

REINVENTING OUR UT

Strategic Council position paper on the future of UT Version 4/4, September

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This position paper was prepared between July-September 2024 by five SB members on behalf of the SB. They did so at the request of the deans. Fikkers coordinated the process. Bondarouk, Herek, Koopman, Van Steen gave inputs and collaborated intensively.

The inputs came from the SB and Executive Board members. All SB and Executive Board members were interviewed individually, gave written input twice and a draft version was discussed jointly. Input was also collected from some external experts and UT colleagues. This has - where possible - been incorporated into the paper. Where this was not possible, this was coordinated with those involved.

This document provides frameworks for the upcoming budget cuts and organisational changes within faculties and services. It is also the initial impetus for the Institutional Plan 2025-2030. The SB proposes that the Executive Board start the development of this plan, with intensive involvement of the UT community, employee participation, Supervisory Board, and external stakeholders.

This position paper does not stand alone. It builds on the SB's January 2024 '*Updated Mission & Vision*'.

1. THE STRENGTH OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

The University of Twente has always *been* a rock-solid international and entrepreneurial *university of technology*. And we will remain so. And we have a beckoning perspective: we are going to further strengthen our position as a rock-solid entrepreneurial *university of technology*. That means we will work differently in the coming years, with even more focus on making a meaningful impact. To this end, we will continue to develop as University 4.0. We do this together with strong scientific and social partners. We find them in the East Netherlands, but also elsewhere in Europe and beyond.

Our education is and remains excellent, but we will organise it more efficiently and sustainably. This means that we will focus our education more on the overlap between our scientific disciplines and the impact domains. We will make our education less labour-intensive for teachers and support staff, and there will be more focus on

study efficiency. Positioning will have a strong focus on UT-wide alignment and social relevance. With LLO (lifelong development), we are bringing in a new type of UT student.

We are also becoming more entrepreneurial in our research and innovation. That means being more adaptive, responding faster to major societal questions, encouraging creative and innovative approaches and seeking partnerships. We make our impact domains socially indispensable thanks to our expertise in engineering and natural sciences. We intuitively and cleverly interweave these with strong social science knowledge. We are fully committed to a better and more future-proof research and innovation funding mix. We also remain committed to providing development space for our research talents

2. WHY DO WE NEED TO CHANGE?

Why do we need to change? Let's start by saying: a university is always changing. Every university is constantly influenced by its environment and vice versa. What is different this time? This time, we need to change faster than we are used to, and there are three reasons for this.

First, all Dutch universities are under financial pressure. We are no exception. Budget Day 2024 highlighted this again with the announced cuts.

Second, our traditional uniqueness and strengths (e.g. our campus, strong role in the region, entrepreneurship, and interdisciplinarity) have become less distinctive in recent years

become. In a world where resources and talent are scarce, this is a risk.

Third, we expect a contraction in student numbers due to demographic and political developments. This logically means less revenue.

The good news is that we don't have to reinvent the wheel. One of our deans aptly put it: '***we have many ingredients already in place, such as short lines of communication and a great sense of ownership***'.

Change offers opportunities to enterprising UT people. We are confident of seizing those opportunities!

3. EDUCATION: FOCUS, COST AWARENESS AND LLO

Education at UT has always been innovative and often set the tone for other universities. In 1961, we were the first Dutch university to offer a broad candidate programme and a real campus with a residential function for students and staff. Then we became the first university to weave entrepreneurship into education, the first to link STEM and social sciences, the first to experiment with technical medicine. We led the way with internationalisation, the European Universities Initiative and cooperation with universities of applied sciences. As enterprising engineers in a young university, we are now very good at innovating, unencumbered by inhibiting traditions.

Anno 2024, UT education is struggling with two problems. First, on average, our courses are a lot smaller than at other universities. As a result, our education is too labour-intensive and cost-inefficient. In times of decreasing funding per student, and falling student numbers, this is a serious problem.

The second problem is that we have lost uniqueness in recent decades. Nowadays, almost all universities have a campus, offer education in coherent blocks and you can study technical medicine in several places. We are proud that UT innovations have proved successful elsewhere. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that others see us less as a forerunner, as they used to.

Our education sector faces three challenges. To (1) increase cost awareness and (2) bring more focus by innovating and restructuring. In addition, we want to (3) attract a new type of UT student, for example through Lifelong Learning (LLO). For these three tasks, we need to become more adaptive and creative in the way we organise our education.

- **Task 1: Creating more cost-consciousness in education.** Our education is really good: *'We spend significantly more time with our students than other universities. That means the perception of our student is really better. We do need to nurture that,'* said one of the deans. An SB member touched on the value of this: *'Our students like the fact that they feel seen and heard with us feel'.* To keep our personalised approach affordable, we need to organise our teaching more efficiently. More than before, we are focusing our limited capacity on activities that have direct value for students. This means less support available for teachers and revising key aspects of the TOM 2.0 model. We will do this as follows:
 - A. The basic principle remains that programmes organise their educational activities themselves, but from now on this is done in a more coordinated, well-considered way and in harmony with other programmes. It is important to use the expertise of different faculties in the programmes, where relevant.

- B. Faculties will budget their education (income as well as costs) and standards will be agreed with the Executive Board around these budgets.
 - C. This will lead to agreements with faculties on standards around all aspects of education, including the time commitment per student and which subjects remain part of our programmes. We will also ensure more cost-consciousness among the programmes.
 - D. We make all considerations integrally from the perspectives of quality, operational management and social need.
- **Task 2: More focus: restructure and innovate.** We are moving towards a situation where we only have education programmes that match the scientific expertise and impact profiles present. Sufficient interest from potential students is crucial in this respect. Among other things, this means that we will have a clearer thematic profile at the interface of (1) our expertises in engineering, natural sciences, entrepreneurship and organising, and (2) the four chosen impact domains: health, climate, safety and chip technology. We all carry this message and translate it - as best we can - into the names and curricula of all our programmes. This means that we apply and maintain a minimum entry level, and that Marketing C Communication focuses marketing purely on a matrix of up to twelve profiles, based on the combinations of (1) our expertises in engineering, natural sciences, entrepreneurship and organising, and (2) the four chosen impact domains. Where necessary, this will lead to curricular adjustments as early as 2025, including phasing out courses that do not meet

meet our profile. Where possible, we launch new courses that strengthen the profile and meet market needs.

Consider the intersections of beta engineering, social sciences and AI. As of 2026, we already see less fragmentation in programmes.

Innovation also means regularly evaluating the relevance of impact domains, curricula and programmes.

- **Task 3: Stronger commitment to LLO.** In 2030, the Netherlands will have fewer 16-year-olds than in 2024, but half a million extra inhabitants. To remain relevant, we can and must tap into new target groups. Those new target groups consist of students who traditionally do not opt for full BSc and MSc programmes, for instance because they are already working, or because university is less obvious. There is also a growing group that demands more flexibility from education. We are therefore going to put much more effort into flexible LLO. We will do this as the technical university of the East Netherlands, also at locations outside the UT. The departments will jointly build a strong support organisation for this, which will be ready in 2025. We have already recently obtained external funding for this. The faculties will offer their education to the whole world, via the UT-wide support organisation. It is important for UT to remain alert to external developments and possible new markets so that we can respond quickly.

Action points:

- ⇒ ***Every faculty budgets for its bachelor's and master's programmes and we agree UT-wide (with the involvement of the employee participation body) on the frameworks these budgets comply with. Faculties decide for themselves how to achieve a balanced budget at faculty level.***

education budget, guided by the social need and the quality of our education. This means taking a sharper look at small courses more than before.

⇒ *For small courses, at least, the focus will be on the teaching itself, leaving less room for more complex organisational forms such as module coordination and services provided by support staff. It is likely that in the case of*

these programmes are also committed to (further) integrating the curricula of different programmes.

⇒ *We are also using LLO to search university-wide for new target groups that traditionally do not opt for full BSc and MSc programmes. We are focusing more on this than before.*

⇒ *During the first half of the 2024/2025 academic year, the relevant Building Blocks and the UCOW will work out the detailed objectives.*

These will be used in the new institution plan.

4. RESEARCH & INNOVATION: EXCELLENT DISCIPLINES AND IMPACT DOMAINS

'We differ from other universities in that we focus on both fundamental sciences and real-world applications,' says one of our deans.

By 2030, UT will be known as the entrepreneurial engineering university of the Netherlands. The foundation of our university lies in the strong disciplines of engineering, natural sciences and organising. Within those disciplines, the faculties determine where the priorities lie.

We work in an entrepreneurial way: adaptive, creative and pragmatic. We focus on external and interdisciplinary collaboration and are willing to take risks. Our motivation is to make social impact through our research and innovation. This happens mainly within the four impact domains: health, climate, security and chip technology. The institutes determine the focus and have a leading role.

- **Task 1: Cashing in on our strengths.** Our starting position is good: *'We are at the heart of at least seven key technologies, we are*

aware of our unique value, and we dare to do new things,' said an SB member. Moreover, we approach technology not only from engineering and natural sciences, but also from a strong social science base. The challenge is to capitalise on this even better.

Already from mid-2024, we are working on a better mix of external funding. From 2026, that mix will be in our DNA. Grant support and business development can only offer to proposals that contribute to that good mix. That judgement is up to SBD. To that end, from 2025 every faculty will have an up-to-date and *well-informed research funding strategy*, supported by SBD. This will make us much more successful at European and national opportunities.

- **Issue 2: Caring for our people.** Research talent will know how to find us much better in 2030 than it does now. We scout talent with an appreciation for entrepreneurship and offer plenty of opportunities to develop as entrepreneurial researchers and teachers. Faculties offer much more room for diversity in academic

career paths, team science and collaborations that cross group and faculty boundaries. Each faculty has one integral strategic personnel planning. Part of this is the agreement that all researchers at UT also teach, and vice versa.

- **Task 3: Make our internal collaboration more efficient and effective.** It is likely that in these times of shrinkage and transformation, we will have to look at whether the current arrangement of faculties and institutes can be improved. Substantive cooperation is leading in this respect, especially when we look at our research infrastructure. Due to the changing financial situation, we have to move and/or downsize research groups anyway. Each research group must fit into

UT's uniqueness, i.e. at the interface of our areas of expertise and impact. *'All units in UT should be able to explain why UT is the right place for them,'* said an SB member.

Action points:

- ⇒ *All faculties set up their integrated strategic human resources planning and research funding strategies.*
- ⇒ *This academic year, we are doing an assessment of the quality of our research and realising an update of the research and innovation strategy. The SB, the UCOZ and the UCI are guiding that elaboration. It can be used in the Institutional Plan 2025- 2030.*

5. OUR CAMPUS: SUSTAINABILITY AND MORE EFFICIENT USE

'Our campus is about togetherness, relationships and developing yourself',

said one of the deans. The campus is and will continue to be hugely important for

colleagues and students, also in 2030. Our image is largely determined by its green surroundings and excellent residential, sports and cultural facilities. We want the campus to become even more of a hub for students and colleagues, as well as for businesses and social partners.

The financial situation is already forcing us to limit investments in the campus to (major) maintenance and maintaining current capacity. This means that our real estate will deteriorate. Over the next five years, too, the focus will be on renovation, sustainability and more efficient use of office environments and teaching facilities.

The resulting free space is used for research purposes or rental. In principle, we only rent to social organisations that enhance the quality of our campus or to knowledge-intensive companies with which we cooperate intensively. In the period towards 2030, we will adjust current external leases as much as possible or not extend them. In doing so, we will work towards 0.8 workplace per FTE university-wide. We will not divest real estate owned on campus. The long-term LTSH plan is leading in this respect.

6. OUR FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE: QUALITY AND HARMONISATION

UT is a complex organisation, which calls for a stronger, professional finance column. We want the finance column to develop, with a clear organisational structure, and uniform processes and practices in the areas of (1) financial strategy formation, (2) budgeting, (3) administrative recording and (4) monitoring. By working more uniformly, we can achieve better quality with fewer colleagues.

From 2026, our finance column will be known for its knowledge of education, research and innovation, professionalism, proactive and solution-oriented mindset and unity of action. The finance column will provide relevant, reliable and real-time steering information at every level, of higher quality than today. From every

faculty or department, we expect them to have their financial-administrative affairs in order in a uniform, timely and correct manner. This allows the entire UT to (re)manage where necessary.

It is essential for an entrepreneurial university to have financial space for innovations, for risk-taking and therefore for 'failure'. We will have to make that space big enough so that we can continue to innovate.

Action points:

⇒ The overhaul of the finance function is urgent. We will complete it by mid-2025. The UCB and the vice-president are leading this elaboration. Support in the units is very important here.

7. OUR SUPPORT ORGANISATION: SHRINKING AND ADAPTIVE

We want our support services - in faculties and centrally - to become much more flexible, innovative and entrepreneurial. In some types of services, the demand of the faculty will soon be more paramount, while in others the university-wide ambition.

We also expect a number of service types to become less relevant in the coming years. On the contrary, others will be given greater priority because we need them to make UT's transformation a success. Regarding the latter, we expect a growing need for: UT-wide

organisational change capability, business development, digital transformation, business intelligence, financial strategy formation C control, and guidance on the transformation of our education system.

In addition, our support colleagues (inside and outside the faculties) need to work much more efficiently. We count on fifteen to twenty per cent shrinkage of the number of support colleagues compared to the number of researchers and lecturers. The share supportive colleagues has become so high that we cannot afford

can afford. We achieve shrinkage by making the best use of the opportunities offered by digitisation (including AI) and flexibilisation.

Financial contraction and selective growth also means that we need to organise our support organisation differently. Firstly, we need to harmonise support capacity UT-wide much more. That means we need to align what happens in faculties much better with what is organised centrally.

We also need to look at how central services can be better organised. Their joint decision-making will really have to be much more effective and business-like.

'To achieve organisational flexibility, faster decision-making, and better responsiveness, we need to redesign services. The transition to more operational excellence, can only succeed if there is direction,' said one of the deans. Therefore, we want the CDO to be more unambiguously led than it is now. We will continue the transition that has already begun.

Action points:

⇒ ***We will start working on this after the summer of 2024. HR, S&P and GA are leading in that elaboration, in coordination with (services within) the faculties.***

8. NEXT STEPS

The SB is optimistic and see many opportunities to become more agile, and to respond quickly to UT's opportunities and threats. But to do so, we really need to make the choices now that will lead to strengthening our position as a unique and entrepreneurial technical university. This is why the SB has written this position paper *'Reinventing the UT'*.

There are also issues for which this position paper (and soon the Institutional Plan 2025-2030) does not offer a concrete solution. For example, it does not provide a blueprint for the coming organisational changes. Those organisational changes must be designed and driven by the individual leaders of faculties or departments. This position paper and the Institutional Plan 2025-2030 do provide faculties or departments with an assessment framework for the organisational changes they are about to embark on.

For the SB, the position paper is the starting shot for the major changes of the UT in the coming years. The SB proposes that the CvB start developing the Institutional Plan 2025-2030 and use this position paper as initial inputs for this. In the development of the Institutional Plan 2025-2030, the UT community will of course be very intensively involved, including co-determination, Supervisory Board and external stakeholders.