

Dear students, dear colleagues, friends,

First, a very warm welcome to all, and particularly to those who recently moved to Leeuwarden or who have been away from our Campus during summer holidays! Also greetings to those who are watching us online.

Actually, I have been away for almost 6-months due to my maternity leave, and it is great to be back, to be reunited again with the rest of my community. And what a community indeed, growing steadily every year!

Three years ago we had our first opening. We had about 25 bachelor students who had been eager to jump on board with us. I remember the Z-building, which was, as the 3rd year students would recall, our first building that we used for teaching. It was more like a spacious flat with a big living room that we would call our Living Lab. We would do lots of things there. Group work, meetings, having lunch, and as teachers we would sometimes crash next to a couple of students who are studying, disturb them with no shame, and have a cozy chat with them. It was utterly different from what I am used to teaching at bigger departments, where contact between students and teachers is somewhat limited.

For instance, I now knew the students by name. I knew what kind of people they were. I knew for instance Jana has a brother who looks very much like her. I knew Amelia became an aunt recently. I knew Frida was a popular Instagrammer. I knew Kari preferred tea over coffee....Of course I also knew other interesting details like which of the students had a party the night before because they would come to your class still hangover and would tell you about it with great honesty. And they knew what kind of person I am because in this form of teaching, there was room for personal exchange. There was room for growing as a community who listens to each other and cares for each other.

And after two years, this is still the case, and perhaps even more so in our beautiful campus building De Beurs, which keeps fostering this community feeling even at times of Corona.

So what do I like about teaching here at the Campus? Obviously, the aspects of personal exchange and community feeling, but not only.

First, our students are “crème de la crème” who enjoy questioning, reflecting and discussing from day 1. Every year I am amazed to see that they can already combine theories and knowledge from different disciplines in short time, have a synthesis of knowledge, which is a precious skill, and usually gained much later in life. Notably, they do not readily accept knowledge, they challenge us and urge us to become better teachers.

Second, our students have a high awareness of what is going on in the world. I am not only talking about the usual suspects here like global warming or the refugee crisis. There have been many instances where I learnt from them, instead of they learning from me about, for example, the tragedies of minority communities in other parts of the world because they would be perceptive about these tragedies and choose writing their essays on these topics.

Third: I like teaching at the Campus because you can come up with a crazy idea and yet your managers would be kind enough to be supportive about it. For instance, what I truly want to try in the coming years is to have a course where there is no grading because I believe grading kills off intrinsic motivation to learn. So what happens if I remove the grading element? Would students still

read the book? Would they still participate in the lectures? We recently discussed this crazy idea in our Staff Retreat, and our Dean and Program Director were very encouraging. So perhaps later this year or next year, we can have the first try-out and pioneer this way of teaching. Because such an experiment can only be done in a supportive environment and with students who have an intrinsic motivation to learn rather than getting all As. And we have them both here: the support and students with such motivation.

So in a way, teaching here at the Campus is not just teaching. It is sharing stories, it is trusting each other, it is an intellectual exchange, a medium where your crazy wishes may come true, it is a nice painting where diversity, openness, support and care are the main colours we paint with.

I want to thank all our students for challenging us to become better teachers and for teaching us new things every day. And of course for choosing me as the teacher of the year! I am truly honoured.

And I want to thank to all my colleagues for making it such a pleasurable work place.

I wish to all our students and to my fellow colleagues an enjoyable, inspiring, and of course a Corona-free academic year.