

Thoughtfully creating impact together

Vision statement 2024-2028

**Koen Augustyns
Karolien De Wael
Tanja Mortelmans
Koen Vandenbempt**



A. Short summary

What we stand for

With determination, expertise and a good dose of audacity, we present our team for the upcoming rector elections. Based on our policy experience and expertise, we believe that we can transform the University of Antwerp into a vibrant, inspiring, and efficient institution. A university ready to face the challenges of the future.

We aim to strive for a university community that not only grows but also flourishes – a place where warmth and progress go hand in hand. With full dedication, we want to contribute to a university that is optimally equipped for the uncertain but fascinating paths that lie ahead.

Support innovation, support progress, support our team!

Koen Augustyns (rector), Karolien De Wael (research), Tanja Mortelmans (education), and Koen Vandenbempt (international policy and academic service).

What we aspire: Thoughtfully creating impact together

The University of Antwerp stands at the forefront in research, academic training and development, thereby maintaining an open and curious perspective on the changing and diverse world in which it is active.

We believe that through strong collaboration, we can become an even better university – for our students, for our staff and for the society to which it contributes.

Our plan actively seeks out this collaboration and focuses on the key issues at hand.

Our core themes

Several principles underlie our plans: **collaboration**, **interdisciplinarity**, **trust**, **internationalization**, **sustainability**, **well-being**, and **inclusion**. In our vision statement, we delve deeper into the nine core themes that our team aims to achieve. Here, we bring together the main points into four clusters. A more detailed discussion follows afterwards.

Collaboration among all stakeholders at and around the university

- Improved collaboration between central administration and the faculties, as well as among the faculties themselves, without compromising their autonomy.
- A sustainable design of the organization.
- Increased significance for the Council of Deans.
- A greater emphasis on working in teams rather than focusing on individual interests.

- Establishing a good and accessible interaction with students as co-creating partners and increased attention to student life.
- Enhancing coordination, contacts, and collaboration with policymakers, professional colleges and partner institutions.

Developing a personnel and student policy based on needs, values and growth.

- Building trust in staff through reduced internal competition for research and a more mindful evaluation process.
- Addressing broader competences in recruitment and evaluation.
- Implementing diversity and inclusion policies with more attention to an increasingly diverse staff and student body.
- Focusing on work-life balance and the effectiveness of staff work (reducing administrative burden).
- Implementing a data-driven policy that contributes to working more efficiently and allows more room for core tasks and innovation.

Towards a future where progress in research and valorization are central

- Reducing internal competition through a basic funding principle, focused on Ph.D.s.
- Emphasizing groundbreaking (and more risky) research through interdisciplinary collaborations.
- Building trust and ensuring that external research visitations at the level of the faculty take the full working context of the academic staff into account.
- Less administrative burden through reform of grant applications and reading committees
- Providing accessible core facilities and infrastructure for research.
- Facilitating technology transfer of knowledge with a long-term perspective, both economically and societally, with a focus on entrepreneurship training for students and researchers.
- Establishing innovative partnerships with external entities within the three defined valorization domains.

A university with impact – both internationally and regionally

- Aspiring to create more English bachelor's and master's programs.
- Internationalizing through a streamlined recruitment process for students and researchers.
- Increasing impact on the region through collaboration with our professional network.
- Attracting more students from surrounding regions (Kempen, Waasland, Mechelen, etc.) by enhancing the attractiveness of our university.
- Implementing a more performative marketing strategy and providing accessible information and communication.

Bijlage: Four short biosketches

Koen Augustyns – candidate rector

“As rector, together with my team, I want to encourage collaboration between all players in and around the University of Antwerp to create more impact internationally and in the region.”



- **What does your career look like?** I obtained my Master's and PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences from KU Leuven in 1988 and 1992, respectively. After my military service and postdocs at UAntwerp and the University of Tübingen (Germany), I was appointed professor of Medicinal Chemistry at UAntwerp in 1997 (full professor since 2012). I have supervised 35 PhD students and led the medicinal chemistry research group (UAMC). My research in medicinal chemistry focuses on discovering potential drugs targeting infectious diseases and cell death. This research was supported by more than 100 research projects, mostly externally funded. I currently teach medicinal chemistry and drug development to Ba3 and Ma1 students of Pharmaceutical Sciences. In addition, I have always enjoyed working on policy, both internally and externally. I was chairman of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences and am presently dean of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical, Biomedical, and Veterinary Sciences. During my career, I was a member of all core task boards at UAntwerp (research, education, service to society, and industrial research fund). I was President of the European Federation for Medicinal Chemistry. I am also a Humboldt Fellow, an Honorary Fellow of both the European and Asian Federation for Medicinal Chemistry, and a member of the Royal Academy of Medicine of Belgium.

- **How do you want to fill in your (potentially) new role?** A good contact with the workplace is crucial, certainly for a rector. I want to talk to colleagues and students daily about what matters at the university. Using a personal approach, we will move towards a decisive university.
- **How do your colleagues describe you?** I believe that my colleagues will describe me as ambitious, hard-working, authentic with honest communication.
- **Nice/Good to know?** With Suzy, I can enjoy being with our three children, their partners, and our first grandson. I get energy from being physically busy outdoors, such as cycling, maintaining the garden, and caring for horses.
- More information about Koen Augustyns:
 - [CV UAntwerp website](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)

Karolien De Wael - candidate vice-rector "Research"

“As the Vice Rector for Research, I aim to represent a future with leadership where balance is the foundation and a people-centric culture shapes the essence. Let's create an environment together where everyone's voice is heard, diversity is embraced, and the collective growth of each individual defines success. Research and human resources policy go hand in hand.”



- **What does your career look like?** I (born in 1979) obtained my Master's and PhD (FWO aspirant) in Chemistry from Ghent University in 2001 and 2005, respectively. After a postdoctoral fellowship funded by FWO at Ghent University, I started my career as a research professor (ZAPBOF) at the UAntwerp in 2011. In 2020, I was appointed as a full professor. In 2021, following extensive international research collaborations, I was appointed as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the "Iuliu Hațieganu" Cluj University in Romania. I have served as a mentor to 28 PhD students, and I am leading the research group A-Sense Lab. In my research, pursuing societal impact is vital through developing innovative fundamental sensor concepts and detection technologies applicable across various sectors. Consequently, future end-users of the sensors are frequently engaged in my projects. I serve as the coordinator for a European project involving 16 international partners and also coordinate an iBOF project with UGent and UZA as collaborators. In the last project, the focus is on the development of a detection technology for cancer. I currently teach general chemistry to Ba1 students in chemistry, bioscience engineering, biochemistry, biotechnology, and electrochemistry to Ba2 and Ma1 students. With great enthusiasm, I currently serve as the chairperson of the Department of Bioengineering, a role that brings me a lot of satisfaction. Throughout my career, I have been a member of the IOF council, research council, IMDO, and the Board of Directors at UAntwerpen. Additionally, I am chair of the scientific committee at the National Institute of Criminology and Criminalistics in Belgium. Recently, I was re-elected as a member of the Bio-Electrochemical Society.

- **How do you want to fill in your (potentially) new role?** By strongly emphasizing the synergy between our research groups, departments, and faculties and streamlining the supportive internal processes, I aim to actively contribute to the thoughtful design of a warm and effective research organization. Let's direct our efforts towards promoting innovation and knowledge instead of getting lost in unnecessary complexity.
- **How do your colleagues describe you?** During a creative exercise aimed at defining the DNA of the Department of Bioscience Engineering, colleagues attributed the following four core competencies to me as characteristics: vision creation, effective communication, reliability, and drive.
- **Nice/Good to know?** I enjoy the tranquillity at home, in nature, along with my husband Ivo and my children Elias and Elien. For the past two years, after about ten years, I've dusted off my basketball shoes and started playing basketball again. The skills required to perform as (an individual within) a team have naturally shaped my work ethic.
- More information on Karolien De Wael:
 - [CV UAntwerp website](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)

"The strength of a team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team." - Phil Jackson.

Tanja Mortelmans - candidate vice-rector "Education"

"The university has opened up more than one world for me. I also find it important that those more vulnerable, for whatever reason, have the opportunity to unfold themselves as individuals in an academic environment. I come from a non-academic background myself and have always been aware of the privilege of being able to study and – later on – work at university. Let's work together to make the University of Antwerp a warm environment where our students can develop under optimal conditions."



- **What does your career look like?** I am a Professor of German linguistics at the University of Antwerp. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the German modal verbs *sollen* and *müssen*. After finishing my PhD (1999), I started working as an Assistant Professor in German linguistics at the University of Antwerp. I was promoted to Associate Professor ('hoofddocent') in 2008 to Professor in 2021. I have been teaching courses at the Bachelor and Master Levels, not only on linguistic subjects (grammar, grammaticalization, language, and gender) but also on language proficiency and German cultural history. I was chair of the Linguistics Department from 2005 to 2009. From 2018 to 2021 I was chair of the teaching committee of Linguistics and Literary Studies at the UAntwerpen. Currently, I am Vice-Dean of Education of the Faculty of Arts. My research mainly addresses so-called markers of TAME (tense, aspect, modality, evidentiality), focusing on the latter two topics, both from a German and a contrastive (German-Dutch-English, and recently French) perspective. I have also published on the relationship between language and gender. Since September 2021, I have been a member of the so-called 'Kerngroep' of the Vlaams Talenplatform, an academic organization promoting language studies and trying to counter the decreasing language proficiency in Flanders via different actions. Together with colleagues from the Linguistics department, I am involved in the service project [WhatsApp for 80+], in which student employees try to familiarise seniors in Antwerp nursing homes with the basics of WhatsApp and other social media.

- **How do you want to fill in your (potentially) new role?** I am a connector by always listening well to what my colleagues and students are experiencing. One never forms a judgment alone. At the same time, it is essential to be able to make decisions and move forward.
- **How do your colleagues describe you?** Among my students, I have the reputation of being 'strict but fair,' which is also related to my teaching of German grammar. My colleagues tell me that I am a good listener and make an effort to find common ground. I do not like to claim the stage but can be decisive when necessary.
- **Nice/Good to know?** I am somewhat of a fanatic cyclist: I cycle daily from Ekeren via the bicycle highway to the city campus, sometimes further to Middelheim. Campus Drie Eiken is a challenge. I love walking (in nature or the city), running, swimming, and (as someone fond of language) reading. I like being outside and traveling, both in Belgium and abroad. Italy is a favorite destination. I cannot cook, but I am happily married to someone who enjoys and is good at it. Erik is the father of our twelve-year-old son Theo and my two stepdaughters Josefien and Elyne.
- More information on Tanja Mortelmans:
 - [CV UAntwerp website](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)

Koen Vandenbempt – candidate vice-rector “International Policy & Services”

“Our university is in motion. Change is everywhere. The challenges, but also the opportunities, are plenty. As Vice-Rector “International Policy & Services”, I want to contribute to strengthening our university's position in this turbulent and challenging environment.”



- **What does your career look like?** I obtained my master's and PhD in Applied Economic Sciences (1999) at the University of Antwerp. I started my career as a lecturer at the University of Antwerp in 2000. Since 2016, I have been a full professor. My research is in management and strategy, focusing on the dynamics of strategic change processes in organizations and industries. Throughout my academic career, I have been actively involved in policy matters, first as a member of the executive committee of the University of Antwerp Management School (the predecessor of AMS; until 2008, UAMS was an institute within the University of Antwerp). Later, I served as the program director for the Ba/Ma AES (Applied Economic Sciences), the associate dean for internationalization, and the chair of the Department of Management. Since 2018, I have been the dean of FBE. As the dean, I still teach "strategic management" in the Master of Business Engineering and Applied Economic Sciences (TEW) and "strategy" in the executive MBA program at AMS.

I am highly active in various international forums, primarily driven by international accreditations in Business and Economics. I am an active member of the American (AACSB) and European (EFMD) accreditation organizations and am involved in many international activities. I am also active at AMS as a board member and a lecturer in the "customer-specific programs."

- **How do you want to fill in your (potentially) new role?** For me, internationalization is not just a goal in itself. It is also about learning from best practices abroad. It forces

us to question our practices and improve where necessary. Focusing on internationalization helps us think "outside-in" and proactively identify and respond to trends and changes. With this mindset, I also aim to fulfill my role as Vice-Rector.

- **How do your colleagues describe you?** Colleagues describe me as someone who views the world positively, sees opportunities everywhere, and acts proactively.
- **Nice/Good to know?** I am still active in sports, especially running and cycling. It is my way of recharging the batteries. Together with my wife Anneleen, we enjoy hiking and making distant travels. Our two studying daughters now require less (or rather, a different kind of) attention.
- More information on Koen Vandenbempt:
 - [CV UAntwerp website](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)