

Universities and the Public Good: Research, Education, and Democracy since 1945

Conference at Herrenhausen Palace, Hanover (Germany)
September 10 - 12, 2025

Supported by the Volkswagen Foundation



Conveners: Convener: Prof. Dr. Charles Dorn (Bowdoin College, Maine), PD Dr. Axel Jansen (GHI Washington), PD Dr. Charlotte Lerg (Amerika-Institut, LMU München), Prof. Dr. Till van Rahden (Centre canadien d'études allemandes et européennes, CCÉAE, Université de Montréal), and Dr. Richard F. Wetzell (GHI Washington)

Bowdoin

Université 
de Montréal



Program

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

1:00 pm	Arrival and Check-in Snack
1:30 pm	Welcome by Volkswagen Foundation Welcome on behalf of Conveners, Axel Jansen (GHI Washington)
2:00 – 3:30 pm	Opening Roundtable: Universities and the Public Good <i>Moderators: Axel Jansen / Charlotte Lerg</i> Suzanne L. Marchand (Louisiana State University/President-Elect, American Historical Association) Julie Reuben (Phillips Brooks Center for Public Service/Harvard University) Susanne Schregel (Københavns Universitet)
3:30 – 5:30 pm	Panel 1: Europeanizing Higher Education and Research <i>Chair: Richard Wetzell (GHI Washington)</i> Johan Östling (Lund University): European Awakening: Discursive Europeanization and Academic Embrace of Europe at Lund University, 1985–1995 Marie-Gabrielle Verbergt (Ghent University): Creating a European Institutional Identity: The Changing Ambitions of Ghent University in the 1980s and 1990s End of day 1
5:30 pm	Dinner
7:00 pm – 8:30 pm	Öffentliche Abendveranstaltung (in German) Podiumsdiskussion: “Können Universitäten die Demokratie retten?”

Welcome: Axel Jansen (GHI Washington)

Moderator: Johannes Völz (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

Julika Griem (Direktorin, Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen)

Ian McNeely (Professor und Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Shalini Randeria, (Rektorin, Central European University, Vienna)

Till van Rahden (CCÉAE, Université de Montréal)

Thursday, September 11, 2025

10:00–11:30 am

Panel 2: Changing Missions of American Universities

Chair: Charlotte Lerg (LMU München)

Ariel Yingqi Tang (Stanford University), The Re-invention of Academic Freedom

Ethan Schrum (Azusa Pacific University), The Instrumental University: Education in Service of the National Agenda after World War II

10:45 am –12:15 pm

Panel 3: Universities as Research Institutions since 1945

Chair: Charles Dorn (Bowdoin College)

Emily Andrea Steinhauer (Royal Holloway University), Women and the Post-Exile University: Intersecting Marginalities within the European and American Research Landscape

Linda Eisenmann (Wheaton College), Academic Women in the Postwar Landscape: The Impact of University Research Growth on U.S. Women's Careers

12:15–1:15 pm

Lunch

1:15 pm–2:30 pm

Young Scholars' Forum, Session 1: Ivory Tower in Context

Chair: Richard Wetzell (GHI Washington)

Senior commentator: Philipp Gassert (Universität Mannheim)

Amit Kumar Sharma (Jawaharlal Nehru University), Rethinking Education and Democratizing the Public Sphere: Post-Colonial Transformations and Justice Movements in German Universities since 1945

Peter Simpson (Rutgers University-Newark), The Third Mission Activities of German Universities of Applied Sciences

2:45 – 4:00 pm

Young Scholars' Forum, Session 2: Academia, Theory, and Justice

Chair: Karl Haikola (Lund University)

Senior commentator: Linda Perkins (Claremont Graduate University)

David Bates (Stanford University), Institutional Creativity and Avant-Garde Epistemologies: A History of Hybridization at Stanford

Georga-Kay Whyte (Brown University): Invisible People: Southern College Custodian in Community 1900 -1970

4:15 – 5:30 pm

Young Scholars' Forum, Session 3: Universities after 1990

Chair: Axel Jansen (GHI Washington)

Senior commentator: Sylvia Paletschek (Universität Freiburg)

Aron Schulze (Technische Universität Dresden), "Humboldtian Revision or Neoliberal Transformation? East German Universities after 1989/90 and the Fiction of a "Catch-Up Modernization""

Andrei Olteanu (Babes-Bolyai University), Engineering Excellence and Exodus: Communist Policies and the Post-1989 Brain Drain in Romania

End of Day 2

Dinner

7:00 pm

Public Keynote (in English)

Welcome: Charlotte Lerg (LMU Munich)

Moderator: Richard Wetzell (GHI Washington)

Mitchell Ash (Universität Wien), *title tbd*

Friday, September 12, 2025

10:00 – 11:30 am

Panel 4: Local Roles of Universities

Chair: Johannes Völz (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

Inna Semenenko (Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University), Displaced universities in Ukraine: catalysts for community development, social cohesion, and civic engagement

Mark Freeman (University College London), An Open Tradition at an Elite University: Extramural Education and the University of Cambridge since 1945

10:45 am – 12:15 pm

Panel 5: Epistemic Turning Points

Chair: Till van Rahden (Université de Montréal)

Gregory Jones-Katz (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt), Transatlantic Counter-Theoretical Culture Wars and the Global Role of Universities, 1980–2020

Adam Knowles (Universität Zürich), Analytic Philosophy and Neoliberal Governance: Exploring the Global Transformation of a Discipline

12:15 – 1:15 pm

Lunch

1:15 – 2:45 pm

Panel 6: A Plurality of Values

Chair: Raphael Rössel (GHI Washington)

Stefanie Coché (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen), Participatory Democracy as a Challenge and Resource for Evangelical Universities in the US: Balancing Conservatism and Diversity at Evangelical Colleges

Michael Hevel (University of Arkansas), LGBTQ+ College Students' Legal Activism and Conservative Backlash in the Age of AIDS

2:45 – 4:15 pm

Panel 7: Centers and Margins

Chair: Jonathan Zimmerman (University of Pennsylvania)

Christine Ogren (University of Iowa), The Urban University's Role in Expanding Democratic Access to Higher Education in the U.S.: Lyle Spencer's Trusteeship of Roosevelt University, 1945–1968

Ian F. McNeely (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), *The University Unfettered*

4.30 – 6:00 pm

Panel 8: Transatlantic Connections

Chair: Stefanie Coché (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen)

Ethan Ris (University of Nevada, Reno), *NGO and Association Involvement in Higher Education Policy in Post-War Germany and USA*

Caitlin Harvey (University of Hull), *American Private Foundations and British Colonial Higher Education, 1920-1970*

6:00 – 7:00 pm

Dinner

7:30 pm

Concluding Roundtable: Past Transformations and Current Uncertainties for Universities

Moderators: Ariane Leendertz (LMU München) and Jonathan Zimmerman (University of Pennsylvania)

Alexander Meyer (Universität der Bundeswehr, München)

Adam Nelson (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Ethan Ris (University of Nevada, Reno)

Anoush F. Terjanian (Human Rights Research and Education Centre, Ottawa)

8:30 pm

End of Workshop

Closing drinks

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