

AGRS

JULY 2020

STAYING IN TOUCH News from the German Rhodes Community





FOREWORD FROM THE AGRS PRESIDENT

Dear fellow Rhodes Scholars,

The importance of “staying in touch” with people we like, we esteem, we learn from, which add colour to our life cannot be overestimated. During the last months, we all have been painfully reminded of this commonplace truth. Fortunately, digital technology allowed us to stay connected – at least virtually.

“Staying in touch” is what we set out to facilitate with our new board of the Association of German Rhodes Scholars. Trying to do this turned out to be a very delightful journey for us. As we pieced together the information about “who does what, who lives where, who can be reached how and what mission do we want to accomplish with the AGRS...,” a picture of a group of incredible diversity and breadth of experiences and accomplishments emerged. A fascinating group.

As part of this year's newsletter edition, we share with you an updated list of German Rhodes Scholars and Rhodes Scholars in Germany, Austria and Switzerland via email. When you browse through this list, I am sure you will be as curious to meet and to get to know members of this group as we were.

We want to fuel your curiosity further. In this newsletter, we draw attention to one facet within our group – the entrepreneurial spirit. We introduce three Rhodes Scholars coming from different generations who have recently founded new ventures and who tell their stories. We hope that this forum gives all of you a chance to learn more about their entrepreneurial journey and offers a chance to connect with our entrepreneurs over common interests or ideas.

In our next newsletter, we intend to introduce Rhodes Scholars from other constituencies who live in Germany, Austria or Switzerland. We were surprised to discover nearly twenty such Rhodes Scholars. Overall, the geographic diversity of German Rhodes Scholars is fascinating. Less than half of the approximately 120 German Scholars actually live in Germany. Alone over 30 live in the United Kingdom. The top four hubs of German Rhodes Scholars are Berlin (18), Oxford (10), Munich (10) and London (9).

It was also satisfactory for us to see that the initiatives we launched received very favourable responses. The offer to help current and recent Scholars take advantage of the deep and diverse experiences of our group by creating new connections was met with enthusiasm and immediate support. Suggestions to connect on the local level prompted similar positive responses and feedback.

Therefore, “Staying in touch” appears to be the appropriate title for our newsletter. Supporting this will be at the heart of our work.

Best wishes,

Dr. Andreas Poensgen
Germany & University, 1983
President of the AGRS

HOW TO CONNECT AND STAY IN TOUCH

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE

Our new website went live in June and contains information on our activities, events and Scholars. Visit our website and let us know if you have feedback on what you would like to see featured: <https://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/alumni-germany/>

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

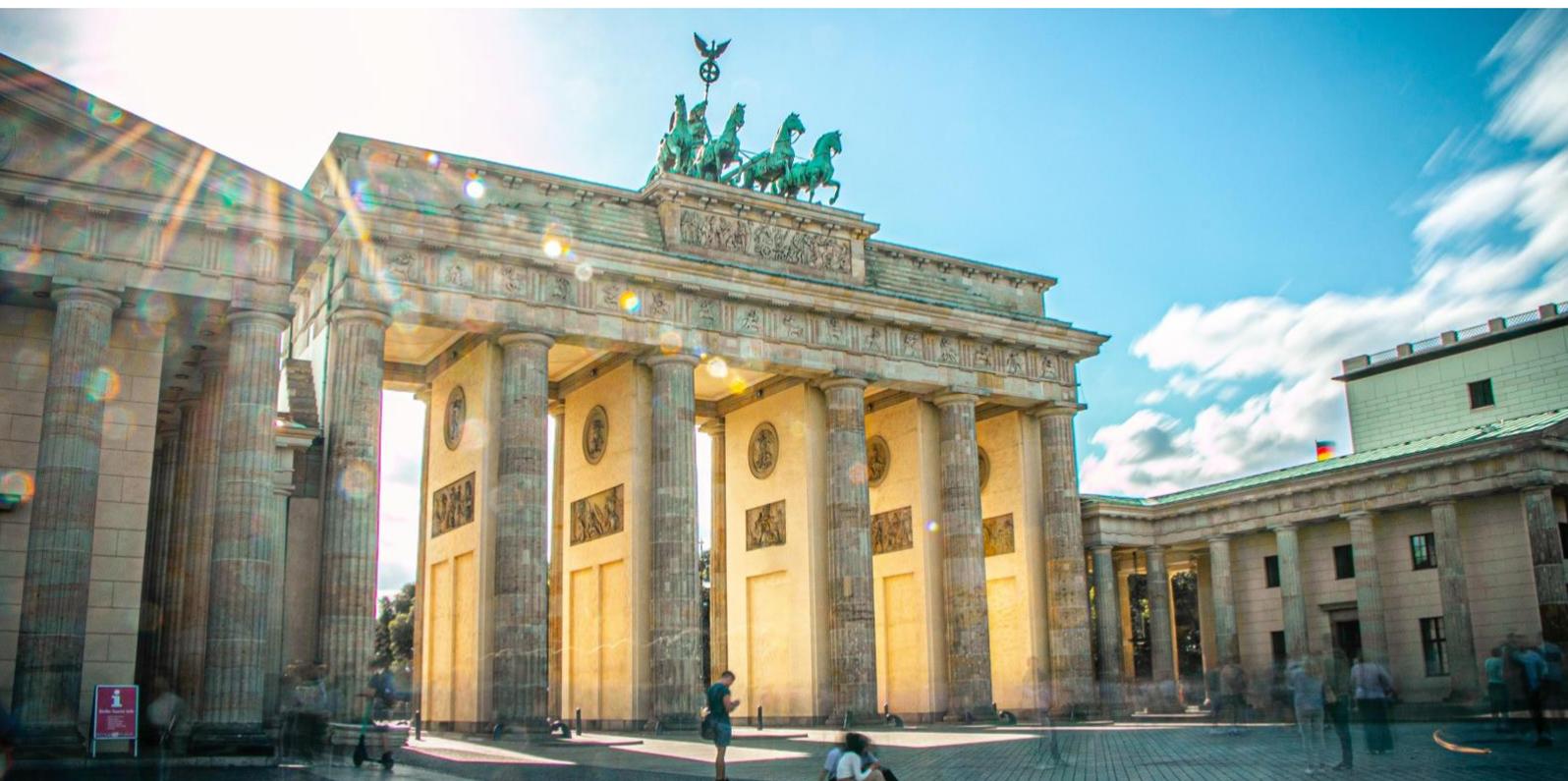
If you did not receive this newsletter via our mailing list, please reach out to us so we can add your email address and keep you up to date: andreas.poensgen@germanrhodes.org

JOIN OUR LINKEDIN GROUP

Many of you have responded to our call to join our LinkedIn group. For those who are not already members, we encourage you search for “German Rhodes Scholars” on LinkedIn or request to join here: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4111114/>. We would like to use this forum to share professional updates, job posts and connect with each other on LinkedIn.

REACH OUT DIRECTLY

If you have any questions or suggestions for our association or would like to update us on your whereabouts, please also reach out directly to andreas.poensgen@germanrhodes.org or friederike.reuter@germanrhodes.org. We are always interested in hearing from you.



NOTES FROM A NATIONAL SECRETARY



NILS OLE
OERMANN
Germany & Christ
Church, 1996

Soeben ist eine weitere Zoom-Sitzung der National Secretaries mit Dr. Elizabeth Kiss als Warden von Rhodes House zu Ende gegangen, und die Eindrücke in Corona-Zeiten sind ganz unterschiedlicher Art:

Zum einen scheinen die Entwicklungen im Rhodes House so gut und sehr erfolgreich wie schon in den letzten Jahren noch unter Charles Conn: Die Zahl der Stipendien steigt stetig mit neuen afrikanischen Stipendien am Horizont. Das Interesse am Rhodes-Stipendium und die Zahl der Bewerbungen steigt stetig - nicht nur, aber auch in Deutschland. Und selbst in Corona-Zeiten entwickelt sich das Endowment des Rhodes Trust weiter positiv, wenn auch mit einer ökonomisch aktuell gebotenen „*de-risk strategy*“.

So kann Rhodes House mit *hardship/delayed funds*-Stipendien in Corona-Zeiten unbürokratisch den *scholars-in-residence* helfen. Und anders als manch internationale Mitbewerber plant Oxford derzeit für die Wiederaufnahme des Residenzstudiums zum Michaelmas Term 2020.

Im Lichte all dieser Bemühungen werden die *scholars-in-residence* der letzten Jahre bestätigen können, wie sich Rhodes House vor allem während der vergangenen Dekade verändert hat: Es ist ein Ort, an dem man sich viel häufiger als früher trifft, an dem man sich vernetzt und echte Freundschaften schließt, in dem man an gemeinsamen *leadership* oder *diversity*-Seminaren und fast allabendlich Veranstaltungen teilnehmen kann.

Kurz: An dem man sich gern aufhält und eine so spannende Gruppe von Menschen trifft wie kaum sonst auf der Welt.

Zum anderen stehen die Community der Rhodes Scholars in Zeiten von „*Rhodes must fall*“ und Universitäten insgesamt in Zeiten von „*Black lives matter*“ oder der Klimadebatte vor der enormen Herausforderung, sich dabei inhaltlich fundiert wie hörbar zu positionieren.

Dies ist in *virtual town hall meetings*, Rundmails an die Rhodes community und einem offiziellen Statement von Rhodes House zur Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft des Rhodes-Stipendiums am 14. Juni 2020 seitens des Rhodes Trust geschehen:

<https://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/blm-covid-impact/blacklivesmatter-racism-and-legacy/>

In unseren regelmäßigen Runden der National Secretaries wird in sehr offener, direkter Weise diskutiert, was all dies für unsere ehrenamtliche Arbeit auf Tagesbasis bedeutet, vor allem: Für die Zusammensetzung der Auswahlkommissionen durch möglichst profilierte Externe wie Rhodes Alumni weltweit.

Auf der Tagesordnung stehen dabei die großen Fragen nach der Qualität unserer Auswahlverfahren, aber eben auch durchaus praktische Fragen: Wo ist einheitlich zu agieren, wo unterschiedlich je nach *national constituency*? Was soll mit der Altersgrenze passieren? Ist es fair, dass Länder wie Deutschland oder Pakistan proportional zu ihrer Größe oder politischen Rolle so viel Stipendien vergeben wie Bermuda?

Bezüglich des Auswahltages und seines Ablaufs wird dabei den deutschen Scholars aus den Zeiten ihrer eigenen Interviews einiges bekannt und vertraut vorkommen, und doch sind manche Herausforderungen neu:

Wie etwa gehen wir mit Datenschutz und Versuchen von Einflussnahme um? Wie schließen wir in digitalen Zeiten das offenbar wachsende Risiko von *fraud/misrepresentation* aus? Wie steht es mit der nächsten Auswahl in Zeiten der COVID-Regeln etc.?

All diese eher technischen Fragen dienen wie die Diskussion der eher generellen Themen im Ergebnis einem Ziel: *To identify those who fight the world's fight*, wo auch immer dies Ringen geschehen mag.

Nach unseren Statuten gelingt dies nur mit Hilfe der Rhodes Alumni, die bei jeder Auswahl mit beteiligt sind und die helfen, dieses Stipendium an ihren jeweiligen Orten bekannter und damit sichtbarer zu machen.

Ihnen gebührt der große Dank von Rhodes House, und es ist derzeit eine echte Freude, als Mitglied qua Amt im neuen Rhodes-Alumni-Vorstand mitwirken zu dürfen.

REPORTS FROM OUR SCHOLARS IN RESIDENCE

LAURA KLUENER

Germany & Hertford, 2019

*Laura (*1995) earned a BSc in Physics, an MSc in Medical Physics, a medical degree and a medical doctoral grade (Dr. med.) at Ruhr-University Bochum. At Oxford, Laura is reading for a DPhil in Medical Science. Her research focusses on discovering new AI-based imaging biomarkers for cardiovascular risk prediction using computed tomography. She enjoys the process of discovering new research applications in medical imaging and wants to further international cooperation in medical translational research. In addition to her academic work, Laura is an accomplished pianist and ballet dancer.*



I can hardly believe that even the third term is almost over. I get the feeling that I just arrived in Oxford and entered Rhodes House yesterday. It was the first time for me to be abroad for more than one month. But I was greeted so warmly by everyone that I felt immediately welcome. During the first week, I met an incredible number of new people, made new friends, and tried to get some orientation in Oxford. Maybe it is also due to the current COVID -19 situation, but even now I still have the feeling that I have not even seen half of the things in Oxford.

The first weeks in Oxford were a big change for me: I could not imagine living in a city without subway or fast bus connections. The weather in October was not a bit better than you could have expected it. Nevertheless, I was overwhelmed by how many opportunities there are in Oxford to take an active part in social life apart from my degree course. After spending my entire study period at Ruhr-University Bochum in Germany – also known as “Pendler-Uni” – I was used to travel back to my hometown right after the regular university activities. Life in Oxford is completely different compared to that, but in a positive way: I quickly found myself in numerous events of the Oxford Union, now even in the position of the graduate office. I started studying Russian intensively on my own and applied my newly acquired knowledge directly on Tuesday evenings in the “Language Immersion” at St. Antony’s. It was amazing how quickly I got to know so many people from all over the world. I have made many new friendships that will continue beyond my Oxford time.

Especially the events at Rhodes House itself were great. I remember several dinners, talks, the weekly meetings of the Rhodes Incubator and of course the first open mic night at Rhodes House in January this year, which was organized by Peter Holderrieth, among others. It was the first time for a long while that I had played piano in public outside my practice room in the music faculty or in my college in Oxford. Actually, I would have taken part in the Rhodes China Trip in April and was really looking forward to it. But it was cancelled because of COVID. Instead, we are now working from home. Nevertheless, we still receive a lot of support from Rhodes House, including numerous online events and virtual coffee chats. I hope that I will be able to take part in Oxford life in person again in the next term and I am looking forward to the remaining two years!



PETER HOLDERRIETH

Germany & New College, 2019

*Peter (*1997) pursues an MSc in Statistical Science focusing on computational statistics and machine learning. He was born in Schwaigern, a small town near Stuttgart, and graduated as a Bachelor student in Mathematics from the University of Bonn winning the best graduating student award. He also worked as a tutor at the Mathematical Institute and has conducted research analyzing the efficiency of Markov chain Monte Carlo algorithms. In his spare time, Peter enjoys playing music in various ensembles and composes music of different genres; two of his works for symphonic orchestras have already been played on stage. In the future, his goal is to contribute to the development of new statistical and machine learning algorithms with applications in biotechnology and other industries.*

When I came to Oxford last October, I was very excited to start a new chapter of my life. My goal for the Rhodes Scholarship and for my studies at Oxford was to deeply engage with the coming challenges of our generation - on an academic, on a professional and on a personal level. Being very honored to have received the Rhodes Scholarship, I was particularly looking forward to being part of a unique community of exceptional students.

After my arrival and a warm welcome from my fellow German Rhodes Scholars, I met with my Rhodes cohort by having conversations about impact investment in India, by playing music with a Syrian flamenco guitar player or by discussing economic development in South Africa. Even after the first two "Welcome Weeks", I felt I had already learned a lot before my actual studies had even started.

In the following weeks, I was overwhelmed by the opportunities Oxford offered to me and the only thing that could have made me sad was that I could not explore all these opportunities at the same time. I joined the rowing team of New College as a beginner and experienced a team spirit that I had not known from a university team. In Hilary term, I even made it into the first team of New College. I also restarted the "Rhodes Creative Arts" group with some fellow Rhodes Scholars and organized events at Rhodes House, e.g. the first Rhodes Open Mic Night. I continued my foreign language studies at the Oxford Language Centre and joined the "Rhodes Incubator". It was especially the many events and the one-to-one conversations with the friends I made from all over the world which inspired me so much.

On top of that, I started a new chapter of my professional life at Oxford. After three years of studying intensively mathematics, I wanted to use my knowledge to study algorithms that make sense of the big data sets that shape the innovations of our time. Therefore, I decided to pursue a master's degree in statistics. I am currently working with one of the leaders in statistical machine learning on the question - in simple words - how to use symmetries of geometric structures to fill gaps in missing data. I was also honored to receive an offer for DPhil with additional support from a DeepMind Scholarship. My studies have also inspired me to do a research internship in computational biology over this summer to learn how data science can be applied to medical sciences. I am glad that I made the decision to use my quantitative skills to work on statistics, machine learning and their applications and I want to keep on this track in the future.

When in March 2020 COVID-19 spread over the world and many of my friends left the UK, my life at Oxford suddenly changed. A two-month lockdown in my student room gave me a lot of time for reflection about my experiences and my life goals. Of course, I would have loved to do the things I have missed out during the crisis, e.g. I was supposed to compete in the University's regatta for my college or I was supposed to travel to China, a long dream of mine, with the Rhodes China Trip. However, this long time of reflection and especially the COVID-19 crisis made it once more very clear to me what privilege I had to spend this time at Oxford and how thankful I am for this. My studies at Oxford and the Rhodes Scholarship meant for me a time of putting everything in context: I thought about my own professional life and my goals on a much broader and more global scale. I think I have never reflected on myself and this world so much as in the last year. I am extremely grateful for having received this opportunity and therefore want to thank everyone who helped to make this wonderful ongoing lesson of my life possible.





ALUMNI ENTREPRENEURS

HERWIG GUTZEIT

Germany & St. Catherine's, 1972

Herwig Gutzeit is a Professor at Technical University Dresden's Institute of Zoology and founder of Saxofeed. As a Rhodes Scholar in Oxford, he read for an MA in Zoology before completing his PhD studies at the University of Basel. He habilitated and received his venia legendi at the University of Freiburg. Prior to Oxford, he studied biology, chemistry and German philology at the University of Marburg

The company

Saxofeed is a newly founded company in Saxony located in Grimma (near Leipzig). The products which we intend to produce are high quality proteins for animal feed from mass cultures of insects. Animal feed for livestock is largely soy-based and extremely cheap on the world market. Why do we feel that our company should have its place in the highly competitive agro-industry?

The world-wide challenge

The arable land in the world is limited and, in fact, decreases gradually due to urbanization and the progression of deserts. At present, the increasing demand for proteins for animal feed can only be met by the destruction of the remaining rain forests and other valuable ecosystems. Brazil is a well-known example of this devastating development. As a result of the growing world population a „protein gap“ is imminent and the need to close the widening gap will become a major challenge for the future.

Our solution

Some insect larvae can be cultured at high density and the production can be scaled up to industrial scale. Some insect species like, for example, the Solder Fly (*Hermetia illucens*) can be fed on organic waste. The insects need little water (compared to livestock) and produce little greenhouse gases. The most important advantage, however, is that no arable land is required for the mass cultures. In other words: the partial substitution of soy proteins by insect proteins may save rain forests! For our projected plant we will use excess energy produced by a biogas facility (this is why our pilot plant is located in Grimma). The insect larvae contain high quality proteins (also suitable for human consumption) as well as valuable lipids which may substitute palm oil.

The economic obstacles

Nothing is cheaper than the rigorous exploitation of nature. Therefore, it is difficult to compete with the low price of soy. At present we try to develop strategies to overcome this problem and to produce insect proteins at a competitive price. Some commercial competitors are already on the market. Economic success depends to a large extent on the size of the insect production plant. This is a problem for any investor. Furthermore, there is little practical experience with the up-scaling of insect production plants. Problems are likely to be faced.

The personal benefits

Since the project has potentially an important positive ecological impact it is not difficult to find motivated students and competent scientific staff. The media have also reported favourably on several occasions. I have guided the project from its very beginning. At present, I see my role as „senior advisor“ and I leave the operative management to a younger person. Recently, we employed a CEO (Norbert Mohlberg) who will try to overcome remaining administrative and financial obstacles.



MARTIN-IMMANUEL BITTNER

Germany & Trinity, 2014

Martin-Immanuel Bittner is a co-founder and CEO of Arctoris, the world's first fully automated drug discovery platform. Martin graduated as a medical doctor from the University of Freiburg in Germany, followed by his DPhil in Oncology at the University of Oxford. His research experience covers both clinical trials and preclinical drug discovery, he is a member of several international cancer research organisations, and actively promotes Open Science. In recognition of his research achievements, he was elected a member of the Young Academy of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in 2018.

Please tell us more about your venture and what you plan to achieve with it

Arctoris is a technology company in the life sciences and drug discovery space. Our mission is to empower scientists around the world to do better research – by enabling them to spend more time with genuine scientific tasks, instead of manual experimentation. We developed the Arctoris robotic lab to conduct a broad range of experiments for scientists in pharmaceutical corporations, biotech companies, and academic centres. Using the Arctoris platform, they can conduct life-saving research without the need for their own lab, thereby democratizing and accelerating biomedical research.

Why did you decide to start your own company after Oxford? How did you get to where you are now?

The first idea for Arctoris evolved through my own experience in the lab. I could see that my colleagues, highly skilled PhD students and postdocs, were spending most of their time with manual lab work, lacking the time to read the literature, develop hypotheses, write publications etc. I thought that scientists should be empowered to do what they are best at: original scientific thought, coming up with new ways to think about the world. All other industries around us have been transformed by the rise of robotics and AI. That is how the idea behind Arctoris was born: to build a robotic laboratory that performs experiments for scientists worldwide at the click of a button. My cofounders and I then developed and verified key

assumptions about research processes, the drug discovery ecosystem and the market opportunity, and gained a deeper understanding of robotics technologies in the life sciences. We successfully applied for R&D grants from the British government and the European Union, enabling us to develop first IP, leading to two rounds of VC funding (with strong involvement from the Rhodes community) and enabling us to grow our company further.

What have you learnt so far while being an entrepreneur?

In my experience, I have found that an entrepreneur needs a sense of vision, creativity and resilience. Developing and communicating a vision for the future is what defines an entrepreneur in the first place – seeing something which doesn't exist yet, and finding a way to make it a reality. Creativity is the next ingredient, it is required to find ways to overcome the many challenges that lie ahead. And finally, resilience is what keeps you going, and makes an entrepreneur pick up the phone to win a client or investor, even after having been told 'no' a hundred times that day.

How would you describe the life of a founder from your experience?

As a founder, I am a generalist, and I constantly do things I have never done before. I had to – and still have to – leave my comfort zone over and over again. I enjoy being exposed to all parts of growing and running a company, from the science and technology to HR, legal conversations, IP protection, fundraising, marketing, and sales. It is immensely exciting to be challenged and to learn something new every single day, and build an idea into a company that serves clients globally.

How did your time at Oxford prepare you for this challenge? And how does being a Rhodes Scholar make a difference to your success?

When I left the University Medical Center in Freiburg and came to Oxford, I was pursuing the clinician-scientist route, and primarily wanted to gain experience in lab research to complement my clinical knowledge. I was preparing for a role in translational medical research, i.e. taking new drugs from bench to bedside. At Oxford I was exposed to a world-class scientific environment, and I met highly driven and motivated people who excelled in so many different sectors and in so many different ways. Especially at Rhodes House I was fortunate to interact with an amazing cohort of current and senior scholars that helped me to see that there are many different ways to have impact, and for a doctor, there are far more options than clinical care and research only. Over the course of my DPhil I learned a lot about what drives me, and that is having a positive, meaningful impact on other people's lives. I found that entrepreneurship gives me the chance to do that at scale.

What does fighting the world's fight mean to you?

For me, fighting the world's fight means finding a cause worth fighting for, and then persevering in pursuit of it. In my case, the cause is helping to bring better drugs to patients faster, by providing scientists with access to the most advanced techniques and equipment, so that they can do the best research possible. Especially with the rise of precision medicine, we will need to completely rethink the drug discovery ecosystem – with Arctoris, we want to do our part to enable the discovery and development of more tailored and more effective drugs for those that need them.

What is the effect of Covid-19 on your venture?

COVID-19 has changed the world around us profoundly. Travel restrictions and closed borders meant that conferences and meetings suddenly all moved online – and for many biotech companies and academic centres, lockdown also affected their lab operations. Research continuity became a major concern, and we actually see an increasing demand in our remote, automated experimental services. Thanks to our focus on automation and robotics, Arctoris remained fully operational throughout the whole pandemic, helping our clients continue their R&D (it turned out robotics are particularly helpful during pandemics...). At

the same time, we established several COVID-19 research assays, helping researchers to find and test new therapeutics against the disease.

What are currently your biggest challenges? How could the Rhodes community support you?

Arctoris has evolved so much over the past four years: as of June 2020, we built and moved into our new HQ in Oxford, opened a subsidiary in Singapore, and serve clients on three continents. The next one or two years will see us accelerate further, as we scale the company, increase partnerships and revenue, and further grow our lab and team. One of the biggest challenges ahead is growing with the company, evolving my role further from leading a small team to leading an increasingly large team of experts and specialists in various roles, negotiating contracts and partnerships worldwide, and being the link between the company and its Board of Directors. It is a challenge I look forward to, and where I benefit enormously from my mentors, many of whom are Rhodes scholars – such as Charles Conn, Patrick Pichette, and Alexander Straub. So, not only did the Rhodes scholarship change the path and trajectory of my life, but it also helps me on this path by allowing me to learn from amazing mentors who had followed a similar path themselves and who invest a lot of time and energy into the next generation of scholars – giving advice on everything from how to be a CEO, to marketing and sales approaches, making introductions to potential employees, investors, partners, and thereby reinforcing that we are all part of a truly global network.





LUKAS LANGE

Germany & Magdalen, 2015

Lukas is the CEO of Probably Genetic. Prior to starting Probably Genetic, Lukas worked as an Associate for The Boston Consulting Group. In addition to his consulting experience, Lukas has worked in business development in Shanghai and seed-stage VC in Germany. He also served as a consultant for the \$2 billion dollar investment arm of The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Lukas is wrapping up his Genetics PhD at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, where he worked on rare genetic disease diagnostics. He holds a Master's and a Bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from Cambridge University, where he worked on biodiagnostic devices, and the Technical University of Munich respectively.

Please tell us more about your venture and what you plan to achieve with it

Probably Genetic develops technology to find undiagnosed rare genetic disease patients and helps them get tested. Globally, approximately 400 million rare disease patients exist, spread across 10,000 different diseases. Rare diseases are severe and their symptoms are complex, often presenting as more common conditions, including autism, chronic pain or fatigue, or hypertension. Because of their complex symptoms, half of all rare disease patients remain undiagnosed and undergo unnecessary, often invasive and expensive medical procedures. Probably Genetic's mission is to diagnose 200 million patients globally.

Why did you decide to start your own company after Oxford? How did you get to where you are now?

I've known for a long time that I wanted to start a healthcare company because it felt like the best way to do three things that I'm passionate about at the same time: work on difficult, cutting edge science and technology, contribute to an ecosystem that's evolving at breakneck pace, and have a disproportionate, positive impact on people's lives. I applied to Oxford and the Rhodes with the intention of learning about genetics, a field that ticked all three boxes, in order to start a company. Oxford was the perfect safe haven for me to learn the science from the ground up, get a sharp sense for upcoming innovation, and experiment with ideas. I've been fortunate to find many mentors in the Rhodes community that have built successful ventures whose experience I could learn from. Simultaneously, meeting people in the flesh that "made it" made my far-fetched goal seem more attainable. To start Probably Genetic, my team and I eventually applied for and got into the Silicon Valley-based startup incubator "Y Combinator (YC)", moved to San Francisco, raised capital from reputable investors like Khosla Ventures and Rhodes alumni Alexander Straub, and started building the company.

What have you learnt so far while being an entrepreneur?

Humility.

What does fighting the world's fight mean to you?

Using your skills and privilege to solve a big and meaningful problem for humanity that other people might not be fortunate enough to even get a shot at. If you had enough luck in life to win a Rhodes Scholarship, you better make sure you leave the world slightly better off than you found it, instead of just optimizing for your own wallet's weight.

Why did you launch your venture in the U.S. and how has being in Silicon Valley helped you launch your venture?

Because we got into YC right when we were getting serious about starting the business. YC enabled us to raise funding fast, and gave us access to people we otherwise would not have met, most importantly many more senior entrepreneurs that can assist with guidance and introductions. The YC network now consists of more than 5,000 alumni, including the founders of AirBnB, DropBox, and Reddit that started companies and can coach you in many ways.

What are the missing ingredients in the European innovation ecosystem? What can we learn from Silicon Valley?

I'm not sure if I'm qualified to comment since I've never started a company in Europe, but here's one point that struck me: optimism. In Europe, I always felt like I had to thoroughly research an idea for months before I could dare to have a discussion with anyone else about it. People would intuitively try to find the ten reasons for not doing something before they'd focus on the one reason for doing something. In Silicon Valley, I can wake up and have an idea, sit down with smart, successful people within hours and brainstorm how big an idea could become even when I haven't done my homework yet. I think some ideas get squashed in Europe before they've ever had the time to blossom.

Can you tell us more about your decision-making process when being faced with difficult ethical questions in genomics?

Most tough decisions we had to face are usually about doing what makes you grow fast vs what's right. Those decisions aren't easy since the expectation for any startup is the proverbial hockey-stick revenue curve, ideally from day 1 of the company. In healthcare, you can't operate the "move fast and break things" model of Silicon Valley, for two reasons: (1) people's lives are at stake and (2) it's a regulated industry. You might get away with jeopardizing (1) because it's not necessarily trivial to be found out, you just better have a really strong stomach to still be able to fall asleep at night. You can even get away with not taking (2) seriously in the short run because regulators are busy and only pay attention to you once you're bigger. However, I think both (1) and (2) will catch up with you in the long run. It's easy to philosophize about doing what's right, but calling the shots on delaying your launch or slowing growth are the decisions that test your ethics late at night.

As far as upcoming decisions go, I actively think about how to implement a "devil's advocate" of sorts into our company to ensure we don't build anything harmful in the long run. What I mean by that is a mechanism that has to be independent of the company's leadership with the sole purpose of ensuring your technology is truly safe and made for good. You can have the best intentions to help people find out the cause of their devastating illnesses, but you're inevitably also collecting large amounts of data on people that need to be governed carefully. The single duty of a company's leadership is, by definition in your incorporation documents, maximizing shareholder value. However, maximizing shareholder value isn't necessarily what's in the best interest of society. Facebook is the best example for that. When seeking discussions about this with Rhodes alumni, you'll quickly be pitched the idea of a "Public-Benefit Corporation (PBC)" that enables you to add an additional purpose to your company, other than

just the maximization of shareholder value. The problem is that (1) that additional purpose is often ill-defined and (2) realizing that purpose with a company that relies on external investors is hard. “You want to donate 10% of your profit to rare disease research? I love that idea! Good luck raising your next round of funding though”. It’s curious that the people who pitch those ideas most often either never founded a company themselves, or already exited their businesses before the idea of PBCs became prominent and find the concept highly intriguing once they’re not in the driver’s seat anymore. If anyone in the community has ideas on this they’d like to discuss, reach out!

What are currently your biggest challenges? How could the Rhodes community support you?

We reached a significant milestone very recently: we were able to find undiagnosed rare disease patients online, predict which disease they likely have, and confirm said disease prediction with a molecular genetic test. We believe we’re the first company to do this. We are now building partnerships with drug developers that are trying to find rare disease patients for trials or approved treatments. Drug developers in this space include Roche, Genentech, BioMarin, Novartis, Pfizer, Biogen, Alnylam, Spark Therapeutics, Ultragenyx, and many more. If you work for one of these companies or know anyone who does, I’d love to talk to you!



INTRODUCING OUR NEW SCHOLARS ELECT



CAROLIN KRÖGER

*Carolin (*1995) studied Economics at the University of Mannheim and the National University of Singapore. She is currently enrolled in an MPhil in Development Studies at the University of Oxford and focuses her research on socioeconomic development and its impacts on health in South India. She plans to expand her studies in a DPhil on the implications of climate change on health inequalities. In her spare time, she volunteered for a social-entrepreneurial water project in South America, worked with the Rhodes Artificial Intelligence Lab and served as an ambassador for the local equal opportunities programme of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation.*

How did you hear about the Scholarship?

I first heard about the Rhodes Scholarship by meeting some of the scholars in residence at Oxford and becoming involved with the Rhodes Artificial Intelligence Lab.

What was your first reaction after receiving the Rhodes Scholarship?

I felt sheer happiness and felt incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Rhodes community and the trust placed in me to make the most out of the Scholarship.

What does being a Rhodes Scholar mean to you?

To me, it means being able to work at the cutting edge of research and to immerse myself in the opportunities, network and friendships that the Rhodes Trust enables. Most importantly, it means leveraging these opportunities and my passion for development and health towards social justice.

How are you planning to contribute to fighting the world's fight?

I plan to conduct research on the nexus of global health, development and climate change and hope to contribute to better understanding and voicing the suffering of those disproportionately affected by inequitable development.

Why did you choose to study International Development in Oxford?

The Oxford Department in International Development not only offers excellent supervision for DPhils in health-related projects but also pays great care to teach students critical thinking to disentangle the discourses that structure development and global health.

What are you most looking forward to when thinking about your time at Oxford?

I am most looking forward to engaging with the other Rhodes Scholars and to learning from their past and ongoing efforts to fight the world's fight. I am especially keen to get involved in the activities of Rhodes House, such as the Annual Health Care Forum and other initiatives driven by scholars.

To get to know you as a person better, what is your idea of a perfect day?

My perfect day is a patchwork of work and vacation: It starts with an extensive brunch with friends followed by a seminar group discussion on self-responsibility for health. It continues with a long hike through the countryside while listening to music and finishes with teaching a dance class in the evening.

What is one of your most favorite books and why?

I read "Le Petit Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupery as a child, teenager and adult and discovered a new layer to the story every single time. It's my favorite book because it seems to change and evolve as the reader does and holds great advice and lessons for life.

Last but not least, what is the best advice you ever received and who gave it to you?

A close friend of mine said: "Choosing what to dedicate your life to is hard and there is no objective right or wrong. The best way to check whether you are on the path that's right for you is to ask yourself whether you would be proud telling your five-year-old child about why you are pursuing this path."



NAN-HUA NADJA YANG

Nadja was born in Bremen as the second child of a Chinese immigrant family. While she mainly grew up in Germany, she remained close to the Chinese culture and served as a volunteer in China before reading Chemical Engineering at the Technical University of Munich (TUM). There she founded and led her campus' Environmental Department, represented her campus as its student representative and co-founded TUM's first official dance group.

Before completing her studies, Nadja conducted research on circular economy, resource efficiency and change management at the Tsinghua University Beijing and University of São Paulo. Moreover, she studied on a 'floating campus' during her 'Semester at Sea' when she travelled to four continents within four months. Nowadays, she is serving at the intersection of engineering and policy as a board member of the Studierend forum im Tönissteiner Kreis and Vice President of Public Policy of the European Young Engineers. At Oxford, she will pursue a DPhil in Engineering Science.

How did you hear about the Scholarship?

When it was time to think about the next chapter of my studies, I already knew that I wouldn't pursue the typical

chemical engineering career that was depicted to me. The student counsellor noticed that I had other ambitions than most of my peers and connected me to a like-minded alumnus who continued his study in the UK. It turned out that he was a Rhodes Scholar.

What was your first reaction after receiving the Rhodes Scholarship?

Pure gratitude.

What does being a Rhodes Scholar mean to you?

Growing up in an environment that didn't really see the value of education, I am thankful for my family and those people who encouraged me to dream big and supported me along my path. For me, being a Rhodes Scholar therefore means to give back to society even more than I have received by making use of the knowledge and resources I gain.

How are you planning to contribute to fighting the world's fight?

At the age of 15, I decided to contribute to the world's fight against global warming when I realised how natural catastrophes could wipe away numerous lives in an instant. Because such tragedies were often caused by people from previous generations, I wanted to break the cycle.

Nowadays, I believe that this fight can only be resolved through a fundamental system change in society. Goals such as climate-neutrality have already been specified but the exact implementation of them is still not completely clear. Therefore, I plan to support the transformation by identifying and executing the necessary steps.

Why did you choose to study Systems Engineering in Oxford?

I chose to pursue a DPhil in Engineering Science (specifically Systems Engineering) because I need to understand how society works first in order to identify possible steps for the transformation towards a sustainable future. Through my research, I strive to gain a better grasp

of the bigger picture and develop models that will assist society for the system change mentioned above.

What are you most looking forward to when thinking about your time at Oxford?

Probably I'm most excited about getting inspired by the story, mindset and vision of the people I will encounter.

To get to know you as a person better, what is your idea of a perfect day?

In my opinion, what makes a day 'perfect' is not the day itself but my attitude towards it. I could look forward to the day with the narrow focus on my tasks, worries, failures etc. and be frustrated if things don't go my way. And even if everything went perfectly well, I wouldn't be able to embrace that day to the fullest due to my narrow-mindedness.

On the contrary, I could experience the greatest joy on a day when I'm willing to embrace anything that happens to me with a grateful heart. Seemingly mundane things like lunch with my colleagues or a conversation with a friend suddenly become so meaningful. Thus, a perfect day for me is when I face the day with genuine appreciation and open-mindedness.

What is one of your most favorite books and why?

'Five Love Languages' by Gary Chapman. This book teaches about the different 'languages' and 'dialects' that people speak when they express love. Unfortunately, people often misunderstand each other because they do not speak the same 'love language'. These principles could be applied to any type of relationship. Although there are parts of the book that I don't agree with, its principles have helped me to understand my surrounding better, to identify possible sources of misunderstandings and improve my relationships to others on the long run.

Last but not least, what is the best advice you ever received and who gave it to you?

'Take nothing for granted; appreciate everything.' – My very best friend.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANNUAL DINNER & GENERAL MEETING

27 November 2020, 6pm / 7pm

Berlin

This year's Annual Dinner will again take place on the same day as the election of the new German Rhodes Scholars and will start at 7pm. Last year's dinner was a wonderful occasion to reconnect and meet other senior Scholars as well as get to know our two newest Scholars (see photo below).

The annual dinner will be preceded by the general meeting, which will start at 6pm. We will communicate the exact location in Berlin for both the dinner and the general meeting in a registration email closer to the date so watch out for future communication.

We hope that many of you will join and we look forward to welcoming you in Berlin again!

50-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE REINSTITUTION OF THE GERMAN RHODES SCHOLARSHIP

Postponed to 2021

As many of you know from our emails, our main event on this year's agenda was celebration of the 50-year anniversary of reinstating the German Rhodes Scholarships since World War II (1970-2020). We had already planned 1.5 days of activities that would have promised wonderful new exchanges and impressions, which included discussions with distinguished speakers, a greeting from Rhodes Trust Warden Elizabeth Kiss and visits of different locations in Berlin.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we decided against the risk of bringing together a group as large as 75-100 people and therefore postponed the event. Stay tuned for announcement regarding a new date for the event





HOW TO DONATE

Thank you for all those who donated this year to the Scholar's Fund! The Scholar's Fund is vital to the success of the Rhodes Scholarships as it provides support for research, leadership programmes, events and specific aid in case of need to our Scholars in residence.

This year, our constituency achieved a participation rate of over 25%. While some constituencies have much larger financial firepower than our small German constituency, we hope to continue to show our support for the Scholar's Fund through our usually above-average participation rate.

In our email from June 2020, we highlighted how important recurrent and predictable contributions from the German constituency are and would like to encourage Scholars to consider standing orders (Dauerauftrag) or an authorization for the Vereinigung Deutscher Rhodes Scholars e.V. to debit your bank account directly in specified intervals (Lastschriftverfahren).

You can find more information on how to donate in a tax-efficient way on our donation form that is linked to on our

website (<https://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/alumni-germany/>). Alternatively, you can

- Directly transfer the amount, specifying name and intent "The Rhodes Scholars Fund"
- If you consider a regular contribution, please use the process "Dauerauftrag" specifying name and intent "The Rhodes Scholars Fund"

In both cases the tax efficient way to execute the gift is via the following account:

Vereinigung Deutscher Rhodes Scholars e.V.

Deutsche Bank Hamburg

IBAN: DE68 2007 0024 0515 5593 00

BIC/SWIFT: DEUTDEDBHAM

Jürgen Reitmaier will send out donation receipts (Spendenbescheinigung) to all donors at the beginning of each year.

“Staying in Touch: News from the German Rhodes Community” is the annual Newsletter published by the Association of German Rhodes Scholars (AGRS).

The Editor of the AGRS Newsletter is Friederike Reuter (Friederike.reuter@germanrhodes.org).

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