

Press Release

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Identifying and Developing the Own Potential: Successful Participation in the “Leibniz Mentoring Programme”

Since 2011, the Leibniz Association has been offering the best possible support to highly qualified female researchers with a doctoral degree on their path towards a leadership position or a professorship by means of the “Leibniz Mentoring Programme“. Dr. Hellen Ahrens, Postdoc and Animal Welfare Officer at the Leibniz Institute on Aging in Jena/Germany, was one of the attendees in vintage 2016/2017.

Jena. In 2011, the Leibniz Association founded its “Leibniz Mentoring Programme“. This program started as a pilot in Berlin/Potsdam and has been open to all Leibniz Institutes since 2014. In addition to a mentoring tandem, a series of competence seminars as well as professional assistance during the process enable highly qualified female scholars to manage their careers in a targeted way, to expand their subject-specific networks and to take on managerial tasks with self-confidence.

Dr. Hellen Ahrens was the first candidate of the Leibniz Institute on Aging – Fritz Lipmann Institute (FLI), who successfully applied for vintage 2016/2017, which was officially closed in a celebration ceremony at the end of October 2017 in Berlin. Dr. Ahrens is postdoc in FLI’s research groups of Dr. Christoph Kaether and Dr. Julia von Maltzahn. Her research is focused on the functionality of muscle stem cells during regeneration and aging.

The core component of Leibniz Mentoring is the cooperative relationship between mentor — leading in her or his field of expertise — and a mentee, an up-and-coming female scholar with a doctoral degree. This so-called tandem meets at regular intervals, the goal being to reflect on the mentee's professional progress. The acquisition of key qualifications for future leaders, in particular in academia, is promoted in an accompanying program, which comprises skills seminars for the mentees.

„I am really grateful that PD Dr. Gerhild van Echten-Deckert from Life & Medical Sciences Institute (LIMES) at the University Bonn is my mentor. She strongly supported me within the past months“, says Hellen Ahrens. „My personal highlight during the Leibniz Mentoring was her invitation to Bonn, where I held a presentation within the GBM (Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology) lecture series “.

And also the mentor lauded the Leibniz Mentoring: „This initiative of the Leibniz Association is really exemplary; not only does the program support young female scientists in their career

development, but also strengthens their self-confidence and networking capabilities”, Dr. van Echten-Deckert states.

“The Leibniz Mentoring has provided me with many innovative impulses, which will have a sustainable positive impact on my career and personal development. I can really recommend every young scientist to work with a mentor – since feedback from an external point of view is always a big enrichment. I am sure that I can take advantage of my tandem far beyond the program”, Hellen Ahrens concludes.

All mentees of the fifth vintage (2016/2017) were honored in a ceremonial farewell in October 2017 by Prof. Matthias Kleiner, President of Leibniz Association. Concurrently, the new mentees and mentors of vintage 2017/2018 were welcomed. More information on the Leibniz Mentoring: <https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/en/careers/the-next-generation-of-researchers/leibniz-mentoring/>

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Background information

The **Leibniz Institute on Aging – Fritz Lipmann Institute (FLI)** is the first German research organization dedicated to biomedical aging research since 2004. More than 330 members from over 30 nations explore the molecular mechanisms underlying aging processes and age-associated diseases. For more information, please visit www.leibniz-fli.de.

The **Leibniz Association** connects 91 independent research institutions that range in focus from the natural, engineering and environmental sciences via economics, spatial and social sciences to the humanities. Leibniz Institutes address issues of social, economic and ecological relevance. They conduct knowledge-driven and applied basic research, maintain scientific infrastructure and provide research-based services. The Leibniz Association identifies focus areas for knowledge transfer to policy-makers, academia, business and the public. Leibniz Institutes collaborate intensively with universities – in the form of “WissenschaftsCampi” (thematic partnerships between university and non-university research institutes), for example – as well as with industry and other partners at home and abroad. They are subject to an independent evaluation procedure that is unparalleled in its transparency. Due to the institutes’ importance for the country as a whole, they are funded jointly by the Federation and the Länder, employing some 18,700 individuals, including 9,500 researchers. The entire budget of all the institutes is approximately 1.8 billion EUR. See www.leibniz-association.eu for more information.

Pictures



Picture 1:

Dr. Hellen Ahrens proudly shows her certificate on the successful participation in the „Leibniz Mentoring Programme“ 2016/2017. (Credit: FLI / Kerstin Wagner)



Picture 2:

Dr. Hellen Ahrens, Postdoc and Animal Welfare Officer at Leibniz Institute on Aging in Jena/Germany together with her mentor PD Dr. Gerhild van Echten-Deckert in Bonn. (Credit: private)