

DIES NATALIS 2020

Speech by *Professor Jantine Schuit*

November 19, 2020

Thank you, mister Chairman

Dear students, colleagues and guests

It is an honor for me to accept the role of **vice rector magnificus** and I am proud to fulfill that role for this beautiful university. I would like to thank the Board of Governors of Tilburg University for the trust they have placed in me.

The theme of this DIES is **academia in transition**. Our former Rector magnificus Prof Sijtsma has already spoken eloquently about the VSNU project called Room for Everyone's Talent.

In his speech, he states that *'We need a better balance between the different activities of education, research, societal impact, leadership, and team spirit.'*

I fully agree with him. In fact, our university has already laid down some important fundamentals for this ambition in our Schools. We acknowledge the importance of connected leadership and team spirit and we are now in the process of implementation and putting it into more concrete actions and policy.

When it comes to finding a balance between the individual and the collective I personally believe that apart from the importance of recognition and reward **of individual** staff members (e.g. for their contribution on their team, to their department or their consortium), it is also important to give recognition and reward for the **joint performance of a team**. So basically reward the joint product or achievement. A team performance to which each member has contributed individually based on their own specific expertise and competences.

To me, working in teams means to be open minded to other ideas and concepts. We must be prepared to listen to each other. Dare to be open and maybe even show vulnerability to the other, to put trust in our colleagues or our fellow students.

I truly believe that team science enhances the quality of the work. It can also lead to new ideas and theories within a certain discipline. But it also has a positive effect on the team members themselves. Working in teams of scientists or students makes it possible to divide the tasks in

such a way that they match the strengths of each individual as closely as possible. When people unlock their full potential they will experience less work pressure and will have more fun in doing their work or study. Working in teams will stimulate creativity and may inspire young and older individuals for new ideas.

But how are we going to make this work? And how do I see my role in this?

In March this year were we faced with ***another transition in the academia*** that has had far-reaching implications. Due to the COVID-19 crisis we were suddenly forced into a completely other way of working and teaching. But not only for the staff, also for students the COVID crisis lead to a complete shift in studying and relating with your fellow students.

These changes have affected us all. At first, we were overwhelmed and we had to put all hands on deck to try to keep up the quality standards of our research and teaching. And actually, we did a rather good job, despite the difficult circumstances at home and at work. Also, most of our students were able to deal rather well with the new situation.

Now we are in the second wave and we notice that we are starting to reach our limits to motivate ourselves. It has become more difficult to do our work with passion and purpose, or to find the energy and inspiration to study. Now more than ever we miss the connection with our colleagues and our fellow students.

We realize what is important in our personal life, in our work and in our study. We ask ourselves what is the real purpose and who do we want to be and what do we need to become the person we want to be. How do we stay connected to our friends, colleagues and society? How can we give a better meaning to our work?

In my new role as **vice rector magnificus** I want to commit myself to creating *more connection*.

With connection I mean creating more opportunities to connect with our fellow colleagues or students. Finding better solutions and opportunities to work or study together. If possible even in teams consisting of people with different disciplinary background or with different cultural background. Teams in which everyone can contribute with their own discipline to a solution of a complex social problem. Being connected provides the creativity we need to come up with new and innovative solutions and help society move forward.

But with *connection* I also mean connection between the Schools, connection between the Executive Board and the staff and students. Connection with other universities, building strong alliances with societal partners and with the people and organizations that can benefit from the knowledge and expertise we have.

In the coming weeks and months the Executive Board together with the extended leadership of our university, will develop a new strategic plan. Together, we will formulate our ambitions and

goals. In this process, we will reach out and *connect* to both staff and students. We ask you to participate in this dialogue. We will also *connect* with the outside world, as we are part of a greater system and need to find our purpose and added value for society and its people.

An example of an important connection of our university is our valued collaboration with the Elizabeth Tweesteden Ziekenhuis. In that context, it is my pleasure to introduce to you our keynote speaker of the Dies: Professor Bart Berden, chair of the Board of this hospital.

Professor Berden is a man that I have come to know as a man with a passion for excellent health care. A man committed to the improvement and innovation of hospital care. He has an eye for the professional but also for the patient. Since 2019, he is as endowed professor of the *Organisation of Hospital Care* at Radboud University. Prior to that, he was a professor at TIAS at our own university. Dr Berden is also chairman of the Regionaal Overleg Acute Zorg (ROAZ), the outbreak management team of the province of Brabant.

Professor Berden has played a crucial role in the initiation of the *We Care program*. Together, we have created a research program in which our institutes jointly conduct research into ***shared decision making and data science*** in hospital care. We are very grateful for his role in this.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Professor Bart Berden