

Transcript Video: History of the University of Würzburg

Introduction

Welcome to the Julius-Maximilians-University of Würzburg, Germany. Today, we will give you a brief overview of the history of our university in just ten minutes and show you why it is definitely worth a visit.

Buildings

As early as 1402, a university was founded in Würzburg, but it only lasted for a few years. The foundation of today's university took place almost two centuries later. In order to live up to the Latin motto of the university, "Veritati – 'Committed to the Truth'", we must therefore – unfortunately – refer to the year 1582 as the actual founding year, which still underlines an impressive centuries-old tradition.

The founding year, 1582, fell in the time of the Reformation, with hard battles between Catholics and Protestants – also on a spiritual level. Therefore, the Würzburg prince-bishop Julius Echter obtained the privileges of the emperor to be allowed to found a university in his city. The aim was to advance the Counter-Reformation by fighting back against Protestant ideas with academic means. It is therefore not surprising that the university – led by Jesuits – was purely Catholic for a long time.

A sad chapter for the history of the university was the time of National Socialism. During this time, more than 150 scientists were deprived of their doctoral degrees because they were Jews or resisted Nazi ideology. It was only in 2011, that these people were rehabilitated posthumously.

During the heavy bombing of Würzburg on March 16th, 1945, large parts of the city were destroyed, including numerous university buildings. After the end of the second World War, the university buildings, many of which date back centuries and are still in use today, were all rebuilt. What is special about the University of Würzburg is that these university buildings are spread over the entire city. Everyday university life, therefore, takes place throughout Würzburg and not just on a demarcated campus.

During all these events, the number of students continued to grow. As early as the year 1800, the students joined together in student fraternities. For example, in the *Corps Franconia Würzburg*, founded in 1805, which still exists today. Over the centuries, a large number of famous researchers have worked at the university. Wilhelm Röntgen stands out in particular. In 1895, at the Physics Institute of the University of Würzburg, he discovered X-Rays, the "Röntgenstrahlen" named after him in German.

Hubland

After World War II, the 1st U.S. Infantry Division was stationed at the Leighton Barracks in Würzburg for many years. Since the withdrawal of the Army in 2008, the former army site with the preserved buildings has also been used by the university. As a result, a campus site based on the American model is increasingly being created here.

Interview With a Student (English Subtitles)

Clara: My name is Clara and I have been studying Theology and German here in Würzburg since 2018. I will be writing my senior thesis this winter. I'm almost done with my studies.

Question: What is special to you about the university?

Clara: To me, the university is special as it is located all throughout the city. Due to the fact that I have two majors, my classes are take place at two different buildings, one of them in the city center and the other one here at *Hubland*. I really like not being restricted to one campus.

Question: Does your faculty have buildings that show the history of the university?

Clara: Definitely the building called "New University", you can see that the university has probably started there. At the Hubland, you cannot see that much history as all the buildings are relatively modern.

Question: Why did you choose to go to JMU?

Clara: Well, I did not know much about Würzburg before I came here but combining my two majors – theology and German – is not possible at many other universities. So I looked at the city of Würzburg because both majors were available here and I liked it right from the beginning and thought 'Well then, I'll move to Würzburg' and it turned out to be the right decision.

Question: Are there any free time activities that you can recommend?

Clara: I really like the extracurricular gym classes at the university. They have lots of different options to choose from and the classes are not overcrowded either. Other than that, I like the University-Cinema and the summer festivals that are currently taking place. I like that all the different departments usually have a summer festival or something similar organized by the student councils.

Question: What is special about your faculty?

Clara: For theology, to me it is certainly the fact that it is a rather small program so the atmosphere is quite familiar. This is a huge difference compared to my second major, German, as there are lots of students whose prospect it is to become a teacher.

Question: Which activities can you recommend to an American student visiting JMU?

Clara: You should definitely take advantage of the activities offered by your faculties, departments, and everything that the student councils organize. I can also recommend the Language Center.

Interview With a Professor (English Subtitles)

Question: What has influenced your decision to work at JMU?

Prof. Flachenecker: Starting to work here was first and foremost a coincidence, as it usually is when one gets appointed to a chair position. What really appealed to me was the fact that I would be the position for Regional Franconian History with an emphasis on the medieval period in Germany. And since I have always been interested in Franconian Regional History, this was the best possible position for me. Hence, I have been here for 20 years.

Question: What is special to you about the university?

Prof. Flachenecker: Outstanding about the University is that it comprises all ten existing faculties, which means it covers the whole possible range of existing university programs. Furthermore, the university is deeply connected to the region: With about 30.000 students, we are quite a big university. Life in the region here is very livable.

Question: What do you think about the dispersal of the university throughout Würzburg?

Prof. Flachenecker: From an American point of view, this is quite hard to understand as American universities are 'campus universities', meaning they are restricted to one area comprising all programs, lecture halls and even the dorms. In my opinion, it don't think it's bad for a town to represent a university because it is present all over the city which leads to a steady integration and representation of the university.

Question: Do you take part in any campus activities?

Prof. Flachenecker: Yes, the annual summer festivals of our faculty – unless we have a pandemic. Those festivals have always impressed me.

Question: Is there anything you can recommend all guests to do?

Prof. Flachenecker: Buildingwise, the famous 'Old University' is a must-see if one likes renaissance architecture. This is the place where Echter founded the University.