

# observant

INDEPENDENT WEEKLY MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

VOLUME 44 / JUNE 13, 2024 Nr 30



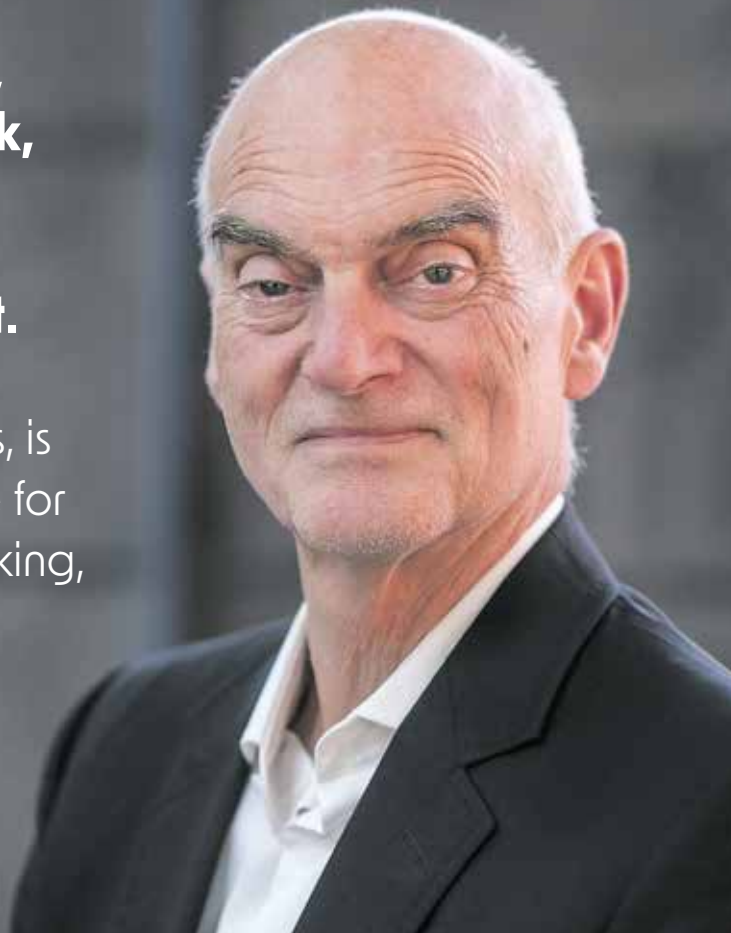
The holidays are around the corner. This is the last paper issue of this academic year. For the **latest news**, go to **observantonline.nl**, where we will continue to publish for a few more weeks. In the week of 26 August, we will be back with a special first-year issue. **Happy summer!**

Illustration:  
Simone Golob

**A hard worker, a policy geek, devoted to Maastricht University, critical, a control freak, dependable, honest, sharp-witted and sometimes a bit blunt.**

The vice-president of the Executive Board, Nick Bos, is retiring. But no black hole for him. He will continue working, just not at UM anymore. Why? "Working is fun."

**Page 6-7**

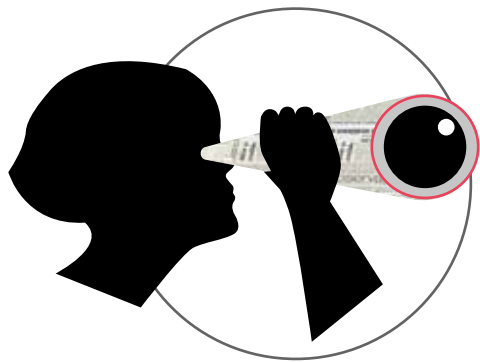


**Green, greener, greenest. The UB in Randwyck has been renovated and reopened this week.**

Light green paint on the walls and lots of plants too. Studying has never been so green.

**Page 3**





## editorial Field trip

Riki Janssen

Last Thursday felt like a field trip. At 7:30 AM, we were all on the train to Nijmegen with hot coffee, homemade sandwiches and yoghurt and muesli cups. Some had cast their votes in the European elections just before catching the train. Our books and newspapers never made it out of our bags; we were too busy talking, laughing and discussing which party we voted for.

We were off to Nijmegen for the annual conference of the *Kring van Hoofdredacteuren*, the national association of news media in Dutch higher education. This year's theme was AI in journalism. I consider myself a complete novice in this area. Until last week, I thought I'd never used AI and had no concrete plans to do so. I didn't realise that DeepL, a translation service I use almost weekly to quickly translate a few sentences (we use human translators for articles), counts as artificial intelligence.

That wasn't the only thing I learnt. Experts explained that AI

won't replace us journalists anytime soon; AI tools generate superficial articles, inevitably make mistakes (as they're fed both "good" and "bad" content) and struggle to replicate creativity and emotion. You still need a human journalist for that. But using tools like DeepL and ChatGPT can make our lives easier. Quickly summarising the main points of a lengthy policy document, transcribing a voice memo in no time, coming up with headline suggestions – they can do it all. We found out for ourselves in a workshop. I asked for ways to get more students to read *Observant*. The answer was comprehensive but unsurprising: produce a weekly newsletter (check), write articles about students (check), get students on the editorial team (check), and so on.

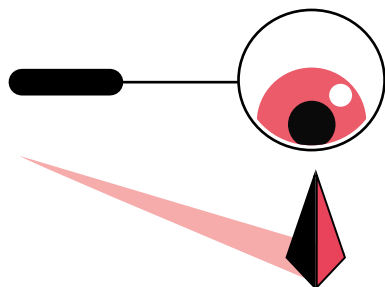
A few colleagues, still or again in field trip mode, became a bit unruly as the day progressed. After asking ChatGPT some serious questions (this, I learnt, is called "prompting" in AI jargon), they asked if you can "hit a junior journalist

if they don't do what you want". The junior journalist who typed in the prompt laughed the loudest when the AI tool informed us that this is "unacceptable and illegal". Also, "Hitting a colleague can have severe negative effects on the working environment." You don't say!

Like you, I suspect, we are just about ready for a break. The last print version of *Observant* of this academic year will be published this week. From next week, you'll find the latest news on our website until 1 July. After that, it's time for the summer holidays. Enjoy your summer and see you in August.

*PS ChatGPT came up with five rather underwhelming headline suggestions for this editorial, including "A Journey Full of Insights: AI and Journalism at the Kring Conference".*

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



## splinters

A funny incident, a striking piece of news, something interesting that happened elsewhere in the country: it is in this column. Contributions: Cleo Freriks, Dennis Vaendel, Simon Wirtz

### Save your bike

Bike owners be aware: it's that time of the year again! On Monday, 17 June, employees of the Facility Services will start to go around the UM-buildings and tag all bikes that have a 'visible defect' with a small paper tag. With the yearly 'bike clean-up action', the UM tries to prevent overfilled racks full of damaged bikes that are not in use anymore. Want to keep your bike? Then make sure to remove the paper tag on time. All bikes that still have it attached to them in the end of August will be taken

to one of two central places: in Randwyck (behind Endepolsdomein 150) and at Tapijn (beside building TAPA), where they can be retrieved by their owners until 20 September. Good to know: bike-collectors in Randwyck need to make an appointment at the reception of EPD 150 beforehand. Didn't make it until 20 September? Then your chance is gone. Left-overs, of which there are dozens every year, will be given away. In the last years, they were donated for a good cause.



### Room for discussion?

Is there actually still room for discussion at the Room for Discussion – a debating platform at the University of Amsterdam? One speaker after the other is cancelled or moved to another location, sister newspaper *Folia* writes.

Last week, it was minister of Defence Kajsa Ollongren. She was supposed to come on 13 May, which was cancelled due to the planned pro-Palestinian walk-out, which led to the occupation of university buildings throughout the country. Attempt number two has now also been cancelled: according to the Amsterdam 'triangle' – mayor, public prosecutor and chief of police – the risks of unrest are too great "looking at the situation lately".

Earlier this year, debates with mayor Femke Halsema and Rob Bauer, the highest-ranking military officer within NATO, were moved to another hall for safety reasons. Both Bauer and Halsema said afterwards to *Folia* that they felt it was a pity that people were not open to discussion. "It is one-sided shouting, not a dialogue," said Bauer.

Purely Amsterdam shenanigans? No, a 'dialogue table' (about the war in Gaza) was cancelled in Maastricht last January due to "the risk of disruption being too great", said Rob van Duijn from Studium Generale at the time in *Observant*.



### State weed

Smoking a joint containing weed or hash that is legally produced – under the watchful eye of the government. From next Monday (17 June), this will be possible in Maastricht. After years of preparation, the 'weed trial' will start in ten Dutch cities. In Limburg, in addition to Maastricht, Heerlen is also participating.

The objective: experimenting with the legal production and distribution of cannabis. According to the law, it is still illegal, but the government turns a blind eye to the sale of soft drugs in coffeeshops. With a criminal circuit at the backdoor as a result. The hope is that with the new approach illegal producers will be cut off.

During the trial, the production will be in the hands of a dozen

growers, chosen via a selection procedure; the government checks the quality. Small-scale experiments have already taken place in Tilburg and Breda since December. Now it is the turn of the other eight cities. For the time being, coffeeshops may also sell their 'familiar' cannabis from the illegal circuit, in addition to the 'state weed'. This 'transitional phase' is planned to last until mid-September, after which the illegal weed will disappear. That should provide the legal growers with enough time to increase production, but also the quality and variation – to prevent users turning towards illegal trade after all. The experiment will run for at least four years after that. The government will then decide whether or not to return to the old situation.

# The University Library in Randwyck is open again

## Studying in a green library



Photo: Joey Roberts

After months of renovations, the University Library in Randwyck was reopened for students, last Monday. Just before the end of the academic year. The official opening will take place after the holidays.

The renovation is part of the eight-year plan encompassing the renovations of UNS50, which started in 2022. It was the library's turn in August of last year. Studying had to temporarily take place on Endepolsdomein 150, which used to be where the Maastricht School of Management was housed. There is a screen at the entrance showing a map. The first and second floor are for self-

study, the third is for group work. And just like in the city centre, spaces can be reserved, but not everywhere. "Only in the super focus areas," Meike Kerkhofs-Welkenhuizen, project leader of innovative learning spaces explains. "You do have to be quiet in there." As well as studying, there is also room for mental health, but that is still "a work in progress," she said. "The idea is to use VR glasses for mindfulness."

Instead of red and dark blue, the library is now light green and adorned with an abundance of plants. *Real* plants. That was still a question: would the influence on the humidity affect the books? "We have to keep an eye on that," says

the project leader. There was no need for an extra employee for the maintenance of all that green; an external party is responsible for that. In addition to the plants, the anatomy space is also new. Where models used to be in glass cases, they are now in an open case, ready to be practiced upon. Although the latter is still not clear to everyone. "A student asked me if the models could be touched," she laughs. What do the users themselves feel about the metamorphosis? Quieter and more orderly, a third-year medical student says. And that was exactly the architect's intention.

Lotte van de Loo

## Working at Maastricht University: what do you like, what don't you like?

### Good atmosphere and a lot of freedom, but also high workload

*Appreciation of the atmosphere, mutual collegiality, freedom, and the balance between work and private life; minus points are workload, lack of career perspectives and a so-called "orange ceiling". Still, all in all, an above-average score, Randstad Consultancy concludes, the agency that mapped out why people (want to) work at UM, last year.*

Let's first talk about that orange ceiling. That is something that is experienced by a number of foreign members of staff: they expect that they must have a high level of Dutch for certain positions. If they can't manage this or not sufficiently, this is seen as an enormous threshold for further

growth. President Rianne Letschert said about the matter: "we take it seriously when people feel excluded" due to the language. That is why UM's Language Centre is working on more options for internationals to learn Dutch well. She is convinced that "they want that too".

What do Letschert and senior corporate recruiter Vicky Sterk conclude from the survey – which included a questionnaire completed by more than 1,600 employees – would help the university employ and hold onto personnel? Will it really contribute to that? After all, the plusses and the minuses are nothing new. Partly true, Letschert agrees: "It doesn't surprise me that our staff feels that autonomy is important. Or that they find the workload heavy. What does surprise me, is that, especially considering the increase of the workload, they nevertheless actually experience that autonomy in their work. I am happy about that."

But still: a good working atmosphere, excellent fringe benefits, attention for the balance between work and private life... other organisations are boasting about that too. How does UM distinguish itself in this area from other

large institutes in the region such as Zuyd Hogeschool or the Provincial Government, let alone from other Dutch universities or large businesses? According to Sterk, Randstad compared the results of the survey to similar studies elsewhere. "Then you can see, for example, that the fringe benefits here are really special. An annual bonus, a lot of holidays; that is not matter-of-course everywhere. Other universities have the same collective bargaining agreement, yes, but at UM we often see that more is possible in consultation with one's manager." The survey should result in an 'employer's promise', comparable to a *mission statement* about what kind of employer UM wants to be. The Randstad report contains some modest initiatives, but what the final promise will look like, and how it will change UM's communication? Sterk thinks that will be determined in the coming months. When will the outside world notice anything about adapted vacancy texts or web pages? Sterk: "At the beginning of the new academic year."

Peter Doorackers



## A Learning Organisation?



Am I the only one who feels that UM is facing change and complexity more and more quickly recently? From debates around internationalisation, political developments, and technological disruptions to economic pressures - as an organisation, we have a lot to deal with. And who knows what we will be facing next - no one anticipated the pandemic, for example. From my perspective, as a researcher in the learning sciences, UM must not only react to these challenges, but it should thrive on them. UM should be a learning organisation.

A learning organisation flexibly develops new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and structures in response to change, by sharing knowledge, fostering innovation, and relying on collaboration. This sounds a lot like doing research, doesn't it? And indeed, in our research work, we learn and share knowledge continuously, so we can address pressing questions for science and society. We experiment and reflect, we engage in critical problem-solving, and we collaborate internationally to address our research questions in the best way possible. So, as I see it, UM now consists of many small learning organisations.

And yet, at the institutional level, UM can feel inert rather than flexible, conservative, instead of innovative, and siloed, rather than connected. When talking to colleagues who joined UM at its inception, it sounds like in its early days, UM was a place filled with entrepreneurial spirit, autonomy, and flexibility in its early days. And now that my faculty is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I wonder whether we could rekindle some of this spirit?

To me, the people that make up UM have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and structures to form a true learning organisation. Now it all comes down to our values and how we act on them. Are we structurally, consistently, and sufficiently encouraging knowledge sharing, innovation, and collaboration? Are we socialising and teaching our incoming colleagues how to learn together? Are we taking a learning perspective when assessing and promoting our colleagues? Now is the time to live these values, to show what lifelong learning looks like, we can create a resilient and innovative, a learning UM.



Therese Grohnert,  
Assistant Professor at SBE

series the societal impact of UM research

# “No sector has a greater impact on climate change and biodiversity than agriculture”



Christopher Brewster Photo: Ellen Oosterhof

In today's world, the societal impact of research findings seems more important than getting published in an academic journal like *Nature* or *The Lancet*. What impact has research conducted at UM had in recent years? This week: how UM computer scientists are developing software for farmers.

A camera system that can detect pests or diseases in fields. GPS trackers that monitor livestock in remote areas. A water-saving irrigation system that uses sensors to measure local rainfall, temperature, soil moisture and crop water needs. All these are examples of smart farming, the use of data, modern technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) in agriculture.

“The main goal is to make agriculture more efficient, and therefore more environmentally friendly”, explains data scientist Christopher Brewster. “There’s probably no sector that has a greater impact on climate change and biodiversity loss. The IT world claims that computers are the solution. They can

help reduce fertiliser, pesticide or water use, for example. It’s better for the environment and economically attractive for farmers. It also meets the growing desire of governments to monitor agriculture and of farmers to automate their processes due to the farming labour shortage.”

But how can you best use technology in agriculture? This is the question Brewster, who also works as a researcher at the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO), is looking to answer at the Faculty of Science and Engineering (FSE), where he holds an endowed chair in the Application of Emerging Technologies. As its title suggests, his work goes beyond

mere theory. “I’m particularly interested in solving practical problems.”

## Potato fields

Take OpenAgri, an EU project involving several universities and organisations, with Maastricht University taking the lead – and Brewster as the project leader. “We develop software for farmers interested in digitalisation, or IT professionals interested in agriculture. We’re not working towards a final product, but developing separate components for people to use independently, like codes to relay local weather forecasts or calculate how well a crop is growing. This makes digitalisation more accessible. Rather than having to start from scratch,

you can build your own program using these existing components.”

The translation into practice is already underway. Five pilot projects were launched this year, each involving several farms in the participating European countries. In Greece, for example, a computer system using high-resolution cameras to automatically detect fungi in vineyards is tested. And Belgian farms are using AI to analyse drone images for pests in potato fields and simultaneously select the right pesticides.

## The cloud

“These projects will run for three harvest seasons, and more pilots will follow. Meanwhile, we analyse what works best in practice and meets the needs of farmers. What data should be collected, how and when? And should you process the data on a local computer or online in the cloud? The latter requires an internet connection, which uses more energy, but might produce better results due to greater computing power. The question then becomes: what is the best result that’s still energy efficient?”

Ultimately, the aim is to develop software that gains widespread adoption. “That’s why we want to make everything open source [freely available for modification and redistribution]. I don’t really believe in intellectual property. This way, we hope to create a community of users.”

## Utopianism

The approach is similar to that of another EU project Brewster is involved in, DiTECT, which is currently in its final phase. “But it has a different focus from OpenAgri, namely food safety. The aim was to develop systems to collect and immediately analyse food quality data in various ways throughout the production process, from harvest to transportation to the supermarket. This way, we can increasingly prevent people from falling ill or dying.”

The DiTECT project has produced a lot of useful software, says Brewster. Is it now widely used in practice? “Unfortunately, it’s hard to say. The downside of open source is that you don’t know who’s using it.”

Brewster is careful not to be overly optimistic when it comes to impact. “I’m aware of the danger of technological utopianism, the idea that technology will solve all our problems. People have been quick to hype smart farming, but so far, there’s little evidence that it’s actually more efficient or environmentally friendly. Much research still needs to be done on that.”

Dennis Vaendel

This is the final article in this series. You can read all previous articles on our website.

## Students about the European Football Championship

# “In these times of war, football unites”



Illustration: Simone Golob

From June 14th to July 14th, the European Football Championship will take place in Germany. In 51 matches, 24 national teams will compete against each other. Are UM-students in football fever?

To be expected: some people have nothing to do at all with football or the European Championships. “It’s not a topic among my friends,” a student

says. Or: “Of course it’s nice when the Dutch team wins the championship, but I’m just not interested in the sport.” Lasse Bock however, a first-year Inter-

national Business student, can hardly contain himself as soon as he hears the word ‘football’. “I am a loyal fan of Roda JC [club from Kerkrade, South

Limburg], I have had a season ticket since I was a child. I think football is great. And of course I watch the European Championship – even if there is unfortunately no Roda player in the Dutch team,” the 18-year-old from Vaals laughs. Students are in their exam weeks, does a championship and exams go together? “Yes, absolutely. It’s nice to watch a game with friends in a bar after studying all day.”

### Pool

Third-year student of Econometrics Kees (“no surname please”) will be watching the games in a fraternity house of Hyperion, together with his fellow members. Of course the interior will be decorated in orange. They also have a betting pool: each member has put in 10 euros. Whoever has made the best prediction, wins everything. “In total probably around 200 euros,” he says. Is he also betting on the Netherlands to win? No. “It will be England against France in the final. I hope England wins, they haven’t won in a long time.” Nevertheless, he supports his home country. “I will sing the anthem, the Wilhelmus. With my hand on my heart.”

Bas Ooijman, master student at the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, on the other hand, says that he will “absolutely not” sing the anthem. “I’m not that nationalistic.” But like Kees, he also takes part in a bet. Instead of playing for money, he and his friends however choose for more creativity: “A few years ago, the loser on holiday had to wear a suit with a picture of a naked man on it all day.”

### War

What about international students? Rebekka Wernicke, a master’s student at Law, was born in Switzerland, grew up in England and Canada, while her parents are from Germany. Who is she supporting then? “I’m for Switzerland, even though I only lived there for a short time. My parents are ruling for Germany, my brother for England. I think it’s great to have all the countries we have a connection with are represented.” For Tristan Balakrishnan football has a special meaning. The first-year student in the bachelor’s European Law School, who also plays himself as goalkeeper in a Belgian amateur club, loves the sports, but especially values the worldwide message of football: “At a local level, football strengthens the sense of community, at an international level it brings different countries and cultures together. Especially in these times of war, football unites.”

Lotte van de Loo, Simon Wirtz

## Retirement interview with Executive Board member Nick Bos

"I don't like being the centre of attention. I'm no spearhead or standard-bearer"

"I don't have a soft side", says Nick Bos half-jokingly. His secretary Sandra Kolkman, coming in with refreshments, disagrees. When she begins to explain why, the vice-president of the Executive Board, who is retiring in July, quickly excuses himself. "I'm off to the men's room."

**Text:** Riki Janssen **Photo:** Joey Roberts

**B**os is a hard worker, a policy geek, devoted to Maastricht University, critical, a control freak, dependable, honest, sharp-witted and sometimes a bit blunt. Most of the people *Observant* spoke to for this retirement interview agreed on these points. But they

disagreed on others. Some see Bos as a stoic and distant man, an enigma "who isn't easily approachable", while others highlight his "soft side" – his empathy, supportiveness and willingness to go to great lengths for his employees. As his secretary Kolkman explains, "You

don't get to see that soft side straight away, it takes time, and it's visible only to the inner circle." Bos returns from the men's room. "No more than one paragraph on this", he says. And, later in the interview, "Of course I care about people. I coach a few younger employees, which

I enjoy a lot. But I'm not a people manager. I'm here to get work done. My passion is more in achieving concrete goals. That's what gives me the greatest satisfaction in my work. Obviously, I never do that alone, but always with a team."

### War general

Teamwork was essential during the cyber attack that hit UM on 23 December 2019, the biggest crisis Bos experienced in his twenty-five years at the university. According to an insider, "He took the smallest room in the war room on Grote Looiersgracht. He was like a general, directing everything without getting in the way of his troops. He was there when he was needed. It earned him a lot of respect." Bos: "If my employees are working on Christmas Day, I'm not going to stay home and sit by the fire." Without false modesty, he adds, "I'm a good crisis manager. I stay calm, keep a clear overview of the situation, get up to speed quickly and know the university. I can be very efficient in those kinds of situations [the Covid pandemic followed soon after]." But, he reveals, sometimes his composure is a façade. "I can be very restless. My mind never stops. I try to turn worry into positive action by making plans and coming up with solutions, from the moment I wake up." This is usually around five in the morning. He always starts his day with a walk through the fields near Amstenrade (his birthplace), Brunssum and Binglelade with his German pointer, Borre. He produces his step tracker: in the last 25 weeks, he averaged 10.1 kilometres per day. While out on his morning walk, he fires off the first few emails and messages of the day. "But I also look around, and make sure Borre doesn't take off when he's off leash."

### Proud

And no, the cyber attack wasn't the low point of his career. "It was a very intense period. I had to go all out on all fronts – how do I tackle this? Where can I find the necessary knowledge? I had no experience in this area. The fact that we got hacked isn't something to be proud of. As it turned out, we were very vulnerable. But I feel proud of everything that came after the cyber attack – how we solved it, the sense of solidarity, the loyalty, the dedication of our staff and our transparency afterwards." The emphasis here is on "afterwards", two months later. During this time, the university maintained complete radio silence and refused to admit to paying a ransom. The argument was that they didn't want to tip their hand to the hackers. "We held a press conference in front of a battery of cameras. We were national news. It was stressful – I wasn't exactly in my comfort zone. I don't like being the centre of attention. I'm no spearhead or standard-bearer; I gladly leave that to others." One of these others is his close colleague, Rianne Letschert. When Martin Paul stepped down, leaving the post of president of the Executive Board vacant, Bos immediately said, "Rianne, you should do it." She's "much more suitable" for the job, he says. "She's an incredibly talented

leader with an extraordinary human touch. She can create a network out of thin air, build goodwill and has the likeability factor. That's not something you can learn; you either have it or you don't."

### Achievements

Nick Bos, who studied history and earned his PhD in Utrecht, came to Maastricht University in 1999 to become director of the Student Services Centre. In 2003 he became general director, before later assuming the position of vice president of the Executive Board on 1 January 2014. At the time, many wondered if he – the embodiment of a policy geek – had what it took to take on the role. He proved that he did, although his tendency to involve himself in the details over the years ("I eventually developed the ability to take a helicopter view") didn't always sit well with his employees. They felt restricted, given too little freedom in their work. Bos understands their frustration, but "as a member of the Executive Board, I'm held accountable for everything. Sometimes I need to know the particulars of a case in order to fully understand it. So I'll ask questions, but not unnecessarily."

He looks back on his career at UM with a sense of fulfilment. Bos can call himself the founding father of the four Brightlands campuses in Heerlen, Maastricht, Venlo and Sittard-Geleen (see box). During his term as general director, the then Executive Board gave him the opportunity to set up Brightlands ("I'm grateful for that"), which he continued to develop after he became an Executive Board member himself. "I took the lead, built bridges within UM, between UM and the Province of Limburg, between UM and industry, and stuck my neck out. For example, I brought Clemens van Blitterswijk's tissue engineering research group from Twente to Maastricht. I took a risk – it wasn't a guaranteed success – and it paid off. MERLN is now a leading research group in regenerative medicine."

Without Brightlands, the Faculty of Science and Engineering wouldn't have existed, he explains. "The two have an almost symbiotic relationship. Their combination makes the university stronger and benefits the region both socially and economically. And there's still a lot of potential left."

UM has also grown tremendously over the past 25 years, while remaining "financially and economically sound, as well as a pleasant organisation to work for", says the man who was responsible for finance and operations on the Executive Board. But some say that the university's growth has come at a price. "The workload", Bos immediately deduces. The inflow of students has increased workload for both academic and support staff, but the university service centres didn't see their budgets grow accordingly. "We're still lagging behind", they remark. Could anything have been done differently? "I appreciate that it's been difficult for some of the service centres, but this was the only way", says Bos. "Everything I did, I

did to ensure the continuity of our education and research. That was where the money had to go. Just look at how important FSE is for Brightlands and medical innovation. We're much better prepared for the future. It's made us stronger – the service centres, too. But yes, it's time get them caught up. We're working on it."

### Blunt

He sets high standards for both himself and his employees. If he's not satisfied with someone's work, he can be quite forthright in his criticism; "blunt" is a term often used to describe him, or "angry". Could he imagine that people are afraid of him? "Afraid? No. I never scold people. I can be blunt, or whatever you want to call it, when I'm disappointed, and demand more of employees, but never more than I demand of myself. I'm focused on end results; I don't necessarily need things to be done my way. Instead of telling people off, I'd rather take over myself."

High performers receive praise and freedom in their work, he explains. What about dissenters? "I don't want yes-men around me. I like to hear other views. I'm the one who ultimately makes the decision, but I like to be well informed. I get enough pushback in the Executive Board and from the administrative side."

### Humour

When asked who he has learnt a lot from, he doesn't have to think long. He first brings up Louis Boon, who played a major role in establishing the Faculties of Health Sciences and Psychology and University College Maastricht. "It's very impressive what he has achieved. He showed me how to build things." Next up is former UM president Jo Ritzen, "a visionary", says Bos. "He was often one step ahead, but he was the first to say that UM should engage with the surrounding community – the Province of Limburg, DSM, Philips." Former UM president Martin Paul also makes the list ("a very capable leader"), as does Rianne Letschert, of course. "How could anyone not learn from Rianne?" Former rector magnificus Gerard Mols showed him the importance of humour and the ability to put things into perspective.

### Black hole

"I won't fall into a retirement black hole", he, who received the Teken van Verdienste van de Stad Maastricht on 6 June for his great services to the university and the city, says firmly. Six months ago, he was less sure. During a chat in the hallway just before a University Council meeting, he admitted that he was feeling a bit apprehensive about his upcoming retirement. And now? "I've been fortunate that the Province of Limburg has asked me to stay on as a freelancer at Brightlands two days per week, for two years." He will be building even stronger connections between the four campuses, looking for opportunities for closer collaboration and finding other potential partners in industry and the public sector. "It's a new kind of role where I'll have to

## Brightlands campuses

The four campuses are collaborative efforts between Maastricht University, industry, municipal authorities and the Province of Limburg. The campuses are Chemelot in Geleen, Campus Greenport Venlo (agriculture & food and transport), Maastricht Health Campus and Smart Services Campus in Heerlen. Their aim is to stimulate the regional knowledge economy and therefore employment growth, both on the campuses themselves and through start-ups.



Nick Bos

convince or persuade parties to work together with us." To be clear, "I won't be stepping on my successors' toes. Both Rianne, Pamela [Habibovic, rector magnificus] and Jan-Tjitte [Meindersma, Bos's successor on the Executive Board] will play a role. I helped build Brightlands; it would

be a shame to jeopardise that by becoming a backseat driver."

### The joy of work

And it won't stop there. Bos is still on several boards, leading the board of Museum van Bommel van Dam in Venlo (he's an art enthusiast). "I'll

have more time for that now. And I have lots of other stuff going on, I'm being asked for all kinds of things. I'll take my time to think them over." He will be working fewer hours, though. "Those 80-hour working weeks everyone keeps talking about, that's nonsense. You'd have to work

at least eleven hours per day, seven days per week. It's practically impossible." But he'll continue to work. Why? "I enjoy it."





## 'Cliënten voelen dat er naar ze geluisterd wordt'

Jelmer AIOS



Jelmer is AIOS bij UWV in Heerlen en heeft een brede interesse binnen de geneeskunde. Naast psychologie werd hij aangetrokken door de fysiologie, de biologie, de pathologie van ziekte en van de lichamelijke werking. Ook orthopedie leek een optie, totdat hij ontdekte dat één op de acht jonge klaren werkloos is. Werken in het ziekenhuis wilde hij niet en toen kwam hij al gauw in de sociale geneeskunde terecht. Tijdens een sabbatical van zijn opleiding tot huisarts, zocht Jelmer naar een tijdelijke uitdaging en kwam bij UWV Sociaal-medische zaken terecht. En hij ging niet meer weg.

Het allerleukste aan zijn werk, vindt hij het cliënt contact: 'Daarin voor mij persoonlijk wat meer de voorkant. Vooral werken met cliënten in de ziekte-wet, omdat dat een combinatie is van alles wat ik hiervoor heb gedaan. Het is de psychologische toepassing, het orthopedische lichamenlijk onderzoek en inzicht in het lichamenlijk kunnen. Plus, het soort van huisarts-geneeskundig werk waarin je de hele problematiek moet uitfilteren, deze op de juiste wijze moet toepassen en daarin dan ook nog eens iemand 'moet' helpen naar herstel.'

Als arts arbeid en gezondheid zit je volgens Jelmer met een dubbele pet op: 'Je doet sociaal medische beoordelingen, maar je kijkt en luistert ook naar de persoon die voor je zit. Wanneer iemand ziek is, brengt dat economische instabiliteit en onzekerheid met zich mee. Dus op het moment dat je beseft dat er straks geen cent meer op je rekening staat, dan is het lastig om aan je herstel te werken.'

Jelmer: 'De ruimte die we kunnen bieden aan cliënten, komt door de tijd die we krijgen. En dat voelt echt als een verademing vindt hij. 'Als ik iemand volledig in een ziektelast zie zitten, heb ik

een uur de tijd - en als ik wil nog langer - om de cliënt inzicht te geven in zijn ziekte en om hem daar vervolgens in te begeleiden. We zijn het niet altijd met elkaar eens, maar cliënten voelen wél dat er naar ze geluisterd wordt en er begrip voor hun situatie is. Tot nu toe zijn we er gelukkig altijd samen uitgekomen.'

Beoordelen of iemand arbeidsgeschikt of ongeschikt is, is heel zwart-wit en juist het grijze gebied binnen zijn werk vindt Jelmer interessant; 'Het mooie in dit vak en hetgeen waar je de diepte in kan leggen, is achterhalen waarom iets niet gaat. Niet dát iets niet gaat, maar waarom iets niet gaat en of de cliënt daar eventueel zelf iets aan kan doen. Vervolgens kun je iemand daarin ook echt gaan begeleiden en sturen.'

Jelmer heeft als AIOS helemaal zijn draai gevonden: 'Ik ga met plezier naar mijn werk toe en wat ik nog belangrijker vind, ik ga ook met plezier weer terug naar huis. Iets moois aan het verzekeringsgeneeskundige vak is dat je werkdag aan het eind van de dag ook echt klaar is. Er zijn niet per se nog heel veel losse eindjes. Wat niet willen zeggen dat je

natuurlijk niet nog uren kunt verder werken. Een verslag is nooit af als je er nooit een punt achter zet. Aan jou om die punt dus wel te zetten.'

Van plan om 'stil te zitten' is Jelmer ook niet, want hij heeft grootse plannen als het gaat om zijn ambities. Zo gaf hij aan dat hij ambieert door te groeien richting het onderwijs of management. Momenteel begeleidt hij coassistenten en onderzoekt hij de mogelijkheden om zelf onderwijs te geven. Er bestaat zelfs de optie om naast zijn opleiding tot specialist arbeid & gezondheid ook te starten met de managementopleiding. 'Mooi dat dit alles mogelijk is binnen UWV en ook gefaciliteerd wordt.'

Wat ik zou willen meegeven aan (toekomstige) artsen? 'Kijk eens tijdens de studie of in je huidige werkveld hoe het ook anders kan. Bedenk nog eens waarom je voor geneeskunde hebt gekozen en kijk of je dat nog terugvindt in je werk en of het past in het leven dat je voor ogen hebt.'

Geneeskunde wordt vaak nog door artsen in het ziekenhuis neergezet als een roeping en niet als een vak. 'Je hebt zelf bepaald dat je arts wil worden en dat je 80 uur per week gaat werken. Dat is nou eenmaal hoe het is.' Dit kan volgens Jelmer dus anders. 'Het kan juist zo mooi zijn om daar eens een keer bij stil te staan en om te onderzoeken hoe het buiten het ziekenhuis is want het is ook gewoon een baan en niet je leven.'

Word arts arbeid en gezondheid.  
Meer dan een arts. Kijk op [werkenbijuwvvalsarts.nl](http://werkenbijuwvvalsarts.nl)