



Press Release

## **New Equipment Makes Studying Easier**

Disabled Students at the University of Freiburg are now able to loan special devices

The University of Freiburg has created a pool of helpful learning aids for students with disabilities or chronic illnesses. Students can borrow the equipment for use during class, exams and in the library. „The new pool of helpful learning aids is a significant step forward for barrier-free learning at the University,“ says Prof. Dr. **Gisela Riescher**, Vice-President for Research Integrity, Gender and Diversity. „To attend University successfully and manage the associated day-to-day demands with a disability or chronic illness is particularly challenging. The pool of helpful learning aids is an important building block to alleviating the challenges people face.“

Starting March 2017 a high-performance laptop with special programs will be made available to visually impaired students so they can magnify texts with an audible function. In addition, the laptop’s mobile camera system „Topolino Smart“ has the ability to magnify, photograph, save and read aloud handouts and blackboard images. Blind students can borrow a braille line that displays texts in braille, making them tangible. Users can write on the computer or smartphone with the device. Hearing impaired students, those with ADHD or autism can use a wireless audio transmission device in order to support speech comprehension during class by reducing ambient sounds and raising the speaker’s voice.

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Typically the welfare authority provides technical equipment through its integration assistance programs. However, students often experience shortages – for instance, the time it takes before equipment can be approved, during exams in which their own laptops with special software are not allowed or when external students visit a block of courses at the University. As a result, this new provision significantly augments the welfare authority's current offerings.

The devices were tested and selected by future users as well as the University library's IT department. The German Society of Blind Academicians consulted during the selection process.

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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 25,000 students from 100 nations are enrolled in 197 degree programs. Around 6,000 teachers and administrative employees put in their effort every day – and experience that family friendliness, equal opportunity, and environmental protection are taken seriously here.