

THE INDEPENDENTS

FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES TO COMMON GOALS

- We wish to serve as representatives of all of the employees of Tilburg University, both support staff and faculty, national and international, regardless of rank.
- Our list of candidates represents a broad base of employees from all of the schools and nearly all of the service departments. As such, we can represent, consult with and involve a wide range and a large number of colleagues in our program, discussions, and decision-making.
- We believe that all employees need to be given the opportunity to perform at their best in a stimulating professional climate where there is a healthy balance between performance, well-being and a sense of the human scale. We are, therefore, committed to fighting for
 - Improved personnel policies:
 - Which aim to achieve an equitable balance between the value placed and appreciation given to education, research, impact and support,
 - Which provide fair and proper employment conditions for our Ph.D. candidates and tenure-track faculty members as well as other employees on temporary contracts, in particular now as we face the Corona crisis.
 - Which guarantee a socially safe work environment
 - Which aim to reduce work pressure
 - High-quality, independent, and honest research
 - Clear policies for the future of our university and effective governance
 - Sustainability

- **HR: Striking a balance between institutional ambitions and individual needs**

- There needs to be a balance between the attention given to education and research. We, as a university, need to create career opportunities that combine a focus on education, research and impact
- Temporary faculty members with heavy teaching loads need to be provided with better career perspectives.
- Ph.D. candidates need to be provided with sufficient time to do quality research and, therefore, need to have limited teaching tasks. Non-employee Ph.D. candidates need to be provided with supervision that is comparable to that of those candidates who do have an employment contract. The university needs to provide Ph.D. candidates with a physically, mentally, and emotionally safe working environment.
- Support staff need to be provided with both favorable working conditions and the prospect of varied and challenging careers.
- Researchers should be judged not just on their individual research achievements, but on their contributions to team science (as proposed by both the VSNU and NWO).
- Similarly, the contribution made by individuals to team performance in education and impact should be given due consideration.
- *The Independents initiated a successful pilot project in which junior lecturers were provided with four-year contracts. We are now pressing for the provision of professional development tracks to all new junior lecturers being given contracts of at least four years. We have also*

helped to make it possible for junior lecturers to earn the University Teaching Qualification (BKO).

- *We will continue to fight for the direct appropriation of funds to teaching and teachers in all budgets relating to the “Quality Agreements”. We shall continue to closely follow developments relating to the Action Plan aimed at guaranteeing the quality of Ph.D. tracks.*
- **Reasonable workloads for reachable goals**
 - We firmly believe that the total workloads for employees need to be reduced. The administrative workload of teachers and researchers needs to remain within the boundaries of the doable. We have, and we will continue, to apply pressure to the executive body of our university to be clear in all of its proposals how goals are being related to available means in specific HR statements.
 - *We have, in the past two years, achieved that the budgets for the support divisions align with the budgets for the schools in order to guarantee that there is sufficient funding for the provision of support staff. There are now also periodic measurements taken of work pressure (agreement with the Lokaal Overleg) We will continue to evaluate all proposals being forward for consideration in the council on need, feasibility, practicality and the degree to which the measure will lead to extra work on the part of employees.*
- **A safe and healthy work environment with proper safeguards**
 - In recent years, there have been, regrettably, a number of serious lapses in academic integrity at a number of Dutch universities, including ours. These lapses have led to junior researchers being victimized by the improprieties of senior staffers due to the asymmetries of power that exist between junior and senior faculty. If staff members wish to voice their objections and make clear that they question certain practices, they deserve the protection of their administrators and supervisors, and they should not need to fear for their careers
 - *As members of the council, we have a duty to guard both the integrity and independence of academic research at this university. We will continue to provide input on the University’s Code of Conduct and whistleblowing procedures in order to foster an atmosphere of safety that ensures that employees are able to put forward their concerns without fear of recrimination.*
 - *We have arranged, by means of a council initiative, for the appointment of a psychologist specifically for Ph.D. candidates. We will continue to push for new initiatives on and better communication with employees regarding work pressure, safety in the workplace, and mental health. As the corona crisis unfolds, we will likewise push for the monitoring of the physical and mental well-being of employees as they work from home.*
- **The needs of both students and teachers should be central to education**

We are committed to quality education in which students have meaningful and effective contact with their teachers. We strongly support innovation projects in education, as long as these projects are a good fit with the didactic insights and competencies of the teachers involved and there is enough support provided for these teachers to improve their teaching skills and knowledge. We are closely monitoring the implementation of the Tilburg Educational Profile, in particular with respect to (the measurement of) student success rates.

We have made sure, in addition to placing students in a central position in the education process, that we as a university have not lost sight of the significance and the role of teachers in this process and that they are given proper consideration in decision-making: striving for student centricity should not make us blind to teacher realities.

- **Striking the balance between integrity and independence of research on the one hand and external funding on the other**

In a world where we increasingly see external funding of university research, the Independents support diligent policies with respect to safeguarding the integrity and independence of our research. In this respect, it stands to reason that we also support policies to provide researchers with sufficient time to properly execute the projects they undertake.

- **In research: in addition to integrity, guaranteeing quality**

We strive to safeguard the quality of research, in particular that of Ph.D. candidates, as there have been irregularities there in the past. In the university community, the quality of the doctoral degree is assumed to be profoundly influenced by the input of the thesis advisor. We believe that these advisors need to be provided with equitable conditions for providing the best possible input they can.

In the council, we have successfully campaigned for the inclusion of a guarantee of comparable and fitting support to all Ph.D. candidates at our university in the advisory discussions on the dossier "Quality Guarantees for PhD. Programs." In particular, we resisted the inclusion of mandatory minimum numbers of candidates for Ph.D. supervisors.

- **Impact: in service to society**

We believe it is important for the university to make its knowledge and insight available to society by collaborating with (local) organizations and, for example, by offering programs in "life-long learning."

Fundamental and applied research should reinforce each other. They are complementary, but must also be properly co-existent: the one needs to provide the proper amount of room for the other. Our university's motto, "understanding society", expresses precisely these two aspects. We will continue to drive this point home to the university's Broad of Governors.

- **Contribute to a clear mission to inspire employees**

In order to be able to compete internationally, a clear university profile and a well-executed strategy are vital. This profile needs to be based on an inspiring mission and propagated by effective governance, allowing faculties to work together in unison. The Independents, with our broad representation of faculties and services, are ideally equipped to help shape this mission. *With an eye to guaranteeing the quality of education, we have successfully argued in favor of controlled growth with respect to the number of students. We played a constructive role in the selection of the new members of the Executive Board. We contributed useful criticism in the process of adopting the most recent Strategic Plan. We will continue to strive for a clear strategic vision and effective governance.*

- **Every employee counts: participation should be possible for all**

We remain vigilant in guaranteeing that staff and students, regardless of their nationality, gender, or age are provided with equal opportunities to participate in university life.

Our party has made it a point to push for improved levels of English proficiency among employees and to encourage employees from abroad to learn Dutch by providing them with compensation for the costs of courses. We have welcome non-speakers of Dutch in our party and require that all university documents be translated into English, policies we will continue in the coming two years.

- **A sustainable community in a sustainable environment**

An educational institution such as ours, which is over 20000 strong, serves as a role model for both its students as well as the local community. We will continue to stress that the university needs to act responsibly in utilizing both its natural and human capital.

In concert with the student parties, we were successful in pushing through policies that ensure that the university will, in the long term, be CO2- and energy neutral. It remains essential to maintain this progress, in particular with respect to business and commuter traffic. We further stand for a varied, healthy and vegetarian-inclusive selection at the campus restaurants.