

Speeches by Kristel Baele, President of the Executive Board

Transfer of Rectorship, 15 June 2018

Welcome and introduction

Dear Madam Minister, your excellences, dear members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Erasmus Trust Fund, colleagues and students, ladies and gentlemen. A special welcome to Huib, Lientje and their family, David and his wife Chantal, Thomas, and his wife Danielle.

Today is a festive day, but it is a day with two sides to it. Today we celebrate Professor Huibert Pols' office as Rector Magnificus, we commemorate what he has accomplished over the last 5 years *and* we bid him goodbye. Today we also welcome Professor Rutger Engels, who will, when we have reached the end of this ceremony, be our new Rector Magnificus. For both of them, as well as for all of us here today, it is a special day.

Dear Huib, today marks the end of an era. The era in which you have been the Rector Magnificus of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. A Rector Magnificus following a long line of predecessors, with big names such as Henk Lambers, after whom we named our Professor H.W. Lambers Prize, Alexander Rinnooy Kan and the namesake of our newest building on campus, Nico Jacob Polak. In this long line you are Rector Magnificus number 58.

In 1913, the *founding* Rector Magnificus at Erasmus University was Gijsbert Weijer Jan Bruins. He and his successors – until 1975 – could expect to be in office for just one year, with a few exceptions.

I wonder, did they consider the office of rector to be a particularly dangerous one in those early years? Or has it undergone such a transition that maybe a different effort was required? We can certainly state that the office of Rector Magnificus has become increasingly difficult over the year, in particular in the last decade. If we start our count in 1975, you are the 10th Rector Magnificus to hold the office for longer than a year, five years in your case. And if we look at the moment that your office started in 2013, it could not have been more special: it was on the day that the Erasmus University celebrated its centennial that you were presented with the chain of office.

The theme of this transfer of rectorship is Making the Most of Talent. I would like to take a moment to emphasize Huib's many talents that in my opinion, have made him an exceptionally good rector and an exceptionally fine colleague.

The university is a unique meeting place for talent. We see that around us every day. Huib is the embodiment of bringing talent together. In particular, young people with inspiring and new ideas could always count on him to connect them with people who could help bring their ideas to fruition. To them he was an inspiring and wise discussion partner and someone who acknowledged their talent and was able to help enhance it. The recognition of talent will be continued through the gift we will present Huib with in a few moments. His talent for connecting people, with vision and an eye for the bigger picture, and for seeing the next step in the process, is unprecedented. He would look, listen, reflect and enable everyone to do what they did best, while giving everybody the feeling that their talent was seen and valued.

Many young scientists, disappointed by a rejection of their proposal for funding, found that Huib could facilitate their dream research project. His attention for the development of female talent in education and science has been of the greatest importance.

Huib is a very wise man, with a talent for bringing opinions together that at first seem to contradict each other. All the while avoiding the trap of compromise.

He is also an outside-of-the-box thinker. His guidance and fresh point of view have been crucial to our new educational vision and have been an important part of the reason that the Erasmus University did so well in the Institutional Review earlier this year. Challenge Accepted, our joint ambition with the Trust Fund to raise 100 million Euros for research, has benefitted greatly from his confidence and unwavering support.

Thanks to Huib's talent for innovation and his incredible capacity to bring people together, he leaves us beautiful initiatives: the Community for Learning and Innovation, and the Erasmus Initiatives – our trio of multi-disciplinary programmes.

These accomplishments can rightfully be considered Huib's legacy to the Erasmus University.

On a personal note, I have had the honor and the privilege to be Huib's close colleague in the Executive Board. I know him as an amicable, collegial, funny, warm and caring person. Always kind, always interested and always a good joke at the ready.

Huib has another remarkable talent: he had the wisdom to marry Lientje, a wonderful woman. The apple of his eye, his rock, his support. We should certainly give her some credit for Huib's success. Behind the scenes Lientje kept a close eye on everyone, she welcomed new executives and arranged guided tours for them and their partners, and arranged birthday cards and little presents for Christmas. And she has always been a patient and listening ear for a Rector in difficult times. Lientje, thank you so much for all of that. I wish you and Huib, on behalf of all of us, happiness and health in this new phase in your life. And Thomas and David, I am happy to see you both present at this important moment in your father's life. You have been very important to his career and I understand that Thomas co-read all Huib's speeches to ensure that the zeal of youth was always included.

But as I said earlier, today marks the end of Huib's office as Rector Magnificus and the beginning of that of Rutger Engels. Later on in this programme we will listen to their own speeches. I have no doubt that you will enjoy them and I am sure both of them will leave us with some interesting subjects to ponder, as will the other speakers today. So without further ado, I now pronounce the transfer of rectorship ceremony opened.

I would like to invite Huib to stand up.

This ceremony begins with the launch of a scholarship fund that bears his name. *I therefore have great pleasure in inviting Huib to receive the first cheque towards the Huibert Pols Talent Fund.*

May it be of service to many a promising talent.

Closing remarks

Thank you Geert.

The Ad Fontes Medal is the highest possible award at our university. It is given only to those who have contributed to the university and the academic community in a major and most significant manner throughout their career.

Ad Fontes is a saying often used by our namesake Desiderius Erasmus, and means *back to the sources*. Erasmus meant that sound knowledge depends on the earliest and most fundamental sources.

Dear Huib, it is my great honour and privilege to present you with this highly esteemed award. Please accept the Ad Fontes Medal as a sign of our appreciation for everything you have done for the Erasmus University and for the academic world during your impressive career.

Congratulations.

I would like to leave you with a poem. It is called For Celebration. (*I have chosen to read this poem in the Dutch translation, where it is called, Voor een feestelijke gelegenheid*) and it is by the Irish poet, writer and philosopher John O'Donohue.

Voor een feestelijke gelegenheid

Dit is het moment om je hart te bevrijden,
alle plannen en zorgen een halt toe te roepen,
de vreugde in je binnenste de vrije loop te laten,
je bewust te worden van het wonder van je leven.

Open je ogen en zie de vrienden,
die jouw gezicht in hun hart als eigen herkennen,
iedereen die zo waakzaam, nabij en vriendelijk is,
je aan te moedigen alles uit het leven te halen.

Zie wat de jaren aan moois gebracht hebben,
dingen die je met inspanning nooit had kunnen verwerven,
de gezondheid waarmee je geniet van wie je wilt zijn,
en je gedachtewereld een afspiegeling van het mysterie.

For Celebration

Now is the time to free the heart,
Let all intentions and worries stop,
Free the joy inside the self,
Awaken to the wonder of your life.

Open your eyes and see the friends,
Whose hearts recognize your face as kin,
Those whose kindness watchful and near,
Encourages you to live everything here.

See the gifts the years have given,
Things your effort could never earn,
The health to enjoy who you want to be,
And the mind to mirror mystery.

Thank you.