

## KIT Is University of Excellence

**President Hanselka: “Outstanding Success – With Its Concept, KIT Is One of Eleven Universities of Excellence“**



*Cheers after the decision: KIT is University of Excellence! (Photo: Markus Breig, KIT)*

**Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) was successful in the funding line of “Universities of Excellence” in the Excellence Strategy competition launched by the Federation and the Federal States. The concept “The Research University in the Helmholtz Association I Living the Change” will now be granted funding. For the next seven years, a total amount of EUR 105 million was applied for. KIT’s proposal focuses on strengthening excellent research at KIT. Other central elements are intensive dialog with society and providing reliable academic careers. This concept has made KIT one of eleven Universities of Excellence selected for funding by the Excellence Commission from a total of 19 proposals. The decision was announced on Friday afternoon (July 19, 2019) in Bonn.**

**Photos taken at KIT during the announcement can be downloaded [here](#).**

“This is a great day for the KIT, acquisition of funding as a University of Excellence is an outstanding success! KIT is one of four universi-

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ties in Baden-Württemberg that have succeeded in the most important and hardest competition of universities in Germany. A central element of our proposal is enhancing performance and agility of top-level research over the entire research spectrum, from fundamental research to application, by establishing 100 new professorships in the next ten years. Other central elements are intensive dialog and exchange with society and providing reliable academic careers. We will now push our ideas with all our efforts,” says the President of KIT, Professor Holger Hanselka. For this purpose, funding under the Excellence Strategy is highly important, he thinks and adds that funding as a “University of Excellence” also means an enormous image boost. “We want to attract many excellent scientists and students and further strengthen cooperation with partners from science and industry. The title “University of Excellence” is a distinction of all those people at KIT, who worked for this day. My special thanks go to them in particular!”

“KIT’s selection as a University of Excellence in a very special way reflects excellent interdisciplinary collaboration of scientists at KIT. We will use the boost of today to decisively push our further development in this sense,” adds KIT Vice-President for Research, Professor Oliver Kraft. “To strengthen excellent research, we will extend, among others, the concept of real-world laboratories to study and test new technologies in a real environment together with users and citizens. To promote young scientists, we will establish a university-wide tenure-track system. I am very happy that our proposal was successful. We thank all KIT employees from science, administration, and infrastructure for their outstanding commitment in the past years that is the basis of this success.”

The results of the competition for “Universities of Excellence” were announced by Federal Minister of Education and Research and Deputy Chairperson of the Joint Science Conference (GWK), Anja Karliczek, Science Senator of the State of Bremen and GWK Chairperson, Professor Eva Quante-Brandt, Chairperson of the Council of Science and Humanities, Professor Martina Brockmeier, and the President of the German Research Foundation (DFG), Professor Peter Strohschneider, at a press conference following the final meeting of the Excellence Commission.

### **The Research University in the Helmholtz Association | Living the Change**

The *leitmotiv* of KIT’s successful proposal is “The Research University in the Helmholtz Association | Living the Change.” It focuses on three central, interconnected packages of measures, called thrusts:

strengthening excellent research and its agility over the entire range from fundamental research to application, intensive dialog and exchange with society, and providing reliable academic careers.

**Thrust A: Strengthening Excellent Research** is aimed at further enhancing research performance and agility over the complete spectrum of work. To respond to the challenges facing society, additional research areas will be identified and further developed. In internal competition, KIT will promote highly innovative projects at the frontiers of science and at the interface between disciplines which are expected to give rise to scientific breakthroughs. Existing mechanisms of granting startup funding will be expanded to a comprehensive program for specifically enhancing flexibility in science and improving boundary conditions for the development of future-oriented research areas to large research alliances.

**Promoting Research by Interaction with Society (Thrust B)** will be of crucial importance to KIT. It is the objective to further establish KIT as a research university rooted in society. KIT will advance its successful concept of real-world laboratories, among others in the area of autonomous driving. Real-world labs are places, where researchers study and test new technologies in a real environment together with stakeholders and citizens, the aim being to develop scientifically excellent and viable solutions. Together with the already existing real-world labs, such as the District Future in the Oststadt of Karlsruhe, they will offer ideal prerequisites for future-oriented preventative research. The issues addressed in the real-world labs and the related societal needs will also be subject of the planned annual KIT Science Week. This is a scientific conference involving top-level scientists that includes dialogs with the public and other public science events in collaboration with the city and regional stakeholders. Through enhanced dialog with the public, KIT intends to consider societal feedback on science in setting its research agenda.

The third important element of the successful proposal is **Providing Reliable Academic Careers (Thrust C)**, among others by establishing a university-wide tenure-track system. KIT wishes to attract excellent young researchers in the early phase of their careers already and to offer an accompanying qualification in professional skills and support program, which ranges from orientation at KIT and career planning to intensive support during the proposal writing phase for a young investigator group of their own. To interest current students in pursuing an academic career, KIT will expand research-oriented teaching at selected KIT research facilities.

All three thrusts are embedded in a cultural change, with KIT addressing concrete needs for a KIT-wide culture of equality and equity of opportunities as well as diversity. This will include, for example, workshops to develop ideas for specific projects to promote equality and equity of opportunities, study and qualification programs geared specifically to attract female students and doctoral researchers, and a recruiting network of excellent senior female scientists. To significantly accelerate this cultural change, KIT will establish 100 new professorships within the next ten years.

### **KIT Is University of Excellence – Comments**

Professor Renate Schubert, Chairperson of the Supervisory Board of KIT: “Today’s decision in the Excellence Strategy competition is an internationally visible sign of KIT having consistently pursued with strategic foresight its goals in research, teaching, and innovation in the past years. The title of University of Excellence is a great distinction for this successful work and, at the same time, motivation for the further development of KIT as an institution unique in Germany.”

Professor Otmar D. Wiestler, President of the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centers: “I am very happy that “The Research University in the Helmholtz Association” again succeeded in achieving the status of a University of Excellence. This is a great success and confirmation of the Umbrella Strategy that has been implemented determinedly for some years now. I congratulate Holger Hanselka and all persons involved from the bottom of my heart.”

Dr. Frank Mentrup, Lord Mayor of the City of Karlsruhe: “Karlsruhe Institute of Technology is one of the central pillars of Karlsruhe as a location of education and a driver of innovations for local industry. We are proud of having such an institution in our city. Selection as a University of Excellence once again reflects the outstanding research achievements made there and their wide recognition throughout Germany.”

### **KIT in the Excellence Strategy**

Like no other institution in the German science system, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) is living the integration of university and non-university research. As “The Research University in the Helmholtz Association,” KIT stands for excellent research, outstanding teaching, and driving viable innovation. In September 2018, KIT succeeded in acquiring two clusters of Excellence in the first funding line of the Excellence Strategy: the cluster “3D Matter Made to Order” on 3D designer materials together with Heidelberg University

([www.3dmattermadetoorder.kit.edu](http://www.3dmattermadetoorder.kit.edu)) and the cluster “Post Lithium Storage” on new storage materials together with Ulm University (<http://www.postlithiumstorage.org/>). This success was the prerequisite for submission of a full proposal in the second funding line “Universities of Excellence” in December 2018. In March 2019, an extensive review in Karlsruhe followed.

Prior to the decision today, the international experts met on July 16 to 18, 2019, to discuss the 19 full proposals and the results of the on-site reviews, compare their findings, and derive a recommendation. Today, on July 19, 2019, the Excellence Commission consisting of members of the international committee of experts and the federal and state ministers responsible for research and science decided on funding.

**Photos taken at KIT during the announcement can be downloaded [here](#).**

**More Information:**

Press release of the Council of Science and Humanities and the German Research Foundation (in German):

[www.wissenschaftsrat.de](http://www.wissenschaftsrat.de)

<https://www.dfg.de/en/index.jsp>

Press release of KIT “Excellence Strategy: KIT is Successful with Two Clusters of Excellence“ (September 27, 2018):

[https://www.kit.edu/kit/english/pi\\_2018\\_120\\_excellence-strategy-kit-is-successful-with-two-clusters-of-excellence.php](https://www.kit.edu/kit/english/pi_2018_120_excellence-strategy-kit-is-successful-with-two-clusters-of-excellence.php)

**Being “The Research University in the Helmholtz Association,” KIT creates and imparts knowledge for the society and the environment. It is the objective to make significant contributions to the global challenges in the fields of energy, mobility and information. For this, about 9,300 employees cooperate in a broad range of disciplines in natural sciences, engineering sciences, economics, and the humanities and social sciences. KIT prepares its 25,100 students for responsible tasks in society, industry, and science by offering research-based study programs. Innovation efforts at KIT build a bridge between important scientific findings and their application for the benefit of society, economic prosperity, and the preservation of our natural basis of life.**

This press release is available on the internet at [http://www.sek.kit.edu/english/press\\_office.php](http://www.sek.kit.edu/english/press_office.php).

The photo in the best quality available to us may be downloaded under [www.kit.edu](http://www.kit.edu) or requested by mail to [presse@kit.edu](mailto:presse@kit.edu) or phone +49 721 608-21105. The photo may be used in the context given above exclusively.

This year's **anniversary logo** recalls the milestones reached by KIT and its long tradition in research, teaching, and innovation. On October 1, 2009, KIT was established by the merger of its two predecessor institutions: the Polytechnic School and later University of Karlsruhe was founded in 1825, the Nuclear Reactor Construction and Operation Company and later Karlsruhe Research Center in 1956.