

# SPEAK UP 2027

## Summary pitches

Within the Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences (TSHD), the development of a new strategy for the period 2022-2027 is well underway. The past few months have been about divergence: gathering input, both internally and externally. Important steps were a meeting with the Societal Advisory Board and the **SPEAK UP 2027** event, which TSHD organized on March 1, 2021.

Staff and students were invited to give a brief, 5-minute pitch on themes they consider important for the coming period. A total of 17 teams (consisting of at least 3, but in some cases 8 or 10 participants) presented their views. The participants (87 in total) were asked to indicate which of the pitches for them had the greatest sense of urgency.

The School Board was very pleased with the engagement, enthusiasm, and energy generated by the **SPEAK UP 2027** event and was happy to see a number of common themes. The Board is now working – in close consultation with the Heads of Departments – on a first draft of the strategy. The aim is to deliver the strategy before the summer. An additional meeting with School Council on the strategy is scheduled for July 13.

### Themes:

- Innovation of education / curriculum
- Inclusivity
- Sustainability (sustainable growth)
- Societal impact (connecting to the outside world)

#### Pitch 1 **Modular Skills Courses**

**Urgency: 5,7%**

A modular approach to skills courses: consolidate core skills; diversify (methods seminars building on research, open to students and colleagues); integrate, develop a roadmap. Interdepartmental and interdisciplinary approach.

#### Pitch 2 **Future-proof curriculum**

**Urgency: 5,7%**

Integrate TSHD Educational Innovation Network, TEP 2.0, and Comenius into the strategy.

Four themes:

- 1 Innovative Educational Culture.
- 2 Critical Academic Skills.
- 3 Sustainability and Diversity.
- 4 Focus on Employability.

### Pitch 3 **Tilburg Center of the Learning Sciences**

**Urgency: 9,4%**

Integrate the TiCeLS initiative into the strategy: make Tilburg University's expertise on education visible to the outside world; stimulate research on education; strengthen the Teacher Training Programs.

### Pitch 4 **Lifelong learning / External cooperation**

**Urgency: 15,1%**

*Impacting Society* instead of *Understanding Society*. Increase connections outside of the university campus:

- Life-long learning (professional learning).
- Inform support groups, non-profit organizations, public sector, etc. about the issues we are knowledgeable about.
- Involve external partners in our teaching.

What is needed: a vision / plan; time allocated; money for plans, marketing and developing content.

**Many positive responses in the chat regarding the motto *Impacting Society*.**

### Pitch 5 **Sustainable Science**

**Urgency: 43,4%**

Academic values have to become our point of departure again.

- From business jargon to academic values:
  - Get rid of the words 'entrepreneur', 'entrepreneurship', and 'entreprising thinkers' in each and every document, including the strategic plan.
  - Stop using words such as 'business case', 'growth', 'rankings', and 'leading' in these documents as well.
  - Stop copying slavishly the logic and methods of corporations (and this may include the habit of having strategic plans).
- From growth to sustainability:
  - Get rid of the words 'entrepreneur', 'entrepreneurship', and 'entreprising thinkers' in each and every document, including the strategic plan.
  - Stop using words such as 'business case', 'growth', 'rankings', and 'leading' in these documents as well.
  - Stop copying slavishly the logic and methods of corporations (and this may include the habit of having strategic plans).
- Academics in the lead; from controlling to supporting:
  - Get rid of the words 'entrepreneur', 'entrepreneurship', and 'entreprising thinkers' in each and every document, including the strategic plan.
  - Stop using words such as 'business case', 'growth', 'rankings', and 'leading' in these documents as well.
  - Stop copying slavishly the logic and methods of corporations (and this may include the habit of having strategic plans).

**Many positive responses in the chat: slow science.**

**Pitch 6 Ethical, research-oriented, and progressive educational environment**  
**Sustainable growth**

**Urgency: 18,9%**

**Ethical, research-oriented, and progressive educational environment**

- 1 Strategy/mechanisms for involving students in research: expansion of TSHD Traineeship program.
- 2 Implementation of a University-wide strategy for ethical approval, consent, and diversity, which centers responsibility with both researchers and students.
- 3 Develop a framework for ethical behavior as an early program requirement for students that:
  - a Raises awareness of ethical conduct in the classroom, in science, and in the workplace.
  - b Prevents harassment of staff and fellow students in class and online.
- 4 Foster a culture of social inclusiveness, equality, and cohesion.
- 5 Develop strategy to maintain innovative education practices, methodologies, and technology on regular basis.

**Sustainable growth**

- 1 Develop strategy for scaling including growth milestones and thresholds.
- 2 Systematically involve students in educational activities through paid TA-ships (students hired to organize/lead practical sessions, do certain kinds of grading, et cetera).
- 3 Greater opportunity for involvement in thesis supervision and/or teaching responsibilities for PhD candidates as part of their training (TSHD supplemented for externally funded positions).
- 4 Expand the hybrid and online education horizons:
  - a Bachelor and master classes.
  - b Certificate programs.
- 5 Attract and maintain talented staff with research-support packages:
  - a Add a PhD line.
  - b Add starting research fund.

**Pitch 7 Towards a new optimum – back to (core) business**

**Urgency: 47,2%**

- Growth and increasing work pressure: aim for the optimum, not maximization. Effect of national systemic problems on TSHD:
  - Gap and distance between central and decentral support staff.
  - Audit culture and increasing bureaucracy.
  - Perceived gap between activities of support staff and activities of academic staff.
  - Declining support for work of your support staff.
- Don't reach for the stars if you do not have a rocket:
  - [Aim] Determine a realistic optimum facilitating TSHD's core business: high quality research and education.
  - [Target] Make choices. People, time and money have limits. Formulate policy that can reasonably expect support of us all.
  - [Gear] Create proper circumstances to make the strategy feasible (sufficient capacity).
  - [Fuel] Foster an integral team-spirit across the school for optimal synergy.
- Build a plane instead of a rocket:
  - Invest in people.
  - Strive for optimal support capacity.
  - Create multidisciplinary, non-hierarchical strategy teams.
  - Less bureaucracy!

**Many positive responses in the chat: importance of trust.**

### Pitch 8 **Study Association Flow**

**Urgency: 3,8%**

- Study support: mentorship improvement + better academic English (course).
- Improved practice-oriented education: cases and practical skills (both improve employability).
- Better format for minors (also 'exchange' in the Netherlands, or even within TiU).
- Non-technical track in CIS. Too little freedom of choice in CIS currently.

**Suggestion in the chat: these skills could be developed and taught in cooperation with Flow itself.**

### Pitch 9 **Decolonizing TSHD**

**Urgency: 15,1%**

TSHD should support ACT: A.nti-racist C.ampus T.ilburg: disappointing response Executive Board to open letter signed by 120 (mainly TSHD) students and employees.

- Educating ourselves about institutional racism, whiteness, privilege, epistemic (in)justice and how it applies to our own practices (organizing reading groups, seminars, (guest) lectures).
- Creating a safe(r) work- and learning environment for non-white students, researchers, teachers, and staff (educating ourselves and hiring non-white researchers and teachers).
- Changing the curriculum by adding non-white knowledge (workgroup / task force to help teachers do this).
- Creating research positions around critical race studies, critical diversity studies, post-colonial theory.
- Making decolonization and anti-racism an active and explicit part of TSHD's strategic plan and 'profile', backed up by funding, resources and action.

**Many positive responses in the chat.**

### Pitch 10 **Tension between rising student numbers and small-scale education**

**Urgency: 26,4%**

In order to solve the tension between rising student numbers and small-scale education: invest in teaching. Focus on cooperative learning communities (digital; small groups; more feedback; from 'knowledge delivery' to 'knowledge interaction & discussion'). Invest in teaching assessment: digital methods (for assessment) have various drawbacks.

### Pitch 11 **Prioritizing within the faculty**

**Urgency: 18,9%**

A university is not a company; it is primarily a knowledge institution. Our motto should be: strong education and strong research. We need more academic staff and smaller groups in education. Fewer intermediary committees to distribute government money, more 'hands on the board' and not in the form of temporary contracts. More money for research so that researchers can continue to develop in terms of content and methodology. Less administrative burden: we need a culture of mutual trust. It is time to invest in healthy and motivated academic staff who are given time and space to continue to develop.

**Pitch 12 How can we increase teacher-student ratios without increasing work pressure and losing the connection to research?**

**Urgency: 15,1%**

This team wants to put the following dilemma on the agenda: How can we increase teacher-student ratios without increasing work pressure and losing the connection to research? Demand from society to educate more students. Quality agreements need to be spend on teaching; government does not give extra money for research. TSHD is growing; we do not have enough reserves to fully fund this growth. Should we hire more lecturers (without research appointment)?

**Pitch 13 A more inclusive educational environment for international students**

**Urgency: 18,9%**

Obstacles:

- Examples that contain Dutch text and/or audio without translation
- Examples that require knowledge of Dutch culture, media, politicians, et cetera.
- Notes that support the PowerPoint slides are written in Dutch.
- When a question is asked in Dutch, the teacher answers in Dutch (information could be helpful for all).
- Dutch students often prefer workgroups with only Dutch students.

Possible solutions:

- Clear guidelines for language use during lectures.
- Encourage teachers to follow the Intercultural Competence training.
- The teacher could communicate that each workgroup should contain at least X international(s).
- Brief introductory course for first year students on studying in an international environment.

**Relevant points in the context of internationalization strategy.**

**Pitch 14 Inclusivity and accessibility of research and education for people with sensory disabilities**

**Urgency: 13,2%**

Plea for better accessibility of our research and education. Wish list:

- Enabling automatic subtitling in Zoom and Microsoft Teams.
- Optimizing the accessibility for deaf and blind people of [www.uvt.nl](http://www.uvt.nl).
- Support staff with native signing skills and/or sensory disabilities themselves.
- Data collection with participant groups.
- Public outreach activities (e.g. research dissemination at festivals).
- An interpreting budget for activities not covered by UWV/Menzis.
  - To make public events accessible to key stakeholders (e.g. opening academic year).
  - To collaborate with societal partners.
  - To develop new projects with sign language users.
- Courses in Sign Language of the Netherlands for *all* staff.

Benefits for TSHD:

- To improve inclusivity and diversity within our faculty.
- To consolidate and support research on people with sensory disabilities.
- To showcase various social ventures to stakeholder groups *and* relevant funding agencies.
- To allow our staff to learn a new language and culture that helps overcome the communication boundaries that deaf people face everyday.

**A lot of support in the chat for offering a sign language course.**

**Pitch 15 English as the lingua franca of TSHD / Closing the gap between staff and students (Active TSHD)**

**Urgency: 3,8%**

TSHD can make better use of the skills of active students / student organizations. Explore co-operation and exchange between staff and student organizations. When I visit the faculty in 2027, I hope not to see what students do *besides* their studies, but that that *is seen as part* of their studies.

**Pitch 16 (Super-)Diversity**

**Urgency: 22,6%**

Plea for a more international, inclusive, and diverse environment. Challenges: international (yet with a Dutch flair), inclusive, gender, societally relevant and engaged. Currently: homogeneous campus; euro-centric perspective on diversity; binary perspective on gender diversity.

**Relevant points in the context of TIDE and Tilburg University diversity policy.**

**Pitch 17 The future of online culture**

**Urgency: 3,8%**

It is about humanities *in* digital sciences. The challenge of listening, also to China; involve them and share with them. More civic engagement. Involve our students more.