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Ulm University honours early-career researchers Awards ceremony at Villa Eberhardt

Ulm University held an awards ceremony to recognise the outstanding achievements in research and teaching of its early-career researchers. The event, held at the end of April at Villa Eberhardt, focused on researchers who had received seed funding for their own research projects. In addition, certificates in university teaching methodology were presented, and the winners of Science Day were introduced once again.

"At the awards ceremony, we make a conscious effort to set aside time for our early-career researchers. Especially in the often hectic daily life of the university, it is important to create space for recognition and to bring these young researchers together," said Professor Dieter Rautenbach, Vice-President for Careers, in his laudatory speech. The initial funding for PhD graduates and postdocs in particular highlighted just how diverse research at Ulm University is. The funded projects range from the psychology of vision and cognitive strategies in searching to the sustainable production of fine chemicals and the mathematical determination of structure-property relations in porous materials. Another project focuses on measuring driver uncertainty in lane change maneuvers. The initial funding of 30,000 euros is awarded to support researchers in the early stages of their careers in launching their own research projects and submitting applications for third-party funding. The 2025 grant recipients were introduced at the ceremony: Dr Nicola Domenici, Dr Ann-Kathrin Kissmann, Dr Daniel Kowalczyk, Dr Andreas Obermeier, Dr Benedikt Prifling, Dr Marian Sauter and Dr Fei Yan.

The spotlight also fell once again on the two winners of the 'Young Researchers' Science Day' 2025. Medical scientist Dr Julia Téoule had won first place in October with her science pitch on biomarkers for the early diagnosis of endometriosis. Dr Christine Schillings, a health psychologist, took second place with her pitch on "Vagus nerve stimulation for improved body awareness". Vice-President Rautenbach also congratulated these two young scientists at the ceremony. At the Science Day in the autumn, they had each taken home a cheque for 50,000 euros and 30,000 euros respectively.

"With funding programmes and training opportunities like these, we aim to support researchers in the early stages of their careers, helping them to further develop their own ideas and prepare for the next step in their careers," emphasised Clarissa Gobiet, Co-Managing Director of ProTrainU, who hosted the awards ceremony.

"Good teaching makes a difference where it matters most: with our students"

However, the quality of a university is not defined solely by its research achievements. "Teaching is just as formative. It is the place where knowledge is passed on, questioned and reimagined," says Professor Olga Pollatos. The Vice-President for Teaching presented the certificates from the Baden-Württemberg Centre for Higher Education Didactics (HDZ) at the ceremony. In 2025, a total of twelve lecturers from Ulm University successfully completed the certificate. The qualification is undertaken alongside work and, with 200 study units, demands a high degree of commitment, reflection and dedication. The state's Centre for Higher Education Didactics (HDZ), which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, aims through its work to strengthen teaching competence and promote innovative teaching concepts. In the courses and seminars, participants learn how to present specialist knowledge in a way that is tailored to students, based on the latest findings in learning psychology and subject-specific didactics.

"Good teaching makes a difference where it matters most: with our students. It not only imparts knowledge, but also shapes learning pathways and supports people during a crucial phase of their lives," said the Vice-President for Teaching, who presented the certificates at a formal ceremony. The university teaching qualification and consultancy programme at the University of Ulm is coordinated by ProTrainU Co-Managing Director Dr Cornelia Estner, Head of the Centre for University Teaching. Certificates were awarded to Dr Jana Schellenberg, Dr Maximilian Förster, Dr Susanne Müller, Dr Ivonne Sehring, Dr Kirsten Reichel-Jung, Dr Kerstin Pfister, Dr Jonathan Schönfelder, Dr Vera Münch, Dr Katja Springer, Dr Maximilian Lutz, Katja Häußermann and Daniel Schmid. The ceremony was accompanied by Michael Staněk on the piano, performing pieces by Claude Debussy and Franz Liszt.

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Further information

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