

Professor Ulrich Rüdiger Named Rector of RWTH Aachen University

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The 51-year old scientist, currently rector of the University of Konstanz, has been named to succeed Professor Ernst Schmachtenberg in August 2018.

On August 1, 2018, Professor Ulrich Rüdiger will become rector of RWTH Aachen University to succeed Professor Ernst Schmachtenberg, whose term in office will end on July 31. Today, March 5, 2018, Rüdiger, who has been rector of the University of Konstanz since 2009, was elected for a six-year term by the University Election Assembly, which consists of the University Senate and the Board of Governors.

As the 51-year old physicist commented, "I am excited to contribute to the further development of a leading university of technology that develops solutions to the global technological and societal challenges within an interdisciplinary research culture."

Return to RWTH

For Rüdiger, the new role in Aachen is also a return to his professional roots – between 1988 and 1994, the scientist from Helmstedt studied physics at RWTH. In 1997, he completed his doctorate on magnetic-optical storage media at RWTH's Institute of Physics II under the supervision of Professor Gernot Güntherodt.

After research stays in New York, San José, and at Cornell University, in July 2002, he completed his habilitation dissertation titled "Spin-dependent Transport Phenomena: Materials, Magnetoresistance and Applications." In December 2002, Rüdiger was appointed professor and Chair of Experimental Physics at the University of Konstanz.

About seven years later, at the age of only 42, he was named rector of the University of Konstanz. In the summer, Rüdiger will prematurely terminate his current term in office, which was scheduled to run until 2023.

Both the University of Konstanz and RWTH Aachen University have been invited to submit full proposals for Clusters of Excellence within Germany's "Excellence Strategy" to the German Research Foundation DFG, and both institutions have good prospects of succeeding in the "Universities of Excellence" funding line. The Excellence Strategy is a federal and state government initiative to strengthen Germany's position as an outstanding place for research in the long term and further improve its international competitiveness.

A search committee made up of five members each from the Senate and Board of Governors recommended Rüdiger. "Professor Rüdiger fulfills all the criteria to assume this challenging leadership position and further accompany RWTH Aachen on its successful path," says the Dr. Bernd Bohr, chair of the search committee and Board of Governors.

"We expect him to bring strategic leadership with a keen ability for challenging times," explains chair of the University Election Assembly and of the University Senate, Professor Stefan Kowalewski.

"I know what awaits me. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to quickly come together as a team to successfully draft projects like the Excellence Strategy and here, particularly, the second funding line. We should also take advantage of every opportunity in

the second round of the pact to promote early-career researchers. However, everything we want to achieve and will achieve at RWTH is a team effort. Objectives arise out of our togetherness and are only achieved together," states Ernst Schmachtenberg's successor.

Vice-Rectors up for Re-Election

The end of Schmachtenberg's term of office on July 31 coincides with the end of the vice-rectors' terms of office as well. The team of vice-rectors includes professors Doris Klee, Rudolf Mathar, Aloys Krieg, and Malte Brettel. They may be re-elected or succeeded. The new rector will recommend suitable candidates to the selection committee with the final decision being made by the Election Assembly.

About Rüdiger

Ulrich Rüdiger has been rector of the University of Konstanz since 2009. In 2014, he was re-elected for a second term of office from 2015 to 2023. After studying physics, and completing his doctoral studies and habilitation in Aachen, New York, San José, and Ithaca, he was appointed professor of experimental solid-state physics at the University of Konstanz. He has been vice-president for research and early career researchers in the HRK or German Rectors' Conference, and member of the HRK's Permanent Commission for Research in Germany and Europe since 2014.

In this and further capacities, Rüdiger accompanies processes in science management. In 2012, he was awarded the Ordre des Palmes Académiques, one of France's highest honors, as well as honorary doctorates from Plekhanov Russian University of Economics in Moscow, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, and Kyiv National Economic University, for his exceptional service to science.

Ulrich Rüdiger was born in 1966 in Helmstedt, is married and has four children.

"Objectives are Developed in Collaboration with Others"

Interview with Professor Ulrich Rüdiger

Professor Rüdiger, what attracts you to becoming rector of RWTH Aachen University?

I find it exciting to contribute to the further development of a leading university of technology that develops solutions to the global technological and societal challenges within an interdisciplinary research culture. RWTH offers a wide range of disciplines, including medicine, the natural sciences, computer science, and the engineering sciences, but also economics, the social sciences and the humanities, which, taken together, provide an ideal basis for developing solutions that gain broad societal acceptance.

What perspectives do you see for RWTH?

RWTH has the capacity to address major challenges in an open system involving society, business and industry – from the scientific fundamentals through to the marketable product. RWTH has all the necessary prerequisites to do so, unlike the smaller University of Konstanz, even though we have been very successful there. Looking back, this is also the reason why I went to study at RWTH and did not choose the next closest university in Lower

Saxony. Back then, I was already looking for a basic research oriented physics that is relevant to the engineering sciences.

What will your concrete objectives be as rector of RWTH Aachen? What are the most important projects?

It would be presumptuous of me as an outsider to come and as the new rector say: Look! These are my goals! I know what awaits me. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to quickly come together as a team to successfully draft projects like the Excellence Strategy and here, particularly, the second funding line. We should also take advantage of every opportunity in the second round of the pact to promote early-career researchers. However, everything we want to achieve and will achieve at RWTH is a team effort. Objectives arise out of our togetherness and are only achieved together. RWTH has clearly already defined its primary goals, for instance in the Excellence Strategy.

You have an Aachen past. What do you remember about RWTH that you might have missed while away?

Looking at the RWTH Aachen now, the University has experienced an impressive boost in the past ten to 15 years. I recently visited the physics center on Melaten and was positively surprised by how the environment has grown with the new Campus. It is an exciting project with great potential. RWTH has developed enormously since I left Aachen for Konstanz. However, I did miss the Aachen specialities Streuselbrötchen and Reisfladen.

Is there something you will definitely bring with you to Aachen from Konstanz?

An almost unwavering good mood and my ever-present optimism.