



Mutual care

The growing interest and investments in the healthcare business are opening up many collaboration opportunities between SBS-EM and ULB's Faculty of Medicine. We talk to their two Deans, Philip Vergauwen and Joanne Rasschaert, about how to bring the two bodies closer together.



Joanne Rasschaert

"We should take more advantage of Belgium's excellent reputation in biotechnology"

Philip Vergauwen,
Dean of Solvay
Brussels School
of Economics &
Management

► **Prof. Rasschaert, don't you already cooperate closely with SBS-EM through the I³h institute, which promotes translational medicine?**

▷ **Joanne Rasschaert:** The economic aspect has always been important in the development of drugs and medical devices, and we are more and more aware of the need to look beyond the world of laboratories. As we are located on different campuses, the virtual I³h initiative is essential in strengthening the link with SBS-EM and other faculties. For example, it is helping us to accelerate our activity in the area of biomedical developments, which has considerable potential that we haven't developed sufficiently yet.

▷ **Philip Vergauwen:** SBS-EM is also looking into the possibility of establishing a new externally funded chair of biotechnology, a platform for which we would cooperate with the Faculty of Medicine and for which the connection with I³h would be an important asset. We should in general respond more to the growing interest in the healthcare business, but in particular we need to take more advantage of the excellent reputation that Belgium has as a hub for the development of innovative and multidisciplinary biotechnology solutions. For example, there is strong demand, among both alumni and companies, for a continuing education →

Who is Joanne Rasschaert?

- Dean of the Faculty of Medicine since 2018
- Lecturer at ULB since 1995 and full professor since 2017
- Obtained a PhD in biomedical sciences at ULB in 1992
- Director of the Laboratory of Bone and Metabolic Biochemistry (LBOM)
- Director of the Department of Biochemistry

The Faculty of Medicine

- Part of ULB since its foundation in 1834
- Based at ULB's Erasme Campus in Anderlecht
- Offers degrees in medicine, veterinary medicine, biomedicine and dentistry
- Community of about 4,500 students, 350 researchers and 1,000 staff members

Text: Andy Furniere
Pictures: Laetizia Bazzoni



programme that fine-tunes the skills of business leaders in the biotech sector. The credibility of Belgium in this domain can help us to attract good students from all over the world.

► **SBS-EM's founder Ernest Solvay in his day sponsored an Institute of Physiology at ULB to advance the health monitoring of workers. Are managers today sufficiently aware of the importance of safeguarding their staff's health?**

▷ **P.V.:** We are investing strongly in 'mindful leadership', by showing our students how essential it is to know how people are feeling in an enterprise. For example we need to become increasingly conscious of the link between physical and mental health. This is not a 'soft' issue: the well-being of staff and managers is a crucial economic factor, as it has a significant impact on the productivity of a company. It's also becoming more and more clear that high levels of negative stress have big implications for the decision-making processes in a business. It would be interesting to expand this part of our programme by asking specialists in the medical faculty to explain relevant problems caused by common health issues such as diabetes.

► **Conversely, do medical students have enough understanding of how to run a practice?**

▷ **J.R.:** We already give students in dentistry and medical studies classes about running a medical practice, but we perhaps need to brush up this dimension of the programme and teach more than the basic skills to prepare them better for that part of their profession. Managing the

administration and human resources of a medical practice or dental clinic, monitoring the budget and thinking about price categories are all examples of issues that we may need to address better. Moreover, students in biomedical sciences could also be prepared better for financial and managerial challenges related to creating a spin-off, for example. Certain courses at SBS-EM on subjects such as management and financial administration could be useful additions to our teaching programmes.

▷ **P.V.:** There are already quite a large number of students at the medical faculty who also follow our specialised Master's programme in management. We also address the management issues related to associations of medical professionals, which are becoming increasingly common. Such collective practices, with experts in different medical disciplines working together, require different solutions in areas such as business modelling and administration from those suitable for individual practices.

“ WE NEED TO LOOK BEYOND THE WORLD OF LABORATORIES ”

Joanne Rasschaert, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

▷ **J.R.:** Perhaps the expertise of SBS-EM can also help to train our students better in setting up a true partnership with patients. It is increasingly important for doctors and specialists to not just have the knowledge to advise their patients but to also possess the skills to really involve them in the process of improving their health situation. If patients are more involved in the setting up of their treatments and understand better the need for certain changes in their lifestyle, they will follow the treatment and advice better. We already organise seminars in which students from different disciplines discuss the fictional case of a patient, with someone acting as that patient, and should perhaps ask SBS-EM students to provide their perspective during these meetings as well. ■

Abstract

SBS-EM and the Faculty of Medicine already cooperate intensely in the virtual institute Ith, which increases the impact of medical developments through multidisciplinary action. There are ideas for a new collaborative chair that focuses specifically on tapping more into the potential of the biotech sector. SBS-EM trains its students to understand the importance of employees' health on a company's productivity and the Faculty of Medicine teaches its students basic management skills, but in both cases closer links between the faculties can lead to improvements. The SBS-EM expertise may also be useful for training medical students in setting up better partnerships with patients.