Increasingly, the windows of universities are opening. Society and external influences are entering. Universities are becoming more and more tied up with practices in the rest of society. They have to prove their supplemental value. This requires a strong and clear profiling concerning the themes of education, research and valorization, based on a set of core values that determine them. Tilburg University presents itself as a university with the motto *Understanding Society*. How can we lend color to that motto bearing in mind the challenges of the coming years?

The motto bears the dedication of our founding father, Martinus Cobbenhagen, to the social sciences in Tilburg as being beneficial to a good society. To that end, it is important to have knowledge of the developments in society and of theories to understand and interpret them. From that perspective, anno 2013, scientific research should comply with both rigor and relevance; it should be state of the art and relevant. The rigor-relevance curve has to be extended, to the level that theoretical and/or empirical analysis satisfies the highest scientific criteria, but should at the same time be policy relevant. Furthermore, education, research and valorization should always only be content driven and mediocrity to be avoided.

Our trademark is the excellent quality of education and research and, as an additional distinguishing feature, our service to society. This is our cultural capital which is still firmly-rooted in our university and which we should actualize, strengthen, and reinforce in the coming years. For example, Tilburg scientists should meet each other more often, inviting excellent guest researchers and experts in seminars involving academic discussions about real world problems. Additionally, during these seminars scientists should reflect on, and share the values they are governed by and want to serve. How do I give meaning to the Understanding Society in my work and how do I give a contribution to a valuable society?

Obviously, we should be realistic about the excellence of quality we are capable of delivering. Unfortunately, Dutch universities are not able to compete with the top ten or twenty of the United States. This is mainly caused by the decreasing financing of the Dutch government. In the next few years the money from the Dutch ministries that goes directly to scientific research decreases from 4.9 billion euros in 2012, to 4.8 this year and 4.3 in 2017.

For your comparison: this equals the sum of money our easterly neighbors invested in higher education as an extra last April only.

It would be beneficial to create a possibility to incorporate the effects of education and research on the productivity in the models of the Centraal Planbureau. After all, Harvard Economist Philippe Aghion empirically proved the importance of education and research for the growth of the total productivity of a country. In that way, the investments in education and research could generate growth in the political party platforms, and, as a result, the real investments by the government could increase.

Finally, as part of our trademark, what kind of university culture do we want to be Understanding Society in? Collegiality and shared pride would have to be part of it. We should be proud of the performances and successes of our colleagues and the organization as a whole. We could pattern ourselves on Harvard, where the portraits of famous Harvard professors like Joseph Schumpeter, Gottfried Haberler, John Kenneth Galbraith, Simon Kuznets, Wassily Leontief, and Dutch Nobel prize winner Hendrik S. Houthakker, hang in the staircase of the economics department. In Tilburg we could be inspired by Tjalling C. Koopmans, the second Dutch winner of the Nobel prize for economics. The Tilburg School of Economics and Management yearly awards the Tjalling C. Koopmans Medal to an international or Tilburg top researcher, who contributes to the School, to economic education, research and valorization in an excellent and outstanding way. This example is worth following. Which Tilburg scientist today can inspire you to make a difference to society by Understanding Society?