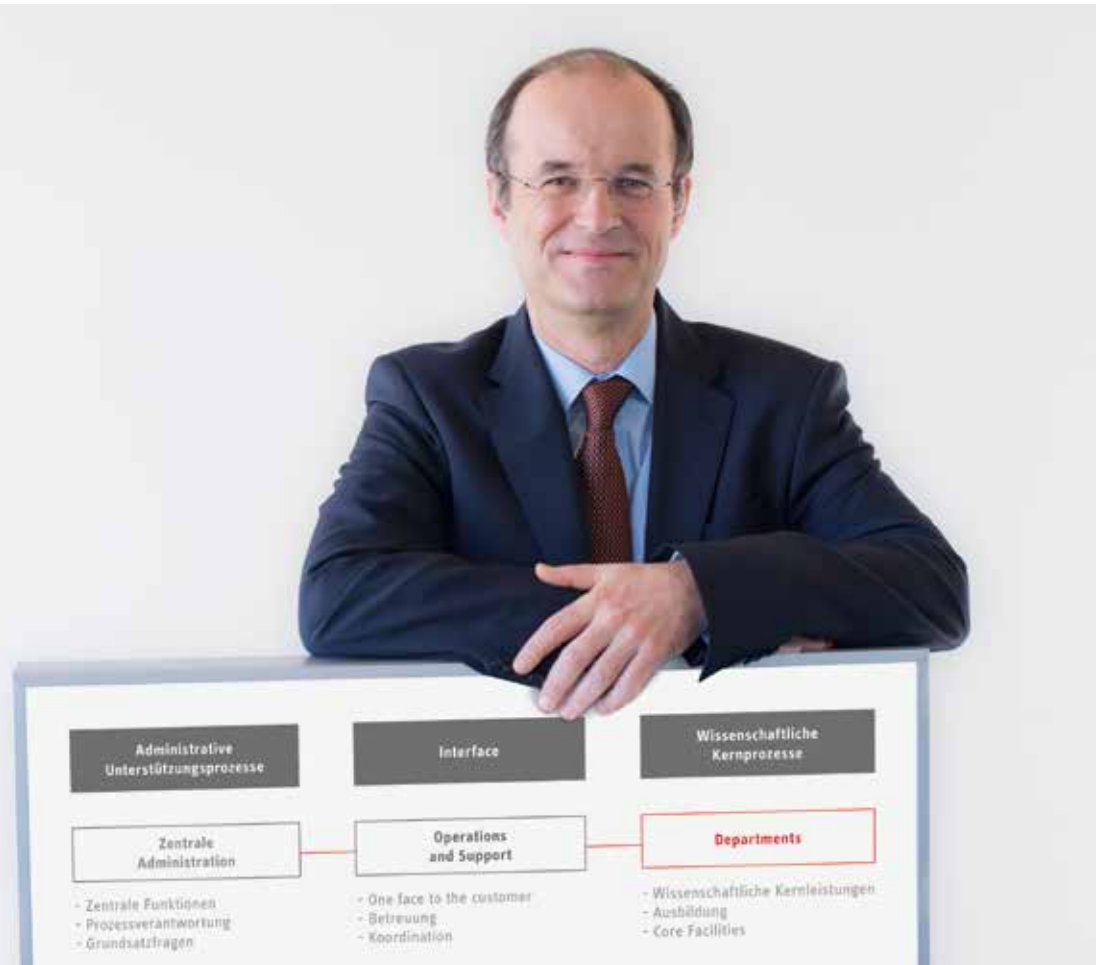


Modern Administration is a Team Sport



Dr. Nikolaus Blum, CFO of the Center, served as vice president of the Helmholtz Association until the end of 2012. In that capacity he advocated more flexibility and a de-bureaucratization of scientific structures. In the interview Dr. Blum explains his ideas on the role and development of administrative organizational forms at Helmholtz Zentrum München.

1. Dr. Blum, science at the Center has developed further and at the same time the complexity of the research landscape has increased overall. What challenges for the administration arise from this fact?

Blum: A major challenge has been the immense growth of the Center. In the last five years the number of employees, the number of procurements and financial transactions have increased

by around 50 percent. With the German Centres for Health Research, the National Cohort and the Initiative and Networking Fund, new financing models for science have emerged. This has led to a high complexity of the current research structures. The administration has had to cope with the growth process of the Center and at the same time has had to deal with this complexity.

2. Science and administration often feel as if they belong to two different worlds. How can this gap be bridged?

Blum: Administration and science are indeed two different worlds. Science is judged on academic performance criteria such as the journal impact factor and the acquisition of external funding. From the administrative side, however, the funding entities expect that the proper execution of administrative processes is ensured. Our task is to bring these two worlds together and thus to create an effective Center. A new approach is the establishment of the Department of Operations and Support, abbreviated OS. With this we wanted to combine the requirements of science and administration as constructively as possible.

3. How must we imagine this?

Blum: Operations and Support has both an interpreter and a support role. It should translate the needs of science into administrative action and at the same time coordinate this action for the purposes of the scientific projects. OS teams are made up of staff members from science and from the administration. A prime example showing the enormous added value of support through OS is when institutes are founded. New institute directors or junior research group leaders must first spend a lot of energy learning how to process procurements, what the hiring procedures are and what possibilities exist for cooperation. With OS, they have a designated contact person who is familiar with the processes and knows how to cope with them.

4. What changes can we expect with the introduction of process-oriented organization?

Blum: Process-oriented organization shall serve to efficiently process the greatly increased number of standard operations. Each year, we hire approximately 800 employees and process 45 000 procurements. With process-oriented organization, we create the conditions to handle these operations quickly and smoothly with all participating administrative units. This change should not be underestimated!! It is a great challenge, because it requires teamwork and the ability to think "outside the box" from all involved. Modern administration is a team sport.

5. In addition to the introduction of OS and process-oriented organization, the administration is continuing to develop its services for science. What concrete measures do you have on your agenda?

Blum: Our catalog of measures is derived consistently from the annual goal for 2014, ranging from improved information and communication to financial processes and personnel matters. Regarding personnel, a policy for fixed-term contracts shall be adopted and implemented this year: Employees with fixed-term contracts shall thus gain more planning security. An applicant management system will be introduced to give the Human Resources Department stronger support in dealing with applicants – that is also a very important point for the public image of the Center. And finally, we will provide the institutes and research units with regular budget information, so that researchers can navigate their resources more easily and efficiently.

6. Since the beginning of 2014 the new governance has been in operation at the Center. To what extent will our core business – research – profit from these new structures?

Blum: The new partnership agreement and the new governance relate primarily to the external management of the Center, i.e. the interaction of shareholders, the Supervisory Board and the Board of Directors. The Public Corporate Governance Codex now also applies to the Center. Despite all the changes, we will continue to intensively implement the internal coordination processes. In the Center, the changed governance will result in noticeably increased action and responsiveness. Research will benefit from faster decision making. Today speed is an absolute competitive advantage also in science.

7. With compliance management, a new internal structure has been created at the Center. What role will it play?

Blum: Compliance means that an organization complies with existing laws and regulations. That is something that is taken for granted. The public and the funding entities expect this from Helmholtz Zentrum München. However, the spectrum of laws and regulations to be observed today is very broad and ranges from legal matters, the annual financial statements, the use of research funds, work safety and IT security to Good Scientific Practice. Compliance management ensures that the framework conditions are known and observed. There are indications of possible vulnerabilities. Compliance management is therefore an aid for all managers, who must ensure that the existing regulations are observed in their area of responsibility.

8. How can we position ourselves optimally in the international competition to attract the best researchers?

Blum: The attractiveness of the Center for foreign scientists arises primarily from our scientific performance. If this is outstanding, many scientists from other countries will want to come to our center. But of course we must offer the international scientists good conditions and support them in their integration. Here the administration can make an important contribution, by providing contact persons and assistance in finding housing, the appropriate schools or childcare. In the long term we will also raise the issue of personnel marketing to the international level. Against the background of demographic change in Germany, we are dependent on the recruitment of highly qualified foreign employees.

9. We recruit talent from the outside – how can we promote the potential of staff members at the Center?

Blum: Talent management is one of our most important issues. As a research institution, our primary role is to promote and train young scientists. There are proven instruments for this, such as the Graduate School HELENA or research groups with a tenure track option. But of course the Center must have excellent employees in all its positions. Therefore, our talent management is very broad. Our internal qualification program has grown tremendously in recent years and supports the development of the Center with a number of targeted measures. The offers of the Munich Leadership Program, which we organize for young professionals together with the Centre for Science Management Speyer, and the offers of the Helmholtz Academy are open to employees. Human Resources Development at the Center ensures that the strategic objectives for promoting talent remain in focus.

10. You successfully advocated more flexible conditions in the recruitment of scientific personnel in the Helmholtz Association. How can we use this new freedom provided by the Academic Freedom Act in the best possible way?

Blum: The Academic Freedom Act has different aims. It affects financial leeway, personnel questions, construction matters and participation options. One of the new possibilities is to carry out construction projects up to a volume of five million euros in each center's own responsibility, if a corresponding construction controlling exists. We are currently planning to take advantage of this opportunity. We are also planning further measures with regard to personnel.



**BRIEF PROFILE
DR. STEFAN ECHINGER**

Dr. Stefan Echinger is head of Operations and Support. His team supports the Board of Directors in the development of scientific organizational units. Operations and Support is responsible for the implementation of new units on an administrative level and coordinates the decentralized management of the center location Grosshadern.

11. For years Helmholtz Zentrum München has been committed to improving equal opportunities for women scientists. Has the end of the flagpole been reached?

Blum: Increasing the percentage of women, also and especially in leadership positions, is a declared goal of Helmholtz Zentrum München. A look at the numbers reveals that we have made good progress. We pay great attention to the equal treatment of men and women and use a variety of funding instruments in order to increase the proportion of women in management positions. However, there is certainly potential for more creative measures. In our view, improving the compatibility of work and family plays a key role. The campus kindergarten is already functioning very well. Through the Academic Freedom Act, the Center now has the opportunity to develop further offers of support from its own income. We hope that we can make an additional interesting offer for young families still this year.

12. What contribution can highly qualified science management make for the international positioning of German health research and in particular research at Helmholtz Zentrum München?

Blum: In today's complex structures, science is not possible without good science management. It is an essential success factor for modern, interdisciplinary research. Of course, science management has a supporting role and will never replace the originality and creativity of outstanding scientists. However, in national and international competition, the successful implementation of projects, cooperation in networks and in particular, the provision of facilities with the necessary equipment and consumables are no longer possible without qualified research management.

Sonja Opitz and Cordula Klemm (from right), Corporate Communications, spoke with Dr. Nikolaus Blum.

