

Sustainable Future: Wear a red cap to support investment in higher education and research

During the opening of the Academic Year 2019-20, the Board of the University and the Young Academy Groningen invite and encourage professors to show support for investments in academic research and education and to emphasize the value of academic breadth and collaboration.

Many of the big questions that face science and society today ask for a multi-disciplinary approach. Thinking about a fair and efficient energy transition will need to draw on a wide range of disciplines from physics to economics and moral philosophy, ageing populations pose socio-economic challenges and raise questions about what counts as a healthy life, and digitalization is a research topic shared by legal scholars, AI departments and sociologists alike. These are just three cases that illustrate the value of the wide array of disciplines represented in Dutch academia, and indeed of traditional, broad, universities such as the UG.

Yet it is precisely this breadth of disciplines that now begins to look vulnerable. Following the recommendations of the Van Rijn committee, the Dutch parliament has approved a reallocation of funding from *alpha*, *gamma*, and medical sciences to *beta*, and from broad universities to technical universities. Implementation of these plans will mean that, in spite of the current economic growth, a vast majority of Dutch universities will not see any increase in funding. Worse, the UG faces an expected budget cut of more than €3.788.000 in the year 2023 as a result of the plans, and similar figures can be cited for other universities.

Although the proposed reallocations are likely to benefit certain fields and institutions, we submit that, overall, they will do more harm than good. In particular:

1. While we appreciate that the natural science and technology fields structurally need additional funding to remain internationally competitive, a similar case can be made for most disciplines currently represented at Dutch academia. Hence a reallocation of funding will alleviate problems in one field by aggravating them in others.
2. In fields that will see a further tightening of their budgets, work pressure will go up even further if quality of teaching and research are to remain at their current high levels given scarcer means.
3. The proposed reallocation of money will undermine the breadth of disciplines needed to tackle some of the big questions that face science and society today.

The opening of the Academic year is an occasion to emphasize the value of the wealth of academic disciplines represented at the University of Groningen, and hence to voice concerns about the proposed reallocation of funding.



Call:

We invite and encourage all professors to wear a visible, yet respectful sign of support during the opening ceremony on Monday 2 September 2019, to:

1. express support of investments rather than cuts in academic research and education, and
2. to emphasize the value of academic breadth and collaboration.

The sign, **a red fabric square**, will be provided on Monday by the Young Academy Groningen. The fabric will cover the top of your cap, which will be clearly visible when seen from above (for ex. the Martini tower). This will look particularly impressive when worn by the whole 'cortege'. Members of the Young Academy will be present in the faculty rooms to help with attaching the fabric to the top of the caps. In case you haven't done so yet, please register via this [link](#).
