J. D. Gruber, "Well-Conceived Proposal for the Establishment and Construction of a New University within His Royal Majesty's German Lands" (August 30, 1732)

Abstract

This August 1732 draft proposal to establish a new university in the Electorate of Brunswick-Lüneburg was written by Privy Councilor J.D. Gruber and sent to his sovereign, George II (1683–1760). Gruber begins by outlining the advantages of founding a university in "his Royal Majesty's German lands." Foremost among these is the education and preparation of the *Landes-Kinder* (children of the electorate) for state and church service, and economic growth. Then he lists perceived disadvantages or challenges associated with founding a university. These include potential rivalries with existing German universities and the difficulty of attracting qualified professors. At the end, Gruber discusses where to found the university and how to finance it.

Source

I. Reasons for establishing a new university

The reasons that His Royal Majesty wishes to establish a new university are as follows:

1) All electoral princes of the Holy Roman Empire have their own universities within their lands. Therefore, the Electorate of Braunschweig, in order to elevate itself to the level of other electorates, is justifiably considering such a worthwhile undertaking.

2) Since His Royal Majesty acquired the areas of Lauenburg, Bremen, and Verden, and controls such an expansive area, it seems that the many students from all of these provinces need their own university.

3) Because, to date, the children of our own electorate have been studying beyond our borders, more than 100,000 Reichsthaler leave our lands and are spent elsewhere. With our own university, not only would these funds be kept within our territories, but two or three times as much would be drawn in from outside. This could easily amount to a sum of 200,000 Reichsthaler with only 1,000 students at 200 Reichsthaler per year. Indeed, most of them spend much more.

4) It is easy to see that not only the university's locale but also the entire country will profit greatly from the circulation of these revenues.

5) At a university over which His Royal Majesty has complete control, his subjects would not only become better prepared for religious and secular service than they are in other places, it would also allow for the best in those subjects to be be recognized early on, who then, in accordance with the requirements of our times, since now there is more work to do in the cabinet than on the battlefield, may qualify for important government positions. Not to mention that…

6) For posterity, an Academia G e o r g i n a would be a perpetual monument honoring His Royal Majesty's

generosity, as well as his love of education and his German lands.

II. Objections and how to address them

The objections raised are:

1) That Germany already has 32 universities, of which 18 are Protestant. Some of these are so close to each other that one cannot expect a new university to flourish.

2) His Royal Majesty already has a university in Helmstädt, whose enrollment figures could be better.

3) To commence and execute such a large undertaking requires a great amount of money that could otherwise be saved.

4) It would be difficult to bring together enough talented men in all of the four faculties that are necessary for the establishment of a good reputation and enrollment. Older scholars are no longer available, and most of the younger people have already commenced their initial professorships elsewhere.

5) Especially in those cities within His Royal Majesty's German lands where a university could be located, such as Celle, Lüneburg, or Hannover, the cost of living is higher than in the rest of Germany. Subsequently, only a few wealthy people would be able to study there, but no poor people. Therefore, attendance would be low.[1]

In response, it may be noted:

1) a. That among the 18 Protestant universities in Germany, barely 6 have enrollment figures worth mentioning, and the nearby universities, in particular, bring in no revenue.

b. That the example of the University of Halle shows us that a new university, even in the midst of the most flourishing ones, can do well when its patron makes the necessary efforts and is inclined to honor its academics in various ways including external decorations (i.e. honors).

c. That if the children of our own electorate study at the new university, which they can be made to do by order of the sovereign, as is done in other places, then this alone will result in high enrollment. Since the nobility and gentry in England love travelling and visiting foreign lands so much, should they not be interested in attending His Majesty's German universities,[2] if His Highness were to signal His approval most graciously to the nobles in that country, especially if they are informed that the institution will also include lessons in chivalry?

2) That the University of Helmstädt is not within His Royal Majesty's territory, and that the community is doing all that it can to prevent these good intentions from being realized. It would not be excessive if a private princely university were to be established near Helmstädt, since the house of Hesse has three universities, namely, in Marburg, Giessen, and Rinteln.

3) a. That the costs need not be that high, since many universities do not require continuing support. Instead, indications are that the investment will earn a great deal of interest, and that the sovereign will gain more than he loses.

b. That it does not require a large, extravagant donation for the obvious reason (among others) that it is not necessary for the proper administration of an academic staff. Although older universities were funded this way, it is sufficient to use the license fund to run a university as well as to assign and pay professors a set annual amount,

as is done in Halle.

c. Since not all districts are equally capable of acquiring the necessary funds, those in which a university is to be established must strive in similar ways as the Wolfenbüttel district, where the University of Helmstädt is located. It has a capital endowment of 100,000 florins, which still continues to earn interest.

d. That in addition to the annual profit made by the three Calenberg cloisters associated with the university—Wehnde, Hilvershaußen, and Marien Garten—the other half of the initial costs and expenses can be entirely covered by His Royal Majesty's revenue account.

e. That, according to the following plan, the entire facility can indeed be compensated for the annual sum of 9,000 Reichsthaler. The three professors of the Theological Faculty will be subsidized with the following salaries:

Faculty of Theology: first chair, 600 Reichsthaler; second chair, 400 Reichsthaler; third chair 300 Reichsthaler.

These salaries are set somewhat lower, because, by and by, the theologians can be given small abbeys and prelatures in the country and in return they can dispense with part of their salary, which can then be added to that of the philosophers.

Faculty of Law: first chair, 1,000 Reichsthaler; second chair, 600 Reichsthaler; third chair, 400 Reichsthaler.

The first chair's salary must be high enough to attract and retain a well-respected man. It will also help in the retention of those in other positions, insofar as it will give them an incentive to aspire to. They will easily get by, because they will have other opportunities through faculty and doctoral work.

Faculty of Medicine: first chair, 500 Reichsthaler; second chair, 400 Reichsthaler; third chair, 300 Reichsthaler.

The third chair can be left vacant initially in order to save on costs.

Faculty of Philosophy: first chair, 400 Reichsthaler; second chair, 400 Reichsthaler; third chair, 300 Reichsthaler.

The compensation for the philosophers must be high, because, unlike jurists or medical doctors, they have no other sources of income, and unlike the clergy, they receive no benefices.

When added up, the annual total is 6,000 Reichsthaler.

Faculty of Theology	**1,300**
Faculty of Law	2,000
Faculty of Medicine	1,200
Faculty of Philosophy	1,500
Total	6,000 Reichsthaler

Additionally, one must also include salaries for an administrator, two assistants, a stable master, a fencing coach, dance and language instructors, also free meals for the poor, plus

all other miscellaneous expenses: 3,000 Reichsthaler
for an annual grand total: 9,000 Reichsthaler

When the cloisters annually consign: 4,500 Reichsthaler

And the territory also contributes: 4,500 Reichsthaler

... the entire facility will be well provided for.

4. That high salaries and great esteem will make it possible to recruit the most learned men and that they will be eager to place themselves in the agreeable and gracious employ of His Royal Majesty. Among the candidates for recruitment, none are more attractive than those who are not yet advanced in years, for they will only get better with age. Among theologians, D. Rambach should be courted.[3] The jurist Heineccius is not to be won over, but D. Otto in Holland and D. Wahl in Giessen could be; the latter being outstanding in civil law[4]. There is no scarcity of candidates for the remaining faculties.

5. That this proposal will be best received when it is not sent to a city with insufficient finances, but to another that is better suited, if not several others.

III. In which principality and in which city could the university most appropriately be established.

(After the court and the government were sent to Celle, the Supreme Court of Appeals was set up there in order to give the city and the surrounding countryside an advantage).

However, despite being in good financial condition, this locale is much too small for a university. Instead, the city of Lüneburg should be taken into consideration. Not only is the location close to Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck, as well as the Holstein and Mecklenburg nobility, it also has its own wealthy citizens who can easily provide students with the necessary funding (which the royal house can easily transfer to the college). However, the flourishing Knighthood School, which is dependent on support from Lüneburg's knightly class, will be a significant obstacle. One can easily foresee that the local authorities will go to extremes to oppose this proposal, since the province in which the university is to be built must provide a large annual subsidy. Lüneburg's leaders have neither the desire nor the wherewithal to do so. Not to mention that the citizens of Lüneburg will not be easily convinced to convert their houses, which have been adapted to the local salt trade and filled with salt, into comfortable residences.

Consideration should thus be given to Calenberg and Grubenhagen, where, in each case, the local authorities have both the wealth and desire to support their gracious sovereign's God-pleasing intentions. Therefore, it will be easier to convince them to provide the necessary subsidies. However, the city of Hannover is uncomfortable with this plan, because they have a surfeit of residents and a great number of young people who are attracted to its university. Some will likely choose to leave it in the face of, and out of respect for, royal princely authority, since they will not be penalized for changing locations.

Aside from Hannover, the city of Göttingen seems the most compatible. It is large and already fairly well developed, and for little expense it could be even further enhanced. The city's treasury is in good shape and could easily provide the necessary support. The locale is in a wholesome and charming setting, due to its great distance from other large cities, which also makes it the least expensive location in the whole region. This should be considered of primary importance. It already has a secondary school, which (because His Royal Majesty has complete disposition [over it]) His Highness could easily turn into a university by keeping the lower grades and adding higher ones. This could be done just as Duke Julius once created Helmstädt's Julius University out of the secondary school in Gandersheim. Until the college is actually built, one could get by with the existing school, or additionally, the magistrate could offer the use of a portion of the city hall.

IV. Review of how to establish the university

These are the primary issues that should be taken into consideration for now. Once dealt with, the internal establishment of the university can proceed at once. The authorizations and statutes of the universities of Tübingen, Rostock, Marburg, Wittenberg, Frankfurt (Oder), Jena, and Helmstädt are already in hand, and those from Halle can be obtained. When one distills the best parts of these, those that are most current and appropriate, and bases the new university upon them, then one can expect nothing but good results.

(May the Lord on high grant success to His Royal Majesty's most laudable and Christian intentions.)

NOTES

[1] The paragraph is missing. (London Correspondence)
[2] "Location of Dutch universities." (LC)
[3] "The theologians D. Rambach, Walch, and Mosheim should be considered." (LC)
[4] "For mathematics, Professor Wolf in Marburg should be considered." (LC)

Source: J. D. Gruber, Entwurf zur Gründung der Universität Göttingen (1732), in Emil Franz Rössler, *Die Gründung der Universität Göttingen Entwürfe, Berichte und Briefe der Zeitgenossen*. Göttingen 1855, pp. 1–9.

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