to analyze growth and condition of the living wall.
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen

Department 5
Computer Science and Languages



Understand. Don't judge.



By Bettina Kranhold

Professor Uta Seewald-Heeg is the spokesperson for Anhalt University's campus in Köthen and Head of the university's Language Center. In her role as Vice-President, she promotes international exchange and equity. Here, she shares insights into how she creates spaces where everyone can feel welcome at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences.

Professor Seewald-Heeg, you are responsible for both the topics of international relations and equity at the university. What does that mean for your work?

→ **PROFESSOR UTA SEEWALD-HEEG:** International relations and internationalization mean much more to us than just exchanges with other countries – they are a central part of everyday university life. In my role, I support international collaborations, serve as a contact person for international students, and work closely with our International Office. It is particularly important to me that international students are not just seen as numbers or a growth factor. Everyone benefits from exchanges between different cultures and perspectives – science as well as society. My second important key focus, equity, is about making different perspectives visible and taking people with different needs seriously. Here, it is vital to listen, develop an understanding for one another and create an environment in which everyone feels equally comfortable – regardless of origin, gender or individual differences.

What role do international cooperations play in that?

We work with partners in Central Asia, China and Vietnam, among others. We are experiencing great interest in the German academic tradition in these countries, especially in practice-oriented training and dual degree programs. At the same time, we also learn from other viewpoints and perspectives. International cooperation is therefore not only a gateway to the world, but also a driving force for the further development of our university.

Left:
Prof. Dr. Uta Seewald-Heeg
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen

International relations and internationalization mean much more to us than just exchanges with other countries – they are a central part of everyday university life.

How are international relations and equity connected?

International relations and equity are inseparable, as both thrive on diversity. People bring different experiences, ways of thinking and cultural backgrounds to the table. That is why it is important to be open to other perspectives and not just take one's own point of view for granted. Particularly in an international context, it becomes clear that students from other countries have different approaches to tasks. For example, I have experienced that Asian students do not dare to publicly criticize others, especially older people or lecturers, as it is culturally taboo and could result in a loss of face. However, if you want criticism to be expressed openly during projects, you first need to create a mutual basis for this. Such experiences show that much of what we take for granted is shaped by culture. But this is precisely what holds the potential for a great learning process.

You also oversee the female professors program. What's happening there?

The female professors program helps to make women in science more visible and to systematically support them. It is not about giving women preferential treatment. It's about specifically promoting and supporting outstanding female scientists. At the same time, young women should see that a professorship can be a realistic career path. Visible role models play an important part in this. There are still challenges, especially when it comes to combining having a family and pursuing an academic career. Flexible working models, support services and an open approach to different life realities are therefore important.

What significance do internationality and equity have for society?

International cooperation creates understanding and long-term connections. People get to know each other, work together on projects and take their experiences

back to their home countries. This is an important basis for mutual trust and peaceful coexistence. At the same time, Germany is an ageing society. That's why we need exchange, openness and specialists from across the globe. International students who get to know our culture and gain experience at our universities are a great asset – both for the university and for society as a whole.

If you look back on your own career: What experiences have shaped your view of equal opportunities?

As a child, I experienced what it was like to arrive in a new environment and not understand many things at first. During my primary school years, my family moved to the Swabian Alb in the south-west of Germany. Many of the teachers there spoke the local Swabian dialect, which was almost like a foreign language for me at the time. I came home crying after the first day of school and said that I didn't understand the teacher. In hindsight, this was perhaps an early indication of the importance of openness and mutual understanding. Not everything is immediately self-evident and not every way of thinking is automatically right just because one is used to it. That's why I think it's important not to moralize, but rather to create understanding for one another. Progress usually comes about when people are prepared to listen and take other perspectives seriously.

Suppose Uta Seewald-Heeg did not work at Anhalt Uni. What would we be missing out on?

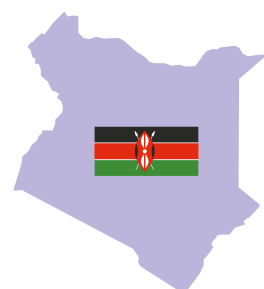
Without her, there would be a lack of exchange, diversity of perspectives and mutual understanding at the university. She is committed to bringing people with different cultural backgrounds, experiences and ways of thinking together.



Prof. Dr. Uta Seewald-Heeg is committed to open exchange and mutual understanding at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences. Photo: Anne Schwerin

Department 1Agriculture, Ecotrophology and
Landscape Development

Making the earth a little healthier



By Katja Wallrafen

Maureen Njaramba has worked in Kenya's Ministry of East African Community, helping to get trees in the ground and strategies off the ground. She is currently studying in the double-degree Master's program Sustainable Land Management and Conservation at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences.

→ Imagine you work in a government ministry of a country that is one of the world's most affected by climate change. You organize tree planting campaigns, design concepts for ecological restoration and know every day that the work you do truly counts. And then you decide to take a short break from all of this – and go back to school.

This is roughly how Maureen Njaramba's journey can be described. The 36-year-old from Kenya completed her bachelor's degree at the renowned Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and then threw herself into the thick of the action instead of looking for a cushy job. She worked in the Kenyan ministry that has 'Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs)' and climate policy in its portfolio. This is Njaramba's past, though. Currently, she is studying for a double-degree Master's in Sustainable Land Management and Conservation at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences.

Planting trees is just the beginning

What Maureen did at the ministry sounds like pure administrative work. But it wasn't. She handled ecological restoration programs attempting to reclaim landscapes that had been lost due to deforestation, erosion or over-use. Tree planting campaigns, sure. But also developing strategies, writing proposals, thinking in systems.

Kenya is not an abstract example of the climate crisis – it is one of its epicenters. Droughts, floods, the decline in biodiversity: In Kenya, these are not headlines, but everyday life.

Right:

Maureen Njaramba is studying for a Master's degree in Sustainable Land Management and Conservation at Campus Bernburg.
Photo: Sascha Perten



»I am grateful for the opportunity to be here and to gain new cultural experiences.«

Maureen Njaramba

Below:
Maureen Njaramba feels at home on Campus
Bernburg and enjoys that nature is close by.
Photo: Sascha Perten



Why Bernburg?

Why study at Anhalt University? Maureen has a clear answer to this: "It has a good reputation in the field of applied environmental and agricultural sciences, and the focus on hands-on learning was a deciding factor for me. It's not just a theoretical course, but one that breaks out of the lecture hall."

She is particularly enthusiastic about the excursions – out into the countryside, out into the action. The double-degree Master's program, a cooperation with an international partner university, is a symbol of the global orientation of Anhalt University. The fact that students like Maureen come here at all is no coincidence, but rather the result of a deliberate internationalization strategy, which enriches the learning environment for everyone.

Maureen feels at home in Germany, finds some stereotypes confirmed – and is happy about it. "I like the punctuality and reliability," she laughs. "I am grateful for the opportunity to be here and to gain new cultural experiences." And yet there is a bittersweet note: "I miss my family, my food and the colors of my home country, especially in winter when everything here looks so white," she admits.

Anyone who knows her homeland – the sunlight, the bright red flame trees, the orange hue of the earth – can imagine what a gray January morning in Saxony-Anhalt feels like in comparison. Homesickness is real, even if one goes in eyes wide open. Yet Maureen doesn't carry it as a burden, but as part of her story.

At some point, Maureen Njaramba will return to Kenya with another degree, some new methods, and knowledge of Europe from the inside. And perhaps she'll return with an idea of how to restore the landscapes she sees every day at home. Anhalt University will then be a small part of it.

Suppose Maureen Njaramba did not study at Anhalt Uni. What would we be missing out on?

With someone like Maureen next to you in a classroom, 'learning from one another' takes on a whole new meaning – with a fellow student who knows climate policy not from the textbook, but from frontlines of a government ministry.



Hands-on thinking, mind-driven design

By Katja Wallrafen

Alberto Iberbuden came to Dessau from Argentina – and stayed. As a doctoral student, he is researching how mindfulness can transform design education.

Left:
Alberto Iberbuden is a doctoral student at Anhalt University's Doctoral Center Architecture and Design Research
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen



»And I always keep coming back to the same question: How do designers think and act? And how can they become better at it?, he explains«

Alberto Iberbuden

→ When Alberto Iberbuden was still at school, he learned how to saw wood, shape metal and build electrical circuits. Not out of obligation, but because he was captivated by the things he could create with his hands. In his home town in northern Argentina, he attended a technical school that combined various disciplines. And while others were thinking about what they wanted to be when they grew up, Alberto knew: He wanted to understand how things are created.

From the southern winter to the German fall

He eventually studied industrial design at the Faculty of Architecture, Urbanism and Design in Córdoba, Argentina – designing products ranging from chairs to complex machines. Studying in Europe? That seemed unimaginable at first, but a small scholarship opened a door that he bravely walked through. In 2017, Alberto moved to Dessau to start in the Master's degree program in Integrated Design. He left the eternal summer weather of the Argentinian north behind him and discovered something surprising in the four distinct seasons in Germany: a new way of thinking. "In a country with a colder climate, I see how people engage in different activities depending on the season," he says. "I really liked that." Dessau wasn't just his place of study. It became his home.

Design and mindfulness: an unexpected combination

Today, Alberto is a doctoral student at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences and teaches design theory and design research in the master's programs. In his dissertation, he explores unfamiliar ground: The focus is on mindfulness practices and the question of how designers learn in the

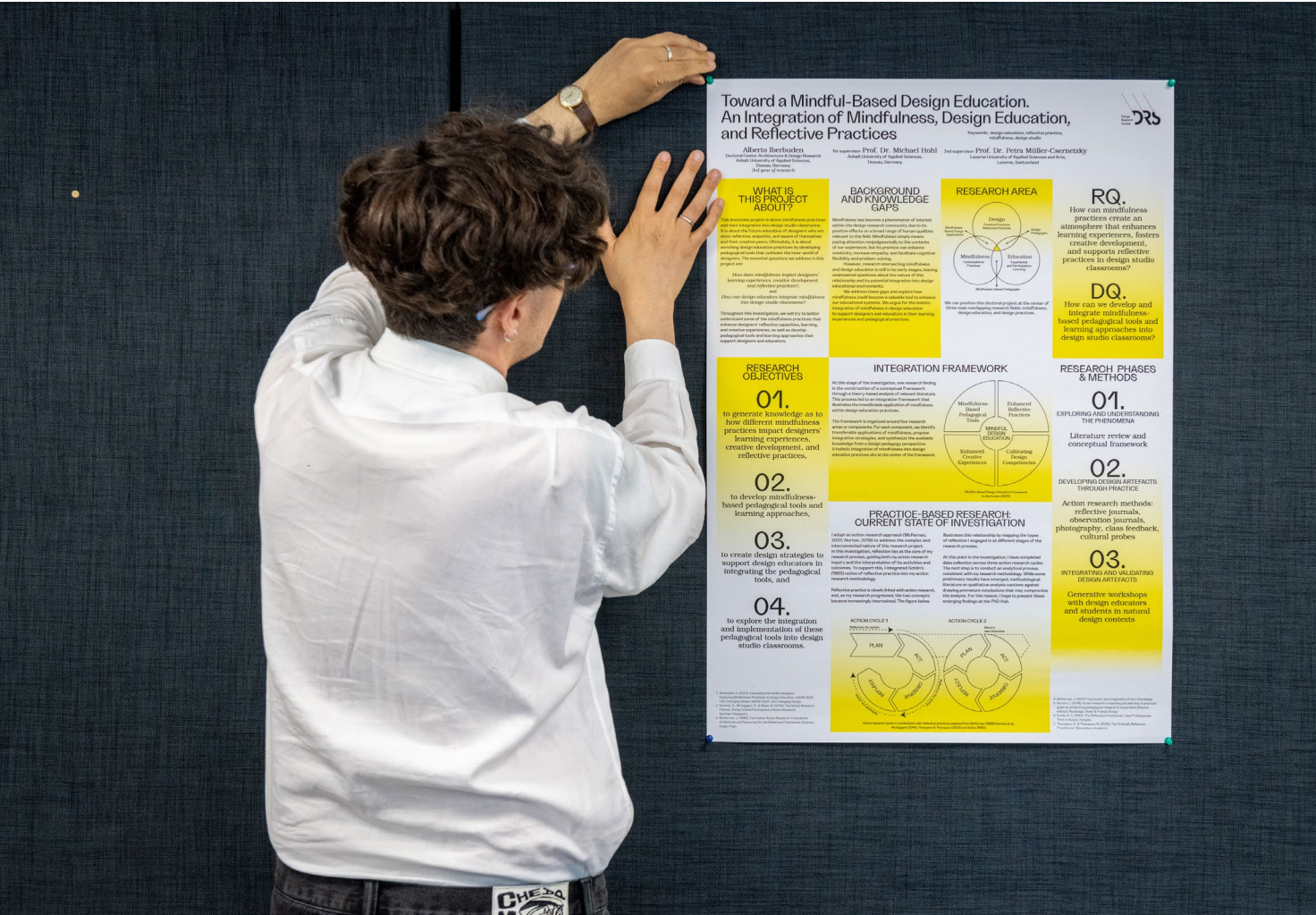


Above: Drawing is one of the methods Alberto Iberbuden uses to explore mindfulness and creative learning. Photo Uwe Jacobshagen

Top right: Alberto Iberbuden presents his research at the Design Research Society's international conference. Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen

Suppose Alberto Iberbuden did not teach and do research at Anhalt Uni. What would we be missing out on?

Without Alberto Iberbuden, we would lack someone who asks what goes on inside learners' minds - and who makes a science out of it.



first place. Specifically, he asks how meditation – properly embedded in instruction – can strengthen creativity, attention and empathy in design studies.

His approaches are anything but conventional: "It's not just about closing your eyes and concentrating," he makes clear. He has developed experiments in which drawing, walking, observing, listening and creative projects are explored as ways to achieve mindfulness. In real design classrooms, with real students. His central hypothesis: These practices not only benefit learners, but also change the entire learning system.

"Empathy and collaboration"

What drives Alberto can be summarized in a few words: He wants to develop new ways of imparting knowledge based on empathy and collaboration. As a holistic desi-

gner, his interests range from philosophy to systemic thinking. "And I always keep coming back to the same question: How do designers think and act? And how can they become better at it?", he explains.

The dissertation is almost finished. The results of his experiments are currently being summarized. In June, Alberto will represent Anhalt University at the Design Research Society Conference in Edinburgh – one of the most important meetings of the design research community worldwide.

From the technical school in Argentina to the design faculty in Córdoba and a doctorate in Dessau: Alberto Iberbuden has never stopped asking how things are created – and how people can grow in the process. In this, mindfulness is not an afterthought.

Department 6
Electrical, Mechanical and
Industrial Engineering

Do it yourself, understand it yourself

By Katja Wallrafen

Tim Poturnak has worked his way into the engineering degree program step by step – as a dual-degree student, with international experience and full commitment

Right:
Tim Portunak is studying for a Bachelor's degree
in the dual degree Electrical and Computer
Engineering program
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen



→ As a child, Tim Poturnak unscrewed his PC's circuit boards and started tinkering with them. Just as he had done with the model train that his grandfather had given him just before he died. Not because someone made him do it – but because he simply wanted to understand what was happening in there. Tim wanted to understand how it works. As there was no one he could ask, he tried to figure it out himself.

This attitude has never left him

He grew up in Dessau where he also completed his A-levels. Reflecting back on his school days, he quotes the German proverb, "ein gutes Pferd springt nur so hoch wie es muss" – basically, "Work smarter, not harder." Going to uni? Initially not an option for him. Instead, he completed a training as an electronics technician for devices and systems. And there he met an instructor who didn't ex-

plain much, and only helped once you had already tried things yourself. "Sink or swim," that's how Tim describes this motto. He found it tough at the time. However, today he knows, that's exactly what motivated him.

During his training, it was the same strict instructor who advised him to seriously consider going to uni and pursuing a degree program. And Tim paid attention. He found a position as a dual-degree program student at an engineering service provider, a Deutsche Bahn subsidiary, and began studying at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences.

Studying in a dual degree program: How it works

Studying at the university while also working, taking time off for exams, working as a tutor on the side – the dual degree program demands a lot. "You need a certain amount

It is genuine interest. Technology that he can touch and understand.

Left:
Tim is soldering a circuit board manufactured right at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences.
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen

of stamina," says Tim. But it's also fun. As a tutor, he and a fellow student taught other students – and this helped him realize how much he himself learned in the process. What drives Tim is not duty, ticking off things that have to be done. It is genuine interest. Technology that he can touch and understand. It is engaging with a course that doesn't just leave him in a lecture hall waiting to graduate, but instead throws him into the midst of professional life – and also allows him to think outside the box.

He traveled to Turkey as part of the ERASMUS+ project "Designing and Constructing a Solar Updraft Chimney with 3D Printing". Students from Ankara, Zagreb, Rosen-

Suppose Tim Portunak did not study at Anhalt Uni. What would we be missing out on?

Without Tim Portunak, Anhalt University would be missing out on a student who shows how far you can get with curiosity and perseverance. His eye for what is feasible and his desire to really understand things shape every team in which he works.

Below:
Soldering is one of the foundation skills in the Electrical and Computer Engineering curriculum.
Photo: Uwe Jacobshagen



heim and Köthen met at TOBB University in Ankara to jointly build chimney prototypes that convert solar energy into electricity. 30 students, five teams, and one week together.

"Ambition pays off"

Before seeing each other face-to-face, they had exchanged ideas online on a weekly basis, but the time in Turkey was a real-life experience: implementing designs, laying out electronics, testing prototypes. A special feature of the intercultural teams was their interdisciplinarity – architecture students from Ankara and Zagreb encountered engineering students from Germany. According to the task brief they were all given, the focus was on collaboration, not on functionality of the product. But in reality, it was different. While the architecture students enjoyed the creative process, the engineering students quickly turned the project into a functionality sprint. "Creativity came up against the need to control – and everyone lost a bit of sleep," smiles Tim.

Tim still has to complete his Bachelor's degree – he has yet to write his thesis. But a new engineering position is already on the horizon. And afterwards? A Master's degree program. Tim has plans. "Ambition pays off," he says at the end of the interview. It's easy to take his word for it.

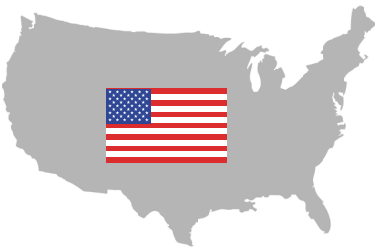
Department 7
Applied Biosciences and
Process Engineering



The woman who sees milk from a whole new angle

By Katja Wallrafen

Professor Zeynep Atamer has done research in three countries, co-initiated a “Memorandum of Understanding” with a top US university – and now calls Anhalt University of Applied Sciences home. Why this is really good news for all of us.



Left:
Prof. Dr. Zeynep Atamer teaches food technology at Campus Köthen.
Photo: Sascha Perten

→ Ankara. Stuttgart. Portland, Oregon. And now Köthen. The career stops of Professor Zeynep Atamer read like a world tour through dairy science. The professor of food process engineering with a focus on dairy technology packed her suitcase and moved from the Pacific Northwest of the United States to – Saxony-Anhalt. This is like winning the lottery for Anhalt University.

Dairy science – what’s so exciting about that? This is all about how we will eat in the future, how our intestinal health works and how food production can become sustainable and intelligent. Zeynep Atamer’s research is at the interface of microbiology, process engineering and digitalization – with a global perspective.

What sounds simple is in fact highly complex. Milk has a scientifically unique food matrix, a naturally structured system designed for growth and development. Initially, Atamer's research looked at the classic question of fermentation stability and product safety: How do you ensure the safety and shelf-life of yogurt and cheese? Today, her scope has widened. She asks about the role of dairy products in actively supporting our gut microbiome.

This is research of the future: After all, personalized nutrition, microbiome-friendly products and sustainable food processes are topics that are catching on worldwide. These issues have been on Zeynep Atamer’s mind for quite some time.

In Turkey, she learned to think like an engineer: broadly, system-oriented, technically sound. In Germany, precision was added - rigorous methodology, food safety of the highest standard, microbiology and process design as two sides of the same coin. And in the US? "Science became the driving force," she says. "At Oregon State University, I worked in an environment where third-party funding, start-up thinking and academic excellence are not at odds, but go hand in hand. Digital process monitoring and automation were not futuristic visions there, but standard procedure." Programs such as “BUILD (Building University-Industry Linkages through Learning and Discovery) Dairy” transferred research results directly into practice – fast, scalable, impact-oriented.

Suppose Zeynep Atamer did not teach and do research at Anhalt University. What would we be missing out on?

Without Zeynep Atamer, we would be missing an innovation-driven researcher. She connects academic research with the industry while not losing sight of societal aspects.

Research that really makes a difference

And it is this network that she has brought with her to Anhalt University. Zeynep Atamer’s part in the “Memorandum of Understanding” between Oregon State University and Anhalt University of Applied Sciences was not insignificant. This means that there is now an official agreement that enables student and research exchanges between Köthen and Portland.

At Anhalt University, she intends to build on what she learned in three countries: application-oriented research that really makes a difference. "The university's engineering profile is the ideal basis for this – an environment in which process engineering, microbiome research and digital technologies can grow together," says Zeynep Atamer.

»Dairy science – what’s so exciting about that? «

Prof. Dr. Zeynep Atamer

Below:
Prof. Dr. Zeynep Atamer teaches students about her field. And they learn to combine scientific depth with practical applicability.
Photo: Sascha Perten

Atamer’s students not only gain specialist knowledge about milk proteins, membrane filtration or cascade processes. Those who study with her learn to combine scientific depth with practical applicability – something that’s definitely sought after on the job market. Food companies are looking for people who not only understand processes, but can also design them.

From Portland to Köthen – that sounds like an unusual move. But for a scientist who has always gone where the most interesting questions are being asked, perhaps it makes perfect sense. The most exciting questions about milk, the microbiome and sustainable food production are not being pursued in cities. They are waiting to be explored in the lab.

