

Opening Academic Year 2024

Dear partners,

Dear students, faculty, support staff,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In his book *The Good Ancestor*, philosopher Roman Krznaric calls for a reorientation toward the future, not to benefit *us*, but to benefit our far-off descendants. His vision is a response to the fast-moving world we live in. The individualistic philosophies of the last century have generated huge concentrations of wealth – but at the same time put us on a non-sustainable road.

Krznaric says that ‘if we manage to be long-term thinkers, we might become the good ancestors that future generations deserve.’¹

Here in Eindhoven, we want to be these long-term thinkers. For that, we need to expand our time horizons and sharpen our foresight by ‘cathedral thinking’. We need to realize that what we do today, we do for our future generations.

We need to move back from the issues of the day to the value of the day.

Because that is what we do as a university, we create value. Every day. We create value with our teaching, with our research, with our collaborations. We create value for society and for industry. We create value for the future, because we aim to use our knowledge for green growth. To do so, we draw on radical innovations from our scientific knowledge, our engineering and design skills.

And that’s why currently we are working on our new research strategy. We already had some great discussions on it.

With this new strategy, we want to be of even more value for society. That means focus, multidisciplinary system thinking, an outside-in view and delivering. We want to build a strong profile, attract top talent, improve excellence, optimize synergy in collaboration, stay an attractive partner in research and innovation and create levers for worldwide research funding.

On education we’ll connect more to our regional partners and want to put even more effort into giving every master student the opportunity to have an experience outside the university, be it in a company, in a cooperation on a societal challenge or as a side job.

We have made a start with a new valorisation strategy, and connect it to research and education. Because that’s where it all starts. If we connect that to societal challenges,

¹ <https://universonline.nl/nieuws/2021/12/02/publieksfilosoof-roman-krznaric-als-we-erin-slagen-lange-termijn-denkers-te-zijn-woorden-we-misschien-de-goede-voorouders-die-de-toekomstige-generaties-verdiene/>

such as future chips, future materials and affordable and accessible health care we can really make a difference by cooperating with partners from outside the university.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Making a difference. I also talked about that last year. And about ‘do what you say and say what you do’. Do you remember? Well, we did what we said.

1. A first concrete output, related to building full value chains by connecting researchers within the university and with external stakeholders: the Future Chips Flagship.

With the Flagship we managed to bring together diverse semiconductor communities to address both technical advancements and societal challenges. The long-term strategic partnerships with ASML, KULeuven and the Beethoven program are prestigious results to address (inter)national research priorities in a way that is tailored to TU/e’s strengths and aspirations.

This is a strengthening of full value chains in the Brainport regio, as I mentioned last year. Watch out for more flagships that will follow!

2. The second topic I mentioned last year was civic engagement. I want to continue to strengthen our role and responsibility in the Brainport region. Our university must be a university without walls, open and engaged in society while retaining our core values. I will come back to those important values later.

We always search for cooperation with industry, with societal players and policy makers. We became a partner of ‘Brainport voor elkaar’, which engages in equal opportunities for everybody.

In the Beethoven plan we intend to strengthen our cooperation with other educational institutions like Fontys, Summa, ROC ter AA.

Another important part of our civic engagement comes from EuFlex, our matchmaker between the suppliers of and demand for technical top talent. Every master student can have a side job. This is a great opportunity for them to get to learn the city, its community and the companies in Brainport. For the societal players and the companies it is a good way to get to know the students, for the university a way to enforce our community by connecting people.

3. A third topic me and a lot of other people worked hard on – next to the full value chains and civic engagement – was reforming academic and professional careers.

Together with the deans and the directors, we want to help everyone at our university grow, not only researchers and educators, but also the support staff.

We strive for parity of esteem between different career paths, including research, education and valorisation. We have made a start with academic career profiles, the

biosketch, simplification of BAC, with the 'professor' title for UD and UHD's, and with permanent positions.

Leadership is a cornerstone of our policy. At all levels we need enabling leadership, to let all people become their best natural version. We have launched an ambitious leadership program.

A lot remains to be done, not in the least for the support staff. There we have to do more and go faster.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, I could have mainly talked about our research, with which we lead the way; about our teaching, which proves time and time again to be among the best; I could have talked about our collaborations, which produce the best results; or about how we are of value to society, because our students, staff and faculty prove that everyday.

But not for nothing I am talking about people during this opening of the new academic year. I talk about people because I know our people are the single most valuable asset of our university.

Every day I talk to staff, researchers, students, partners and everyone else involved in our university. And every day I realize how happy I am to feel so much passion. I want to thank you all for your work, energy and inspiration. You are doing a great job!

I really feel like we are in it together. As one TU/e we want to strengthen our reputation as university where the university where students, staff and faculty want to be. Not only for our education, research and innovation, but also because of our open culture, the aggregate of the common values and beliefs of a group of people.

It is all about people and the connection between people, true care and attention for each other. That is at the heart of everything we do here at TU/e. We stand for each other.

That which isn't good for the hive, isn't good for the bee, said Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius in his Meditations. He talks about the interconnectedness and mutual interdependence of all things in the universe. One for all, all for one. These beliefs are the making of a very strong culture, one in which people are committed to one another and to the organization. I truly believe in his views.

At our university we want to grow together, let every single individual grow and leave no one behind. We take care of each other.

Together with the departments and the services, I want to go on to create a value-based culture, that provides the base for empathy, trust and respect across everybody of the campus community.

Having a set of well-recognized and well-supported values is the backbone for creating a culture that enables a challenging, inspiring, safe and sound environment for everyone in the organization. As TU/e we want to take the lead in integrity and social safety.

I'm very grateful to all those 900 people who got involved in our broad bottom-up process last year for having redefined and reinforced TU/e values, included what they mean for an individual and for the community as a whole.

These are our four values that emerged from this joint process:

- First, we are curious: we cherish curiosity and creativity, we leave the beaten track and expand the borderline of knowledge
- Second, we are open: we value an open, accessible culture and are transparent and trustworthy about our actions.
- Third, we are respectful: we care for each other, treat everyone with respect and show empathy and trust
- Fourth and last, we are responsible: we shape the future, take the lead and make a positive impact on society

Curious, open, respectful and responsible. In the spirit of these four CORE values, we launched the integrity and social safety desk. I am very happy with this much-needed support. This desk is the one-stop-shop where everybody can go for support around integrity and social safety issues. The focus is on listening, and an open conversation. If needed, the social safety & integrity expert team will discuss the case, facilitate and coordinate an adversarial process.

Behind the social safety & integrity desk is a whole program that will address the curative but most importantly the preventive aspect in everything we do.

We will make mistakes, everybody does, but we are a learning organisation, we will never cease improving our integrity & social safety at our university. Because again, we take care of each other.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to go back to the words of philosopher Roman Krznaric. He writes about a reorientation toward the future, not to benefit *us*, but to benefit our far-off descendants.

But how do we do that in a world of instant news, instant internet shopping and instant noodles? It's all very fast, but how nourishing and fulfilling is it?

We should dive deeper and look further ahead. We should look beyond the issues of today.

The value for tomorrow's generations is created by science, technology and innovation. We must cherish that. I am proud of what Dutch universities have managed to achieve within science. We have proven that we can come up with top research and innovation. So what I want to say to the new cabinet: choose for talent, and we will deliver science, technology and innovation for as many people as possible.

We will keep being entrepreneurial and work on impactful education, groundbreaking research and value creation for future generations. We will focus on what generations of tomorrow need and what they really value. We all have the chance to become good ancestors and create a better tomorrow.

Let's do it!

And don't forget: take care of each other, and of yourself. Thank you.