THE ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITY: STRONGER TOGETHER.

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE INSTITUTIONAL PLAN 2026-2032

APRIL 2026

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

COLOPHON

Authors: The Institutional Plan is a mutual document from the University of Twente and was also written in this perspective. For questions regarding this document, please contact Felix van Urk (Strategy & Policy).

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FOREWORD

In an era marked by societal, technological, geopolitical and ecological challenges, UT is called upon to make a difference.

For decades, UT has been known as the *entrepreneurial university*: a breeding ground for innovative solutions, where curious and committed individuals come to study and work in order to make an impact. This will remain our identity.

As a young and rebellious institution, we were pioneers in combining engineering and social sciences, introducing project-based education and developing new interdisciplinary educational programmes. Spin-offs and start-ups have long flourished in Twente. Our entrepreneurial character has always evolved in response to the challenges of the time. Looking ahead, the future calls for a further development of our entrepreneurial approach towards an impact-driven university.

The world around us is changing, and expectations of universities are no longer what they once were. We are therefore redefining what we mean by entrepreneurship. Alongside its traditional focus on the commercialisation of scientific innovations, it now also encompasses catalysing the transformation into a single UT community with the ambition to help shape major societal transitions. Commercial knowledge transfer and growth in specific fields remain important in enabling us to continue contributing new solutions to society and serve these transitions. Our four impact domains (Climate, Health, Safety & Security, and Chip Technology) provide the framework for this. In our education, the focus lies on offering flexible education,

People are at the heart of UT. That is why we approach this transition together: everyone contributes and takes responsibility within their role. We are building a culture of trust, guided by our core values: open, inclusive and entrepreneurial. Individual initiative is encouraged, supported by clearly defined guidelines and recognition of everyone's contribution. Managers guide the change process and are mindful of its impact on colleagues and teams.

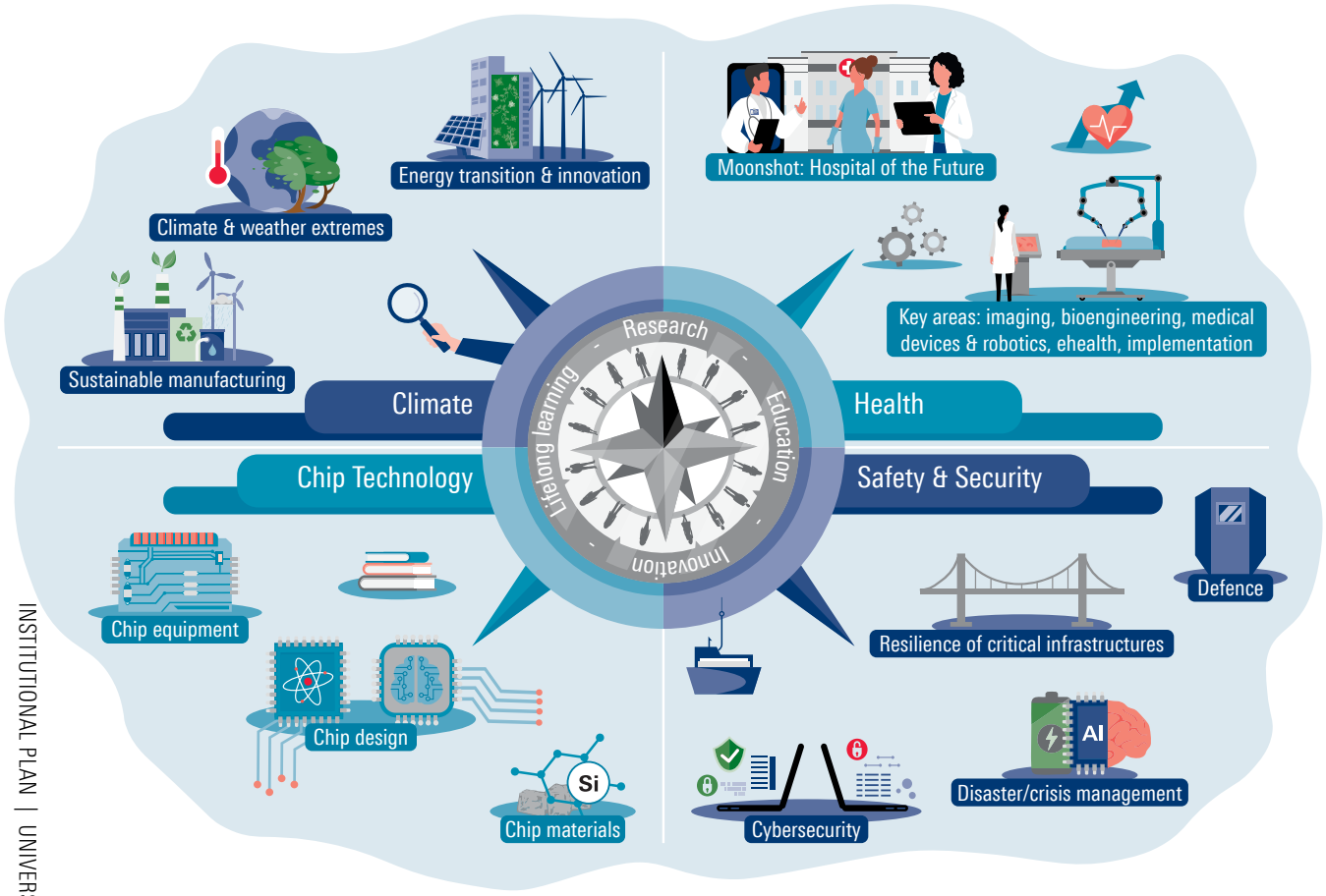
We are a close-knit and inclusive community where everyone can learn, grow within agreed frameworks, and feel at home. Differences make us stronger and are valued. We treat one another fairly and with respect. An open culture also means holding each other accountable for expectations and results, and being open to change.

In this way, we are creating a university where diversity is embraced and where students and staff feel valued. We take responsibility for one another and for our results. We give and receive the space to contribute, excel and develop in ways that suit each individual.

enabling a much broader and more diverse group of learners in the Netherlands, Europe and beyond to engage with us in ways that suit them.

THE UNIVERSITY'S FOUR IMPACT DOMAINS

Together with our partners, we create impact through research, education, valorisation, and lifelong learning



From our regional role, we contribute to the development and prosperity of the eastern Netherlands, while continuing to invest in national and international collaboration. At a time when both government and the region are fully committed to unlocking Twente's growth potential as one of three new national growth regions designated by the Dutch government for large-scale development, we seize these opportunities and thereby contribute to a stronger Netherlands and Europe. Together with our partners in the eastern Netherlands and the Euregio, we take the lead.

With 2035 as our horizon, we set our course: UT will remain the leading entrepreneurial technical university that educates the next generation of *'High Tech, Human Touch'* innovators, working together to build a better world. We are creating an

agile and decisive university that helps steer societal change and contributes through its research outcomes. By making clear strategic choices, we create the space to invest. As a fourth-generation university, we deploy our talent, knowledge, facilities and networks – together with our partners – to achieve maximum positive impact.

1. MISSION, VISION & VALUES

OUR MISSION & VISION

We are UT: the entrepreneurial technical university that educates the next generation of **'High Tech, Human Touch'** innovators to build a better world **together**. Since 1961, we have been committed to combining our entrepreneurial mindset and personal approach with **technological innovation** across all disciplines.

An **entrepreneurial** mindset is essential to our success: by continually challenging ourselves and one another, we can grow and innovate. We embrace a culture that places trust and responsibility above rigid hierarchies.

Our green university campus is a symbol of high-tech facilities and cross-sector innovation, and a vibrant home to a **welcoming, open and inclusive community** where personal development, sport and culture flourish. On our campus and beyond, we foster a strong sense of community to achieve our goals **together**. In the way we work, we support one another and ensure that everyone feels seen and valued.

When it comes to our research, education and innovation activities, we strive to place the needs of society at the centre – particularly through our focus on the impact domains of Climate, Health, Safety & Security, and Chip Technology.

OUR VALUES

Entrepreneurial: entrepreneurship is about taking initiative. Creating something from nothing, always driven by what society needs. As an entrepreneurial university, we give this concept renewed meaning: we develop new forms of collaboration with industry and society, and give our students a significant role in this. We show courage, take a hands-on approach, and continually find new applications of 'High Tech, Human Touch' to address societal challenges.

Open: Our mission to contribute to society can only be realised through genuine collaboration. Science is teamwork – local and global, physical and virtual: stronger together. With our campus as a home base and meeting place, we connect with communities and partners, listen to what society needs, and translate this into our

education, research and innovation programmes. We do so responsibly, with due attention to knowledge security, and guided by our Open Science principles: as open as possible, as closed as needed.

There is no university without open dialogue. That is why we govern transparently: decisions at university and faculty level are accessible to students and colleagues. Our openness ensures that entrepreneurs, societal partners and citizens can easily find us and are keen to work with us. Critical voices are welcome – it is precisely diversity of ideas and perspectives that keeps us sharp and strengthens our role as a trusted university. This also means being clear about what we expect of one another and holding each other accountable for what we have discussed and agreed.

Inclusive: We are committed to an inclusive environment in which respect and appreciation for one another come first. We see differences as a source of enrichment: they make our community stronger. Grounded in academic and professional integrity, and in the creation of a socially safe environment, everyone can be themselves and contribute in their own way. Our university and region thrive on the wide range of backgrounds and perspectives brought together here from across the world. We aim to remove barriers and promote equal opportunities so that everyone can realise their full potential. With all these talents and perspectives, UT is becoming a place where diversity, creativity and collaboration come together – and where everyone can excel and develop.

Our values – open, inclusive and entrepreneurial – are inseparably connected. They form our compass and underpin the UT culture, in which we trust one another, take responsibility and engage in open and respectful dialogue – so that we can grow and improve together.

IMPACT EXAMPLE: HEALTH

The hospital of the future

Imagine this: within a few years, you will no longer need to go to hospital for diagnosis, check-ups and follow-up care. The growing pressure on healthcare calls for rapid and fundamental change. In Twente, we are actively working towards this. Together with leading hospitals in our region, the high-tech innovative industry, the construction and manufacturing sectors, health insurers and government, we are building a future-proof healthcare system for the region. Thanks to new technologies, an increasing share of care can be delivered at home or in specialised centres. New developments resulting from

the Policy Document on Housing (Nota Wonen) provide opportunities to design infrastructure in a way that optimally supports the healthcare of the future.

Healthcare will increasingly be delivered through networks in which doctors, healthcare professionals, home care providers and other parties work closely together, supported by state-of-the-art technology. This requires new skills and training at all levels, as well as effective support for patients with low literacy or limited digital skills. This development is expected to significantly improve labour productivity, by as much as a factor of ten, and to enable far more personalised care in the familiar home environment. At the same time, it provides a strong economic boost to the region, with industry developing solutions that can be applied worldwide.

Twente is ideally positioned to drive this major innovation. We have a mature ecosystem in which knowledge, technology and collaboration come together. UT contributes leading expertise in fields such as technical medicine, chip technology, imaging technology, robotics, AI and social sciences. It is precisely this combination that is needed to prepare both healthcare professionals and patients for the future of healthcare.

'High Tech, Human Touch'. In Twente, it happens!

2. OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION: THE FOURTH-GENERATION UNIVERSITY

WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE MAKE IMPACT

Our mission, vision and values form the foundation of how we create impact as UT. Education, research and commercial knowledge transfer are our core tasks. We expect Lifelong Learning (LLL) to become a core task of knowledge institutions in the longer term and will continue to invest in this area. We educate students and other learners to become entrepreneurial innovators who identify opportunities, push boundaries and take on challenges, including beyond established paths. As a technical university with strengths in the social and behavioural sciences, we aim for world-class research in order to achieve positive impact for society. As an entrepreneurial university, commercial knowledge transfer, the process of translating knowledge and research into value for society, is not only a statutory core task but also a defining element of our identity.

Through our four impact domains, Climate, Health, Safety & Security, and Chip Technology, we connect the outside world with our internal strengths. We build on our strengths and align with international and national transition agendas, such as the National Technology Strategy (NTS), the scaling up of defence, the Supplementary Healthcare and Welfare Agreement (Aanvullend Zorg- en Welzijnsakkoord, AZWA), and related societal developments. Investment in our innovative infrastructure is crucial to enabling us to contribute to a stronger Europe.

OUR ENVIRONMENT IS CHANGING

Universities operate in a complex landscape shaped by societal expectations, shifting political priorities and global competition. In the Netherlands, public appreciation of universities is increasingly under pressure, with institutions sometimes perceived as elitist and too distant from society. Political debates on student intake, internationalisation and efficiency are translating into legislation and regulation that affect institutional autonomy, such as the Dutch Balanced Internationalisation Act (Wet Internationalisering in Balans). At the same time, universities are increasingly expected by policymakers to act as a single, coherent contractual partner in addressing major societal challenges. At both Dutch and European level, we see similar trends: geopolitical tensions and the need for a more economically independent Europe call for more structured forms of collaboration. Finally, universities in the Netherlands and in many parts of Europe are likely to face contraction in the coming years, as a result of demographic developments and political choices. How we respond to this as a university will largely determine our future position in society.

We choose to collaborate in an accessible way at the grassroots level of society with citizens, public authorities and industry, so that, together with society, we can contribute to solutions to major challenges. This apparent paradox between coherence at scale and diversity at a local level calls for a renewed dialogue with society and for clear choices in positioning and collaboration.

With this institutional plan, we as UT community respond to these developments. Two transitions are required:

1. We must evolve into a **fourth-generation university**. This means involving society even more closely in our processes of education, research and commercial knowledge transfer, from design through to implementation. In this way, UT becomes more accessible to societal organisations, companies (including SMEs) and citizens, and increasingly becomes a university of and for them.

2. We must operate more as **a single community** and organisation when working with well-organised partners, as this is what they expect of us. These include public authorities, companies and societal institutions.

At the same time, we must become more resilient as a university. As outlined above, universities will face greater risks in the years ahead than in the past. It is our responsibility to continue working towards a healthy and safe organisational culture in all respects, including physical, social and financial ones.

THE TRANSITION TO A FOURTH-GENERATION UNIVERSITY

Twente plays a transformative role in the Dutch and European economy and society. At University of Twente, we contribute to this from our values: for us, a strong economy is one of the indicators of a strong Twente. That is why the way in which we collaborate with our partners to create societal value will become our strategic focus. Previously, our strategy focused on developing key value propositions in education, research and commercial knowledge transfer – we are known for these strengths and will continue to build on them during this transition. The next step in our evolution as a university is to further open up our processes to our ecosystem, enabling us to develop new ideas together. This is an approach with which we are already partly familiar, but which will increasingly define who we are and how we are perceived.

	Transition from a third- generation…	…to a fourth-generation university
What society sees	• The university as a producer of knowledge, focused on research, education and knowledge transfer. • The university as a partner to industry and government in projects with a clear beginning and end. • Success reflected in the number of students, spin-offs, patents and contract research. • Stand-alone institutes and centres. • A global orientation.	• The university as an impact-driven, open platform within a regional and international ecosystem, where the co-creation of research, education and innovation is the primary mode of working. • The university as a continuous partner to society: citizens, hospitals, industry and public authorities collaborate with us. Structurally active ecosystems become essential. • In addition to third-generation KPIs, success is reflected in living labs, field labs and co-creation. • Innovation spaces involving multiple stakeholders, with institutes and centres acting as drivers of innovation. • An ecosystem-oriented approach.
Impact	• Economic impact through industrial innovation. • Knowledge transfer from the university to society. • Student contributions to society are considered to be a nice-to-have.	• Systemic impact on societal transitions, alongside economic impact. • Knowledge production in collaboration with the ecosystem. • Active student contributions to society are considered to be an integral part of their educational programme.
Culture and behaviour	• Academically driven, organised along disciplinary lines. • Collaboration primarily project-based. • External partners align with academic agendas. • Clear separation between support and academic staff.	• Open, transdisciplinary and mission-driven. • Structural and programmatic collaboration with industry, public authorities and citizens within ecosystems. • External partners co-shape agendas and implementation. • Hybrid teams with diverse academic and societal backgrounds working in an integrated way.
Recognition & Rewards	• Primary focus on publications, citations and grants. • Career paths determined by bibliometric and economic success. • Commercial knowledge transfer as an additional task or by-product of research.	• Recognition of team science, co-creation and societal impact. • Multiple career pathways (research, education, impact and leadership), with hybrid career options in collaboration with societal partners. • All researchers have a plan for the next steps towards the impact of their research.
Key value propositions	• High-quality knowledge and talent • A reliable R&D partner for industry and government. • Technology transfer and commercial knowledge transfer.	• Co-creation of solutions to complex societal challenges. • Acceleration of transitions through ecosystems. • Universities as anchor institutions in the region and in society.

Inspired by: Bogers, M., & Steinbuch, M. (2023). De vierde generatie universiteit: Het nieuwe tijdperk van open innovatie en ecosysteem-denken (The fourth-generation university: The new era of open innovation and ecosystem thinking. Holland Management Review, 208: 62-7

AN ATTRACTIVE TWENTE

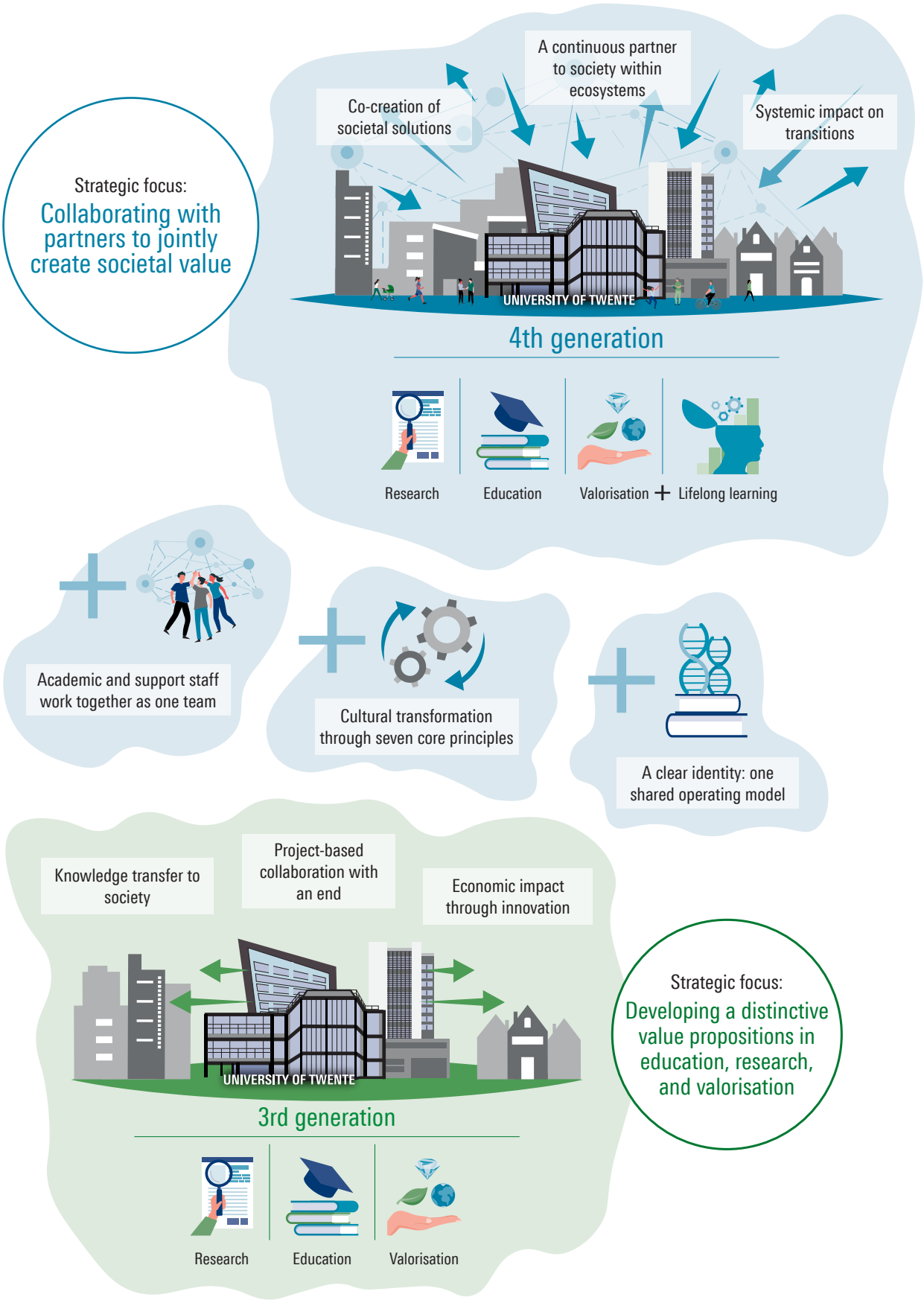
The Twente region, as part of the Euregio, is characterised by a strongly growing and robust high-tech manufacturing sector. It is this entrepreneurial spirit that enables us to respond quickly together in areas where we can make an impact. Collaboration with other educational institutions, industry and public authorities within the framework of the Twente Board is crucial in this regard. The recently published draft National Spatial Strategy (Nota Ruimte) identifies Twente as one of three new growth regions where the Dutch government aims to initiate large-scale development. We will play an active role in this transformation. With our students and researchers, both national and international, our networks, our strong connection to society, and our close-knit region with ample physical space, Twente offers opportunities that are not possible elsewhere in the Netherlands. The envisaged scaling up of Twente, and of the eastern Netherlands more broadly, will strengthen the region's high-tech economy, a region with the physical space to realise opportunities.

This will increase the attractiveness of our region and improve the stay rate of national and international talent.

From Twente, we work to build a better world at regional, national and global levels. Our strategic partnerships are shaped by this vision. We collaborate with knowledge institutions (such as TNO, Saxion University of Applied Sciences and ROC van Twente, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Universität Münster, University of Waterloo, Tecnológico de Monterrey, ECIU European University, 4TU and UNL) hospitals (Radboud UMC, MST and UKM) secondary education, companies, local and regional public authorities, and with platforms that bring partners together, such as the Twente Board.

THE TRANSITION FROM THIRD TO FOURTH-GENERATION UNIVERSITY

From value creation to societal impact



3. WORKING AS ONE UT COMMUNITY. WHAT DOES THIS REQUIRE OF US?

STRONGER TOGETHER: WHAT THE TRANSITION REQUIRES OF US

In the coming years, UT as a single community will be in transition towards a fourth-generation university. This institutional plan builds on the transition we have already initiated and will continue to implement in the years ahead. This requires commitment, flexibility and the courage to let go of established ways of working.
To ensure success, it is essential that everyone feels heard and involved. Leadership at all levels is indispensable: together, we will standardise processes and implement further changes. Over the past year, we have already begun introducing a number of no-regret measures, such as a new role description for programme directors, budgeting at programme level, agreements on the research project pipeline, and the optimisation of education support processes.

In recent years, faculties have taken far-reaching strategic and organisational decisions, largely within their own context. This demonstrates both their strengths and the limitations of operating primarily at the level of individual units. Externally, public authorities, funders and strategic partners expect a clear and consistent profile of the university as a whole. Internally, differences in procedures and decision-making lead to duplication, longer lead times and uneven implementation of university-wide decisions. To remain competitive in attracting funding, talent and partnerships, clear mandates, shared standards where they add value, and consistent follow-through are essential. We will therefore act more as one university, while retaining the responsibility of faculties for their academic content and their own priorities.

More than ever, people and organisations around us expect us to have a clear profile and a distinct identity as a university, and to collaborate coherently on that basis. We will meet this expectation: we will harmonise the ways of working of faculties, institutes and service departments, enabling us to organise ourselves more coherently and effectively, to learn together, share knowledge and scale up successful approaches. During this transition, we will not lose our local identity; rather, we will grow as one UT community with shared goals. Successes within individual units will be celebrated collectively, while we continue to strive for and recognise excellence at the level of individuals and teams.

Our seven core principles provide direction for the necessary cultural change and for new ways of working.

THE SEVEN CORE PRINCIPLES OF UT

The core principles guide our cultural transformation and ways of working

1. **We are transforming towards new ways of working, a new organisational culture and new organisational structures.**

2. **Our core activity is academic education.**
   We prepare young people to address complex scientific, technological and societal challenges.

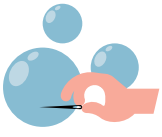
3. **We conduct excellent research to complement our primary educational mission.**
   We expect our academic staff to be actively engaged in both education and research.

4. **Our research has meaningful academic and societal impact.**
   We aim to place the needs of society at the centre of our education, research and innovation activities.

5. **An entrepreneurial mindset is essential to our success.**
   This means taking well-considered risks, experimenting, maintaining a sound financial position, and having the discipline to discontinue activities where necessary.

6. **The integration of the social sciences and humanities with scientific and technological disciplines distinguishes UT from other universities.**

7. **We look and act beyond our own bubble.**
   We will actively collaborate with our local, national and international partners to create new opportunities for students.



The core principles are derived from our mission, vision and core values (see p. 8) and will guide the two transitions in the years ahead: from a third- to a fourth-generation university and towards one UT community. As with the principles underpinning the Twente Educational Model and our vision on talent development, a direct connection with society is central to all the work undertaken by students and colleagues.

	From communities within UT…	…to one UT community
What the world sees	• External partners encounter different approaches depending on their UT contact person; agreements are often made locally without organisational alignment.	• UT presents a single, clear face to the outside world: external partners recognise a consistent approach to contracts, partnerships and public relations.
Impact	• The impact of UT teams (faculties, departments, research groups, central services) is only partially connected to a recognisable UT profile; strong units may still appear isolated.	• UT as a whole becomes a stronger institution, enabling it to attract more talent and create greater societal impact. This is achieved by better coordinating the impact generated by individual teams. • UT's impact is visible at institutional level: research outcomes, talent attraction and societal engagement are assessed not only at the level of individual units, but also through university-wide performance indicators (e.g. joint programmes, interdisciplinary grants).
Culture and behaviour	• UT's units have developed organically. Processes, priorities and ways of working vary by team. • Many decisions affecting UT are taken locally. Consultation is often extended to all stakeholders, which slows decision-making. • Formal decisions at UT level are implemented inconsistently across units; some units revert to local ways of working.	• UT operates a shared operating model: roles and responsibilities are clearly defined so that decisions are taken at the appropriate level without unnecessary consultation. Success is reflected in reduced duplication and clearer internal handovers. • Decisions are taken at the appropriate level with clear accountability: units are responsible for local matters, while central governance is responsible for university-wide priorities. • We are a learning organisation: performance is regularly reviewed, with clear consequences and support where implementation stalls.
Recognition & Rewards	• Actions are primarily rewarded based on their contribution to unit-level objectives (faculty, department, research group). • The current focus in promotion is on the individual.	• Unit-level and organisational-level objectives carry equal weight in recognition and rewards. • Teams are central: clear procedures are in place for recognising and rewarding team science and team efforts more broadly.
Leadership	• Department-level decisions are aligned with departmental objectives. • Leaders focus primarily on departmental goals and the local context; alignment with university-wide objectives is assumed but not measured.	• Department-level objectives and decisions are aligned with organisational objectives. • Leaders take responsibility for the UT strategy: annual performance reviews of leadership include measurable contributions to university-wide objectives and cross-departmental collaboration.

TRUST, LEADERSHIP AND OWNERSHIP

Leaders at UT foster an open and learning culture, and demonstrate this through their behaviour: building trust, taking ownership, holding one another accountable, showing courage and dealing calmly with uncertainty. They align their own ambitions and those of their teams with the UT vision and frameworks, and create an environment in which teams learn together, develop solutions and achieve tangible results. Leadership thus becomes a key driver of the inclusive and future-proof organisational culture we seek to realise. Individuals and teams assess themselves and are assessed on the basis of their own objectives, aligned with the vision of their unit, faculty or UT. Leaders are evaluated on both performance and the wellbeing of their teams. We therefore invest deliberately in leadership as a powerful accelerator of change, such as the harmonisation of faculties. Managers are given clear frameworks and objectives, with specific attention to essential operational areas such as finance, workforce planning and data-driven working.

In the coming period, we will pay particular attention to the working relationship and alignment between academic and support staff. To enable students to flourish and to empower our researchers, we make full use of the expertise of our support staff. Reducing manual work, standardising processes and working in a connected way across the organisation not only make work more effective, but also more meaningful. Colleagues in faculties can rely on support and advice that meet their needs. Colleagues in support departments can expect their contribution to be recognised and respected by academic staff. We work together towards our shared goals as one UT community and show interest in each other's work. This represents an important responsibility for leaders within UT.

OUR ORGANISATION IS ALSO IN TRANSITION: IT IS ABOUT PEOPLE

A transition places significant demands on the people in our organisation. It means managing two priorities at once: continuing day-to-day work while at the same time innovating and letting go of established ways. This calls for adaptive and shared leadership, particularly from managers. To improve through experimentation, we need to have trust in one another and in the process. Leaders therefore align closely with one another while also motivating and guiding their teams in collaborating across departmental boundaries. We work as much as possible in line with our intended future way of working: in strong, integrated, UT-wide teams in which people feel connected and take joint responsibility. In this way, we increase our agility and strengthen our faculties, institutes and service departments.

We will respond in an agile way to internal and external changes. This means making timely and effective decisions, innovating through experimentation, making adjustments where needed, and working from guiding intentions and goals rather than detailed strategic plans. Clear communication and agreements provide direction, while giving

teams the space and responsibility to innovate in their day-to-day work. Diversity, autonomy, trust, clear frameworks and transparent accountability form the foundation of an organisation in which people can use their talents in ways that suit them, and where wellbeing and success reinforce one another.

In addition, the way we organise our work is evolving. Operations work in an interdisciplinary way, closely connected to the core processes. For example, completing a PhD within four years requires effective collaboration: Team Science is central, with professional support staff (such as technicians and grant support) making a significant contribution to the success of the team.

We provide frameworks, agree on goals and results, and trust one another to deliver. Wherever possible, we organise support processes in a uniform way so that we can respond more quickly to new developments and make our services less vulnerable. Roles and responsibilities can adapt flexibly in consultation, ensuring that everyone contributes where their knowledge and skills add the greatest value. The harmonisation of faculties entails not only uniform ways of working but also alignment of roles and responsibilities, and in the transition process we also review the balance between central and decentralised roles. Where necessary, organisational changes may be implemented. This new way of working brings shared responsibility and flexibility through standardisation, while allowing greater autonomy through clear role descriptions. The aim is also to reduce perceived workload. In addition, collaborating across organisational boundaries on innovation is fitting for staff at an entrepreneurial university, as it helps them gain greater insight into other aspects of UT. With a strong Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) cycle, based on reliable data, we stay on course and continue to improve.

OUR CAMPUS AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AS A FOUNDATION

Alongside new ways of working, we make optimal use of our physical environment. The campus is a safe and inclusive place to live, work and study, as well as a vibrant meeting place, Living Lab and innovation ecosystem. Our infrastructure is a unique value proposition, for which we have a strategic plan and which serves as a guiding principle when initiating new initiatives and recruiting talent. We actively deploy our knowledge and physical and digital infrastructure for co-creation with public and private partners at regional, national and international levels. We do so within a sustainable framework in which ecological, social and governance aspects of sustainability are embedded in our research, education, organisation and operational management. Climate is not only one of our impact domains; we also actively pursue a climate-positive approach in our operational management. We fully endorse the Sustainable Thinking, Sustainable Action manifesto of the Green Young Academy, which guides our approach in this area.

4. AMBITION A: TALENT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Our first ambition focuses on our people: we foster talent, resilience and connectedness, both within UT and in society. We embed these qualities in the educational programmes of our students and encourage them among our developing staff. Our aim is for everyone to bring out the best in themselves and in others. Through education, research, commercial knowledge transfer and LLL, we contribute to strengthening individuals, companies and other organisations in society.

AMBITION A: TALENT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

We want to stimulate talent, resilience, and a sense of belonging, so that students and staff can reach their full potential and empower others, both at the UT and in society.

Our education and approach to talent development are distinguished by personal attention and a unique combination of engineering and social sciences: *'High Tech, Human Touch'*. We educate students and learners who, from an entrepreneurial mindset, identify opportunities and take on challenges, including beyond established paths. Strong in their own discipline, they are also able to apply their knowledge in a broader context to address societal challenges.

Our *Vision on Learning & Teaching* forms the foundation: learning by doing, building inclusive communities, and personal development. These three interconnected strands reinforce one

another and together define our education, which delivers 'more than a degree' alone. Our academic staff, both early-career researchers and more experienced colleagues, also develop in line with these principles. Roles are shifting from individual academic work towards a team-based, socially engaged knowledge practice, supported by technology and involving hybrid teams from academia (working from UT) and society (working within companies or other organisations).

OUR STUDENTS ARE OUR FOUNDATION

For the Bachelor's programmes, the principles of the Twente Education Model (TOM) remain leading, with project-based education and learning by doing, underpinned by a strong focus on the personal development of students as individuals and professionals at an academic level. Where necessary, we will adapt the organisation of TOM to support the move towards greater flexibility that we are pursuing. We want students and learners in Dutch and international society to be able to access our education easily, including those who are not enrolled full-time. New technologies such as AI are integrated into the curriculum in such a way that students develop both practical proficiency and the ability to reflect on their ethical implications. Master's education builds on our scientific strengths and the identified societal challenges within the four impact domains.

Studying at UT is about '**More Than A Degree'**: as a fourth-generation university, we contribute to students who make a difference in society. A distinctive and attractive feature of UT is that we ensure that the way students participate in the wider student experience, and as partners in the governance of our university, continues to align with the needs and expectations of today's students.For this reason, all members of the UT community take an active role in encouraging and facilitating 'More Than A Degree'. Broader societal engagement by students is embedded in our education. We will further strengthen the formal recognition and reward within the curriculum for extracurricular activities and remove barriers to ensure that participation remains inclusive and accessible. We are exploring various forms of financial support with the aim of increasing student engagement. We offer students opportunities for global exchange, including a European learning experience in collaboration with as many as 13 universities within the ECIU University Alliance. In this way, we prepare our students for a global labour market and for their role as responsible global citizens.

INCREASINGLY, PEOPLE LEARN AND INNOVATE WITH UT: WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO LLL

UT's ambition is to be a fully fledged, professional partner in the LLL landscape. Although LLL is not yet a statutory core task, we take our responsibility in light of major labour market shortages, large-scale societal transitions and the emergence of new technologies. For now, this is a private activity that is not publicly funded. Together

with our regional education partners Saxion, Windesheim and ROC van Twente, we are experimenting with innovative LLL solutions, ensuring that our region is well prepared for the future in this field. Learning and working are becoming increasingly intertwined, and universities play a key role in this. We see it as our responsibility to take a leading role in strengthening an LLL culture in the Netherlands. Particularly in times of societal transition, adaptive professionals are needed who are able to select, combine and apply knowledge in their professional practice. Moreover, by 2030, the Netherlands will have fewer sixteen-year-olds than in 2024, while the population will have grown by half a million.

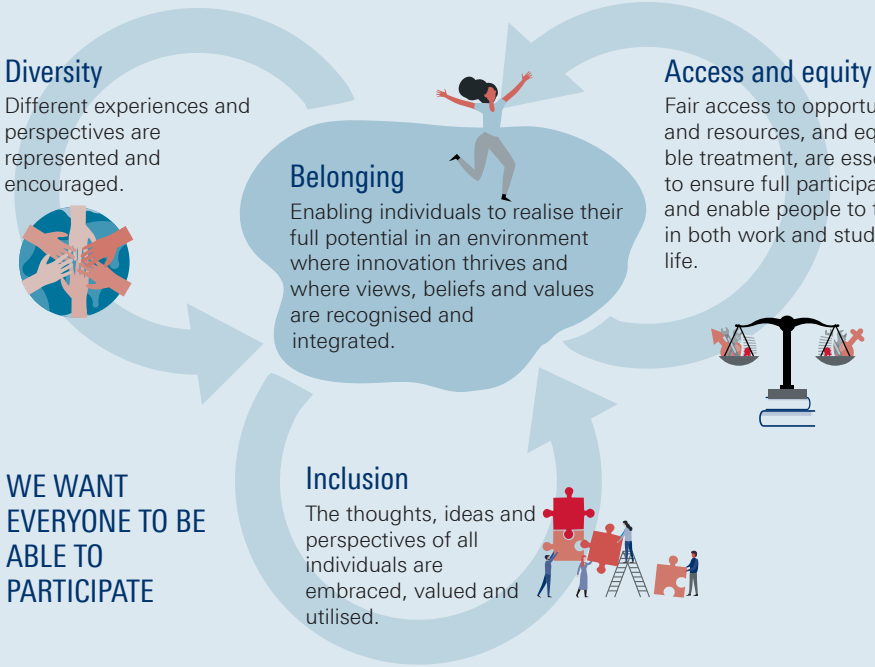
LLL is connected to UT's three core tasks (education, research and innovation) and takes different forms depending on learning or knowledge needs. UT adopts an impact-driven and demand-driven approach. LLL is being embedded in the organisation and shaped in co-creation with partners. The portfolio is aimed at working professionals, companies and organisations with learning needs, and alumni who wish to remain connected to UT. In terms of its themes, the portfolio reflects UT's four impact domains: Climate, Health, Safety & Security and Chip Technology. The portfolio does not stand alone, but contributes to commercial knowledge transfer and strengthens innovation capacity within UT's networks, as those who learn with and through us are often also partners in innovation projects. Through this approach, LLL contributes to positioning UT as a fourth-generation university by strengthening, in an integrated way, scientific development, talent development and commercial knowledge transfer.

INTERNATIONAL TALENT IS ESSENTIAL FOR TWENTE AND THE NETHERLANDS

Science is inherently international. UT has an international community and is proudly rooted in Twente. In addition, as a technical university, UT contributes to key national priorities – such as the Beethoven programme in the field of chip technology – which require us to create ample opportunities for international talent. This is something we stand for, based on our values as a university and as a partner within the Netherlands, and we therefore give it high priority. We have introduced parallel bilingualism to ensure that participation at our university works for everyone. In addition, together with our regional partners (the province, municipalities, the Twente Board and industry), we are committed to retaining international talent in our region. Together, we make working and living in Twente more attractive for them, enabling them in turn to contribute to further strengthening the attractiveness of our region. We recruit international talent (again: students, PhD candidates and staff) in line with our contribution to the Twente and Dutch economy. International and intercultural experiences form an integral part of our education, our research practice and our extracurricular activities.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DE&I)

The diversity of our community enriches us, and we embrace it. We bring together differences in perspectives and experiences, resulting in relevant education, impactful research and high-quality services. Leaders at UT, across all units, are expected to promote and apply the UT DE&I Development Framework appropriately. We already offer our UT community a wide range of training opportunities to become familiar with and feel comfortable engaging with DE&I. In doing so, we aim to strengthen the role and responsibility of each of us in working together to create a welcoming, respectful and socially safe environment for all.



SPACE FOR ALL OUR TALENT

Our many talented colleagues are our antennae to the outside world: they identify opportunities beyond the university and act on them. In response to societal and scientific transition challenges, we expect new roles for researchers within UT: transdisciplinary, impact-driven and firmly embedded in (European) collaboration

1 AI & big data; networking & cybersecurity; technological literacy
2 resilience, flexibility & agility; motivation & self-awareness
3 leadership & social influence; empathy & active listening; education & mentoring

structures. Our academic professionals combine analytical and creative thinking with a solid disciplinary foundation[1], self-efficacy[2] and strong collaboration skills[3]. In this, our institutes, which facilitate cross-faculty collaboration, play a crucial role. Collaboration requires robust structures and standards for knowledge security and ethics. Our research is as open as possible and as closed as necessary. The academic integrity of every member of staff is essential in this regard. Our talent is committed to our core values (entrepreneurial, open and inclusive), engages responsibly with new technologies such as AI, and is given the space to grow through diverse career pathways and opportunities for entrepreneurship. In addition to our students, our PhD and Engineering Doctorate (EngD) candidates are our ambassadors, and our vision on talent is reflected in these programmes.

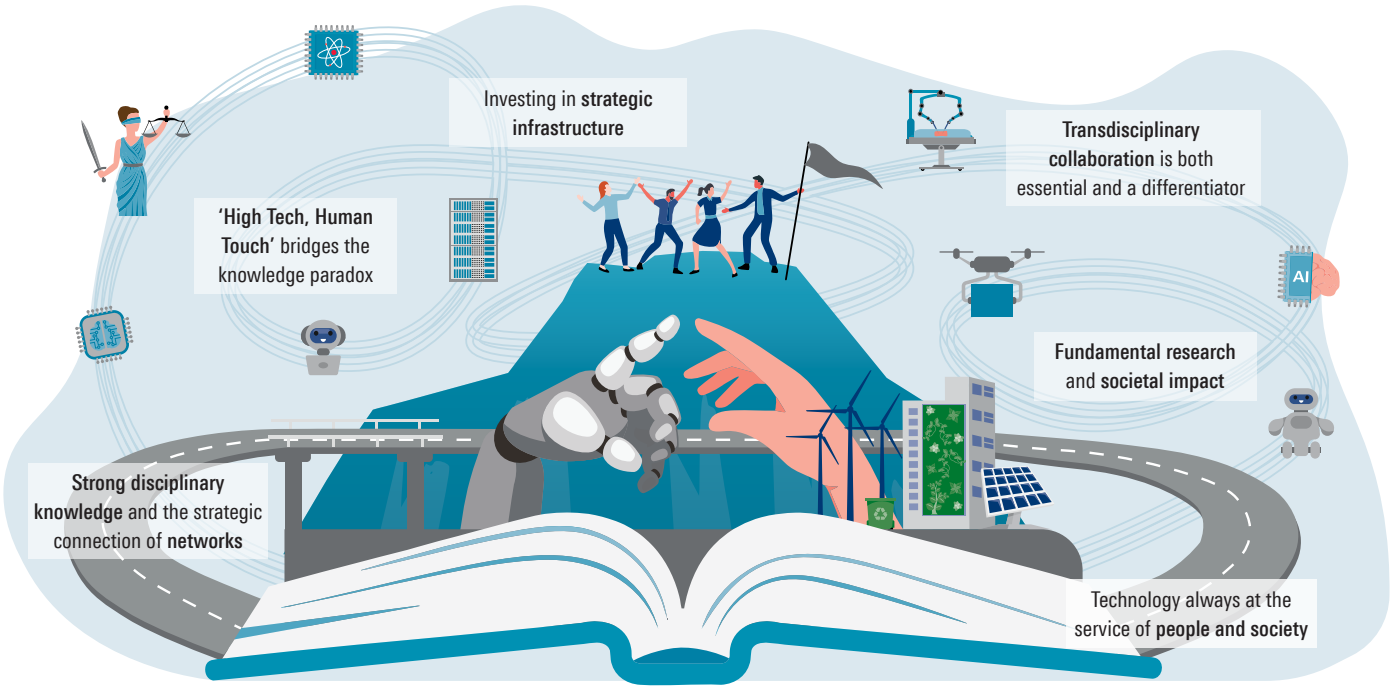
Science is a team effort. We therefore place strong emphasis on recognising and rewarding teams. Team success is central throughout the employee journey, from recruitment onwards. Team science is leading, with a strong role for support staff. Colleagues in non-academic roles – whether they work in a service department, faculty or institute – play a crucial role both within and beyond UT in connecting our education, research and commercial knowledge transfer activities with the needs of society. Investing in the development and mobility of non-academic colleagues across different career pathways is an integral part of our vision on talent.

The further development towards a fourth-generation university also means that hybrid roles (for example, from academia to industry and back, citizens conducting their own research, and impact developers as an integral part of academic teams) will become the norm. A strong technological foundation (including the responsible use of AI), self-reliance and collaboration skills are central to the continuously learning UT community. By working in UT-wide teams on internal challenges and mission-driven programmes with external partners, we strengthen interaction between colleagues across faculties, institutes and service departments.

Based on our Talent Development Principles, we recognise everyone's development potential and align individual development with the development and performance of the team as a whole. We do this through strategic workforce planning.

5. AMBITION B: IMPACTFUL SCIENCE

The transdisciplinary collaboration between the natural sciences and engineering disciplines on the one hand, and the social sciences and humanities on the other, is both essential and distinctive for UT. Through this 'High Tech, Human Touch' approach, we address the 'knowledge paradox' – the challenge that new knowledge and technologies are often not optimally utilised in society. Building on our strong innovation activities, we differentiate ourselves and attract talent, partners and funding. All our researchers are engaged in academic teaching, while continuously innovating.



AMBITION B: IMPACTFUL SCIENCE

We connect science and society. Through 'High Tech, Human Touch,' we combine technology with societal engagement and translate research into solutions for societal challenges.

The development of new academic knowledge and technology forms our foundation. UT's strength lies in combining curiosity-driven fundamental research with the ambition to develop solutions to today's societal challenges. We combine technological excellence with societal engagement. 'High Tech, Human Touch' underpins an integrated view of innovation, in which technology always serves people and society. Our foundation remains our strong disciplinary expertise across the fields represented

at UT. Lifelong Learning (LLL) is closely connected to our research, and vice versa. We connect research through learning communities and real-world challenges, thereby also strengthening innovation capacity and impact. LLL is embedded within the organisation and serves as a testing ground for innovation in integrating research and education.

IMPACT EXAMPLE: SAFETY & SECURITY

Delta plan for digital autonomy and resilience

Over the past 30 years, our society has become increasingly digitalised at an unprecedented pace. It is now unthinkable that we would not be able to communicate continuously online – with one another, with businesses and with public authorities. Critical processes, too, have become highly digitalised. From Twente, we have a long track record of innovations that have made this possible, such as Campusnet, WiFi, and online platforms such as Booking and Thuisbezorgd.

However, this digital success is under pressure: we have entered an intensifying digital storm, in which hostile states attempt to destabilise society through cyberattacks, including attacks on critical infrastructure. As a result, digital and physical security have become inextricably linked. At the same time, Big Tech not only threatens our privacy, but is also a frequent source of disinformation, enabled by the unrestrained use of AI. Traditional alliances can no longer be taken for granted. It is therefore high time for a delta plan for digital autonomy and resilience, to equip ourselves against this digital storm. The aim of this plan is to regain control from the perspective of cybersecurity, cyber resilience and digital autonomy. This requires leading research into digital threats, the societal impact of digitalisation and policy.It also requires educating a new generation of professionals who have deep knowledge of the impact of digitalisation, understand the threats, and are able to implement solutions based on open standards that safeguard control and autonomy.

UT is well positioned in this field, with leading research and a regional, national and international network that enables us to deliver real solutions with direct impact. We work closely with partners in tertiary education and secondary vocational education (mbo) in the eastern Netherlands, demonstrating that we not only generate ideas, but also develop solutions that prove their value in practice.

Our research contributes both to the further development of academic disciplines and to solutions for societal challenges, particularly those that require a transdisciplinary approach. By focusing our research along our impact domains, strategic research infrastructure and key enabling technologies, we align closely with European and national agendas and make optimal use of our strengths. To reinforce this, we will place greater emphasis on the positioning and financial aspects of research activities, with specific attention to both the acquisition and the use of funding. An efficient and effective research support structure is essential in this regard. The Research & Innovation Charter ensures that our researchers are well informed, aware of expectations and working arrangements, and act accordingly.

IMPACT EXAMPLE: CLIMATE

A regenerative, climate-resilient society powered by knowledge

Imagine a society in which economic activity actively contributes to restoring the climate, the living environment and quality of life —a society that is safe, inclusive and resilient because it is designed to anticipate change and to continuously improve. At the heart of this society lies a strong, locally supported knowledge base, used to design and build digital twins of energy, climate, water, land, nature and infrastructure systems, supporting smarter, faster and fairer decision-making. By 2050, Twente will be the leading European reference region for safe, affordable, energy-neutral and climate-resilient infrastructure. Twente demonstrates how digital twins, innovative governance and transdisciplinary collaboration can transform regions. By sharing and scaling technologies, governance models and skills through strategically impactful partnerships, Twente drives a European transition towards resilience by design.

The University of Twente, together with regional partners, is setting the standard for innovation in technology and governance: creating an environment in which collaboration leads to real impact, shared value creation and long-term trust. UT delivers integrated solutions for resilience, from understanding hazards and escalating risks to modelling vulnerabilities and designing and monitoring interventions to strengthen resilience – always in close collaboration with stakeholders. The unique integration of technical and social sciences makes Twente a launchpad for experimentation, education and scalable impact in Europe.

Our campus is where research, education and commercial knowledge transfer come together: our students and staff learn in a living lab for co-creation and the accelerated application of new technologies, both physically and digitally. We connect our global

and local networks in a smart way. We bring our knowledge and high-quality research infrastructure into the innovation process at an early stage. In this way, we accelerate impact that is visible, tangible and lasting. We invest strategically in distinctive research infrastructures and are introducing a long-term infrastructure plan, building on our existing long-term campus development plan. Where possible, we open up our infrastructure for use by, and collaboration with, our partners. In this way, we create an ecosystem in which entrepreneurship, commercial knowledge transfer and start-up development can thrive, and we remain the leading entrepreneurial university in Europe.

With this integrated ambition, we operate as a fourth-generation university.

IMPACT EXAMPLE: CHIP TECHNOLOGY

Future of Compute: Energy-efficient chips enabling new functionalities

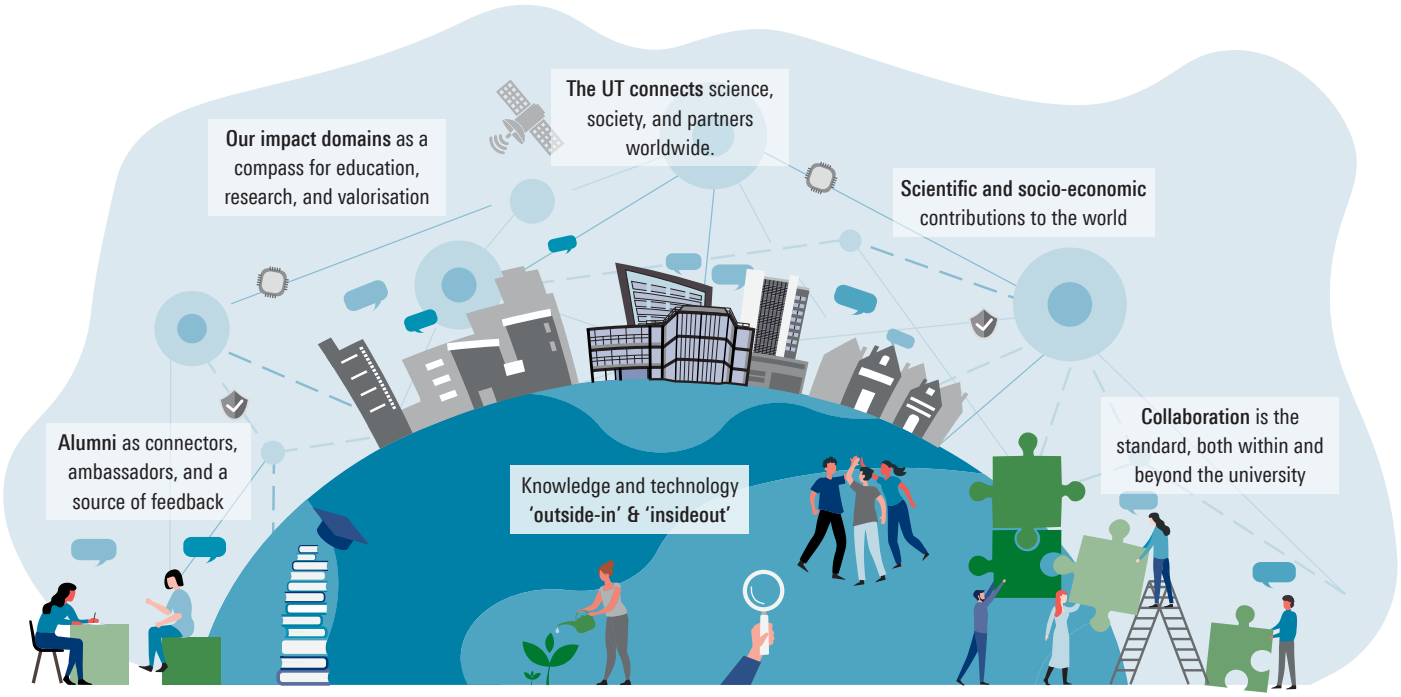
Energy consumption is critical for many chip applications. In information technology, the continuous transfer of data between processing and memory elements leads to excessive energy use. This is particularly evident in data centres, which require vast amounts of electricity and cooling water. The Future of Compute Framework aims to achieve radical improvements in energy efficiency through advanced chip design, novel device concepts and new materials. More energy-efficient chips also enable new functionalities, such as event-based sensing, in-sensor computing and edge AI.

The development of such energy-efficient chips and integrated sensing–computing devices is a global effort, in which each player must identify its niche. For the University of Twente, key strengths and opportunities lie in chip design, nanomaterials and nanodevices, integrated photonics, quantum technologies, sensing, and lab-on-a-chip and organ-on-a-chip technologies. A particularly promising area is neuromorphic computing, which draws inspiration from the energy efficiency of the brain. In addition, the university has specific expertise in the development of equipment for chip fabrication and metrology. These technological developments go hand in hand with the assessment of societal impact.

Academic research at the University of Twente is complemented by pilot line activities, which stimulate the application of our research by industry and spin-off companies. In collaboration with partners worldwide, chip technology research at the University of Twente provides a stimulating environment for education and talent development.

6. AMBITION C: FOR AND WITH SOCIETY

As a campus university in Twente, we are an important link between science and society in the region, in the Netherlands and in the world. Collaboration is our standard: both within and beyond the university, we actively connect science and innovation with the work carried out in industry, public authorities and civil society organisations. We bring people, knowledge, questions and technology to UT: 'outside-in' & 'inside-out'. We deliberately focus on partnerships in education, research and commercial knowledge transfer that strengthen our strategic position and enrich the UT ecosystem.



AMBITION C: FOR AND WITH SOCIETY

We bring people, knowledge, questions, and technology to the UT: 'outside-in' and 'inside-out'. We deliberately invest in partnerships in education, research, and valorisation that strengthen our strategic position and enrich the UT ecosystem.

By impact, UT refers to both scientific and socio-economic contributions to the world. We have defined a clear focus through four impact domains. Based on our strengths and aligned with international and national transition agendas, we have selected Climate, Health, Safety & Security and Chip Technology. These four strategic impact domains serve as a compass for decisions in education, research, commercial knowledge transfer and collaboration. They provide a connecting framework across disciplines, faculties, institutes and partners, and structure the contributions and

innovations of education, research and commercial knowledge transfer in support of societal transitions.We will further strengthen this profile in the coming years.

Our faculties, together with our institutes, actively contribute to the impact domains. To ensure the success of this approach, we are establishing a strong gateway function for each impact domain. This will enable greater internal focus and a clear profile for external stakeholders. Clear communication is essential to this, a shared responsibility we are all committed to.

UT educates for society, the labour market and science. This means we collaborate with regional, national and international partners on education, content exchange, internships and joint programmes. We take a demand-driven approach. In addition to our initial programmes, we focus on working professionals, public organisations, companies with development needs, and alumni. We offer a wide range of services for these target groups. LLL opens new opportunities for structural collaboration with companies, civil society organisations and international partners. We will therefore intensify and diversify our collaborations. Thematically, the LLL portfolio aligns with the impact domains.

As an entrepreneurial university, commercial knowledge transfer – the conversion of knowledge and research into value for society – is at the core of our identity. Innovation, the implementation of new ideas, processes, products or services that add value or solve a problem, is embedded in everything we do. We are a crucial part of the innovation ecosystem, which also includes industry, civil society and citizens, and in this way we contribute to strengthening Dutch and European innovation. We work together with companies, societal partners and public authorities on our innovation mission. To strengthen our position, we encourage our researchers to consider at an early stage of their research what steps are needed to create societal impact. We recognise and value innovation activities, and encourage entrepreneurship within career pathways. Students and researchers are supported in creating impact through spin-offs, public–private partnerships and knowledge sharing.

Our alumni form a valuable bridge to society. They are our ambassadors and demonstrate what we have to offer as an educational institution. They open doors within the organisations where they work and act as partners in new initiatives. They also provide valuable input and feedback about our environment, which we aim to use more systematically. Collaboration with our alumni, for example in the context of our LLL activities, strengthens our continued development as an entrepreneurial university.

7. ABOUT THIS INSTITUTIONAL PLAN

This institutional plan is the result of an extensive process. Driven in part by external developments, it became clear that a sharper financial and organisational course was required. Together with the UT community and external stakeholders, we undertook various actions to lay the foundations for the necessary changes. In this context, consultation and participation rounds were also organised with students, staff, participation councils and external partners.

The outcomes of these initiatives form the basis of our Institutional Plan 2026–2032. The implementation of the plan is an iterative process: each year, we assess whether our ambitions and chosen course remain relevant or need to be adjusted, including through scenario sessions with the Strategic Council. We monitor and steer our course through the planning and control cycle.

With this institutional plan, we also meet the statutory requirement to adopt a plan every six years that provides direction for education, research, commercial knowledge transfer and organisational development, as set out in the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*, WHW).

Monitoring

The two transitions and ambitions set out in this institutional plan are translated into objectives that will be continuously monitored through strategic KPIs and progress dialogues. In this, we align with UT's regular Planning & Control cycle. This means that progress on the objectives will be reported three times a year in the management report and will be discussed during the dialogues between the Executive Board and the faculties, institutes and service departments. Where possible and appropriate, the KPIs will be included in the strategic dashboard, incorporated into the annual framework letter, and reflected in the annual report.

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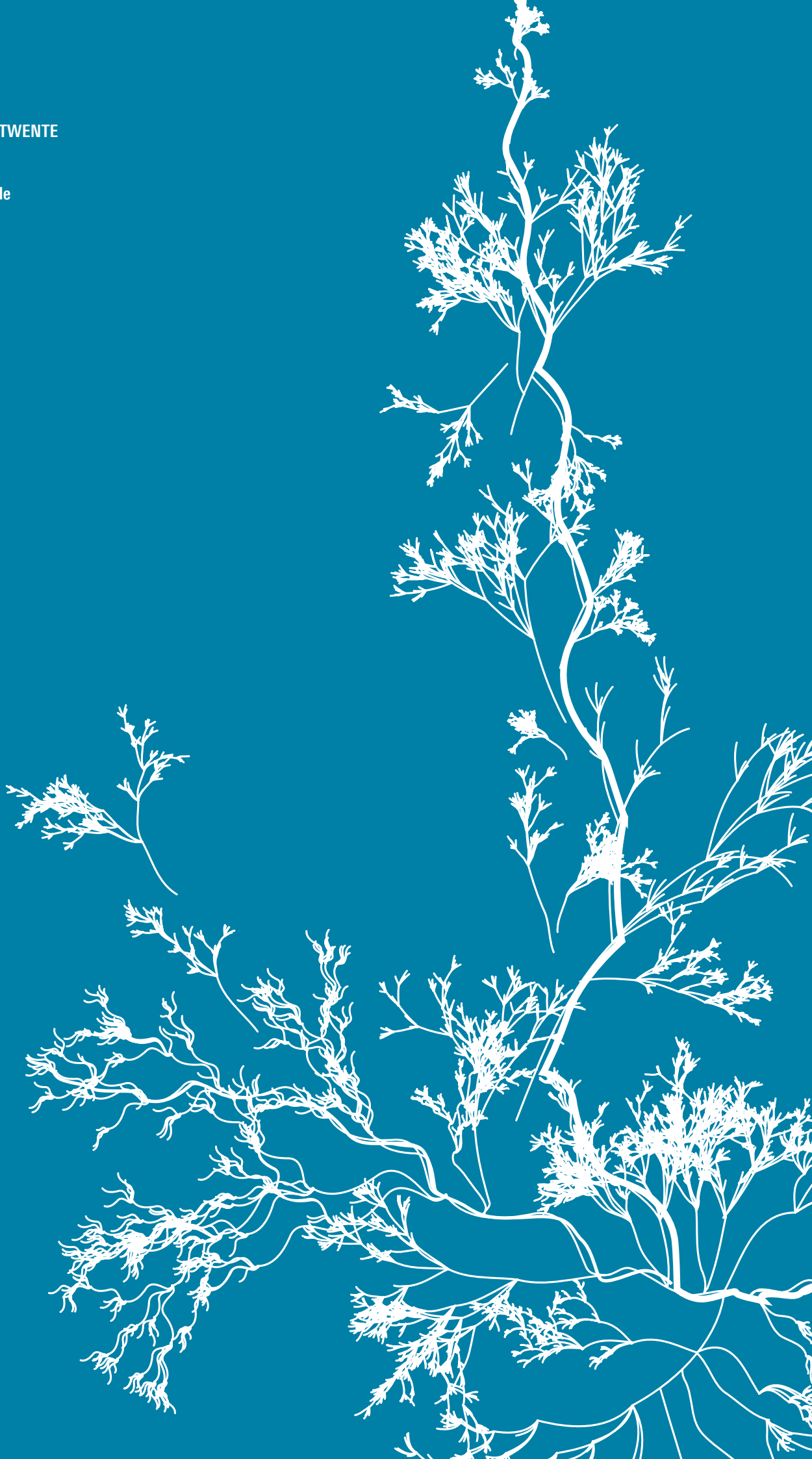
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