The New Fiction of Good Science – in Need of a Paradigm Shift?! 

A Science Evening for Visionary Leaders 

May 6, 2021, Live-streamed from the NRW State Representation Building in Berlin 

Report – The Event Highlights
On May 6, 2021, the international Science Evening “The New Fiction of Good Science – in Need of a Paradigm Shift?” was live-streamed from the NRW State Representation Building in Berlin. The event brought together more than 20 experts from within and around the science community.

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Dear guests of the Science Evening,
Dear partners and friends of RWTH Aachen University,

Developments such as digitalization, Industry 4.0, changes in the world of work, and many more have a decisive influence on what and how we will live and learn in the future. Society as a whole is being confronted with new demands and constant change – especially when it comes to the job market and research. The historically evolved structures of the science system can hardly keep up with these challenges.

What far-reaching changes are therefore needed in university teaching? What can we learn from the coronavirus pandemic – firstly, regarding the innovative capacity of universities and, secondly, regarding an overdue redesign of teaching and learning formats? How can we best prepare students today for the circumstances that await them in the future? How can we create more marketable innovations to keep our economy successful? Last but not least: How can universities contribute to making the world a better place?

In short: What is “the new fiction of good science?” How can universities make a relevant contribution to the wellbeing of society?

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of RWTH Aachen University, we decided to try switching roles – from player to critical observer – and question the future viability of universities. We started this experiment on May 6, 2021, with the international Science Evening “The New Fiction of Good Science – in Need of a Paradigm Shift?”. The event brought together more than 20 experts who are directly involved or associated with the science community and was live-streamed to a wider audience from the NRW State Representation Building in Berlin.

This report provides you with a detailed overview of the topics and participants of the Science Evening “The New Fiction of Good Science – in Need of a Paradigm Shift?”

The full video of the event is still available at YouTube (the link can be found on the event website www.rwth-aachen.de/newscience). So far, an overwhelming 25,000 people have watched the video, and quite a number of them have commented and submitted questions to our experts. This highly encourages us to continue the discussion of “the new fiction of good science”, and we are happy to announce the new virtual series „The New Fiction of Good Science – Talking About…“, which will start by the end of 2021.

We look forward to discussing the most pressing challenges facing the academic and, in particular, higher education system with you. But first of all: we hope you enjoy reading this report!

All the best,

Manfred Nettekoven
Chancellor of RWTH Aachen University

Univ.-Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Dr. h. c. mult. Ulrich Rüdiger
Rector of RWTH Aachen University
German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel officially opened the Science Evening with a video address. She gave her welcome address in German, with English subtitles offered simultaneously.

Minister President Laschet, Professor Rüdiger, Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Lernen. Forschen. Machen.” (“Learning. Researching. Realizing.”) is the slogan for the anniversary of RWTH Aachen University which can now look back on a 150-year history. A hallmark of this university is the fact that it harnesses and implements insights from findings and research in the real world. The year of its founding, 1870 – against the backdrop of the industrial revolution – was characterized by major upheavals in the economy and society.

We face major challenges also today, including the pandemic, the digital transformation, and climate change – to name but a few examples. RWTH Aachen University keeps abreast of the time in seeking solutions to these challenges and is often even two steps ahead of the game. This is very much in keeping with its aspiration to number among the best technical universities in Europe.

The Federal Government sets great store with attractive conditions for science and research. It is for this reason that – in addition to financial assistance from the Länder – we are supporting universities to the tune of around five billion euro each year. The universities also indirectly benefit from the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation, for which we are making 120 billion euro available by 2030. These are all most worthwhile investments. After all, our universities have shown themselves to be engines of innovation for both their regions and the entire country.

Aachen is one such example. Whether hydrogen and quantum technologies or other research fields of the future – Aachen enjoys an excellent reputation as a region of innovation, thanks in large part to RWTH Aachen University. And so I hope that this university, steeped in tradition, will continue to be what it is now in the future – namely a flagship for Germany as a location for study and research.

All the best, and greetings to you all in Aachen.

German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel congratulated the University on its 150th anniversary via video message and said: “Our universities have shown themselves to be engines of innovation for both their regions and the entire country. Aachen is one such example.”
A Special Message From the Patron of the Science Evening, Armin Laschet

Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia Armin Laschet took on the official role of patron of the science evening. Here are some excerpts from his welcoming speech:

It seems quite unbelievable how a polytechnical school, which opened its doors on October 10, 1870, with 30 to 32 teachers and 223 students, has grown and flourished over the following 150 years. Today, RWTH Aachen University, with around 45,000 students, is not only the largest technical university in Germany, it is also one of the leaders in innovative research in Germany.

…

The coronavirus pandemic has acted like a magnifying glass here and has made us painfully aware of where digitalization in Germany is still lacking. We urgently need to catch up in many areas, especially in education but also in the health care sector.

…

Scientific knowledge must remain the most important compass of our society. This compass is not infallible, but it is the most reliable one we have. None of the major challenges we face can be solved without science.

…

We must work together to ensure that universities are and remain places for an open exchange of ideas and opinions.

…

Science and research must always be able to push the boundaries of previous knowledge and raise entirely new questions. At the same time, they must always face critical questions, explain results, and remain accessible to all those who are interested in its reasons and backgrounds.

…

It is precisely in this time that we need excellent science, we need RWTH Aachen University.
Panel on Third Mission

University Mission (Impossible?):
From Role Model to Supermodel

If the university wants to be a role model and even a „supermodel“ for innovation, it must open up, think, and act „outside the box“. It must be able to give space to happy coincidences and at the same time create reliable framework conditions for researchers and students. What does this mean for the university, then, if we think of it as the „box“? How can the institution shape research and teaching for the future? How can it make an impact that is locally embedded and internationally networked?

Perspectives from inside the „university box“ and from outside, including from business and the art world, were identified and presented by RWTH Professor Malte Brettel and Dr. Anne Schreiter in the panel „University Mission (Impossible?):
From Role Model to Supermodel“. They spoke with:

Prof. Dr. Thomas Girst, Global Head of Cultural Engagement, BMW Group

Stefan Hilterhaus, Artistic Director, Executive Director, PACT Zollverein

Prof. dr. Rianne Letschert, Rector Magnificus, Maastricht University (The Netherlands)

Dr. Wolfgang Rohe, Chairman of the Executive Board, Stiftung Mercator

Dr. Georg Schütte, Secretary General, Volkswagen Foundation

With his introductory question, Prof. Dr. Malte Brettel highlighted the multitude of changes as well as the options for taking action: “There are so many new things coming to the universities – third mission, digital learning, …. What should the university really do?”
One task of universities is to make solutions for major challenges scalable on site

Dr. Georg Schütte first took a look at his surroundings: Universities have a global responsibility as international players in teaching and research, in the development of key technologies, but also as drivers of social cohesion and as role models for intercultural understanding.

At the same time, however, universities are of course regional players that have a relationship with local residents and conditions. This also includes taking advantage of the opportunity to generate knowledge together with non-university actors, as in the case of structural change in the former lignite mining region of North Rhine-Westphalia, for example. Universities succeed in resolving the tension between local embedding and international networking if they manage to make knowledge scalable: „Answers should be found in local, but have to be scalable to global contexts.“

Universities are places of community and knowledge production with the potential to change under their own power

But what are universities actually, what is in the „box“? Wolfgang Rohe sees universities as characterized by two crucial components: They are people (a community of people) who, with their curiosity, collectively make a university a place of research and learning. In addition, universities are places of knowledge production – the way in which knowledge is generated has always changed.

Universities, therefore, have great potential to change not (only) because of external influences, but from within. The so-called third mission plays a role in this, but it should not be seen as an area detached from research and teaching, according to Rohe.

Research and teaching as the two supporting pillars of universities are supplemented by the third field of action of the third mission, which relates to innovation and transfer. According to Rianne Letschert, this third pillar also includes the social impact of research and teaching. According to the presenters Professor Malte Brettel and Dr. Anne Schreiter, the requirements and tasks that can be assigned to this concept „play a decisive role in making the world a better place.“

Teaching must be valued much more to enable innovation – universities must find good structural solutions for this purpose

Rianne Letschert made a particularly strong case for teaching from her university’s perspective: „In order for universities to keep meeting rapidly changing demands in society, we need to drastically and fundamentally change the way we recognize and reward our academic staff.“

The fact that academic career paths are still predominantly dependent on research output is, in her view, unhelpful. Letschert advocates equal and diverse career paths in research and teaching.
Since it is foreseeable that even after the pandemic, "virtual learning" and new formats will be expected as a natural requirement, there must be better incentives and recognition systems for committed and, above all, well-trained university instructors. However, not everyone can and should necessarily cover all areas; there is no "one size fits all supermodel". Early-career researchers, in particular, should have the choice to focus more on research or teaching early on.

**Universities should perceive and use „functional serendipity“ and space for experimentation as strengths**

Letshert recommended that students see a university as a place where they can not only prepare for their (sometimes uncertain) professional life but above all, get to know themselves with all their interests and talents – if universities manage to provide the right environment for this, the university will also remain relevant as a place.

Professor Thomas Girst supported the approach of seeing universities as places of guided trial and error, which thus offer space for „functional serendipity,” i.e., structurally enabled happy coincidences. Universities should therefore encourage students to look beyond their own field of study, to take a mental detour or two, and to even be open to that which is seemingly unimportant. Quoting Nitzsche, he also appealed to the students themselves to always remain mentally agile and interested and to also accept supposedly non-target phases of learning: "In order to be lightning, you have to be a cloud for a very long time."

Girst recommended that universities design the academic environment in such a way that failure is also possible – but also the „functional serendipity“ mentioned above. It is precisely the soft skills associated with this that will be increasingly in demand in industry in the future. Like hard skills, they should be learnable in the protected environment of universities.

Loosely quoting Nietzsche, Professor Girst appealed to the students to also allow themselves some time to learn things not directly related to their study goals: "In order to be lightning, you have to be a cloud for a very long time."

The following discussants joined the panel online (small images on the screen from left to right): Dr. Georg Schütte, Dr. Wolfgang Rohr, Prof. dr. Rianne Letshert, and Stefan Hilterhaus.
Innovation arises at areas of contact: Art can inspire new forms of knowledge production at universities

Stefan Hilterhaus advocated that universities should reach out and promote dialog with non-university places and actors for such a self-image – especially if these places and actors initially appear very different.

Using the example of the connection between BioTech and art, which PACT Zollverein made possible, he observed a great curiosity and mutual interest for this venture. Interacting with art forms, universities can then experience things from a completely different perspective and rediscover for themselves what should not be foreign to them either: embracing cross-disciplinary approaches, questioning routines, and constantly recalibrating what knowledge is really relevant.

In response to the question of what project he would propose to RWTH in order to make these ideas practically tangible, Hilterhaus devised a Center of Advanced Curiosity as a „huge social space for conferences, coffee, and cooperation."

The panel agreed that universities need to open up more to social issues and contribute to public discourse in order to make our world a better place.
Panel on Teaching and Learning

University 4.0: Teaching and Learning in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

How can universities benefit society in the best way? How will teaching and learning have to change to accomplish this? What potential already exists? The panel of international experts addressed precisely these questions in discussing the topic of “University 4.0: Teaching and Learning in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.” Prasanna Oommen moderated the panel discussion, which kicked off with two exciting keynotes.

Keynote by Lynda Gratton, Professor of Management Practice, London Business School, UK, and author of The New Long Life

“Longevity and technology are having a profound impact on human life course and this inevitably calls for deep innovation in learning and education.”

With her keynote at the Science Evening “The New Fiction of Good Science - in Need of a Paradigm Shift?!”, Lynda Gratton caused a bit of a stir with the audience who was following the event online.

Gratton outlined the change, required in her view, away from a three-stage life model of education, work, and then retirement. “We can no longer pack all our education into one phase of our lives!” she stressed.

Besides, it hardly makes sense to learn what machines and artificial intelligence can accomplish now and in the future. However, repetitive learning is still a significant part of young people’s education at universities, she said. Gratton calls for a new focus: In her view, the crucial skills are creativity and social skills.

These should be developed much more than before. And there should be more opportunities for creative people to meet. For Professor Gratton, the essential question for “Teaching and Learning in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution” is this: “How do we design new learning experiences that allow creative people to encounter others they’ve never met before?”

Gratton is convinced: “We can no longer pack all our education into one phase of our lives!” In her keynote, she made it clear that we need to move away from a three-stage life model of education, work, and then retirement. And she would also like to see more space and opportunities for creative people to meet.

“Is she roasting the whole education system?” was asked in the chat as the Professor of Management Practice at London Business School and author of The New Long Life spoke on the topic of “University 4.0: Teaching and Learning in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.”
Keynote by Anant Agarwal, Founder & CEO of edX, and Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, MIT, USA

“The COVID-19 pandemic rapidly accelerated the future of education, establishing a new model for education delivery. Although there will always be a place for in-person learning, the pandemic has illustrated that online learning must be a key pillar of every university’s strategy. In this new normal of blended learning, no school has to do everything on its own.”

The pandemic has confronted universities with a new normal. This was made clear by Anant Agarwal, founder and CEO of edX and Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in his keynote address “The New Normal in Education.” This new normal is based on the recent digitization of teaching and learning. The technology had long been there, but it was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that its widespread use was triggered by force. Universities were mostly able to react well to the situation. The question is this, however: How will it all continue after the COVID-19 pandemic? For Anant Agarwal, the new normal is a flexible mix of online offerings and face-to-face learning.

But, the now established online learning system is the biggest revolution in education that has happened in a very long time, he said. And, it is good for society, he adds, because it allows for much more individualized, flexible learning opportunities – for everyone, anywhere in the world. Agarwal’s approach is to offer so-called MicroBachelor’s programs, subdivided into learning chunks from which people from all over the world could put together their own individualized degree programs at universities worldwide – in a completely modular fashion.

For Agarwal it is always fun to dream about what the future will look like at our universities. The most important question for him is this: What systems can be created for learners to provide each of them individually with the best possible offers to reach their goals.
Panel Discussion

To what extent or what quality of digitization is necessary and efficient was the focus of the panel discussion “University 4.0: Teaching and Learning in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.” Prasanna Oommen spoke with:

Prof. Dr. Dr. Andreas Barner, President of the Stifterverband, and Member of the Shareholders’ Committee of Boehringer Ingelheim

Prof. Dr. Anna Karlsson-Bengtsson, Vice President of Education and Lifelong Learning, Chalmers University of Technology (Sweden)

Prof. Simone Buitendijk, Vice-Chancellor, University of Leeds (UK)

Raphael Kiesel, PhD Candidate; Chief Engineer of the Laboratory for Machine Tools and Production Engineering, RWTH

Moderator Prasanna Oommen held the discussion in the Panel „University 4.0: Teaching and Learning in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” among others, with Professor Simone Buitendijk (1st small picture from the top), Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds, who said: “We need to think harder about what we want for our students and how we want to prepare them for the future.” Also joining the discussion: Prof. Dr. Anna Karlsson-Bengtsson from Chalmers University (2nd small picture from the top), Prof. Dr. Andreas Barner, President of the Stifterverband (3rd small picture from the top), and Raphael Kiesel, RWTH PhD candidate.
The fact is that the COVID-19 pandemic has already changed teaching and learning worldwide. “The pandemic has shown us all that digitization is possible. The process has not always been perfectly successful in recent months, but it has been possible. Five years ago, a lecture available as a video was still the Champions League of teaching. But, that has changed within just a short time. Now we have to find the right formats and content to address students’ real demands specifically,” explained Raphael Kiesel.

But what are the demands, the appropriate formats, and content?
The panel reached the consensus that we cannot go back to the way things were before the pandemic. “We need to think harder about what we want for our students and how we want to prepare them for the future. We have to bring the real world into our universities. University is not like a boxed situation,” Simone Buitendijk explained.

The panelists had some exciting ideas to offer in this regard:
“Students need to be able to follow their own path across the different disciplines; they need to be able to choose their courses individually from all the disciplines in order to face the complex societal challenges,” Anna Karlsson-Bengtsson explained. “Hybrid teaching and learning is our short-term goal and improving these methods is also a long-term goal. Our society is changing, and with hybrid teaching, we have an opportunity to support lifelong learning.”

“There’s no doubt about it: We urgently need more quality data literacy. It cannot be that China is the only country in the world with a school-level textbook on artificial intelligence. We also need to strengthen students’ skills to help them start businesses. If we don’t take up these two aspects at our universities and educate our students accordingly, where else are young people supposed to learn about them both?” emphasized Andreas Barner.

“We need more global collaboration - and not just among developed countries. As universities, we must not just focus on our position in rankings. And we must not maintain our colonial attitude that we alone know what is truth and good for the world,” said Simone Buitendijk. “Students should learn how to change the world – globally!” If all universities collectively create a curriculum, it will be decolonized by definition.”

The first step in this process is the obvious homework that the panelists formulated for the universities: “We must not make the mistake of saying: we are now digitizing all Bachelor’s degree courses or something similar. Bachelor students also need to experience learning formats in which they can debate interactively. They have to learn effective discussion skills and how to agree with others – or not,” explained Andreas Barner. He further stated: “It would be vital for German universities to learn even more from those in the English-speaking world about how students work in teams on concrete projects.”
“We need to think of education more interactively; students need to be able to contribute their skills much more than they do now, and lecturers can act as guides to help them. Students should learn how to innovate but also how they can afford to make mistakes. And when they graduate, we can’t just have them leave for positions in industry, NGOs, politics, and others for good; we must always remain open to them,” outlined Simone Buitendijk.

“The curriculum in mechanical engineering, for example, has changed very little in the past decade, even though society and industry have changed significantly. We need to change that quickly, but we also need to find the right formats for teaching the necessary skills,” said Raphael Kiesel. “The future is hybrid, not online.”

Raphael Kiesel was not the only one to emphasize that ultimately, there must be face-to-face encounters. Yet there must also be offers for students who cannot participate in a campus setting due to their family situation or other circumstances. In the end, the how and the what is much more crucial than the where. Andreas Barner formulated these central questions: “How can universities help address the major challenges society faces today, such as new mobility, new energy, and sustainability? How can universities teach interdisciplinary skills better, and how can they help students develop their interdisciplinary thinking?”

Simone Buitendijk pointed to the influence universities could have if they were to join forces worldwide. “We should never forget we are training the next generation who need to change the world. Those universities that can teach in collaboration with others around the world are the ones that change the world.” The knowledge, quality, and reach of universities could be disruptive globally.
Panel on Innovation

Deep Tech, High Touch: The New University Innovation Ecosystem

Universities are places where a community of experts is continuously creating new knowledge – innovation is therefore also part of everyday life there. At the same time, university structures are finding it increasingly difficult to keep pace with the increasing demands placed on them by society. Universities are supposed to address the major global challenges, develop key technologies to keep Germany competitive as a business location, and adequately prepare the new generation of workers and social leaders for the future. How can they contribute to this while maintaining their freedom and independence? What ideas and processes from industry, start-ups, and social enterprises are revitalizing and renewing the self-image of universities?

The panel “Deep Tech, High Touch: The New University Innovation Ecosystem” found initial answers to what an ecosystem with players from different sectors needs to enable innovation.

Dr. Anne Schreiter and RWTH Professor Frank Piller welcomed:

Katharina Fegebank, Minister of Science, Research, Equality and Districts and Deputy Mayor of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg

Prof. Dr. Günther Schuh, Former CEO of Next.e.GO Mobile SE, Professor of Production Engineering and Director of the Laboratory for Machine Tools and Production Engineering WZL

Prof. Dr. Sabina Jeschke, until May 2021 Member of the Management Board for Digitalization and Technology, Deutsche Bahn AG (now Senior Advisor at Deloitte)

Thomas Rachel MdB, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Education and Research

Prof. Dr. Günther Schuh, Former CEO of Next.e.GO Mobile SE, Professor of Production Engineering and Director of the Laboratory for Machine Tools and Production Engineering WZL

Carolin Silbernagl, Founder & Managing Director, zukunft zwei
Innovation needs knowledge transfer – sector changes must become easier for this

“We need a new ecosystem for cooperation between universities and industry,” said Sabina Jeschke. Such a new ecosystem would emerge almost by itself if experts did not have to commit themselves to one sector. By working in multiple or alternating positions at universities, in industry, in NGOs, or in politics, knowledge can be better distributed and thus promote innovation. This is particularly true for technology transfer. Günther Schuh agreed, saying he would like to see the option of his career as a professor and as a founder as a viable option for even more of his colleagues at German universities. Universities should therefore encourage students to try out several roles at an early stage, for example by founding a company or getting involved in social and political activities, added Sabina Jeschke.

Why innovation? Universities offer great potential for innovation, but they need to more precisely define how they will contribute to a fair and sustainable future

But how can an innovation ecosystem actually be designed? First, Katharina Fegebank generally outlined this, using Hamburg as an example: The fundamental strategy is to create benefits for all city residents. Science plays a central role in this: „Use science as an engine for city development. To get the engine running, she says, cooperation with business, society, and politics is needed – something that paid off during the coronavirus pandemic, for example. The main task then, she says, is to enable the players to be open and connected with each other.

Carolin Silbernagl also addressed the role of universities in innovation ecosystems: In view of global crises with the environment, resources, and biodiversity, universities offer a true treasure trove of innovation: Where else do internationally networked experts from so many disciplines work under one roof to understand problems and develop solutions for them? This potential must be (better) exploited. To do so, universities must see themselves as a supporting structure of society and set themselves a clear vision of how they can contribute to a fair and sustainable future. „The University needs to work alongside society with constant contact points beyond conferences and campus rooms,“ is Silbernagl’s credo.
To achieve this, the self-image of science must evolve: The openness that Katharina Fegebank already mentioned as a prerequisite for innovation must then be reflected, for example, in the fact that scientific actors can work together with diverse social groups. Non-academics and groups of people outside the universities would then be less a pure source of data and more experts and discussion partners as equals. Silbernagl gave the example of how nurses were actively involved in the design of management processes in care facilities.

**Innovatively teaching innovation – universities should encourage explorative learning and curiosity**

The panel agreed that a changed self-image of science must also be reflected in teaching. According to Günther Schuh, universities should no longer primarily focus on lecturing, rather on research and testing learned skills and knowledge. More project work is needed, to integrate the aspects of „researching“ and „realizing“, he said, referring to the RWTH’s anniversary motto of „Lernen. Forschen. Machen.“

Real experiences from the corporate world – such as the fact that a large proportion of promising deep-tech innovations in this country went to investors from China, the US, and Saudi Arabia – would also have to shape university teaching, for example by integrating management and finance topics into engineering courses at an early stage. The question of what exactly a successor model to a traditional lecture might look like remained open, at least during the panel.

Sabina Jeschke emphasized the need to encourage students: Universities should give young people the confidence to concentrate on research areas in which they are not (yet) specialists. After all, it is precisely in these areas that innovations are usually still possible. But, this also means increased and stronger promotion of stays abroad, as they enable students to develop not only their self-confidence but also their language skills, cultural understanding, and soft skills.

New research areas that need confident creative minds include, for example, RWTH’s „Internet of Production“ Cluster of Excellence. With regard to the digitalization of production processes and the students’ growing commitment to sustainability Günther Schuh is convinced: „That is the opportunity of the digitalized world in industry and it comes with the sense of our young generation.“ Massive overproduction as a negative side effect of the industrial revolution could be stopped in the future – a real innovation.

Carolin Silbernagl sees universities as a true treasure trove of innovation with a clear duty to contribute to a fair and sustainable future.
What can remain the same? Access to education and investment in research and teaching are key conditions

Despite all the need for improvement and requests for change, at the end of the round, State Secretary Thomas Rachel emphasized the excellent conditions for science in Germany. The long-term nature and budget of the two major funding lines – the Excellence Initiative and the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation – clearly show the immense importance the German government places on universities and non-university research institutions. And Rachel would clearly keep one feature of the German science system: „We should keep our differentiated education system which is accessible for everyone, combined with high quality standards in teaching.“

Professor Frank Piller jokingly summarized the panel and the entire event:

„Innovation happens when ideas have sex.“

In closing, Prof. Frank Piller was asked to summarize the panel “Deep Tech, High Touch: The New University Innovation Ecosystem” in just one tweet: “The age of the single Einstein is over, being replaced by a connected interdisciplinary network of empowered students acting with purpose.”
Join the Discussion!

The Science Evening “The New Fiction of Good Science – In Need of a Paradigm Shift?!” kicked off a long overdue debate of great importance for our students, academic staff, future employers and employees, university leaders as well as policy makers.

Let us make sure the discussions started there will continue and remain in everyone’s mind!

The insights gained from the kick-off-event, the Science Evening, will subsequently be addressed in more in-depth virtual formats and discussed in smaller expert groups. Therefore, the new virtual series called „The New Fiction of Good Science – Talking About...“ will soon be launched. The topics will be directly related to the Science Evening. While the kick-off event on May 6, 2021, provided the big picture and future vision, the „Talking About...“ series is designed to be practical, topic-specific, and results-oriented.

Initially, three focal points are planned (working titles):
- The New Fiction of Good Science – Talking About...
  How Sustainability Is Driving Innovation
- The New Fiction of Good Science – Talking about...
  How We Envision the Future of Hybrid University Teaching
- The New Fiction of Good Science – Talking About...
  How Universities Positively Shape Social Change

Your questions and comments are very much welcome in this format: Join the discussion about the future of our academic system! Send your questions, comments, and suggestions to 150@rwth-aachen.de or post your contribution with #newscience. We look forward to discussing the most pressing challenges facing the academic and, in particular, higher education system with you.

More information and dates:
www.rwth-aachen.de/newscience

The Stiftung Mercator and the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft e.V. have kindly supported this event.

At the very end of the Science Evening, RWTH Rector Prof. Ulrich Rüdiger thanked the audience for the many comments and questions contributed. His personal take-home message and main homework as a result of the preceding discussions he described as follows: “Provide the right room and don’t lose the human touch.”
Chris Brid provided musical transitions with electronic beats between the lively discussion sessions.