



university of  
 groningen

campus fryslân

## Opening Academic Year 2025- 2026 3 September 2025

### Speech by Dean Prof. dr mr Tjalling Halbertsma

Distinguished guests, dear colleagues, dear students –especially our newly arrived students. A warm welcome!

I realize that the new academic year brings you a bonanza of ceremonies here in Leeuwarden and in Groningen - and it is therefore good to see that so many of you are also here today at Campus Fryslân.

For, only two days ago, on Monday, our Rector opened the academic year in Groningen themed this year “Local meets Global” - about making an impact beyond borders.

This “Local meets Global” is music to our ears. For, the inspiring motto of Campus Fryslân remains of course “Global Challenges, local solutions”.

So let me very briefly give you some examples of how we have put that lofty motto into practice in the previous year - and especially how we aspire to live up to that motto in the academic year ahead.

Only a week ago Campus Fryslân hosted an international conference on speech technology –a collaboration between the campus societal partners and industry - resulting in the first speech synthesizer in Bildts to provide this minority language from Fryslân with a digital voice.

In fact, one of our talented PhD researchers won the Ben Feringa Award for doing precisely the same for the Frisian language.

But what is important here is to realize that this research not only benefits Bildts or Frisian, but also the thousands of other minority languages around the world.

Indeed, providing meaningful local solutions to global challenges.

And this must also be music to the ears of Mr. Arjan Hut, our Poet of Fryslân, whose poetry here today will ensure that we, at this very international institution, don’t forget where we are and in which societal context we work. Even though I read your motto less “wifi more poetry!”.

In education our bachelor programme Global Responsibility and Leadership was again awarded the distinction “Best Bachelor programme of the Netherlands” - for the fourth time in a row - and in addition to one of its lecturers winning the university’s “Best Practice in Teaching and Learning Award 2025”.

And I am so pleased to say that we can now also launch a scholarship-programme, generously funded by our private sector partners - including FB Oranjewoud, Flynth and others - to bring more talent our programmes to increase our student numbers.

Importantly, research of Data Fryslân shows that stay rates of international students in our province are actually increasing. More and more students decide to stay and start careers here in Fryslân.

Indeed, in this case “Global meets local!”

But Monday’s opening of the academic year in Groningen was also about making impact beyond borders and if there is anything the previous year has shown us - a year of bitter politics, much polarization and so much violence - it is that we need to further increase our engagements and responses to global developments.

The faculty will thus expand its current portfolio with new teaching- and research lines to address such challenges.

And we will start in the domain of **broad security**, resilience – “weerbaarheid”, in dutch – and governance.

The domain of broad security that we already address in virtually all our programmes such as our bachelor in Data Science and Society, and in our master in Sustainable Futures - or in our research with our academic staff contributing - for instance- to the next Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of the United Nations or indeed our valuable REGE-NL programme on regenerative agriculture.

We would thus like to expand these initiatives with a new master programme on broad security, resilience and governance.

And we look forward to do this in close cooperation with our sister faculties in Groningen, The University of the North, Campus Drachten, and particularly our partner institutions in Leeuwarden – and I note colleagues of Peace and Conflict Studies and of the Thorbecke Academy are also present here today.

Importantly, we have also started a pilot with NHL Stenden and Van Hall Larenstein to facilitate admission from their valuable bachelor programmes to our masters.

We are therefore particularly pleased to also announce the appointment of professor Natascha van der Zwan – our new Aletta Jacobs Chair for Global and Local Governance with a focus on security – welcome! – who will spearhead our efforts to profile the faculty in the domain of governance and the development of a new master programme and research line.

It is of course in this context that also professor Beatrice de Graaf is here today, to deliver a keynote on resilience and security. And we are grateful for her willingness to also deliver a keynote tonight *in Dutch* at our Studium Generale.

And that brings us back to where we are, at Campus Fryslân in Leeuwarden, as part of that broad and established University of Groningen. A university aspiring to be a “fifth generation university” connecting the domains of Science and Technology, with Medical Sciences and Social Sciences and Humanities. A university firmly rooted in societal networks.

An approach that suits us so very well as an interdisciplinary faculty strongly embedded in the region.

And an approach that encourages us in this academic year to further strengthen our cooperation with our sister-faculties in Groningen while at the same time carefully preserving and strengthening the valuable campus we have built here over the last years.

For only with their participation and **presence** in Leeuwarden can we truly develop that agile and broad university in two locations.

– and can we accomplish the aspiration we have articulated at the previous openings of the academic year here at Campus Fryslân - last year, the year before and also today:

“to make this academic year the best year ever to date”.

Or indeed, for those who **also** cherish the Frysian language,

“IT HIE NET BETTER WEST KINT HA!”

Thank you!