

The Bavarian Virtual University

The first five years and new perspectives

Helsinki, June 20, 2005

Paul Rühl, Managing Director

The Bavarian Virtual University

(VHB = Virtuelle Hochschule Bayern)

- an institute formed by all the universities and the universities of Applied Sciences in Bavaria (not an independent university!)
- pilot project first put into operation in May 2000

Member universities

- all of Bavaria's 9 state universities and 17 universities of Applied Sciences
- ten „non-state“ universities, e. g. Bundeswehr-University Munich, Catholic University Eichstätt, the Film and Television Academy in Munich, the Bavarian Civil Service Academy

The Bavarian Universities

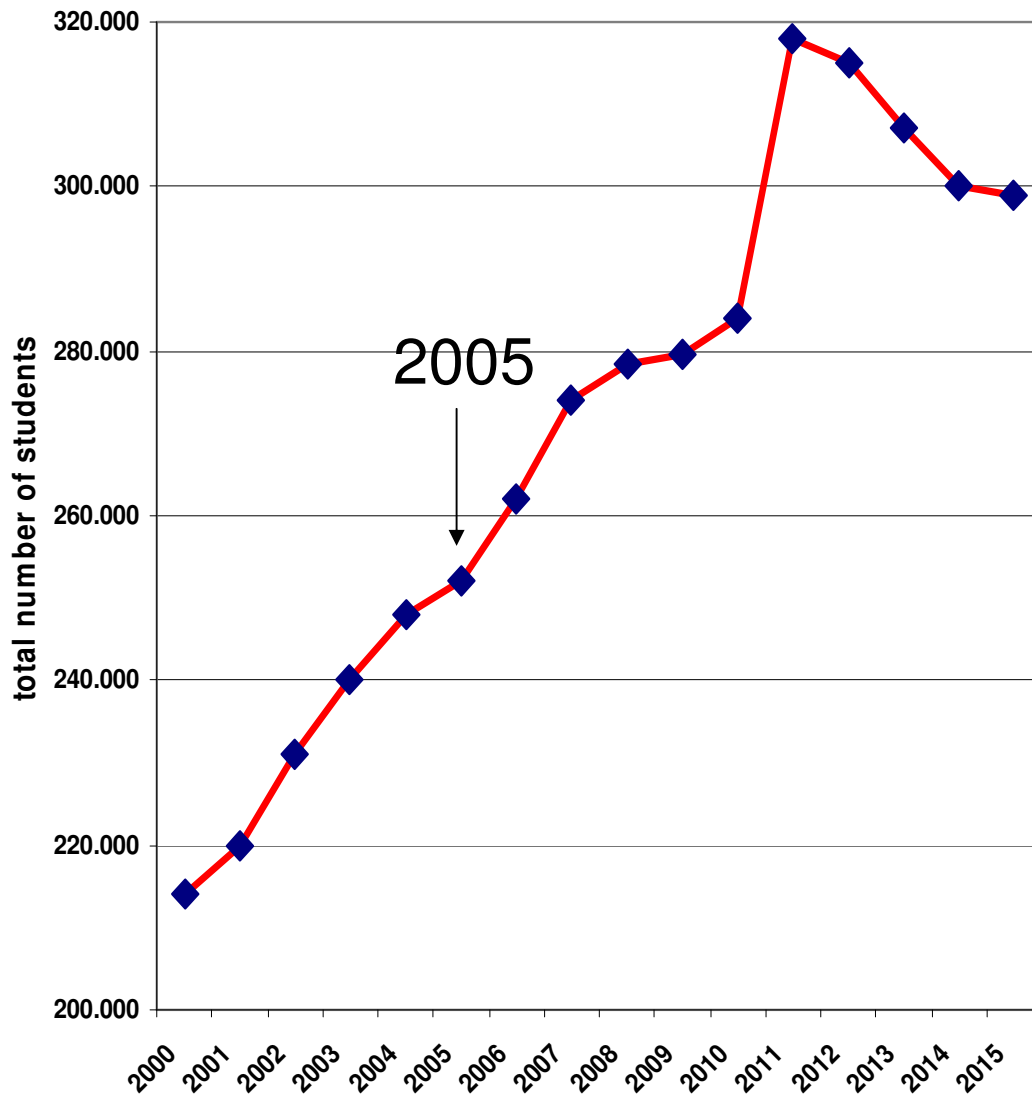


The Bavarian/German Situation

- face to face education easily available to all „traditional“ students
- distance education plays a minor role
- need for complete online or blended-learning curricula is limited
- from a political point of view, web-based and -aided teaching and learning is attractive when cost-effective.

The aim of the VHB

- to complement the programme of the traditional universities, not to replace them
- no degrees, only credit points
- to aid the member universities in educating growing numbers of students while state funding does not grow proportionally
- to spread eLearning literacy, thus enhancing the employability of the students



Students in Bavaria 2000 - 2015

(source: Wissenschaftsland Bayern 2020. München, BStMWFK, 2005)

Financing 2000 - 2006

- project initially financed with EUR 11 mio as part of the High Tech Offensive initiated by the Free State of Bavaria
- funding from other programmes: EUR 3.7 mio
- funding from the regular state budget since 2003: EUR 4.6 mio
- since 2004: revenues from course licensing
- since 2005: tuition fees from individual users

Target groups

- students at member universities (free of tuition fees)
- other students (tuition fees)
- persons interested in life-long learning on an academic level (tuition fees)
(No special courses for this group!)

Fields of study

- Business sciences
- Computer science
- Engineering
- Health
- Key qualifications
- Law
- Social work
- Teacher training

Types of courses

- lecture + tutorial
- virtual seminar
- self-instruction environment + optional tutoring

A vhb-course typically equals 3 – 4 ECTS credit points

Course essentials

- high degree of interaction
- individual tutorial guidance
- meeting credit-point requirements
- sustainability
- demand by member-universities

Quality management

- peer reviews of projects
- accreditation by VHB-boards
- student evaluation
- reports

Technology

- centralized student administration and catalogue
- variety of platforms and learning management systems
- individual courses are accessed via servers at member universities

VHB-Services for professors

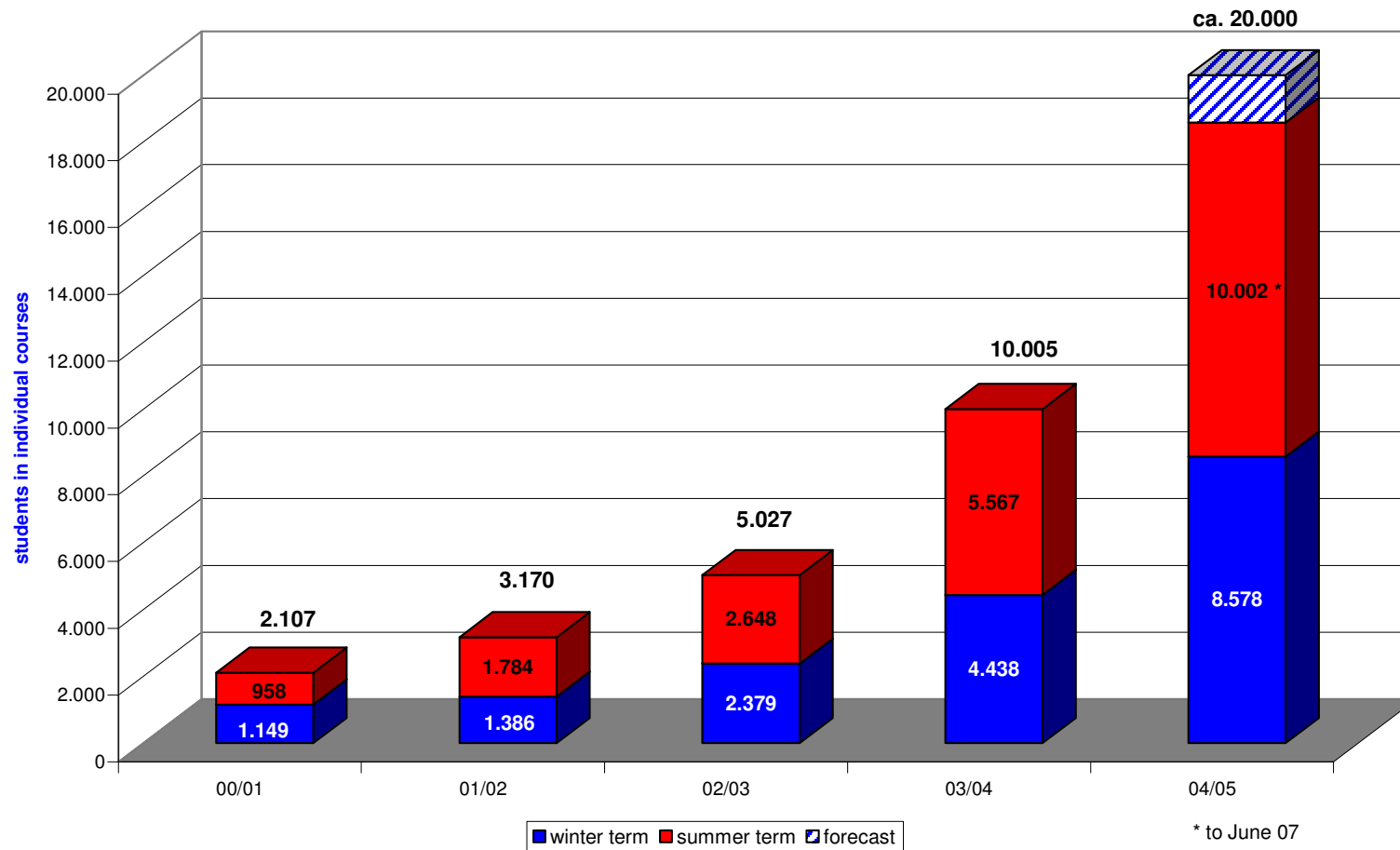
- grants for new courses
- information and advice by boards and project managers
- grants for tutors
- free training for tutors
- grants for course maintenance

= keeping the courses sustainable

VHB offices

- project management
- finance
- student registration
- internal communication and public relations
- technical support
- staff: 13 employees

Student enrollment until summer term 2005



Problems until now

- financial situation secure until Dec. 2006
- possibilities for self-financing grossly overestimated
- structure of VHB rather complicated
- many courses do not meet sufficient demand
- insufficient acknowledgement of courses by many universities
- examinations not always offered at the student's university

Main recommendations of the evaluation committee 2005

- restructure the organisation
- secure stable funding
- develop courses according to the demand of the universities

Restructuring

- strengthen the influence (and the responsibility!) of the member universities
- „Lean structures“:
fewer boards and committees
- relocate the VHB offices in one place
(present sites: Bamberg and Hof)

Funding

- basic funding by state budget (suggested: 3.6 mio € p.a.)
- appropriate participation of the VHB as soon as semester fees will be introduced (2007?)
- revenues from course licensing and from individual customers (comparatively low in the foreseeable future)

Course development to demand

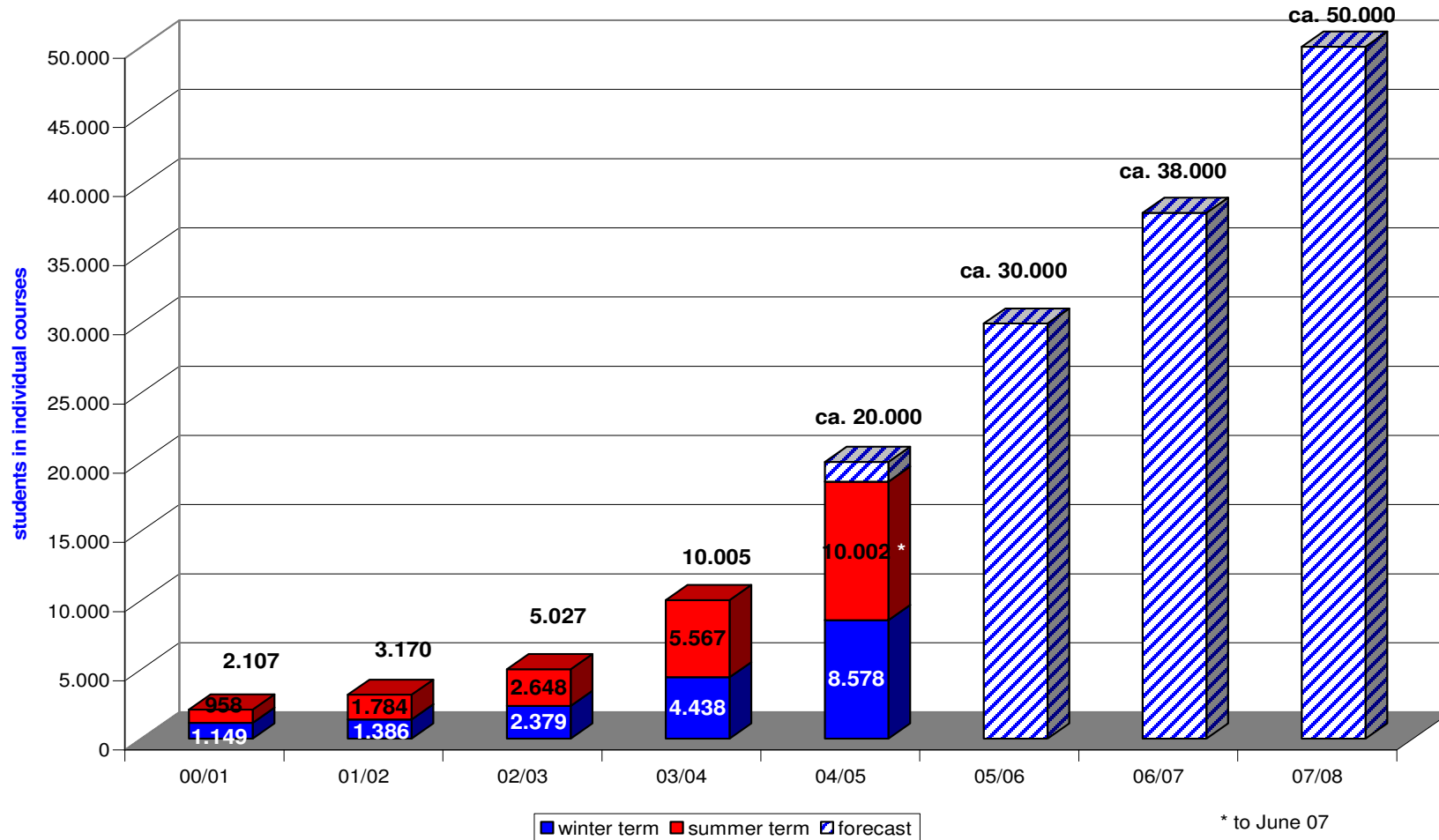
in the past:

- 1) professors suggest projects
- 2) experts evaluate project quality
- 3) Board of VHB-directors selects projects for funding

in the future:

- 1) universities declare their demand, suggest and define projects
- 2) Board of VHB-directors selects projects for funding and calls for proposals (competitive bidding)
- 3) Board of directors and university representatives choose among bidders

Student enrollment (forecast)



Thank you for your attention!

Contact:

paul.ruehl@vhb.org