

Aktuelle Meldung

Hasso Plattner's institutes in Palo Alto and Potsdam expand simultaneously

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Potsdam/Palo Alto. The Hasso Plattner Institute at the University of Potsdam (HPI) congratulated its sister institution at Stanford University on the school's expansion. Celebrating the inauguration of a new building in the center of the Palo Alto campus on Friday 7 May, Director Prof. Dr. Christoph Meinel presented a highly symbolic hightech gift to his colleagues from the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, Prof. David Kelley and George Kembel: two miniature communication robots in the shape of rabbits. Via an Internet connection, the two rabbits will be able to read out emails exchanged between Potsdam and Palo Alto, to announce the time at the respective partner institute, and to transmit "emotions" between the two teams on both sides of the Atlantic with the help of light signals or movement.

The gift from Germany will take up its station in the Peterson Building, one of the oldest of the Californian elite university, which was recently remodeled for the "d.school". The building now offers ideal working conditions for the Design Thinkers, with flexibly adjustable project areas for multidisciplinary teams. Guests lecturers or experts who join the innovation school temporarily will have apartments waiting for them; an arrangement expected to intensify exchange with the students.

"Our sister institutes in Stanford and Potsdam have been connected for years by more than just the name of our founder and patron", Meinel said. The objective was in fact to mutually promote innovative ideas for all walks of life that are needs-oriented, easy to use, and economically successful. "At both sites we realize the vision of a novel academic education concept that overcomes disciplinary boundaries and establishes an innovation culture shaped by interdisciplinarity", the guest from Potsdam pointed out. Prof. Ulrich Weinberg and his complete team at the HPI School of Design Thinking joined the festivities in Palo Alto through a video message.

Thanks to the new premises the capacity of the Californian HPI increases from 150 to 400 students. Likewise, the HPI School of Design Thinking in Potsdam will triple its capacity step by step over the summer. From the fall on, 120 students per semester can apply for the Design Thinking course.

Background: Design Thinking

The innovation culture named Design Thinking originated in California, to a great extent at the renowned Stanford University in Palo Alto (Silicon Valley). The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford or “d.school”, as it is called, began to teach Design Thinking in 2005. The school’s funder, Prof. Hasso Plattner, was also the one to transfer the model of an academic innovation school to Europe by establishing the HPI School of Design Thinking at his Potsdam-based university institute in 2007. The students in Potsdam and Palo Alto work on real-life innovation projects generated by renowned partners from industry, administration and society. The two sister institutes also explore the Design Thinking method academically. In a joint program they research how the method can be combined with other approaches common to the field of engineering to overcome the obstacles of time and distance often experienced by distributed developer teams. The supplementary course of one or two semesters at the Hasso Plattner Institute in Potsdam is intended for students who are nearing completion of their degree in another discipline. No more than 40 students can be accepted per course. The program, for which no tuition fees are charged, requires two days’ attendance per week. Those who complete the course successfully receive a Basic or Advanced certificate from HPI. The innovative aspect of this novel academic program is that both the five to six students per project group and their professors or teachers come from a variety of disciplines – only few of them specializing in IT. For example, the 40 students in the third program year are enrolled in 30 different disciplines. They are mentored by a multi-disciplinary team of experienced professors and lecturers from the Berlin metropolitan area. Students interested in lateral thinking can apply for the upcoming winter term by 31 July.

Please find more information at www.hpi.uni-potsdam.de

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