



**Fundraising and Sponsorship
Free University of Berlin
Der Tagesspiegel – Mid-April
Ambassador Coats**

The Free University was founded in 1948 during the Soviet blockade of West Berlin. Berlin was being starved of food, fuel and other basic necessities. And under Soviet ideological constraints, Berlin's university was being deprived of academic freedom and intellectual honesty. In response, a brave group of professors and students rebelled, and decided to found a new university in the American sector of Berlin. This commitment to freedom of thought and scholarly integrity resulted in the establishment of Berlin's Free University.

This new university would not have been possible without international support. The government of the United States, as well as private American citizens, businesses and institutions, pledged their support for this courageous new venture. That commitment reflected the American vision of a reunified Germany and a Europe "whole and free." It took several decades to see this vision fulfilled, but today -- on the eve of a major step towards the "completion of Europe" -- Berlin is no longer an outpost behind the Iron Curtain; it is at the crossroads of Europe.

Over the years the Free University has developed strong partnerships with close to 30 American universities, and more than 100 universities worldwide. Together, these institutions represent the best in research, education, and innovation.

In the United States, over two million degrees are conferred each year at nearly 4,000 public and private colleges and universities. Higher education in the U.S. is complex, and offers something for everyone. A student can start at a community college with an inexpensive, job-focused course of studies, move on to a four-year university for a bachelor's degree, and then earn a higher degree wherever his or her talents and ambition lead -- including at one of America's famous "elite" universities. This is one reason that 30% of young adults in the U.S. have completed four or more years of college. And while in the U.S. students and their families must bear some of the cost of higher education in the form of tuition (typically one-third to one-half of the actual cost), the availability of financial aid makes college affordable. Even at the most expensive American universities, there are a higher percentage of students from low-income families than at German universities.

American universities are rightly known for their quality, as well as their diversity. According to a recent ranking published by the European Commission, of the world's 50 best universities, all but 15 were American. And in the past two decades, almost two-thirds of all Nobel laureates in the sciences had U.S. affiliations. American higher education attracts the best and the brightest from around the world.

What's the secret behind this success?

A spirit of philanthropy pervades American higher education, and is a large part of its "margin for excellence." Between 1910 and 1950, increased private donations outpaced increases in students and faculty at American institutions of higher education. Since then, alumni and other individual giving have grown exponentially,

and now surpasses other sources of outside support. American universities also benefit from public funding through research and other grants and from funding provided by the business sector, foundations, and others.

In the future, universities will be challenged to continue their expansion into such areas as lifelong learning, information and communication technologies, and applying the results of the research which they conduct – while still continuing to offer broad and fair access to all. As the dialogue in Germany – and Europe – concerning the challenges faced by higher education accelerates, the public-personal-private sector partnership which defines American higher education may offer some useful models. But in both Europe and the U.S., the challenge of the 21st century will be to adapt and change in response to our increasingly globalized world and the evolving educational needs of our citizens. In their time, the founders of Berlin's Free University reflected the boldness and courage needed to counter the intellectual tyranny and repression which they faced. Our task today is to apply that same spirit in the cause of providing our citizens – and especially our young people – with institutions of higher education in which they can apply their talents, unleash their creativity, and pursue their dreams.