Pressemitteilung

NMI Naturwissenschaftliches und Medizinisches Institut an der Universität Tübingen
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NMI under new management

Prof. Dr. Katja Schenke-Layland has chaired the Natural and Medical Sciences Institute at the University of Tübingen since the beginning of April 2018.

On 1 April 2018, Prof. Dr. Katja Schenke-Layland took over the management of the Natural and Medical Sciences Institute (NMI) in Reutlingen. She succeeds Prof. Dr. Hugo Hämerle, who had headed the institute since 2008. The new head of the NMI is well known within the Institute's networks: Schenke-Layland has held a professorship in medical engineering and regenerative medicine at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen since 2011, and is connected with the NMI through numerous biomedical research projects. Concurrently, she gained management experience at the interface between industry and research during her career at the Fraunhofer Institute for Interfacial Engineering and Biotechnology IGB in Stuttgart, where she had temporarily headed the institute together with Prof. Dr. Christian Oehr since January 2016. As head of the NMI, the 41-year-old biologist now combines her expertise in research and management at the Reutlingen institute while she continues her professorship. "My goal has always been the promotion and application of socially relevant innovation-oriented research in medical engineering and regenerative or personalized medicine, which represent important future fields for Baden-Württemberg's economy," said Schenke-Layland.

Actively shape the interfaces between university, clinic, and industry

Schenke-Layland set the course for her carrier in applied research in the field of biomaterials at an early stage. While working on her doctoral thesis at the Clinic for Thoracic-Cardiovascular Surgery (Friedrich Schiller University in Jena), she researched cardiovascular tissue engineering, i.e. the production of replacement tissue for the cardiovascular system from the patient's own cells and biomaterials. Following her doctorate in 2004, Schenke-Layland spent five years conducting research in this field in California - since the end of 2008 as an assistant professor at the University of California (UCLA) in Los Angeles. At the beginning of 2010, Schenke-Layland returned to Germany as part of Fraunhofer Gesellschaft's Attract program. At the Fraunhofer IGB in Stuttgart, she established her own work group for cardiovascular tissue engineering and, together with Dr. Petra Kluger, headed the Department of Cell and Tissue Engineering at the IGB from 2013 until she took over the management of the institute as a whole together with Prof. Dr. Christian Oehr in 2016.

Schenke-Layland continued her university career in Germany when she accepted a professorship for medical engineering and regenerative medicine in Tübingen in November 2011, which is now a division of the Department of Women's Health. At the same time, she assumed the role of Associate Professor at UCLA.

Her research groups deal with the development of biomaterials and in vitro test systems based on human cells. Other focus areas are stem cell research and research into the extracellular matrix - both with the aim to utilize it in the area of regenerative medicine. In addition, one of her groups is working on the development of imaging technology, especially for marker-free diagnostics.

On April 1, 2018, Schenke-Layland further expanded her academic activities in Tübingen and has since acted as Dean of Studies in the Medical Engineering program.

Use synergies to drive innovations
Schenke-Layland will continue to fulfill her tasks and duties at the university and still act as the head of the NMI. With this, she strengthens the synergies in biomaterials research between the groups conducting fundamental research at the university, and the application-oriented teams at the NMI. She is assisted by Dr. Thomas Joos and Dr. Stefan Raible who will continue to act as deputy directors of the NMI.

Schenke-Layland can rely firmly upon her team here and her teams at the university and she is looking forward to the new challenges in her position as head of the NMI: “The NMI is one of the leading non-university research institutes in the health sector in Baden-Württemberg. The teams working in the fields of pharma and biotechnology, biomedical engineering, and surface and materials technologies use their strong academic and technological expertise to achieve results. This and an impressively communicative and cooperative corporate culture with a high team spirit are the institute’s success factors. I am definitely looking forward to contributing my share to the shaping of the future NMI together with partners from the industry and with research institutions.” Schenke-Layland replaces Prof. Dr. Hugo Hämerle who had headed the NMI and the foundation’s Executive Board for 10 years. While in office, Prof. Dr. Hämerle expanded the Reutlingen-based institute with a focus on life sciences and biomedical engineering, increasing the headcount from approximately 120 to 200 employees and the annual budget from roughly €10 million to just under €18 million. His name is closely associated with numerous spin-offs and successful projects and collaborations in the health industry and application-oriented research. The most recent example of his fruitful work is the establishment of the RegioWIN Campus at the Technology Park Tübingen-Reutlingen, within proximity of the NMI. Hämerle will assist and advise Schenke-Layland until September 2018. He will continue to act as Managing Director of the NMI TT GmbH and as the spokesman of the Baden-Württemberg Innovation Alliance. As a convinced networker, he is especially happy about his successor: “With her team spirit and focus on collaboration, Ms. Schenke-Layland has the right focus for the NMI. She has impressively demonstrated her skills in dual management functions and we are very happy that we recruited a leader who has a firm technical knowledge in all fields of NMI’s activities and who understands both the academic partners and the industry and the markets.”
Prof. Dr. Katja Schenke-Layland
NMI