



### Dear Humboldtians,

I wish you all the best for the New Year and hope that you tackle the tasks ahead of us with renewed energy and joy. It will be a challenging year that will bring many important decisions for our university.

We will have to deal with the austerity measures imposed by the Berlin Senate and the House of Representatives. On 19 December, we sent a clear joint signal from universities, research institutions, the student union, the student body and trade unions with the "Save brain city" rally. Around 3,000 people were visible and audible in front of the Berlin House of Representatives. I was very pleased to see so many colleagues from the various sectors on site. Many thanks to everyone who was there and to everyone who was involved in the preparations! The Academic Senate had also previously adopted a clear statement against the austerity plans at its December meeting. This cohesion is what makes us special and gives me confidence for the coming months that we will represent our concerns as a community.

The Berlin Senate has announced its intention to renegotiate the university contracts signed in February 2024 and valid until the end of 2028. To this end, the State Conference for Rectors and Presidents of Berlin Universities (LKRP), which I chair, has commissioned a legal opinion. The legal opinion confirms the validity of the university contracts and strengthens our negotiating position in the upcoming talks. At its January meeting, the Academic Senate will discuss the changes we are calling for to the current higher education agreement and the pressing issues that are not yet part of the higher education agreement that need to be addressed. This includes university construction: as HU, we are still waiting for the construction freeze on the building at Invalidenstraße 110 to be lifted and for this building, which is so important for our university, to finally be renovated and made usable again. The same applies to other construction projects that are urgently needed for research, teaching and administration. It will be important that the new financing and implementation models announced in 2024 are made feasible this year. We will also continue to push for the simplification and acceleration of various administrative and approval processes.

We are not unprepared for the austerity measures. We have built up a great deal of trust in the Berlin University Alliance in recent years. We can build on this when it comes to developing our research and teaching profiles together with the other universities in an even more coordinated manner. As Humboldt-Universität, we have shown that, if necessary, we are capable of drawing up our own consolidation plan, which also includes painful decisions. On behalf of the entire Presidential Board of HU, I would like to thank the Academic Senate for its approval of the Structure and Development Plan 2024, which is an important step on the way to balancing our structural deficit.

There are also important talks and negotiations on the new HU constitution that we submitted in December 2023. The Council has appointed a new constitutional commission, and the Senate Administration has begun to submit its statement on the new HU constitution section by section. We have a lot of work ahead of us in order to have a new HU constitution by the end of September 2025 that meets the requirements of the Berlin Higher Education Act and does equal justice to the institutional culture of HU.

For all these decisions, we need committed Humboldtians on the committees. I therefore invite you to take part in the elections to the Academic Committees on 14 January (tomorrow!) - a high voter turnout strengthens the democratic legitimacy of these important committees and gives us all a tailwind to actively shape HU.

2025 will also be a decisive year for us as part of the Berlin University Alliance: the Clusters of Excellence will be presenting themselves to international reviewers until mid-February. The decision on funding will be announced on 22 May. We are keeping our fingers crossed for all ten new and renewal applications that are supported by Berlin universities! At the same time, we are preparing the application for continued funding from the Berlin University Alliance: The submission deadline is at the beginning of August, and we are expecting the international reviewers at the beginning of November to show how substantially the cooperation in the Berlin University Alliance has advanced Berlin as an integrated science location. Cooperation is our best strategy - especially in times of dwindling resources.

However, 2025 will once again offer many opportunities to showcase the excellence and diversity of teaching and research at HU. Tomorrow, 14 January, the "Opening of the Quantum Year 2025 in Germany" will take place at HU, with Nobel Prize winner Wolfgang Ketterle giving the keynote speech. The Centre for British Studies, which stands for the close partnership with the UK and the relevance of UK-related research and teaching at HU, is celebrating its 30th anniversary. The Helmholtz-Zentrum für Kulturtechnik is also celebrating an anniversary, shedding a special light on the great importance of research and teaching in interaction with society for the HU.

We will continue to work on implementing our mission statement for teaching and address the importance of new technologies such as artificial intelligence for studying and teaching. We will continue our strong international and European commitment. Our European university alliance Circle U. will offer HU members more opportunities in 2025 than ever before. In addition to funding opportunities for students and researchers, Circle U. offers international courses, calls for proposals and networking meetings. The first joint Master's program on European Governance will also be launched this year with HU participation.

Research and teaching at the HU depend on good communication and reliable administration. We have also set ourselves ambitious goals for 2025 in these areas: The new website with the central areas of studies, research and international affairs as well as the university presentation will be launched in the fall.

The fight against antisemitism, racism and all forms of discrimination is a permanent task and a self-evident obligation for us. That is why, in addition to a wide range of current projects, we will continue to develop and strengthen the Centre for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging in particular as a central coordination office in 2025.

In short, we have major tasks ahead of us, which we will master well if we act together and maintain an open and respectful exchange, especially when things get difficult and controversial. With your support, your commitment and the solidarity of our partners in the Berlin University Alliance, I am confident that we will master these challenges and at the same time open up new perspectives for HU and Berlin as a centre of science and research.

I would like to thank you all for your work, your ideas and your commitment to HU and wish you all the best for 2025, both personally and professionally!

Yours

Julia von Blumenthal



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Photo: Stefan Klenke

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