

TUMscapeSynergizer

Sometimes it hits me what an amazing ecosystem of knowledge universities are. Later on in our lives, we will most probably not be embedded in such stimulating environments anymore. The TUM has over 150 study programs, labs, institutes and an excellent reputation worldwide.

Let's make more of our time here! Let's explore beyond the scope of our study programs and our faculty! That is much easier said than done though. Limited time and not knowing where to look make it hard to explore outside of the path carved out for us. The number of lectures and events across the entire TUM each day is staggering, let alone widening that scope to other institutions in Munich. There are info screens to inform us about big events and a lot of info is naturally shared on a peer-to-peer level: which lecture at another faculty is nice and easy and gets me ECTS, valuable info nuggets like that. While these channels are important, my proposal is to augment them with a new strategic systemic element: a full-time position to continuously scan the TUM and wider landscape for synergies. This person has access to all curriculums and is able to show cross-connections on a daily basis. As such, the synergizer can tell me things like: "You studied this algorithm today. Tomorrow the medicine students are learning about a device in which it is being used. And the day after the political science students are discussing the societal relevance of such devices". The synergizer is like a travel guide that can show you hikes and trips alongside your default study package tour. A lecture-series at another faculty that you can get credits for? A talk in the Deutsches Museum that happens to fit your seminar paper?

Compared to the existing role of student counsellor, the focus is beyond single faculties and on widening horizons and stimulating curiosity. You can always expect the synergizer to try to respond to your inquiries with suggestions that create real meaning for you. Leads you bring for interesting cross-connections will be cherished and passed on to other students with respectfully mentioning you as the source. By self-critically following up with students, the synergizer can continuously refine. Lecturers can also come for consultation on how to position a new lecture-format or to ask for help recruiting curious students for an experimental seminar. With these kinds of insights, the synergizer is also well positioned to advise TUM strategically about interdisciplinary efforts like seminars open to all or projects that span multiple disciplines. To ensure fresh motivation and to find innovative ways to fill this role, I would suggest having a new person every 2 years. For example, motivated Master's or PhD graduates that have been around the TUM, like to network, are good at opening doors and want to give something back to their university before moving on with their career. Someone who thrives generating added value for multiple parties by furthering the interleaving of educational offerings in Munich.

Having such a role can mean a solid competitive advantage for TUM compared to other universities. Many students chose a program without knowing very well what they are getting themselves into. The decision whether or not to stick with it can cause pressure. Getting inspiration on how to reconcile a chosen study-program with other passions one might have could ease some of it. Think of a student whose parents urged him to study and he chose astrophysics as he found it always interesting. However, he was really good in art at school and is missing it a lot. Maybe the synergizers hint that there is actually a field of astronomy that looks at constellations of stars in historic paintings to date them and to verify their authenticity, sparks his interests and helps navigate towards combining his interests.