

Small but smart: The Trier Center for American Studies

The American Studies program at the University of Trier has achieved a very good result in a new research evaluation by the German Council of Science and Humanities ('Wissenschaftsrat'). The young Trier Center for American Studies (TCAS) is a central part of one of the best small American Studies programs in Germany.

The 'Wissenschaftsrat', the most important science policy advisory council in Germany, recently published the findings of its first research rating of English and American Studies Departments in Germany, in which Trier's American Studies program scored very good results. In the categories that were evaluated, namely "quality of research", "reputation", "research enabling", and "transfer to non-university addressees" its performance was rated as "very good", "very good/good", and "good". In sum, American Studies at the University of Trier (staff: one professor, one part-time non-academic position) was rated to be one of the best small American Studies programs (category "small": up to three staff members; among them departments at universities of excellence such as Cologne or Constance) and rated among the best of the mid-size American Studies programs in Germany (category "mid-size": up to five staff members; among them departments at universities of excellence such as Freiburg or Heidelberg). This achievement needs to be acknowledged especially considering the high teaching load of those involved. Since only research performance was rated, it was not taken into account that the number of exams more than doubled within the Trier Department of English Studies while the number of professorships was cut from seven to six during the data collection period.

The Trier Center for American Studies received an excellent evaluation for its focus on knowledge transfer of research to non-university addressees. It was rated the best in this category among the group of smaller institutes for American Studies. Overall, it was positioned within the German Top 10 in this category and, with the rating "very good" (the best grade scored by smaller programs in any category), it was on the same level as renowned departments at universities of excellence, such as the John-F.-Kennedy-Institute at the Free University of Berlin or the Georg-August-University of Göttingen.

As the data collection period of the research evaluation dating from 2004 to 2010 coincides with the founding period of the TCAS, the positive evaluation results can be seen as a confirmation of the young center as one of the very special institutes among the American Studies Departments in Germany. This was recently confirmed by Prof. Alfred Hornung (JGU Mainz), the spokesperson of the evaluation committee of the 'Wissenschaftsrat' when he gave a lecture at the TCAS. Hornung especially commended the accomplishments at the University of Trier and emphasized that it was one of the important evaluation findings that very good research performance cannot only be found in major research centres and institutes with strong external funding but also in smaller institutes.

In order to enable smaller institutes such as the TCAS to conduct successful research, to attract visiting professors, to acquire external funding as well as to organize events (for example the large exhibition project on speed and rebellion - www.motorcycle-trier.de) a great effort is required from all sides. The organization by excellent secretarial staff, support by the

advisory board and members of other divisions of the English Department plus the voluntary commitment of a countless number of interns and students have all contributed to the TCAS now being able to call itself one of the best smaller American Studies research institutes in Germany.

Trier, December 20, 2012

Contact:

Prof. Gerd Hurm, Ph. D.

Director

Trier Center for American Studies (<http://www.uni-trier.de/index.php?id=14500>)

University of Trier

Universitaetsring 15

54286 Trier

Germany

(49) 651-201-2300

hurm@uni-trier.de