

Details

Karin Vanderkerken

Function: Vice rector Research Policy

Title: Prof. dr.

Academic position: Professor of oncology

Short biography

Place and date of birth: Etterbeek, September 28, 1965

Married to Frank Goes (civil engineering: VUB 1988), mother of two children, Tim (April 22, 1991, VUB graduate), Sofie (November 30, 1997), VUB student.

Studied: Doctor in science (biology) (VUB, 1994)

Scientific career in brief:

After graduating in biology at VUB, assistant in the Histology/Cell biology group in the faculty of medicine at VUB; postdoc at the hematology department (VUB) under the leadership of Prof B Van Camp, 10 years as postdoc FWO, from 2004 as a member of ZAP. Currently president of the Hematology and Immunology research group and of the Oncology cluster in the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy.

Turning point:

During my studies I became interested in cell biology as well as immunology. When I had the chance to do a doctorate in the cytology department, it was the beginning of my research into cancer biology and immunology. During my postdoctoral period my focus was on multiple myeloma, a bone marrow cancer. When you see what research over the last decade has meant for the development of new treatments for patients, and in terms of extending lives and improving quality of life, I think that's the most important reward and motivation for scientists.

Hobby/passion: Cooking, travel

What do you see as the biggest challenges in your new function?

Creating a pleasant work environment, with counselling and career planning for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers as well as novice ZAP members; renewal and replenishment of the research infrastructure to make it state of the art; creating more core facilities; broadening access to international literature; making it easier to combine work and family in a scientific career, with attention to gender issues. Other points to focus on are scientific integrity and ethics, strengthening the principles of "Responsible Research and Innovation".

Further definition of the research landscape (including increasing the thematic research clusters) with clear internal and external communication. Intensifying the collaboration between VUB and the university hospital with clear instructions about the rights and responsibilities of each party.

Where would you like to be in four years' time?

There are a number of challenges for research, ethically and financially too. The chances of successful financing of a project are falling, on a Flemish and European level. I hope that we can increase the chances of success for VUB researchers, through structural support, in collaboration with the other vice-rectorates. The research landscape is well-mapped internally, but it needs to be developed internationally, in partnership with the vice-rectorate for internationalisation.

What is your vision for the future of the university?

VUB sees itself as a collective project in which the person is central. We need to invest in quality, in education as much as in research and the integration of both, also in terms of internationalisation.

Finally, what is your motto?

"One candle can light a thousand others without shortening its own life."