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University of Vienna / Max F. Perutz Laboratories: WWTF grants for outstanding young scientists

Martin Leeb, Christopher Campbell and Jillian Petersen will come to Vienna

In the second call of the "Vienna Research Groups for Young Investigators" program of the Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF) three positions, each funded with up to 1,6 million euros, went to the University of Vienna: Two to the Max F. Perutz Laboratories (MFPL) of the University of Vienna and the Medical University of Vienna, and another to the Faculty of Life Sciences. The program supports outstanding young scientists who want to come or return to Vienna for their research.

Cutting-edge research is the basis for the development of new technologies and an important economic driver that ensures prosperity and jobs. The Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF) invests in key future areas to position Vienna as a knowledge center, now and in the future. One of the funding instruments of the WWTF is the "Vienna Research Groups for Young Investigators" program, which was first advertised in 2010, and aims to recruit outstanding talents to Vienna to set up their own research groups. The program funds outstanding young scientists with up to 1,6 million euros to secure long-term research agendas, and also to retain them in Vienna.

"I am very pleased with the successful outcome of the WWTF call for the University of Vienna. We once again show our strength in research and our ability to recruit excellent scientists to Vienna," says Heinz W. Engl, Rector of the University of Vienna.

Two positions for the Max F. Perutz Laboratories

"We are proud of this outstanding result: from over 160 candidates from all over the world in the pre-selection, we supported nine candidates for the application to the WWTF. Of these, six were invited to the hearing and two were ultimately successful. These numbers underline that the MFPL are an attractive research institute and are internationally competitive," says a pleased Graham Warren, Scientific Director of the MFPL. Already in the first call of the "Vienna Research Groups for Young Investigators" program in 2010, two positions went to the MFPL: Claudine Kraft and Alipasha Vaziri were granted funding.

Martin Leeb returns from Cambridge

The 2014 call brings Martin Leeb back to Vienna, where he had completed his PhD in 2009, before continuing his career in Cambridge at the MRC Stem Cell Institute. Together with his colleagues he was the first to establish artificial stem cells with only one set of chromosomes. These "simplified" cells allow determining the effect of a genetic modification much more easily than "normal" cells with two sets of chromosomes.

Christopher Campbell comes from the University of San Francisco to the MFPL

The second successful candidate, Christopher Campbell from the University of San Francisco, studies the details of chromosome segregation, a process that is often impaired in cancer cells. "We are pleased to expand the circle of WWTF-funded group leader in 2015 and to welcome these two promising young scientists to the MFPL. They will surely be an asset to our institute," says Warren.

Jillian Petersen comes from the Max-Planck-Institute to the Department of Microbiology and Ecosystem Research

The Australian Jillian Petersen is currently working as a Postdoc at the Max-Planck-Institute for Marine Microbiology in Bremen. "During the last years she has published sensational results and one of her articles even made it on the cover of the journal Nature," says Michael Wagner, Head of the Department of Microbiology and Ecosystem Research and the Department of Microbial Ecology. Petersen's group will be the seventh in the department and will investigate the interaction of symbiotic bacteria with marine shells, and so expand the existing research focus "symbiosis". The whole team is thrilled about this achievement and the many opportunities to cooperate with Ms. Petersen," says Wagner.

Further research funding for MFPL scientists

December was a month of joy for the MFPL: Besides the two WWTF grants, Angela Hancock was awarded an ERC Starting Grant at the beginning of December: Angela Hancock was initially a Postdoc at the MFPL and has been a group leader since July 2014. The Special Research Program "RNA regulation of the Transcriptome", which involves six research groups from the MFPL, one of the University of Vienna and six of the neighboring institutes at the Vienna Biocenter, will also be funded for another four years by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). A joint project of Dea Slade and Gosef Gotzmann from the MFPL and the Campus Science Support Facilities GmbH at the Vienna Biocenter for the microscopic visualization of DNA damage will be funded by the WWTF for three years with more than 500,000 euros.

"In addition to the 3,7 million euros from the WWTF, we will be funded with another 1,6 million euros from the European Research Council and 4,8 million euros from the FWF. This third-party funding to support our research and infrastructure will ensure that the MFPL can continue to do top-class research and so recruit the top talents to the institute," says Graham Warren.

Online Press Release:

<http://www.mfpl.ac.at/about-us/press-media-info/pressdetail/news-detail/wwtf-grants-for-outstanding-young-scientists.html>

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About the Max F. Perutz Laboratories

The Max F. Perutz Laboratories (MFPL) are a center established by the University of Vienna and the Medical University of Vienna to provide an environment for excellent, internationally recognized research and education in the field of Molecular Biology. On average, the MFPL host 60 independent research groups, involving more than 500 people from 40 nations.

About the University of Vienna

The University of Vienna, founded in 1365, is one of the oldest and largest universities in Europe. About 9,700 employees, of whom 6,900 are academics, work at 15 faculties and four centres. This makes the University of Vienna Austria's largest research and education institution. About 92,000 national and international students are currently enrolled at the University of Vienna. With more than 180 degree programmes, the University offers the most diverse range of studies in Austria. The University of Vienna is also a major provider of domestic continuing education. In 2015, the *Alma Mater Rudolphina Vindobonensis* celebrates its 650th Anniversary.