



Press Release

Intelligent, Clever, and with Moral Behavior

The University of Freiburg has now opened a new robotics center as part of its Faculty of Engineering

Developing intelligent robots that can identify tasks independently, learn from humans and their surroundings, and behave morally: With this goal in mind, the University of Freiburg opened the Integrated Robotics Center as part of its Faculty of Engineering on February 17, 2017. Researchers from the fields of medicine, philosophy, biology, computer science, microsystems engineering, and law will now be working together in the new center. “The research we are doing in this new building demonstrates the unique strength of our University: Bringing together experts from different disciplines to find solutions for the complex challenges of the future,” said Rector Prof. Dr. **Hans-Jochen Schiewer**.

“The Integrated Robotics Center will be a beacon for the University of Freiburg in the years to come,” Prof. Dr. **Wolfram Burgard** added with confidence. Burgard’s Autonomous Intelligent Systems research lab, which is part of the Department of Computer Science, has moved into the new center along with the Cluster of Excellence BrainLinks-BrainTools, the newly established Chair of Neurorobotics, and a graduate school for PhD robotics students. Burgard’s team works with robots that use sensors to perceive their surroundings and to move and act independently. The team also brought with them the three robots Obelix, Nao, and Marvin. Obelix became famous in Germany in 2012 for “strolling” from the Faculty of Engineering to the downtown area of Freiburg on its own volition.

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■ The new center is 800 square meters (roughly 8.611 square feet) in size and offers up to 65 workspaces in its offices and laboratories. Forty researchers have already moved into the new building and are researching robotics from a broad range of perspectives. Along with the aspect of technical development, there are also important ethical and legal issues to consider. For example, if a self-driving car is about to crash into a group of people, will the machine choose to hurt a child or an adult? Will it have enough computing power and available data in the first place to be able to make such a moral decision in such a short amount of time? How can the law be modified to allow for a machine sitting at the wheel?

The new center came with a price tag of €2.5 million and was financed by the University of Freiburg, with the help of a grant of €0.5 million from the State of Baden-Württemberg.

www.tf.uni-freiburg.de

Caption:

The Integrated Robotics Center offers up to 65 workspaces in its offices and laboratories.

Photo: Ingeborg Lehmann

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The University of Freiburg achieves top positions in all university rankings. Its research, teaching, and continuing education have received prestigious awards in nationwide competitions. Over 24,000 students from 100 nations are enrolled in 188 degree programs. Around 5,000 teachers and administrative employees put in their effort every day – and experience that family friendliness, equal opportunity, and environmental protection really mean something here.