



The University of Stuttgart and students open start-up café

The University of Stuttgart supports a sustainable start-up culture by providing free space.

The University of Stuttgart is breathing new life into the rooms of the former Wittwer bookstore on the Vaihingen campus. As part of the project "Let US start!", the start-up cafe "frei[raum]" is making use of the space. The new concept is intended to encourage student start-ups, offering students an innovative working space and a creative working environment.

Lots of whiteboards, colorful post-its and the aroma of coffee: in the rooms of the former Wittwer bookstore on the Vaihingen Campus, students are lying on loungers talking to each other, or working together on a laptop. The atmosphere in the newly opened "frei[raum]" is comfortably relaxed.

"The name frei[raum] stands for flexible and innovative space", explains Fritz Otlinghaus from stuvus, the University of Stuttgart's student representatives. The University of Stuttgart's start-up initiative "Let US start!" initiated the project and the concept was developed as a close cooperation between stuvus and the university directors.

The aim of the project is that frei[raum] promotes the topic of start-ups, providing an open work space. In addition to practice-oriented courses and projects, start-ups are also encouraged to present their work, and lectures can also be held. Furthermore, students are encouraged to use the space, when no courses and projects are being held, as a start-up café, operated by stuvus. "With this hybrid concept, we want to create a new center for sustainable ideas and an interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge", says Eric Heintze, project manager of "Let US start!".

The first port of call for anyone interested in starting a company

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Otlinghaus adds: "We see ourselves as a central and uncomplicated point of contact for anyone who is interested in starting a company, and we can provide useful contacts." As a student himself, Otlinghaus knows how challenging a start-up can be. The 25-year-old is studying Simulation Technology and is currently developing his second start-up in IT-services sector. "With my first start-up, I would have welcomed support and tips from professionals."



The University of Stuttgart has established a start-up café in the former Wittwer bookstore.

Photo: University of Stuttgart

The café is open to all students, regardless of whether they are interested in starting a company or not. frei[raum] is a place to meet people, exchange ideas, to work together on projects, or just to drink a coffee, says the student.

A pilot phase of approximately two years is planned for this innovative concept. A successful one-week test phase took place at the beginning of July.

About the start-up initiative "Let US start!"

With "Let US start!" in 2018, the University of Stuttgart brought to life a new program, intended to encourage the start-up spirit in the university's students. "Let US start!" is centrally located in the rectorate's office and is supported by all university faculties as part of the university-wide promotion of start-ups. The project is funded by the



Stuttgart-based Vector Stiftung and is aimed at students from all subjects, giving students the opportunity to challenge themselves and gather their first experience of setting up a company. The aim is to introduce as many students as possible to the subject of entrepreneurship.

Further information: <https://www.student.uni-stuttgart.de/angebote/letusstart/>