

## P.2

Letter from  
the editor:

There's always that  
deadline. Journalists  
don't know any different

## P.4/5

Farewell  
interview with  
Peter Møllgaard

dean of the School of  
Business and Economics.  
The first eighteen months of  
his deanship in particular  
felt like "shock therapy", to  
quote faculty staff members

**NO PAPER  
EDITION  
NEXT WEEK**

DUE TO  
ASCENSION DAY



Photo: Joey Roberts

The changing of rectors during Dies Natalis celebrations

## "UM could become the Dutch university with the greatest impact"

*Less modesty, more focus. That is what rector Pamela Habibović called for in her inaugural speech during the 46th Dies Natalis in the St. Janskerk last Thursday – in May, rather than in January, because they didn't want an online changing of rectors. She also emphasised the importance of Recognition and Rewards: "Not everyone can be a star, but everyone who does good important work, contributes towards progress." Her predecessor Rianne Letschert used her allotted speaking time to reminisce about the steps already taken.*

"It is a little weird to give a farewell speech when you have just started as President of Maastricht University," Rianne Letschert began her speech, in the role of resigning rector. Nevertheless, she looked back over the past five and a half years. To the worries that she expressed when she took on the position, that the generation of academics after her had a more difficult time entering

the academic world and that the atmosphere "that was worsening, and was at times even cynical". To the complex problems that go hand in hand with sustainable employability, work pressure and a socially safe climate. Steps have been taken to deal with these problems, but "the wheels of the university turn slowly." Too slowly sometimes, for Letschert. "I need to be patient, which I am not, and ask myself: can the organisation cope with this, aren't we moving too fast – questions that all leaders must ask themselves." She promised to continue following the direction already embarked upon in the coming years in order to bring about systematic change, by means of Recognition and Rewards, the new Leadership Academy and the We Care project. The new rector Pamela Habibović, who took to the pulpit after the official handover, was more explicit in her ambitions. "We may not be able to become the oldest or the largest university

in the Netherlands, but we could become the university with the greatest impact." As far as she is concerned, more time should be taken to reflect on what has already been achieved and to share that with the rest of the world. Recognition and Rewards is a necessity, said Habibović. "If we continue to name our research groups after ourselves, continue to undervalue our lecturers and ignore the importance of our support staff, then we might create a couple of star scientists, but we won't be fulfilling our role in society." She has a clear message for anyone who thinks that rewarding everyone will lead to mediocrity: "You are wrong." According to Habibović, there is no room for mediocrity if you want to carry out proper interdisciplinary research. A thing that must be done in a world where everyone continues to specialise. "To be successful in your field, you have to work with blinkers on. But because of that, you miss the greater

picture. And that greater picture is crucial if we want to solve complex global problems." So, collaboration is also a necessity. Lastly, both referred briefly to the rumours that went around at the time of the appointment of Habibović; two women on the board, would they begrudge each other the spotlight, who is the real boss? "I can assure you that Pamela and I are not thinking of that at all," Letschert said with a broad smile. Habibović remarked that people who were hoping for a cat fight would be disappointed. "I wonder if there were the same concerns for stag fights in the case of all-male boards."

Cleo Freriks

Read more about the Dies Natalis on page 6 and 7; about the Dissertation prize and Education Prize, the morning programme and keynote speech

# SPLINTERS

A funny incident, a striking piece of news, something interesting that happened elsewhere in the country: it is in this column.

## No women? No board grants



A student football association in Groningen is at risk of losing its board grants because it has no female members. During a committee meeting preceding a University Council meeting, council members regarded the lack of female football players as intentional, Groningen's university newspaper *UKrant* writes. "The men are free to play football amongst themselves, but then no public money should go towards it. This is 2022," said chairperson Dinie Bouwman from the Personnel Fraction.

That is not quite how it is, say the football players themselves. They do not exclude women at all, women simply don't sign up. And even if they did, it would be difficult for them to play. "Recently, we contacted Dutch football association KNVB to inquire about the women's competition on Sunday and the KNVB told us that there was none in the Northern region," said the club's chairman.

The university council will make a decision on Thursday.

## Hospital edition of Who is the Mole?



In the Laurentius hospital in Roermond, a number of 'moles' are walking around this week, *De Limburger* writes. Just like the popular TV programme *Wie is de Mol?* (Who is the Mole?)

they do not adhere to the regulations. In this case, the clothing and hygiene protocols. In areas where patient care is not in danger, deliberate mistakes will be made. It is up to the rest of the staff to spot the moles and approach them. They will then be given a ticket, which counts as a lottery ticket at the end of the week that enables them to win prizes. The more tickets you have, the more lottery tickets.

It is just another way of bringing the regulations to the attention of staff, said the spokesperson for the hospital in *De Limburger*. According to her, personnel had a "positive and fun" reaction. Maybe an idea for MUMC+ too?



## The big twist

Former student of Arts and Social Sciences, former columnist of *Observant*, as well as cabaret performer Micha Wertheim is returning to Maastricht. He will be performing his new show *Micha Wertheim voor heel* even in the Vrijthof Theatre on Monday, 23 May.

Just like in his previous performances, Wertheim enters into an experiment with his audience.

Nobody knows what to expect – critics received a letter with the request not to divulge anything about the big twist in the performance. During previous shows, Wertheim once wasn't even on the stage himself, played part of the performance twice, and toured along empty theatres during the COVID-19 lockdown. For those who have become curious, come and see for yourself for 22.50 euro (in Dutch).

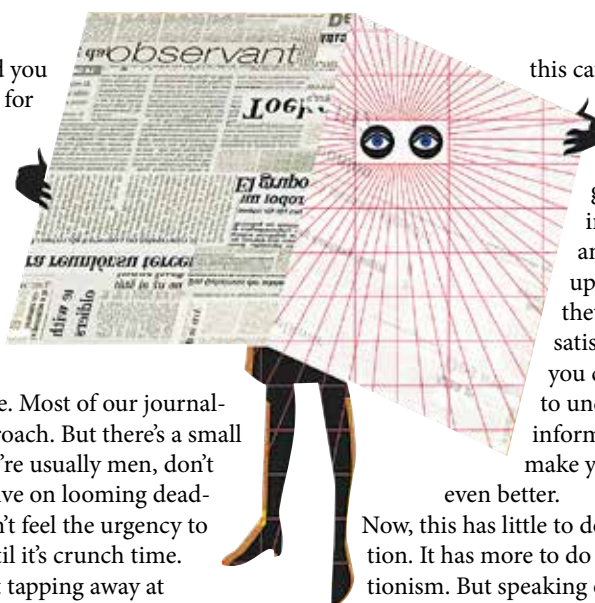
## letter from the editor

## Always that deadline

Every Wednesday, *Observant* must be sent to the printer by 5 PM. That's a hard deadline. All articles must be finished and translated by noon. That's another hard deadline; our designer needs time to put the newspaper together. There's always that deadline. Journalists don't know any different. We plan our days or weeks around them and often have a love-hate relationship with them. It's the constant pressure of having to finish an article in time versus the feeling of accomplishment you get

when you're done and you can sit back and relax for a bit.

Broadly speaking, there are two ways to deal with deadline pressure. I myself make sure to start working on my articles well ahead of time so that I rarely run into trouble. Most of our journalists use the same approach. But there's a small group of people (they're usually men, don't ask me why) who thrive on looming deadlines. It's like they don't feel the urgency to sit down and type until it's crunch time. That's when they start tapping away at their keyboards at full speed, only to submit the end result just before or after the deadline. Getting started earlier, as I sometimes suggest in the interest of stress reduction, doesn't help



this category of journalists. They will continue to do background reading, make calls and look things up, because they're never satisfied; after all, you can always try to uncover more information. It will make your article even better.

Now, this has little to do with inspiration. It has more to do with perfectionism. But speaking of inspiration: participants of our summer school (which will be held again this August) always ask us what to do when you lack inspiration. Our answer: just sit down at your computer

and begin to write. If the words refuse to come out, write a letter on your subject to a good friend. This makes it easier to get something down on paper.

We once had a columnist who wrote a column for us every ten weeks. One day, on the day of the deadline, he sent me an email: no inspiration, so no column this time. He hadn't quite realised that this would leave us with a blank space in the print version of *Observant*. At *Observant*, "no inspiration" is a cue to go brainstorm with colleagues or to go for a walk and let the subject marinate in your mind for a bit. And then, you just sit down and write – and make the deadline.

Riki Janssen

Every week, the editor-in-chief writes about what has been happening at the *Observant* office



# No social contract for first-year students in Maastricht

*From next year onwards, first-year students in Groningen may have to sign a 'social contract'. The university, the university of applied sciences and the municipality hope that by doing so they can curb the disturbance caused by students. The newcomers to Maastricht will not be signing a list of rules of conduct. Neither the Executive Board nor alderman Bert Jongen are considering this kind of plan.*

According to independent news platform UKrant, the initiative of the University of Groningen, is meant to make clear which behaviour

is desirable and which is not. Rector Cisca Wijmenga: "You are a student, but also an inhabitant of this city. So, what does that mean regarding your behaviour?" What will be included in the contract, as well as what the first-year students must adhere to, is still unknown. University Council members from Groningen support the plans, but they do have criticism, UKrant writes, because life outside the walls of the university is not the university's responsibility, is it? And will it be compulsory to sign? What happens if you don't? Rector Wijmenga feels that it is especially important that new students

are instructed on the "liveability of the city". The plan fell on deaf ears in Maastricht. The Executive Board informed via spokesperson Koen Augustijn that they are not considering "a social contract regarding behaviour and activities outside the university walls and outside university hours". That doesn't mean that no attention is being paid to the connection between students and city. On the contrary, Maastricht University and the city together support the 'Student City' programme. Making students more aware of the fact that they are part of the Maastricht community already

starts during the introduction week, the Inkom. In addition, alderman Jongen refers to the Match project, as an example "through which students are actively involved in activities in their neighbourhood or take part in voluntary work". Ultimately, he thinks that engaging in a discussion, even in matters of disturbance, will be more effective than signing a code of conduct.

Wendy Degens

## Studying on a wooden bench on the Orleansplein

The Orleansplein - where many students live - in the Brusselse Poort district is being overhauled. There is now a soccer field, a basketball hoop and a number of play equipment for children. But above all, there are a lot of bicycles. A shame, thought a group of local residents. We have to do something about that; they formed a working group and worked with an architect on a plan to redesign the square. Last Saturday, the working group invited all local residents to discuss the plans that have been on the table so far. The designs will not have come as a complete surprise to the majority of visitors, says Ralph Herben, member of the neighborhood work group and project leader at Maastricht University's facilities services. "We have regularly spoken to people on the street to hear what they think and if they have any ideas." The students too, emphasizes Herben. "We



Orleansplein last weekend Photo: Joey Roberts

want to make wooden seating elements for them, for example, so that students without a garden can study here when the weather is nice." There are no plans for it now, but "if

they make good use of that, we might think about providing good WiFi in the future". The turnout among students was a bit disappointing last Saturday, says Herben. "I think

it was because of the lovely weather, because normally I find them very involved in the neighborhood."

YM

## #MenToo!

I find it upsetting to observe how influential the patriarchy still is, and how difficult it is to change our institutional system. I know change takes time, but for a society in the middle of the #metoo era, it at times looks as if we do not want to change.

This month a Dutch TV-figure publicly declared a rape he committed decades ago. His male peers around the table received his story with jokes. A story that held an uncomfortable level of detail, too painful to even make up. I am not sure if I was more disgusted by the story of the rape, or the lack of appropriate response by the men at the table. And this week, after pausing the TV-show for a few weeks, this 'role model' is back on TV to con-



tinue his show, as if nothing happened. The TV-show is commercially important for the channel - that therefore chooses not to take appropriate response. We can only hope that advertisers will choose to respond by dropping

this show from their advertisement list. If not, how do I signal to my 19-year-old son (and all his peers) that this type of behaviour is NOT tolerated by our society any longer, if society chooses not to respond? Equally surprising was the request that my 15-year-old daughter received this week, while on a school trip to the south of France. Even though it was fantastic weather, she and her female classmates were asked not to wear skirts. Their summer dresses may be a provocation for the men in the streets and may invite these men to behave inappropriately. The boys in the class did not receive a similar request to not wear shorts. And the men on the streets obviously were not addressed at all. Instead of changing the system, and support the girls to be strong, independent and have equal rights to choose what they wear, the school chose to ask the girls to change their behaviour. But the girls did nothing wrong!

Does profitability trump decency and equality? Is it simply easier to ask the women to change? Did we not choose to leave that behind? How refreshing was it that the municipality of Utrecht chose to call out inappropriate remarks from men on the street. Not to be rude to those men, but to create awareness among them on how the women may feel, while being yelled at. A policy action aimed to change society - specifically the part of society that misbehaves. We really cannot keep giving abusers an escape, and keep asking the women to change. #MenToo!

*Mindel van de Laar, director of the dual career PhD programme in Governance and Policy Analysis (GPAC2) of UNU-MERIT/Maastricht Graduate School of Governance*

*This column reflects the personal views of the author*



# *AFTER TWO YEARS, MØLLGAARD FOUND HIS WAY AS SBE DEAN*



Peter Møllgaard promised not to act “like a bull in a china shop” when he assumed the position of dean of the School of Business and Economics on 1 April 2018. He partially succeeded. The first eighteen months of his deanship in particular felt like “shock therapy”, to quote faculty staff members. Møllgaard regularly clashed with the heads of department. But despite the rough start, those same people are now sad to see him go back to Denmark.

**Text: Yuri Meesen Photo: Photo: Joey Roberts**

“Organisational culture is not exactly rocket science”, said the then rector Rianne Letschert when Peter Møllgaard from Denmark became dean of the School of Business and Economics (SBE). It was about whether an outside hire would be able to understand the mores of the faculty. It’s not rocket science, but it may have been more challenging than it seemed. For this farewell interview with Møllgaard, *Observant* spoke with several prominent staff members of SBE. Professor of Real Estate Finance Piet Eichholtz is critical. One of his gripes is that Møllgaard should have invested more time in connecting with the professors. “For example, I’ve never had an appraisal interview with him.” Even so, Eichholtz describes the dean as a “warm, kind man”. It’s a view unanimously shared by all interviewees: a support staff member in the Faculty Council, the chair of that council, the scientific director of the Education Institute and two heads of department. But there is a “but”, especially if you ask the heads of department, who tend to work most closely with the dean. “Peter had experience with other business schools”, says Clemens Kool, head of department and professor of Macroeconomics and International Monetary Economics. “The management structure is usually very top-down. The Netherlands has this culture of endless consultation, which requires leaders to build support for their decisions. It caused friction, especially in the first eighteen months to two years.”

### Tough decisions

Take the introduction of a new organisational model, a matrix structure, which took power away from the faculty’s heads of department. “When the board says, ‘This is how it’s going to be’, it’s met with resistance”, says Kool. “Peter didn’t shy away from making tough decisions.” His fellow head of department Wim Gijsselaers, professor of Educational Research and Development, concurs. “Peter

was accustomed to having a greater degree of independence at Copenhagen Business School. He had to get used to the role that heads of department play here. Our input often surprised him in the beginning. In the Netherlands, people will even question decisions that have already been made. It took him eighteen months to two years to adjust to that.” Møllgaard does not recognise himself in the description of an authoritarian leader. “Yes, big decisions were made, but I always made them together with the rest of the board and after consultation with the department heads. Never alone.” He feels like he was open to listening to anyone with something to say. “For example, the entire faculty is involved in SBE’s current strategic plan.” All major decisions involved regular meetings of the management team (consisting of the Faculty Board, the heads of department and the institute directors). “We took all their input into account, but the board ultimately makes the decisions. That may have been different from what the faculty was used to, but I don’t think the word ‘authoritarian’ is correct.”

### Legacy

Despite the rough start, all interviewed SBE staff members are now sad to see Møllgaard leave. He has changed as a dean over the past four years, they say. According to Kool, “He’s more sensitive to the heads of department now”. They feel like his deanship falls into two periods. “During the second period, several good decisions were made that benefited the faculty”, says Gijsselaers. He is referring, among other things, to the new strategic plan of the faculty. “We must now stay the course, together with the new dean.” What course is that? One that makes more room for interdisciplinary research and prioritises data analysis and digitization. Møllgaard has also “embedded sustainability and ethics in the faculty”, says Mark

Vluggen, scientific director of the Education Institute. “That’s Peter’s great legacy here”, the interviewees unanimously agree. They all cite Møllgaard’s eye for diversity as well. His deanship saw a significant increase in the number of female professors, assistant professors and associate professors. All SBE assessment committees now have at least one female member, and Møllgaard is the only man who attends meetings of FEM, the network for female empowerment at UM.

### Early departure

Deans are ideally expected to stay for two terms. Møllgaard is leaving after one term. One of the main reasons why he is making an ‘early’ departure is his daughter. In the summer of 2020, Møllgaard’s wife and daughter joined him in the Netherlands. “It was in the middle of the pandemic, so the lockdown made it difficult to create a social network. She was terribly unhappy. In the end of the academic year 2020/2021 they moved back to Copenhagen.” Around the same time, Møllgaard received a call from a headhunter about a position as dean of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU). It was an easy decision. “It’s the faculty with the largest student body at the university”, he says enthusiastically. And as the name suggests, the faculty covers more disciplines than just economics and business. “It’s a little like a combination of SBE, the Faculty of Law and FASoS.” What will he miss about UM? Møllgaard points out the window of his office on the fourth floor. “The view and the people”, he says. It’s a politically correct answer, he admits, “but it’s the truth. I’m proud of how the faculty made it through the pandemic. We weren’t just putting out fires, but we used the pandemic to make a strategic choice for technology-enhanced learning. It has made us a stronger

school.”

One thing he will not miss is commuting between Denmark and the Netherlands, he says emphatically. “On average, I spent two long weekends per month in Copenhagen.” On those busy weekends, he would spend time with his family, see his friends and visit his 83-year-old mother.

### Frank Sinatra

“It was not an easy time to be dean”, says Vluggen. He isn’t just referring to the cyber-attack that paralysed UM around Christ-

mas 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic, but also to complex issues such as the integration of the School of Governance, the Maastricht Sustainability Institute and the Maastricht School of Management. “We’re talking about major organisational changes here.”

For his part, Møllgaard refers to them as “exciting challenges. That’s how you have to be able to look at it if you want to survive a job like this.” He’s sad that the Maastricht School of Management is not yet officially part of SBE. “We’re very far along in the process, but I would’ve liked to have been here for the official transition. It’s a shame, but you leave behind unfinished business whenever you leave a job.”

Møllgaard is returning to Denmark with a lot of experience under his belt, he says. His new place of work has a similar structure: the university consists of five faculties. He’s also impressed by the degree of student involvement at the university. “I’ve worked with various student board members, some better than others. It felt like a good way to keep in touch with the student population. Perhaps I will be able to introduce a similar system at SDU.” Finally, is there anything Møllgaard would do differently if he could start over? “I’m immediately reminded of the song *My Way* by Frank Sinatra, in which he sings, ‘*Regrets, I’ve had a few. But then again too few to mention.*’”

“It was not an easy time to be dean”

Until a new dean is elected, professor of marketing and former dean Jos Lemmink will take over the honours.



## Keynote speech by human rights activist Nice Nailantei Leng'ete

# “WHEN I WAS UP IN THAT TREE, I WAS SCARED”

“Leadership is not just for people at the top - we all have influence on our community in different ways.” Kenyan human rights activist Nice Nailantei Leng'ete, who gave the keynote speech during the 46th Dies Natalis celebrations on Thursday, is living proof of her own statement. Even at a very young age, she managed to convince her family and the village elders to be more mindful of girls' and women's rights.

Nailantei Leng'ete was eight years' old when she and her sister hid together at the top of a tree to avoid what she herself refers to as *'the cut'*, circumcision, the traditional genital mutilation of Masai girls, a nomadic people that mainly lives in Kenya and Tanzania. Ultimately, she manages to convince her grandfather - her parents had died by that time - not to go ahead with it, at least in her case. Her sister offers herself up and takes part in the ceremony. “Something that I will always be grateful to her for.” It gave an extra incentive to her fight to save girls and women from genital mutilation and instead to give them education.

By now, she and Amref Flying Doctors have saved 20 thousand girls. Making sure you are heard, requires personal leadership, says Nailantei Leng'ete. “Know yourself, know your dreams and dare to do something with them. Make sure you have a clear idea of what you are striving for as well as what you expect from yourself and others. Take those - often tough - decisions and take responsibility for your own actions.”

But that is not enough. “Change starts with a perspective and the help of the people concerned. I saw how my father always involved the community when he wanted to change something. I lost my parents at a young age, but I never forgot their lessons.” Trying to change something without involving others is counterproductive, says Nailantei Leng'ete. “I often came across wells in Africa that nobody used. Westerners dug them so that women no longer needed to walk so far for water. But the women loved those long walks. It gave them the opportunity to be together, exchange stories and joke about the men.” Doing things together with others, also means respecting their cultures and traditions and teaching them things “through love”. According to Nailantei Leng'ete, that is a crucial factor in the success of her foundation. Another is organising support. “Look to your left and right for help. Look down and offer those who come after you a helping hand. Someone did that for me; I am a product of many helping hands. Someone will do it for you too and, when possible, you will do it again for others.”

Lastly, she calls upon people to dream big. “When I was up in that tree, I was scared. Maybe you are scared of something right now. Dare to dream of change, be brave and think: one day at a time. Follow your intuition, respect others for who they are. The world needs dreamers who are afraid, but who go forward anyway.”



Photo: Joey Roberts

Cleo Freriks

## MORNING PROGRAMME: BACHELOR'S THESES AND BUBBLY

During the morning programme, prizes were awarded to the best bachelor's theses. A total of eighteen: one winner per study programme. The event could only be followed via a live stream. The supervisors had recorded videos beforehand with their heartfelt praises for their pupils. European Law School student Evgenia Kokkou received the maximum grade for her thesis

from Sjoerd Claessens, programme director at the Faculty of Law. It is the second ten he has given in twenty years. Kokkou wrote about data abuse by online platforms. A thesis, which according to Claessens, could also have held up as a “very good master's thesis”. On the other side of the river, it was the women who dominated.

They won all four prizes at the Faculty of Health, Medicine & Life Sciences. These included student of Health Sciences Anouk Blanken, who delved into the world of psychosocial problems with children who are deaf or hearing-impaired. Alicja Mastylak took gold with the bachelor's of European Public Health. Her thesis was about motherhood benefits in Poland. YM

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## Wynand Wijnen Education Prize 2021 for Ben Janssen

HE ALWAYS PREPARES HIS LECTURES BEFOREHAND, “BUT AFTER TWO SENTENCES, I HAVE ALREADY DEVIATED FROM THE TEXT”



Photo: Joey Roberts

Oh, he would really have liked to have given a speech during the Dies Natalis celebrations last Thursday, after winning the Wynand Wijnen Education Prize 2021. But the festive programme was overfull. No time to give thanks. Ben Janssen, associate professor at Pharmacology, emphasises how proud he is. “I have worked here for 38 years, this prize feels like recognition.” Of course, he will give an interview to *Observant*.

Ben Janssen (64) erupts during the brief phone call when the writer of the piece wants to agree on a day and time for an interview. He starts talking about another B. Janssen at this university, or rather in MUMC. “An IT guy,” and two names that are the same can cause confusion in the mail correspondence. So, he never received a message from *Observant*. Even worse: Janssen almost didn’t attend the prize-giving ceremony. “I met someone just by chance and they said: ‘Hi Ben, see you at the Dies celebrations in ten days’ time.’ Me: ‘Huh, what?’ Well, that is when the ball started rolling. That invitation had most likely also ended up with B. Janssen from MUMC.”

Someone who has already worked in education (and research) at Maastricht University for 38 years, and certainly in such an enthusiastic way as this lecturer, needs more than half an hour interview time with the newspaper. Even more than an hour.

#### HANDBALL TEAM

All phases of his life are touched on, and all phases have formed him, he says. From growing up in the Stadbroek neighbourhood in Sittard, his study of Biology in Nijmegen, conscientious objection (“I was in service for one day, not for me, walking around with a gun”) to working at the UM ‘to compensate for

his conscientious objection.’ “I completed my PhD there in 1988, at Pharmacology.” Then he mentions his experience as a young trainer of a handball team in Nijmegen, which has influenced his teaching career: the encouragement, keeping them focused, making sure that the work gets done. The latter is what he also makes clear to his students: “That is when I say: ‘Come on! I jump over the bar, but you do too. Come on, do your best.’”

#### SIDE ROADS

“I love chaos,” he says halfway through the interview. “I always prepare my lectures beforehand, but after two sentences, I have already deviated from the text. Digression, that’s me. But I always come out on the main road.” Students appreciate it. Janssen is open, he listens to what they are dealing with. “You must get their attention and hold on to it. They have to believe me.” So, he often starts his lectures with a question for one of the students in the hall. “That can be about anything.”

He is bursting with energy. “I get my fanaticism from my mother, we never give up. The curiosity, taking roads that are new to me, I get from my father. When there is something I don’t know, I will go and find out.” Janssen is broadly employable with the faculty: “I teach about all the pills, from antipsychotics and antidepressants to rheumatism, high blood pressure, heart failure, morphine, polypharmacy.” His main theme is medication safety. Just before graduation, all master’s students of Medicine in the Netherlands are given an exam in medication safety – Janssen is on the national committee. At all universities, the students have to take and pass the test, but in Maastricht you don’t necessarily need to pass it. His face speaks volumes: he doesn’t think that this is a good idea. “There is medication that you just have to

know about, of which you know that patients, in case of a mistake, could quickly end up in hospital. Students sometimes say: ‘We should have had that earlier on in the curriculum.’”

#### SUSTAINABILITY

He drew up his teaching CV himself – he was just about to print it during the interview, but something else caught his eye. “Mirjam oude Egbrink, director of our educational institute, last wanted to nominate me for the ‘lecturer of the year’ elections in the Netherlands last autumn. I had to put this CV together for that. She thought it was quite impressive. I did too actually,” he laughs. But that election didn’t work out. “At the time, Mirjam said she wanted to do something else with it.” So, that was a nomination for the Education Prize. Janssen was actually nominated twice, “also as a member of the team from the interfaculty minor on Sustainability. That has been running for a year now.” This all has to do with his interest in the ecotoxicological effects of medicines in sewage and surface water. “I was at a meeting and met someone who works for WML Limburgs Drinkwater. That is when I picked it up and started an honours project with students... and then...”

He will use the money he received for the prize for the sustainability project. “Or I will appoint a student assistant.”

Wendy Degens

The Wynand Wijnen Education Prize is awarded annually as a tribute to Wynand Wijnen, Professor of Education, who passed away in 2012. The prize consists of a certificate, money (2000 euros for a work-related project and 3000 euros privately) and a bronze statuette

## 2021 Dissertation Prize for Estelle Nijssen

It is not often that research has an almost immediate and worldwide effect. But it was exactly what happened with the PhD research by Estelle Nijssen, staff researcher Imaging at MUMC+ and CARIM. Together with her team, she looked into the benefit of administering fluids prior to an examination with contrast fluid containing iodine, in order to prevent kidney damage in vulnerable patients. She received the 2021 Dissertation Prize during the Dies Natalis celebrations.

In the Netherlands alone, contrast fluid is used more than a million times every year. It is administered to patients beforehand so that, for example, the organs and blood vessels show better at a CT scan or angioplasty. This could be damaging to patients with weak kidneys, such as the elderly or those suffering from kidney conditions. Administering fluids, via a drip, could make the contrast fluid less harmful. “The drip is quite invasive for the patient,” says Nijssen. “They have to be hospitalised for at least a day.”

But does administering fluids really have effect? She and her team found out it hasn’t. “You can measure kidney damage in the blood using a certain substance; there was absolutely no difference between the research and control group. It was almost the same: 2.6 and 2.7 per cent. Nobody needed dialysis, we saw no related deaths. What we did see, was that patients who were given fluids beforehand had side effects, such as heart failure and tightness of the chest. So, it had no advantages, but disadvantages.” “Within a year, the guidelines were adapted in hospitals, and these patients were no longer given extra fluids, everywhere.”

Read the whole interview on [www.observantonline.nl](http://www.observantonline.nl)

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Photo: Joey Roberts