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What does student engagement mean to you?

For me, student engagement means that as a student I get involved in my free time for things that are important to me. In my case, this is educational equity and more specifically the hurdles that students from non-academic families have to overcome in order to have the same success as their fellow students.

What special features or problems did you encounter as a working-class child/first-gen student during your studies that other students don't recognize?

The biggest disadvantage I see is that I didn't have anyone to explain how studying works and also didn't have a network that could help me on my career path. I had no one to explain to me what ECTS points were or the difference between a professor and a lecturer. Let alone how to put together your schedule.

Fortunately, I always had good fellow students who supported me. Now that I'm doing my master's, it's much more relevant that I don't have any contacts that can help me find an internship or let alone a job. I miss the famous foot in the door.

What advantages do you see for yourself and your fellow students in your engagement?

Through my involvement I have met many like-minded people. This is not only great socially, but also incredibly helpful because it can make up for the network you are missing. Within the group we talk about everything, from internship recommendations to "what should you do if you fail an exam" or you run out of money to study.

So the commitment is great because it's just nice to share the experience that you've worked so hard for and on the other hand you always benefit from the experiences of others.

How did you get involved?

I only found out from a newspaper article that educational equality is still an issue in Germany. When I read that it primarily affects so-called working-class children, including me, I became more and more informed. However, the more I knew, the more unfair I found it and felt like I had to do something about it. As a result, I found out about Arbeiterkind and joined the group.



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What is missing at KIT and in general for more commitment and for studying as a working-class child/first-gen student?

I'm currently spending a semester abroad in the USA and can compare quite well how other countries deal with the problem. The USA has a very high number of FirstGens - that's what you call working class children here. There has been a program that supports working-class children since the 1970s. The financial factor is of secondary importance. Rather, the program offers mentoring, advice and tutoring.

I did some research on this myself and found that this calculation works out very well. That's why I would like to see such academic support at KIT too. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find anything like that so far.