



Press Release

New Humboldt Professorship in applied microbiology for the University of Tübingen

Professor Largus Angenent from Cornell University receives Germany's largest monetary international research prize

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Professor Largus Angenent.
Photo: Robyn Wishna/
Cornell University

The University of Tübingen is to host a third Humboldt Professorship. Germany's largest monetary international research prize brings applied microbiologist Professor Largus (Lars) T. Angenent to the University of Tübingen's Geoscience Department. Previously he conducted his research at the Department of Biological and Environmental Engineering at Cornell University, New York. The Humboldt Professorship is sponsored with €5m over five years. Professor Angenent will hold a chair of environmental biotechnology.

“Geoscientific and environmental research at the University of Tübingen receives an added international boost from the appointment of Lars Angenent,” said University President, Bernd Engler. “I am sure that Professor Angenent will not only bring new impetus to the research in Tübingen; he will also be able to step up international networking in the field,” Engler added.

Angenent will build bridges in two different ways. On the one hand, he creates a connection between environmental and medical microbiology; on the other hand, he links up basic research with a problem-oriented, applications-based discipline.

He has worked on microbiome characterization in air, bioreactors, and lungs. For example, he developed a method with which all microbes in the air of a building could be logged – for instance, to track down the source of airborne disease in a hospital. In the area of environmental technology he was one of the first scientists to work on storing energy

from renewables with the help of microbes. In this process, solar and wind power are used to produce hydrogen gas, which microbes convert into methane – a gas that can be stored. Professor Angenent is also interested in the production of soluble biochemicals from wasted materials and the capture of carbon produced by industry. Yet, he is also involved in basic research, which helps us to better understand the biochemistry and energetics of microbial metabolic pathways.

46-year old Angenent was born in the Netherlands. He studied environmental science and microbiology at the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands. In 1998 he completed his PhD in environmental engineering from Iowa State University. From 1998 to 2008 his career took him to various positions at the University of Illinois, the University of Colorado Boulder, and Washington University in St. Louis. He has been a professor at Cornell University since 2008, with a year's sabbatical at the University of Ghent from 2014-15. He has received a number of awards, including the US National Science Foundation's CAREER Award in 2007, and the 2015 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities.

The Humboldt Professorship brings top international researchers to Germany. Candidates are nominated by the universities and the winners are selected by the Humboldt Foundation. The Foundation has selected three candidates for the Humboldt Professorship in the current round 2017. The Professorships will be awarded at a ceremony in May 2017.

Angenent is the University of Tübingen's third Humboldt Professor. The Professorship was awarded to the linguist Rolf Harald Baayen, who came from the University of Alberta in 2012. And last year the plant geneticist Marja Timmermans came to Tübingen as a Humboldt Professor from Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories, New York.

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