

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues

It is my privilege as the president of Maastricht University to welcome you all at the New Year's reception 2012 and to say a few heartfelt words to you on this occasion.

I promise you; as usual I will be short.

Before however I share my thoughts for the year 2012 to come I would like to remember those colleagues and staff members who we sadly lost in 2011.

Paul Comfurius, former staff member of the department of Biochemistry of the FHML,
12 March 2011

Peter Pop, Emeritus Professor of the department of Internal Medicine of FHML,
28 April 2011

Ton van Attekum, company doctor for Maastricht University, 6 May 2011

Carla Boetes, professor and staff member of department of Radiology of FHML,
14 May 2011

Sofia Tussis, student at University College Maastricht, 18 May 2011

Ellen Verschoor, staff member of the department of Neuropsychology and
Psychopharmacology of FPN, 27 August 2011

Yatish Mudaliar, Head - Finance and operations Maastricht Education and Research
Centre, Bangalore, 5 September 2011

Harold Sanders, Emeritus Professor and former dean of the faculty of Medicine,
1 November 2011

Gwen Schobben, student Health Sciences FHML on 27 December 2011

We respectfully remember the contribution of those who died in this past year.

Those of you who have been following the news and all the New Year's speeches of politicians, international, national or regional leaders, bankers and journalists, may have noticed a trend. They all focussed on 2012 as a difficult year and all were optimistic. Yes at the end of 2012, we will have a better monetary situation, a stronger Europe, of course the Euro will survive, and yes as president I am expected to state now that of course Maastricht University will be thriving...

We have good reason to be positive:

- Our budgets for 2012 are balanced. This certainly has not been an easy job. Thanks to the joint effort of all of you we have managed to create this balance. We as Executive board are aware that this has been a sometimes difficult and for some painful process and I am proud of the professional way this has been handled at all levels in the university, by each of you in a loyal and straight forward way. This process would have not been successful without the sincere and active contribution from you. Thank you for that.
- Our student numbers again have increased. Maastricht University now counts 10.213 bachelor and 4.956 master students. The diversity in the student population has increased with less dominance of single nationalities benefitting our much commended international classroom. In 2011 213 new doctorates have been awarded and we expect this number even more to grow in the coming year 2012. Not only young and talented students recognise the quality education Maastricht University offers. Of course we do well in the rankings, but more importantly – as we could read from the latest ROA report published just before Christmas -, our graduates perform well in the labour market and employers world wide recognize the special qualifications of our Maastricht University graduates: critical thinkers, problems solvers. Our graduates get things done.
- We are about the launch our new Strategic Programme “Inspired by Quality” for the period 2012 – 2015. This programme has been established on the achievements of our previous programme and thorough internal and external discussions on the future direction of the university. Key elements are on the strengthening of our profile in education and in research; the further integration of the UMC with the university; the development the Sciences at our university. In 2011 we have created an excellent position to further develop and strengthen our partnerships in the region with the province of Limburg, the cities of the south: Sittard-Geleen, Heerlen and Maastricht, and with business and industry. As a result of this we can expect our activities at the Chemelot campus and the Maastricht Health campus to successfully grow in 2012 and beyond. Our most recent partnership with RWTH in Aachen on new materials which will be established on the Chemelot Campus is a good example of the networked university we strive to be. The final draft of the Strategic Programme will be launched during the Dies Natalis symposium,

My last point of this new years address is our Maastricht University reputation. Ranking the news: which of our staff members did contribute most to Maastricht University in the news?

We have identified three categories

- Scientists in the press
- Expertise in demand
- Awards

In the category *scientists in the press* the top three are:

3. "Vasalis, a biography" by Prof. Maaïke Meijer of the Maastricht University centre for Gender and Diversity. Prof. Meijer wrote a beautiful book on the work and life of the poet Vasalis. Prof. Meijer attracted a lot of attention in the press with the marathon interview on radio 1 just before new year as one of the latest high lights.

2. "The Yo-yo gen identified" Dr. Ping Wang, scientist in Prof Edwin Mariman's research group at Maastricht University (NUTRIM School for Nutrition, Toxicology and Metabolism) got world wide coverage for the research on the relationship between weight loss and gain and a person's genetic structure.

1. "Grow your own meat in vitro" by Prof. Mark Post, Head of Vascular Physiology and director of CARIM. He received a 300 Keuro grant to grow his own hamburger and got world wide attention of the press.

In the category *expertise in demand* we are proud to mention

- Annemieke Klijn (unexplained deaths in St. Joseph in Heel)
- Mark Post (in vitro hamburger)
- Corine de Rooter (forensic psychology)
- Peter van Koppen (judicial errors)
- Leonie Cornips (bijz. hoogleraar taalcultuur in Limburg)

- Nico Baakman (on political appointments)
- Piet Eichholtz (real estate, credit crisis)

And in the category *awards and nominations* we would especially like to mention

- Prof. Johan Heemskerk winning the Willy van Heumen price (for best initiative to reduce animal testing in cardiovascular research)
- Profs. Harald Schmidt and Jan Staessen, who both won an ERC advanced grant
- And our chair of the university council Prof. Herman Kingma for winning the IgNobelprijs. The IgNobel Prizes honor achievements that first make people **laugh**, and then make them **think**. The prizes are intended to celebrate the unusual, honor the imaginative — and spur people's interest in science, medicine, and technology. Along with five French colleagues, Herman Kingma investigated why discus throwers become dizzy while hammer throwers do not. The answer is that hammer throwers watch their throw and are therefore less prone to spatial disorientation.

I would like to thank and congratulate all with their contribution to our reputation. The full list of “Ranking the News” is available on our website.

Last but not least, I would like share a personal tradition with you. As an executive I'll like to create a motto that is kind of a guiding principle for the organization where I am working, a tradition that I have taken over from one of my former colleagues, Dieter Lenzen, then president of the Free University Berlin. As some of you know my motto for last year was “wordt wie je bent – be who you are”, referring to the necessity to remember our roots as a university, just at a time when we need to define our strategy for the future. This has led to significant input in the shaping of our new strategic program, Inspired by Quality, which I will present in the following week.

My motto for 2012 will be “breaking down the walls”. With this I am not referring to a new destructive real estate design but to the need to overcome borders, the often virtual walls for example between faculties, between the Randwyck and the inner city campus, between the university and the private and public sectors, overcoming borders with Belgium and Germany and even the Netherlands “boven de rivieren”. This concept will not only be a part of our new strategic program but is also well in line with our recent activities such as the covenant with the province, our campus

activities together with the business, the integration plans with the Maastricht UMC+ and the success in the plans to establish joint structures with other universities in the Euregion. But there remains still much to be achieved – let's go for it together.

Now dear colleagues, with no further a due I would like to proceed and toast with you on a good, successful 2012 in good spirits and good health!

To your good health!

Martin Paul