

TU/e New Year's speech 2017

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TU/e New Year's speech 2017

Jan Mengelers

January 9, 2017

1. Opening

Ladies and Gentlemen, colleagues.

Welcome to the New Year's Reception 2017.

Let me start by wishing everyone, personally and on behalf of Frank Baaijens and Jo van Ham, a very happy and prosperous 2017.

2. Review: the year 2016

Today I want to pretty much omit a detailed summary of our exploits in 2016.

I have already summed up the highlights of 2016 on plenty of occasions.

Both in the letter accompanying the Christmas Box and in the winter greetings posted on the intranet in the policy update.

It felt like a good year.

In many respects it was a perfect match between the many issues that are going on at the university. // klopt niet?? // alternative: In many respects it seemed like everything fell into place for a host of issues going on at the university.

In short, a felt a bit like this video clip of construction workers who used a row of bricks to get everything to fall nicely into place. And that's all I want to say about that.

[Filmpje] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BTWiZ7CYoI>

Something I do want to say more about is this:

First of all, I ask that we take a moment to remember all those people in our immediate circle who have been taken from us in the past year. In 2016 many of our great heroes from the past passed away. But it is the loss of our more modest heroes from our personal lives that touches us more deeply.

Let us never forget to cherish their memory.

And secondly, I most specially want to emphasize that we, Frank, Jo and I wish to warmly thank everyone who has worked hard for our university and for all the wonderful things that have been achieved in 2016. Thank you so much for all your great efforts.

At the end of the day, what we do here is all people work, human endeavor.

So a big thank you to you all!

As I said, it is all people work.

But alongside your work you also have a private life.

These days these two elements really do overflow into each other and that means we just don't get enough genuine relaxation.

From all the work pressure studies and discussions on this topic that have been conducted in the past year, what sticks in my mind is that for very many people, once they have finished work, the work pressure leaves them feeling so drained they have no energy left to do anything else.

Partners, hobbies, children and personal development all pay the price//suffer//are all neglected.

That is not good.

With this being a university of technology, we know better than anyone that a battery can run out of power. If you don't regularly recharge it, eventually that battery will be completely flat. Have no more to give. In the coming period, we need to pay close attention to that. All of us: as individuals, colleagues, managers. Together. So I hope that in this past Christmas period everyone has been able to recharge their batteries enough to keep on going.

3. Looking heading: the future

In my own life, 2016 was the first year in the life of our first grandchild, a little girl named Sarah.

A very special experience.

When you have a young grand-daughter it's a chance to see with fresh eyes everything that is pure in life.

First of all, you see life's primary needs, like having a roof over your head and food, and then you see the need for security and safety.

These are exactly the needs that adults experience as being the most important when they find themselves in critical situations, like natural disasters, conflicts and the like.

The pictures we see daily of the world's many refugees bear witness to that//are evidence of that.

Further down the line, wonderment, curiosity, learning and doing become equally important in the development of that little person as she grows up.

That's why I think that children shouldn't have to look at the world with a 1000-yards-stare.

Children should look at the world like **this**.

At the university our primary task is to education young generations and to transfer knowledge to them.

Besides this, we must make sure we expand the knowledge we have by conducting research, and we must contribute to our rapidly changing society.

We do this by simply teaching these generations things, but we also do it by educating them, based on research that is falsifiable, based on facts, on careful consideration and on nuanced reasoning (as opposed to black & white simplification).

Don't leap in with opinions and meaningless babble in 140 characters. And avoid manipulating the mood as much as possible, that's the motto.

Although like anyone else I can't avoid modernity, I do think that our reasoning should rely on views based on facts, that we must adopt a critical but constructive attitude, come to understand issues through reflection and see the coherence of things.

This is the attitude that we must teach everyone at our university.

That is where our work lies!

Seen through the eyes of my grand-daughter Sarah, the world is still incomprehensible.

Her world consists of her parents, on and off her grandparents and family, their house, her daycare center.

But all too quickly her world will expand around her.

Because we are 'connected', wherever we are and with everyone.

Very different from when in earlier generations the next circle in your development included your school, your books, the library and the sports club.

The baggage that you need in your backpack to face that future with confidence is more extensive and more complex in nature than it used to be.

We are living in a time that is both fascinating and frightening.

Only the problems, or rather the challenges, are more complex, the solutions needed are more complex, must be more integrated and must be based on a combination of highly diverse knowledge domains.

Like others, Sarah will have to become competent at managing an overwhelming amount of knowledge, an overwhelming range of services and an almost inexhaustible range of possibilities.

Of course, she will be helped in that by artificial intelligence, but still

.....

Whether she goes on to higher education or not.

[Sheet} Photo robot giving girl a helping hand

The concentric circles in our world, like the individual, immediate family, extended family, street, city, country, are no longer congruent in terms of their values and standards, philosophies of life or beliefs, their culture, pleasures, or the features that define the group.

Everything is muddled up and the only certainty is constant change. This makes it all the more important that the individual is able to stand his or her ground in these turbulent waters.

To my mind, the answer lies, as it has done for many thousands of years, in schooling and education.

What should a university for today's young children, say in 2030, have to offer?

First and foremost: the best knowledge.

Of course, knowledge will be consumed in many forms: online, digital education, in groups.

Of course, we will also see the emergence of the virtual tutor.

But the teacher who teaches you both knowledge and life's wisdom will be no computer.

However complex the world becomes, however far artificial intelligence extends. Life's wisdom is not contained in a box!

And it is precisely this that we want to teach young people.

Our university in 2030 will have to be highly specialized.

As its primary strength, it must have developed its connectedness with industry and applications for society.

It must exude excellence in all it does.

As for the size of the university, it must be small, manageable.

It must be a place where you feel at home, safe within a caring community.

In a nutshell.

A specialized university on an well-arranged campus, well connected with its environment, on a human scale, and having a strong sense of community.

Actually, just like home!

4. Looking ahead: the year 2017

But what do we have in store for the coming year, in addition to the profiling related to these reflections on the distant future.

- 2016 was the year of Consolidating Educational Changes
- 2017 will be the year of Honing the Profile and Positioning
- 2018 will be the year of the Prelude to the New Strategy 2030.

For 2017 I can already divine the following priorities.

- Budget and finances look confidence-inspiring.
- We are trying to control the growth in student numbers by applying upper limits on student intake and asking for the right selection criteria. For the rest, we must develop new forms of education.
- To attract scientific talent we have set aside an extra budget centrally and set up a special task force for talent
- For the policy related to the development of WP interdepartmental committees.

- The primary reorganization of the auxiliary teaching staff will be completed this coming year, and after that the real change will be set in motion
- We are starting with fundraising development,
- There will be plenty of building activity at the Main Building and Matrix
- We will tighten our bonds with some universities
- Make a start building an ecosystem round the university, in which we will start initiatives with industry, enabling the applications arising from our research to reach maturity and fly better and more quickly
- etc., etc., etc.

We have more than enough on our To Do list.

News

And as two extra items of news I can now report

In a year from now, on January 1 2018 we will officially start TU/e Innovation Space.

Probably in the Matrix building.

Isabelle Reijnders will leads this initiative.

Innovation Space supports our ambition to keep education hands-on. Furthermore, we want to stimulate entrepreneurial thinking and the valorization of our research outcomes, and fits the choice for being a campus university

TU/e Innovation Space will become the place where students, student teams, student entrepreneurs, researchers, companies and alumni will work together, hands-on, in multidisciplinary teams.

So, think:

prototypes, applications and breakthroughs,
inspirational sessions, lectures and hackathons.

Picture yourself a lively meeting space, where prototypes and solutions are created in a hands-on setting.

2nd news item.

Today we are announcing a new, stronger cooperation with the University Medical Center Utrecht(UMCU) and Utrecht University. We will be intensifying our cooperation and investing ten million euros jointly in the coming three years.

Via a number of Virtual Research Institutes, we want to collaboratively generate knowledge on regenerative medicine and imaging, porous media and energy.

Our pioneer in this project is Laetitia Ouillet.

The reason we choose to broaden and deepen our interaction with our Utrecht colleagues is that our current societal challenges demand a powerful interdisciplinary approach. It's no secret that modern science relies on cross-boundary collaboration. It is the only way we can be competitive in this increasingly global competition in research and science. By combining forces and expertise Utrecht and Eindhoven will raise their expertise to a higher level.

5. Finally, to conclude

The feeling about the year 2016 was best summed up by the video clip of the bricks falling like dominos.

Grand-daughter Sarah provided the model for the view of the future and I would like to close with a short story about kindness and connectedness between young and old.

It takes place during a bus ride in the United States.

[sheet showing a bouquet of flowers]

'In one seat a wispy old man sat holding a bunch of fresh flowers.

Across the aisle was a young girl whose eyes came back, again and again, to the man's flowers.

The time came for the old man to get off the bus.

Impulsively he thrust the flowers into the girl's lap. "I can see you love the flowers," he explained. "And I think my wife would like for you to have them. I'll tell her, I gave them to you."

The girl accepted the flowers, then watched the old man get off the bus and walk through the gate of a small cemetery.

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Talking about love and kindness.

Let's make it another good year, all of us together, young and old.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues, on behalf of the Executive Board, I wish you all a healthy and successful 2017.

Let's go for a drink

Jan Mengelers

January 9 2017