

# Welcome to winter semester 2024/2025

Dear colleagues,

A warm welcome to you at Saarland University as we begin our winter semester 2024/2025! I hope you are feeling well rested and motivated as you embark on this new phase of learning, research and work.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about important developments and plans that affect our university as a whole:

We have commenced negotiations with the federal state regarding the new **agreement on targets and performance** which will apply from 2026. Based on the discussions to date, with the support of Minister von Weizsäcker, we will be able to strengthen the university and Saarland as a research location and set the course for the future of Saarland University.

The **PharmaScienceHub (PSH)** has started its work as a new, structure-building model for the further expansion of cooperation partnerships with external research institutions in Saarland. This cooperation platform between the university and the Helmholtz Institute for Pharmaceutical Research Saarland (HIPS) aims to identify and develop drugs for socially relevant diseases quickly and efficiently. The PSH brings together more than 70 research groups and over 300 researchers from a variety of disciplines.

The largest and most exciting project at the PSH is currently the application for funding from the Excellence Strategy, a funding programme of the German federal and state governments with the objective of strengthening top-level research. Last year, the speaker team around Prof. Anna Hirsch and the involved scientists submitted a draft proposal for the Cluster of Excellence **nextAID<sup>3</sup>** Next-Generation AI-Empowered Drug Discovery and Development. It was further developed by the proposal team with exceptional commitment into a full proposal, which was submitted to the DFG at the end of August. The cluster team now has to impress the international reviewers in Bonn in mid-November. A decision on funding will then be made in May 2025.

This winter semester we have once again been able to increase the number of international students. Totalling around 3,610 people, this group accounts for around 22 percent of our students and is therefore well above the national average of 16 percent. With your support, I would like to build on this growth and make Saarland University even more international. In light of the structural and demographic change, we must continue to expand our efforts to attract international students and employees.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to you all: your creativity and commitment are the foundation of our university. Whether in teaching,

research, administration or technical services, each and every one of you makes a vital contribution to the success of Saarland University.

You have mastered the challenges of recent years with impressive flexibility and innovation. I would like to thank you sincerely for your extraordinary commitment, patience and perseverance. You are what makes Saarland University what it is: a place of knowledge, innovation and inspiration. I look forward to shaping the future of our university together with you.

Thanks to your commitment, our university has a strong sense of momentum and numerous positive developments are taking place. To name just a few examples: Since winter semester 2023/24, we have been able to fill 15 new professorships and around 50 professorial appointment procedures are ongoing. The establishment of the Käthe Hamburger Centre for Cultural Practices of Reparation (CURE) this year marked the launch of a large-scale, externally funded project with a high profile. An initiative for a new collaborative research centre in the field of physics is about to be submitted for funding and we have submitted or are about to submit proposals for several projects to the transformation fund of the federal state. We have already been successful with the Scheer School of Digital Sciences at Saarland University, which will receive 25 million euros from the transformation fund over the next few years.

Lastly, I would like to encourage you to actively participate in university life. Whether in the departmental student organization, at cultural events or on university committees, your commitment enriches our community and helps shape the future of our university.

I wish you all a good start to the new semester, inspiring discussions and lots of fun learning and researching.

With best regards

Ludger Santen

President of Saarland University