



## From the Executive Director

Dear Humboldtians and Friends:

Individual scholars of excellence have long been at the core of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's approach to research exchange, as demonstrated in the nurturing care and lifelong commitment of the Foundation to its alumni. Alumni, in turn, are invaluable partners of the Foundation and American Friends in our shared efforts to cultivate rising scientific talent and support international research collaboration. In North America alone, there are currently over 5,000 alumni.

As this edition of *Strata* illustrates, this is an exciting time for the alumni of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, as new alumni initiatives and programs both of American Friends and the Foundation come on line. Among the developments we are pleased to report on in this edition of *Strata*:

The **Alumni Council**, a standing committee of the American Friends Board of Directors, is now in operation and has issued its first call for proposals to support activities that nurture the intellectual and personal ties among alumni of the Foundation in the United States. Do you have an idea for an alumni activity? Then consider applying to the Alumni Council for support!

AvH President Helmut Schwarz in June 2009 awarded the first-ever **Humboldt Award for Innovative Networking Initiatives**—an annual award granted to the best proposals to cement academic and cultural bonds between Germany and the award winners' countries through the promotion of alumni networks in these countries.

As in the past, each year the Foundation supports **Humboldt Kollegs**—regional conferences for alumni—around the world. In 2009, the AvH sponsored 47 Humboldt Kollegs, of which four were organized by Humboldtians in the U.S. We encourage U.S. alumni to consider organizing a Kolleg. Please see page three of "*Strata*" for additional information.

Following consultations with the "**Humboldtians on Campus**," American Friends is undertaking some modifications to the program to give Humboldtians more effective promotional tools and support efforts to reach out to professional and scholarly networks beyond the physical campus.

These are just a few of the alumni efforts being spearheaded by American Friends, the Foundation, and individual Humboldtians. We at American Friends thank you for your engagement on behalf of the Foundation and look forward to forging stronger and more effective partnerships—to sustain your community and to ensure that the benefits of research exchange with Germany are passed on to the next generation of "individuals of excellence."

*Cathleen Fisher, Executive Director*

## AvH Grants First Humboldt Alumni Awards

On the occasion of the Humboldt Foundation's Annual Meeting in Berlin, June 8 & 9, the AvH announced the three winners of the newly established "Humboldt Alumni Award for Innovative Networking Initiatives."

The award, which was established in January 2009, is granted in recognition of alumni projects that have the potential to strengthen alumni networks and create or extend sustainable academic and cultural relations between Germany and the home countries of Humboldtians. The Foundation received a total of 41 applications from Humboldtians around the world; selected proposals came from Humboldtians in Nigeria, Togo, and Uzbekistan. In keeping with the Foundation's emphasis on excellence, there are no quotas, neither for individual countries, nor for particular academic disciplines. The AvH selected applicants who presented the most innovative and sustainable networking ideas.

A press release with additional details about the winners is available at <http://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/1085269.html>. The call for applications for the 2010 Humboldt Alumni Award will be announced later this year. Up to three awards will be granted per year, each valued at up to 25,000 EUR.

## Humboldt Foundation in Partnership to Advance "Research in Germany"

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation is partnering with the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and other German organizations to inform Americans about important developments in the German and European research landscapes. Under the "Research in Germany" umbrella, the organizations will present information on sponsorship and study opportunities in Germany, and on other initiatives such as the High Tech Strategy and the "Excellence Initiative," both designed to enhance Germany's international competitiveness in higher education, research and science and technology. Recent notable landmarks include:

- In June 2009, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Minister-Presidents of the German Länder agreed to continue the *Excellence Initiative* to promote world-class university research and the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation with non-university research organizations.
- The Humboldt Foundation is partnering with the DFG, the DAAD and other German science organizations to develop "*German Houses of Science and Innovation*" to showcase German achievements and competence. The first "embassies of science" will open in Tokyo, New York, Moscow, New Delhi, and São Paulo.



**American Friends of the  
Alexander von Humboldt Foundation**  
1012 14th Street NW, Suite 1015  
Washington, DC 20005

## **New Directions** *(continued from p. 2)*

events on university campuses, we will explore with the HoCs how we might support or help to organize promotional activities in other venues, for example, at professional or association meetings and conferences.

- **Develop messages and promotional materials that are tailored to the American market and easier for HoCs to use.** HoCs need to be armed with materials that address the specific concerns and needs of U.S.-based researchers in their respective fields and disciplines.
- **Integrate HoC promotions with alumni support.** The greatest strength of the HoC Program is the Humboldtians themselves. With the Alumni Council and the Foundation, we are exploring ways of combining HoC promotions with support of activities that strengthen the intellectual and social ties among the alumni of the Humboldt Foundation. In particular, we encourage HoCs to work with the new Alumni Council to develop proposals for alumni activities.

We invite all HoCs and other interested Humboldtians to review the revised program information and materials as well as the Alumni Council's call for proposals, contained in this edition of *Strata*. Materials are located at <http://www.americanfriends-of-avh.org>.

## **The Alumni Council: Call for Proposals**

### ***The Structure***

The Alumni Council (AC) is a standing committee of American Friends and endeavors (a) to support the work of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation; (b) to increase the involvement of Humboldtians in the activities and programs of the Foundation and American Friends; and (c) to promote and enhance intellectual and social activities among Humboldtians. To ensure a diversity of representation, AC members will be solicited through "Strata," the American Friends website, by e-mails sent to Humboldtians, and by other means. (The initial membership will be appointed by the AF BoD.) The AC will recommend members to the American Friends BoD, which will affirm the final selection.

AC members may serve up to two consecutive three-year terms.

### ***Goals and Objectives for the Alumni Council***

The AC aims to support all activities that serve to maintain and increase the intellectual and social interactions among Humboldtians. It also works with the AF BoD to actively promote the interests of Humboldtians and to recruit potential Humboldtians.

### ***Support through the Alumni Council***

Any Humboldtian or group of Humboldtians may solicit funding for a "Humboldt Alumni Event." Funds can be used as seed money for subsequent bigger events or as support for a self-contained activity that enhances the intellectual and social interaction among Humboldtians. Members of the "Humboldtians on Campus" Initiative, in particular, should take advantage of this funding opportunity.

### ***Funding Mechanism for Proposals***

Funding will be at a modest level. A maximum allocation of \$5,000 to \$8,000 per annum is expected. It is anticipated that individual funding requests will range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars.

Proposals should be submitted to the AF office to the attention of the Alumni Council. Proposal requirements and format can be obtained from the AF website.

The deadlines for submissions of proposals are October 31, 2009, and April 30, 2010.

### ***Evaluation of Proposals***

Proposals for funding should be submitted well ahead of the anticipated event (activity). Significant flexibility exists for the types of events to be funded. The AC is looking for innovative ideas to support its goals and objectives. Examples range from themed discussions over lunch or coffee sessions to funding for a speaker or seed money for a Kolleg.

The AC will evaluate all proposals and make its funding recommendations to the AF BoD. It is anticipated that funding decisions will be made within one month following the submission deadline(s).

### ***Further Information***

Proposals and requests for additional information should be addressed to the Alumni Council either at [alumnicouncil@americanfriends-of-avh.org](mailto:alumnicouncil@americanfriends-of-avh.org) or at c/o American Friends of the AvH, 1012 14th Street, Suite 1015, Washington, DC 20005.

## **AvH President Helmut Schwarz hosts Alumni Dinner in Washington, DC**

On August 18th, AvH President Professor Helmut Schwarz hosted an alumni dinner at 701 Restaurant in Washington, DC, for a small group of local Humboldtians. Professor Schwarz, one of the leading international researchers in molecular chemistry, travelled to Washington to address the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society (ACS). American Friends of the AvH participated at the ACS Meeting as part of the Research in Germany information booth.

The dinner offered Professor Schwarz an opportunity to meet with local Humboldtians to discuss their perspectives on U.S. German scientific exchange, transatlantic career paths, and developments in U.S. science and science policy that impact the Foundation's mission and goals. Attendees included recent German Chancellor Fellows, Feodor Lynen Fellows, a Humboldt Research Fellow and a Humboldt Research Awardee.

Professor Schwarz received a Max Planck Research Award in 1991 and is currently a professor of organic chemistry at the Technical University in Berlin. Humboldtians living in the south may remember him from an AvH Colloquium organized in 1999 for Humboldtians in Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas. Schwarz's presentation, *Holy Grails in Gas-Phase Chemistry: The Search for Elusive Molecules*, was part of a plenary session at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

## **American Friends to Undertake Alumni Visits Around the Country**

American Friends is organizing a series of university visits in 2009 and 2010 to meet with Humboldtians around the country and to promote the Foundation's sponsorship opportunities.

The meetings are intended to update alumni about various forms of alumni support from the Foundation—including the resumption of fellowships, and to gain valuable feedback about how American Friends can better support the alumni of the Humboldt Foundation.

On the first of such trips, Virginia Barth, Program Director for Alumni Relations, travelled to Boston in late March to meet with local alumni and Humboldtians on Campus in the immediate Boston area. Humboldtians at Harvard University, Harvard Medical School, Harvard Dental School, Brandeis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston College and Boston University shared information about their experiences in Germany, as well as their perspectives on transatlantic scientific and professional careers.

American Friends wishes to thank the following Humboldtians who gave so generously of their time and ideas: Jelle Atema, Mark Bathe, Hendrik Dietz, Steven Dowden, Gregory Freeze, Peter Galison, Julie Hausmann, Eugenio Marco, Bjorn Olsen, Klaus Rajewsky, John Sallis, Larry Scott, Dennis Shirley, Frans Spaepen, Maria Tatar, and a visiting Humboldtian from Italy, Donatella Di Caesar.

In late September, Virginia Barth will go to Texas to meet with Humboldtians in Houston, College Station, Dallas and Austin.

## **2010 German Chancellor Fellowship Alumni Meeting to be Held in Washington, DC**

The 2010 Annual Alumni Meeting for the German Chancellor Fellowship will be held in Washington, DC from Friday, April 23 to Sunday, April 25. The gathering will mark the 20th anniversary of U.S. participation in the fellowship program. The meeting, organized by Greg Moynahan (1997–98), will focus on "technology and society." Special recognition will be given to the classes of 1999–2000 and 1990–1991, as they celebrate their tenth and twentieth anniversaries, respectively.

Applications for the 2010–11 German Chancellor Fellowship are due October 31, 2009. Each year, the Humboldt Foundation grants 10

fellowships to prospective leaders from the U.S., the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. The goal of the program is to recruit future "multipliers" who, through their participation in the fellowship, will enhance bilateral relations between their home country and Germany. Various components of the program, such as conferences, seminars and a study tour, encourage extensive exchange between fellows from each of the three countries. The selection meeting will take place February 5–6, 2010, in Washington, DC. Application materials are located at <http://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/4074.html>.

## **American Friends to Participate at Neuroscience 2009**

American Friends will participate at the annual meeting of the Society of Neuroscience, October 17–21, 2009 in Chicago, Illinois. Cathleen Fisher, Executive Director of American Friends, will represent the Foundation at a workshop on Monday, October 19: *Neuroscience in Europe: German and EU Research Funding Opportunities*. The workshop will inform attendees about funding, fellowship, and grant opportunities in Germany and in the EU. First-hand information about the application process and the experience of working in Europe will be provided by current and former grant holders, including a Humboldtian in the field of neuroscience. The session will also provide an opportunity for informal exchange between members of the neuroscience community, leading German/European scientists, and representatives from German research funding organizations and the European Commission.

On Monday evening, the Germany Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the German Neuroscience Society and Solvay Pharmaceuticals will host a reception at The Berghoff Restaurant in Chicago for researchers interested in establishing contacts with German neuroscientists or working in a German laboratory.

Deirdre Kelly, Senior Program Director at American Friends will join representatives from German funding agencies at the Research in Germany booth (#2149) in the exhibition hall. Both the workshop and exhibit will take place in the McCormick Place Convention Center.

Humboldtians working in neuroscience are encouraged to distribute information about these events to young colleagues who are interested in learning more about opportunities offered by the AvH and other German funding agencies.

## **New Directions for the "Humboldtians on Campus" Program**

The "Humboldtians on Campus" (HoC) program is a collaborative partnership between American Friends and Humboldtians to promote AvH sponsorship opportunities in the HoCs' professional communities, universities or organizations. The program is open to all Humboldtians who demonstrate a continuing interest in the Foundation and in recruiting new Humboldtians. To date, American Friends has 55 HoC's located throughout the U.S., most of them at public and private universities.

During the summer of 2008, American Friends conducted an evaluation of the program's operation and impact. While the HoCs remain strongly committed to the Foundation, many encounter significant challenges in promoting the Foundation's programs on their respective campuses. The chief challenge, according to our survey: the limited time and resources available for organizing events—a problem which also often limits participation in promotional sessions.

After careful review of the evaluation results, American Friends will incorporate several changes which will result in more flexibility to the structure of the HoC program. Among the changes we will make:

- **Adopt a more flexible approach to HoC promotions:** We recognize that Humboldtians are active in a wide range of professional networks beyond their physical campus. In addition to supporting promotional

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*Humboldtians and Kolleg participants enjoying dinner at a Miami restaurant.*



*(H)=Humboldtian; L to R, Farida Jalalzai, Lisa Zwicker (H), J. Olsen, Joyce Mushaben (H), Petra Renner, Vice Consul, German Consulate of Miami (standing), Markus Wagner, Markus Thiel, Sarah Wiliarty (H), Melanie Kintz, Louise Davidson-Schmich (H) (standing), Jennifer Yoder and Angelika von Wahl at the participant discussion on "Gender and Governance."*

## Humboldt Foundation Provides Support for Kollegs

### **Gender and Governance:**

#### **The Case of German Chancellor Angela Merkel**

May 8-10, 2009—Miami, Florida

With the support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the International Association for the Study of German Politics, the conference investigated the influence of a political leader's gender on the governance of her country from an interdisciplinary perspective. Speakers examined German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel's first term in office from a number of perspectives in order to assess what role her gender has played in her governance of Germany. Participants represented a range of disciplinary approaches, including political science, international relations, history and law.

Organized by Humboldtian Louise Davidson-Schmich (German Chancellor Fellow 1996–1997), the event opened at the Red Fish Grill in Coral Gables, where participants enjoyed drinks and dinner on the ocean-view patio. Attendees, including Humboldtians and local participants interested in learning about AvH programs, were welcomed to Miami by Petra Renner of the German Consulate. After academic presentations in the morning, a casual lunch gave attendees the opportunity to network and learn more about AvH opportunities, including the Humboldt Research Fellowship, the Sofja Kovalevskaja Award, and the German Chancellor Fellowship. The afternoon session was followed by a wine reception and dinner at a local restaurant, where participants enjoyed Latin American food. The evening provided Humboldtians a chance to network and to reminisce about their stays in Germany.

Sessions concluded on Sunday morning with a roundtable discussion among the participants.

### **Nano-bio: The Next Transformative Convergence**

October 14–15, 2009—Roanoke, Virginia

This two-day conference, sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), will assemble world leaders in Nano-Bio to exchange ideas, present latest findings, provide networking opportunities, and charter fruitful directions for future research. The Kolleg is being organized by Humboldtians Tom Campbell and Romesh Batra of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia.

A diverse group of doctoral students, young researchers, and established leaders are invited to engage the new generation of rising talent in this emerging field, forge new collaborations among research laboratories and continents, and address numerous challenges and promises in the realm of the Nano-Bio sector. Speakers include Professor Ferid Murad, 1998 Nobel laureate in Physiology or Medicine. Humboldtians are invited to attend the Kolleg. Program and registration details are available at: [http://www.cpe.vt.edu/avhkolleg\\_nanobio/](http://www.cpe.vt.edu/avhkolleg_nanobio/).

Funding for Kollegs organized by Humboldtians is available by submitting an application to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Details and applications are located at [www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/32478.htm](http://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/32478.htm).

## Events and Conferences

American Friends represents the Humboldt Foundation in a variety of scientific conferences, career fairs, and academic meetings in the United States. Participation at recent and upcoming activities includes:

### **S.T.E.M. Career Fair for Postdoctoral Researchers**

July 22, 2009—Rockville, MD

### **American Chemical Society Fall National Meeting**

August 16-20, 2009—Washington, DC

### **German American International Network (GAIN) Annual Meeting**

September 18-20, 2009—San Francisco, CA

### **American University Job and Internship Fair**

September 24, 2009—Washington, DC

### **33rd Annual Meeting of the German Studies Association**

October 8-11, 2009—Washington, DC

### **Nano-bio: The Next Transformative Convergence (Humboldt Kolleg)**

October 14-15, 2009—Roanoke, VA

### **Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting**

October 17-21, 2009—Chicago, IL

### **MIT European Career Fair**

January 29-February 1, 2010—Cambridge, MA