

University Teaching in Europe: Challenges and Perspectives

LMU München, 15 to 19 April 2010

The BRIGHT Conference is the annual convention of students from member universities of the League of European Research Universities (LERU). This conference, which is now in its seventh year, aims to provide students of excellence with a milieu wherein they can focus on themes crucial to their education and cultural growth, as the field specialists and stakeholders of the Europe of tomorrow. While LERU was founded to enhance the cooperation between Europe's top research universities, the purpose of the BRIGHT Student Conference is to build a strong communicative network between Europe's top students, and it provides a platform to discuss politically, socially and intellectually challenging topics that shape our present and future.

The 2010 Conference will deal with the theme **University Teaching in Europe: Challenges and Perspectives**. Teaching is daily business at every university. The conference in Munich aims to show how teaching is equally vital for the individual success of every student and as part of university policy, asking for models of good university teaching and considering how teaching interacts with research. This conference offers a unique opportunity for students to contribute their personal experience to the evaluation and improvement of teaching at their own and other European universities. The goal is to start a creative, interdisciplinary process to develop ideas and recommendations for university policy.

The program reaches out to all fields of study, from the social sciences, arts and humanities to the sciences and medicine. It will consist of lectures, panel discussions and eight working groups which will deal with the following questions:

1. How can university teaching be improved?

What examples of great university teaching are there, and what makes them exceptional? What kind of teacher training is necessary to provide excellent teaching? This group will focus on the qualifications needed by university teachers. It will cover all levels of teaching, from students offering tutorials to professors giving lectures, and explore different possibilities for providing good teacher training.

2. What kind of institutional framework does good teaching need?

This working group aims to find out which institutional structures offer the best framework for university teaching. What kind of administrative support can contribute to this framework, and how can tools like evaluation processes, teaching standards, and opportunities for student feedback be of use for innovative teaching?

3. How can university teaching profit from international collaboration?

This working group will investigate different levels of collaboration and networking between universities. How can European universities make (more) use of interoperability between their institutions? How does the Bologna process influence international learning and teaching experiences? What are the pros and cons of exchange of teaching staff, the assimilation of curricula and the competition between universities?

4. How can university teaching interact with society, politics and the economy?

This working group will try to assess the interdependence of society, economy, politics and university teaching. To what extent do they influence each other? This group will also explore the appreciation and the value of good academic teaching outside the university itself, the promotion of specific fields of study, and the negligence of others.

5. How can universities better integrate research into teaching?

How can students be better integrated into research processes? How can professors resolve the challenging conflict between teaching and research? What does an ideal balance between teaching and research look like in regard to different fields of study and levels of courses? What are good policies to integrate the value of teaching experience into academic careers?

6. Elite universities, elite students? In what way do these interact with university teaching?

Does being an elite university involve excellence in teaching? What does it mean to be an elite student? How can excellent students get involved in excellent teaching? How can universities best teach the best students while also making the weakest better? Is there such a thing as an elite?

7. How can universities deal with financial challenges in academic teaching?

“Money makes the world go round” – universities are no exception. How can universities create financial incentives for excellent teaching? How can teaching profit from the increasing financial involvement of industry and commerce? How can funds be funnelled more efficiently towards teaching? What is the market value of academic teaching?

8. How can university teaching develop its full potential?

University teaching is not limited to the classroom. The universe of a university consists of more challenges than studying alone. What kind of infrastructure do students need? How can universities coach and support students individually? Which aspects of university education will really influence students' career perspectives?

Ideal candidates should meet the following requirements:

- Have good communication skills in English.
- Have completed at least the third year of their studies with excellent results; Master and PhD candidates are also welcome to apply.
- Display interest in European institutions, especially LERU, with regard to the subject matter of the conference.

As a part of the selection procedure, we need:

- your CV,
- a motivation letter with a choice of two workshops.

The Organizing Committee will assign the selected students to working groups, bearing in mind the topics they listed in their motivation letters, as well as diversity in regard of fields of study, nationality and home university. The selected students will receive an invitation to prepare a discussion paper of 3000 characters on the topic of the assigned working group. Please be aware that all papers will be made available for preparatory reading on the “Bright 2010” website; the best papers will be considered for publishing.

The conference fee will be 50 € per student.

Further information about the conference will be provided with the invitation.

For questions, please feel free to contact the organizing committee at: Bright2010@lmu.de

Or check our website: www.lmu.de/bright2010.