Memorandum deliberation table "knowing, recognizing, and appreciating each other in the (hybrid) university community"

June 25, 2021

Marjolijn Antheunis, Elke van Cassel, Ramona van der Linden

This memorandum was prepared in collaboration with the members of the deliberation table (Kim Ardon, Anne van Bellen, Stefan Bogaerts, Tine Buyl, Ellen van Dodewaard, Martyna Janowicz, Judith Künneke, Saskia Lavrijssen, Alkeline van Lenning, Jaap Paauwe, Esther de Ponti, see also Appendix 2) and in coordination with the working groups on the aspect topics Internationalization, Budget Allocation Model, Campus Development, and Sustainability; some members of the Connected Leading and Recognition & Rewards Steering Groups, and the policy advisor on gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.

The assignment to the deliberation tables focused on the following questions. These questions are answered in Appendix 1, which can be read as a management summary:
- What ambition could the university show on the theme?
- What choices can the university make in moving the theme toward 2027?
- In what areas is it important to achieve a breakthrough and what steps do we need to take to do so?
- What ambitions and relevant external developments affect this?
- Can the four Cs (Connected, Curious, Caring, and Courageous) be of significance to the theme mentioned?

Internal, national, and international context
The COVID-19 pandemic has made us even more aware that our work is constantly changing because of the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world in which we operate. Working in (interdisciplinary) teams, in which we collectively take up important themes and each can contribute to the larger picture from his/her own expertise and strength, is important to continue fulfilling our mission as a university: to conduct research and provide education at a high level and to realize societal impact. It is important that we are aware of our own talents and those of our colleagues. This requires personal leadership: self-reflection and self-awareness, flexibility, taking responsibility, and the (intrinsic) motivation to keep developing ourselves.

Both nationally and in the European context, a movement is underway to recognize and reward the wide range of talents, to diversify career paths, and to focus on quality rather than quantity in assessments. Stimulating mobility, not only between disciplines but also intersectorally, within and outside academia, and lifelong learning are themes that are high on the national and European agendas. On all these themes, we work closely together nationally and internationally, within Recognition & Rewards and in the framework of ENGAGE.EU.

To work together effectively and to recognize each other's talents, connection and encounters are essential. Precisely because physical encounters declined significantly last year, we have come to realize even more how important and valuable a sense of community is. After the prolonged period of working from home and online education as a result of COVID-19, the contact and connection amongst staff and amongst students and between staff and students needs to be restored. We want to continue to meet and connect with each other now and in a future where we will be working in a more hybrid manner.

Regarding encounters and connection, we believe it is important that we can work together in a positive work and study environment. Diversity, inclusion, and a safe work and study environment (social safety) are, therefore, essential to our community. When team members feel free to express contradiction, also to leaders, it leads to more innovation and better decisions. National and international movements and developments, such as #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and the targets for women in top positions also require reflection, dialogue, and concrete steps within higher education.[i]

The themes that are central to this deliberation table—community building, diversity, inclusion and social safety, talent development, and leadership—are essential to achieve effective collaboration and, thus, to conduct even better research, provide even better education, and realize even more societal impact. In this memorandum, therefore, we first present our vision of collaboration and then, based on the themes, elaborate on the conditions for making this collaboration effective.

Vision on collaboration
At the level of the organization as a whole, collaboration is fundamental to achieving our strategic goals regarding education, research, leadership, team spirit, and societal impact. The increasing importance of multidisciplinarity and contributing to societal challenges call for greater collaboration: the complexity of the problems central to our research and education requires the involvement of different perspectives.

At the team level, collaboration is also necessary to achieve our goals. Different talents, strengths, expertise, and perspectives complement each other, making the sum more than the individual parts. This applies not only to education (*team teaching*), to research *(team science),* and to societal impact (collaboration in consortia) but certainly also to collaboration across the boundaries of organizational units. Therefore, it is important to attune the composition of our teams to the strategic objectives at the various levels within the organization, so that we have the right and complementary talents and expertise available to achieve our goals.

> A possible operationalization of this vision is collaboration in multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary consortia[ii] within and across the boundaries of organizational units. In these thematic consortia, academics, students, support staff, external parties, and citizens (*citizen science*) all play an important role. Collaboration in these consortia focuses on research, but also on education and societal impact, with the three domains reinforcing each other. Involving different parties ensures diversity in perspectives and thinking. This enriches our education and yields (societally) relevant research questions.

Autonomy is a great thing, especially in an academic context, but autonomy and solitude are not the same thing. For all Tilburg University employees—including academics who work individually on fundamental research—collaboration is important, nationally and internationally, within and outside the university, with colleagues and students. We are all part of the academic community and we strive to ensure that everyone feels and acts like that.

Collaboration is a requirement for maintaining and further strengthening our current performance level. This applies to the organization as a whole, to Schools and Divisions, to Departments/organizational units and teams, and to individuals, who are also given more room to contribute based on their own talents and strengths. In addition, working together in teams is also important for resilience and welfare, and it increases our job satisfaction and sense of well-being. [iii]

Conditions for collaboration to be effective
To bring the above vision on collaboration to fruition, we distinguish four conditions in this memorandum: community building; diversity, inclusion and social safety; talent development; and leadership.

Community building: meeting and connecting in a hybrid work context [iv]
To work well together, a sense of community and functioning as a community is important. Among other things, this has a positive impact on commitment[v], performance[vi], and well-being[vii] of employees and students. The feeling of community arises organically when you have a common goal or need, when there is a relationship of trust and a bond (social and work-related). This bonding can be strengthened by social identification with the university's values, by the pursuit of a common goal and because the university is a place you like to be (part of). Diversity is very important here: if the community is diverse, many people will feel at home and part of that community. In addition, encounters are important to maintain a sense of community. Encounters ensure social cohesion[viii], but also creativity[ix] and a broadening of our horizon. Hybrid working means that employees will probably be present on campus less often. Therefore, we will have to organize and stimulate encounters even more than before. Incidental encounters/conversations are also valuable. We want to create conditions in which this type of interaction can also take place.

Hybrid working is time- and place-independent working. This means that we no longer always go to campus to work; there will be more freedom of choice regarding the workplace (at home or elsewhere). This can have a positive impact on the environment and on the well-being of employees. Individual interests may differ from the interests of the team. We will have to make these different interests discussable so that individual freedom does not come at the expense of community spirit and meeting each other. Also, it should not lead to inequality. So we try to find an optimum in which we take the advantages into account (increase in autonomy, well-being, work-life balance, and better for the environment), but experience as few disadvantages as possible (inequality, decrease in encounters, decrease in collaboration, decrease in quality of research and education, and loss of connection with colleagues, students, and the university).

Tilburg University has a vision and framework regarding hybrid working, and within this framework, agreements are made at the level of the Departmental/organizational unit. The agreements of the Departments and units are focused on a conscious choice of what you do online and what you do on campus. So the focus is not on how often you are on campus, but on what you do on campus. We also want to use hybrid working to achieve new ways of working, with the goal of experiencing less work pressure. When implementing hybrid working, the goal of maintaining and strengthening our (sense of) community should be a starting point. In doing so, we take into account the needs of different groups of employees, such as first-time, young, and international employees. Hybrid working is, therefore, not an end in itself, but a means.

Proposals to organize, facilitate, or encourage encounters and connection:
- Design the campus focused on encounters. Common space for (casual) encounters with students and staff from different organizational units.
- Create a lively campus as a pull factor, where there is a pleasant working and studying environment for a diverse group of employees and students. The campus invites to spend time there and meet colleagues and (fellow) students, both indoors and outdoors.
- Organize work-related activities that encourage a sense of community and the opportunity for chance encounters, such as events in partnership with the business community.
- Organize social activities in the evenings and weekends to increase the sense of community and strive for connection.

- Pursue shared goals. For example, you can link this to values but then operationalize it to something tangible, such as striving to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Pay attention to each other; continuing or expanding on the "Golden Rules."
- Utilize and maintain digital communities, such as social media pages for students (including via student associations), LinkedIn pages for alumni.
- Adapt the provision of information (on website, via e-mail) to employees to the new situation where they may work from home more often.

Diversity, inclusion, social safety

Within Tilburg University, we strive to create a safe environment based on openness, trust, and transparency as made explicit in the [Connected Leading philosophy](). From that openness and transparency, we enter into a dialogue with each other, for which it is important that we listen to each other and are open to each other's opinions. The opinions of colleagues and students sharpen our own thoughts and encourage (self-)reflection so that, together, we can come to different— perhaps better—and refreshing insights and achieve our strategic objectives. We stimulate collaboration based on diversity by working on themes and/or in projects that bring people together from different backgrounds and roles. It is by meeting different people that you stimulate and create diversity of thought.

Gender equality has been an important theme within Tilburg University for a number of years. In the coming years, gender equality will remain an important theme. In doing so, we align with [Global Goal 5, gender equality](), which is part of the 17 worldwide Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, in recent years, we have invested in, for example, the creation of participation jobs for people who are work disabled and setting up projects for highly educated refugees. In the context of inclusive education, Tilburg University has signed the Declaration of intent of the UN Convention. [x]

Given the developments in society and from the intrinsic motivation of our university community, it is important to continue our current initiatives and, in the coming years, to consider diversity from a broader perspective, and intersectionality. This includes demographic characteristics such as nationality, ethnicity, orientation, social background, age, religion and beliefs, and employment characteristics. It should be noted that diversity, inclusion, and social safety are themes that require a long-term investment (extending beyond the strategic planning period). They are themes that require constant attention, reflection, and commitment and must also be safeguarded at a central and decentral level.

It is important that all our employees and students feel welcome, are shown their way around (both in terms of work and living environment), and feel part of the community. By giving meaning to our values Curious, Caring, Connected, and Courageous together, we create an important basis for an inclusive community. It provides us with a guide ("compass") in what we consider important and also allows us to enter into a dialogue with each other about this and also to call each other to account for behavior. It helps us to continually develop the inclusive conceptual framework and perspective for action together. The [Code of Conduct]() also contributes to a positive work and study climate as a basis for our standards and values for ethical behavior. The accompanying roadmap helps us to make issues discussable.

An inclusive organization makes the best possible use of the diverse talents and abilities of its employees. In an inclusive work environment, all (future) employees come into their own, regardless of their age, stage of life, job tenure, gender, or origin. All employees are respected. Differences are valued and even sought to be utilized for work.

To realize this inclusive way of thinking and acting, it is important that we invest in awareness of our bias and increase our intercultural knowledge and skills. We do this by (continuing to) train employees so that we remain alert to our own biases, have insight into the pitfalls of meritocracy thinking, and also gain tools to enter into dialogue with each other and have the courageous conversation.

Proposals to promote diversity, inclusion, and social safety:
- Continuation of the agreements from the Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan, adopted by the Executive Board and the Deans (May 2021). Concrete actions and agreements have been made in the area of gender equality (see Appendix 4).
- In addition to the Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan, we make the following proposals to promote diversity, inclusion, and social safety:
  - Improve the intercultural competencies and communication of all our employees.
  - Institutionalize a mentoring program, with the side effect of broadening the view of both mentee and mentor.
  - Invest and secure (de-)centralized expertise on diversity and inclusion, drawing on internal expertise such as Babylon.
  - Commit to the recruitment, selection, retention, and promotion of diverse talent, including in decision-making positions.
  - Involve a diverse group of staff in reviewing and/or making choices regarding the current language policy. This policy does not always work well in everyday work. For example, English is not always spoken in front of non-Dutch speaking colleagues or (policy) documents are not always available bilingually.
  - Organize ongoing reflection and dialogue on current topics, such as social safety. Consider, for example, Mindlab, a theater performance, combined with reflection and dialogue.
  - Proactively support social interaction between international and national staff.
  - Pay attention to the needs of the families of international employees, so that these families feel welcome[xi]. It is important to implement and communicate this unambiguously within the various Schools and Departments.
  - Encourage and facilitate continuous dialogue at various levels to meet and utilize dissidents for our organization (both for the primary process and for business operations).
  - Evaluate and build on training focused on diversity and inclusion, such as bias awareness and Active Bystander Training.
  - Connect Diversity & Inclusion policies for staff and students.
  - Ensure that the inclusive organization is reflected in education (inclusive curriculum and didactics), research, policy, and HR processes, as well as in tangible things like food, holidays, and public gatherings.
  - Conduct regular short surveys among students and staff to measure whether we are achieving our goals for social safety and inclusion.

Talent Development
What we envision is an academic community in which all of our employees come into their own. This calls for attention to talent development among staff and supervisors supported by a holistic approach to HR processes: aligning strategy and talent; focusing on values and goals in recruitment and selection; focusing on talent identification and talent development; and endorsing the importance of retaining talent and promoting mobility, with special attention to mobility to and from other sectors.

As an organization, we are developmental and talent-oriented; we recognize differences and value the diversity of talent. In the new approach to recognition and rewards, we do not expect everyone

to excel on all fronts, but we focus on developing and strengthening specific talents. We provide room for everyone's talent. As colleagues, we each excel in our own field. The different talents are complementary and supplementary, so that we achieve our goals as a team and as individuals. How we can strengthen each other based on our talents is central: Use (y)our Talents.

We consider talent over the full span of a career. We are mindful of the different stages in a career. Some talents only unfold during the career. In the context of lifelong learning, it is important to support employees in recognizing and developing these (new) talents. Also from the perspective of sustainable employability, it is important to develop a policy for all our staff with regard to lifelong learning and give employees time for their development. By offering opportunities for development, expansion and deepening, we recognize the contribution that employees make. We stimulate the ability to learn and act from a [growth mindset](). Development also means being allowed to make mistakes.

In the period January through April 2021, dialogue sessions took place within the Schools about the ideas and intentions of the Recognition & Rewards program. These sessions confirmed that, as an academic community, we attach importance to talent development and more room for differentiation in the key domains of education, research, social impact, and leadership. The importance of horizontal expansion and deepening, in addition to vertical development, was also emphatically mentioned.

Proposals to promote talent development:
- Encourage a culture of continuous feedback, reflection, and open dialogue:
  - Encourage employees to give, ask, and receive feedback, as colleagues and as leaders (supported by the Performance & Talent Development system and associated training courses).
  - Coach supervisors to start this conversation, even if someone is not functioning well. We think together about an alternative future, within or outside the organization.
- Encourage and facilitate collaboration in (interdisciplinary) teams:
  - Collaborate across the boundaries of organizational units, taking each person's own role and talents into consideration.
  - Strive for diversity in teams and tap into diversity and complementarity.
  - Recognize and value team players.
- Develop policy on lifelong learning and stimulate (international) staff mobility, within and outside the academy.
- Anchor Recognition & Rewards and Connected Leading with our values, so that these programs can reinforce each other in realizing the desired (culture) change. We bring together the philosophies of Recognition & Rewards and Connected Leading under the heading Use (y)our Talents: a vision of talent development aimed at all our employees.
- Implement the Recognition & Rewards philosophy: including making career paths concrete in the various core domains.
- Examine whether the current management and organizational structure sufficiently stimulates and facilitates collaboration across unit boundaries, based on the idea of "structure follows strategy." If we start thinking more in terms of processes (or chains), this requires a different way of managing. Questions about ownership and responsibility for the process must be addressed.
- Examine whether the internal budget and task allocation models encourage and, in any case, do not hinder diversification of career paths and (interdisciplinary) collaboration across the boundaries of organizational units.

Leadership from the Connected Leading philosophy

Leadership plays an important role in realizing, stimulating and facilitating the various themes regarding 'Knowing, recognizing, and appreciating each other in a (hybrid) university community. In recent years, Tilburg University has invested in leadership development. From within the university community we collected information on what we consider important in leadership, and that has formed the basis for the Connected Leading philosophy.

Leaders play an important role in facilitating and encouraging collaboration within the team. In promoting our common values and creating a safe and inclusive environment based on openness, transparency, and trust, they fulfill an exemplary role and it is important that they call team members to account for undesirable behavior. Leaders align the composition of their teams with the strategic objectives of the organization. This means recruiting talent, coaching talent, and—together with the employee—investing in talent development and monitoring (based on continuous feedback and reflection) whether a next step, within or outside the organization, is in order.

In recent years, through training courses, workshops, and team development, a large proportion of our employees and supervisors have taken steps towards realizing our Connected Leading philosophy. This is confirmed by the evaluation of Connected Leading [xii]; see Appendix 3 for an overview of the main results of the online questionnaire.

Interviews revealed that leadership is and will continue to be as important as ever, including in the context of the implementation of Recognition & Rewards. There is therefore still a need for leadership development (also in the form of follow-up modules) and the further development of personal leadership for all employees. The Connected Leading philosophy, in combination with our values Courageous, Caring, Connected, and Curious, forms the foundation for anchoring other initiatives, such as talent development. Supporting working in (interdisciplinary) teams is also seen as important. Consider the importance of continuous feedback and dialogue on individual and team development; the importance of alternating between leading and following, where the content specialist or team member with the appropriate strengths is leading; and where following is based on proactivity and taking responsibility for the team goal.

Proposals to promote leadership development:

- Adhere to, continue, and expand what we have built with Connected Leading: Connected Leading 2.0, incorporating elements of Recognition & Rewards and also expanding Connected Leading in relation to teams and how teams can further develop and grow.
- Further integrate both Connected Leading and Recognition & Rewards with other initiatives, such as diversity, inclusion, and social safety for leadership development (leader as role model).
- Identify, develop, and deploy leadership talent within Tilburg University. This is important because leadership talent (in the sense of formal leadership) has a number of specific characteristics (e.g., the ability to manage change).
- Continue to invest in the development of coaching leadership and personal leadership. A coaching role as part of leadership is important for talent development. This requires certain skills, which are not yet common to all leaders. Personal leadership is also essential for effective talent development. This requires self-reflection and ownership.

Appendices

1. Answers to questions from assignment for deliberation tables
2. Composition of the deliberation table 'Knowing, recognizing, and appreciating each other in the (hybrid) university community'.
3. Evaluation Connected Leading

4. Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan

Notes

[i] See for example the LNVH research on misconduct ('Harassment in Dutch academia', LNVH, 2019), gender criteria for awarding grants (Horizon EU funds, as of 2022) and the 'National Action Plan for More Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education and Research' from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. In 2021, the KNAW will publish the study 'Breeding Ground Prevention of Undesirable Behavior in Academia'.

[ii] We have included this as a suggestion because this model was discussed quite extensively by the deliberative table. We are not making a concrete recommendation because this is in the realm of the deliberative tables "Substantive Priorities in Overarching Research Themes " and "Positioning and Connecting with University Activities in Ecosystems."

[iii] Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Paine, J. B., & Bachrach, D. G. (2000). Organizational citizenship behaviors: A critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 513-563. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0149 -2063(00)00047-7.

[iv] In this memo, we focus on hybrid working. This does not alter the fact that education will also become a little more hybrid. This is reflected in the memorandum of the deliberation table "Innovative Educational Developments".

[v] Talò, C., Mannarini, T., & Rochira, A. (2014). Sense of community and community participation: A meta-analytic review. *Social Indicators Research*, *117*(1), 1-28.

[vi] Bartko, W. T., & Eccles, J. S. (2003). Adolescent participation in structured and unstructured activities: A person-oriented analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *32*(4), 233-241. ISO 690

[vii] Boyd, N., Nowell, B., Yang, Z., & Hano, M. C. (2018). Sense of community, sense of community responsibility, and public service motivation as predictors of employee well-being and engagement in public service organizations. *The American Review of Public Administration*, *48*(5), 428-443.

[viii] Peters, K., Elands, B., & Buijs, A. (2010). Social interactions in urban parks: Stimulating social cohesion? *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening, 9(*2)*, 93-100.

[ix] Perry-Smith, J. E. (2006). Social yet creative: The role of social relationships in facilitating individual creativity. *Academy of Management Journal*, *49*(1), 85-101. ISO 690

Perry-Smith, J. E., & Shalley, C. E. (2003). The social side of creativity: A static and dynamic social network perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, *28*(1), 89-106.

[x] By signing the declaration of intent, Tilburg University intends to work toward the following goals:
- Strive for inclusiveness in the organization of education, paying special attention to flexibility in the curriculum, the promotion of expertise of all staff, the provision of information, and internationalization.
- Employees are sufficiently equipped, including in the areas of didactics and attitude, to contribute to an inclusive educational climate.

[xi] For this purpose, we use the experience of internationally operating companies in the Brainport area.

[xii] For the evaluation of Connected Leading (conducted in May-June 2021), 490 employees (participants in one of the Connected Leading activities (workshops, training courses, team sessions) received a short online questionnaire; of these, the response rate was: 30%. In addition, 10 (out of 54) employees who were also interviewed in 2017 were re-interviewed as part of the evaluation.