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**Author**

OERTEL, Simon (SÖLL, Matthias)

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**Abstract**

Universities find themselves faced with the conflicting institutional demands of being cathedrals of learning and research as well as introducing managerial and corporate-like structures. Despite many studies in higher education research that focus on how this situation affects the mission of universities, the role of imprinting has not received considerable attention yet. Our study aims at closing this research gap by analyzing the influence of institutional founding conditions on mission statements of universities. Results show that imprinting does not affect the introduction of mission statements, but rather their contents. The role of imprinting is, however, moderated by the power and the reputation of universities. In discussing these findings within the context of higher education research, our study contributes to a better understanding of developments in the field of universities. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Oertel, Simon, E-Mail: [simon.oertel@uni-jena.de](mailto:simon.oertel@uni-jena.de)