

Toespraak Rector Magnificus Carel Stolker bij de opening van de HOP-Week 2016-2017

The Hague Orientation Week: "HOP into your Future"

Welcome to all of you, our new, first-year students for 2016-2017.

Now that I am standing here with all of you, I think back to 1973 when I started my Law studies in Leiden. I can't remember anything at all about a HOP week or a speech by the Rector Magnificus – and certainly not in The Hague.

No, back then you just started attending lectures. What a difference from today, if you look at this EL CID week and all the activities staff and students have organised to introduce new students to university life in The Hague! Leiden University offers 14 master's programmes and 3 bachelor's (LUC, International Studies & Public Administration) that in The Hague, and all of you here have chosen to study one of these programmes.

An introduction week is a great idea. It's been a tradition in Leiden for a long time and it's set to become a long tradition in The Hague too. The theme in The Hague is 'HOP into your future', and we have more than 700 new students taking part, and around 160 volunteers. Let me first of thank all those enthusiastic students who have worked so hard to make this week possible. I am very proud of you students who are joining us today, and I'm also very proud of all those who have made this week possible.

You are part of an international tradition

Even though a lot has changed since 42 years ago, there's also a lot that has stayed the same. Leiden University is much older than 42 years; it dates back as far as 1575. That's old, but universities – or rather higher education – have existed in Europe for much longer than that, since 1088 in fact. It started in Bologna, in Northern Italy, with what we now call academic universities and universities of applied sciences. They were mainly institutions that trained students for the professions: doctors, lawyers, ministers – and not forgetting training in languages and philosophy and what we now call 'the exact sciences'.

That long history of universities gives us a feeling of continuity and energy. The former President of Berkeley, Clark Kerr, once commented:

About eighty-five institutions in the Western world established by 1520 still exist in recognizable forms, with similar functions and with unbroken histories, including the

Catholic Church, the Parliaments of the Isle of Man, of Iceland, and of Great Britain, several Swiss cantons, and seventy universities. Kings that rule, feudal lords with vassals, and guilds with monopolies are all gone. These seventy universities, however, are still in the same locations with some of the same buildings, with professors and students doing much the same things, and with governance carried on in much the same ways.

There have been many intervening variations on the ancient themes, it is true, but the eternal themes of teaching, scholarship, and service, in one combination or another, continue.

Universities like ours hold on to their 'eternal themes of teaching, scholarship and service' that have provided continuity over centuries. Since 1575 in the case of Leiden.

The world needs you!

And what about you? The world of tomorrow needs universities and it also needs *you*. And it is such a complex world that we live in. Devastating wars in so many places; terrorism everywhere; refugees; pointless conflicts about religions; famine and drought; diseases such as Ebola and Zika; energy; climate change that is likely to mean vast areas of the world's landmass being submerged under water. We saw at the opening of the Olympic Games what that looks like.

When people talk about all those enormous challenges, they often say:

"We'll find a solution to climate change, or the energy crisis or the Zika virus, or world famine."

And when they say that: "We'll find a solution", they are actually talking about *you*. You are part of a new generation of world citizens who will have to help resolve these problems. The world is relying on you. We, with all our lecturers and researchers, will be investing in you over the coming years, but you are the ones who will have to do it. This is your chance to make a difference, your chance to give something back to the world.

A network of alumni around you

But you won't have to do it alone, and you will have support from more than the University. Once you have graduated, you can call yourself an alumnus or alumna of Leiden University and you will become part of our worldwide network of more than 100,000 Leiden alumni, a network that will be extremely valuable for you even while you are still a student. Leiden alumni work in the most diverse positions in society - in science, in government and in

industry – in careers that you might be interested in pursuing later. And they are only too happy to help you - with advice on your choice of subjects or minors, or with that bit of extra knowledge you may need to get a similar position. Leiden alumni are easy to contact: several faculties have an online mentor network with enthusiastic alumni that are only too happy to have you approach them. We also have career advisers who can put you in contact with alumni who have experience in the fields you're interested in.

Leiden in The Hague

And finally, you are students of Leiden University, but in The Hague. We have had students here in The Hague since the nineties. I want to congratulate you all on making such a good choice. It's a good choice for three reasons. In the first place there are our excellent degree programmes: University College, the amazing International Studies programme, Public Administration, and a whole range of master's programmes. Secondly, the Hague is a very international city, much more so than Leiden, in fact. There is a long list of national and international courts, NGOs and other institutions that have their headquarters in The Hague. Not only that, The Hague is the world's third UN city, after New York and Geneva. And finally you have made a good choice because when you graduate you will have a diploma bearing the Leiden University brand. That brand stands for the quality of the programme, the city of The Hague and the seal of the University – these are the things that show you have made a wise choice.

Be active!

All of you first-years have a good number of university years ahead of you. How lucky you are! But you can start today by feeling a new responsibility for your own life. It is in your student years that you have so much opportunity to discover new things and enjoy new experiences. In the coming years take the chance to learn some lessons that will be of benefit to you in your future life, not just by standing and observing, but by taking an active part in all that the University has to offer. And that means not just here in The Hague but in Leiden, too – just 10 minutes away. Make sure you join in as many of the activities as possible that the student and study associations and the many and varied University clubs organise for and with you!

Ideally, I'd like to speak to each one of you personally, look you in the eye and have a serious conversation with you about the amazing opportunities you have ahead of you. But that's not possible right now – nor is it necessary. Today is the start of a new stage in your life. I wish you all enormous success and hope that you have a fantastic time!

HOP into your Future!!

En weet dat ook wij ons best zullen doen!

Comment [HM1]: Als ik me goed herinner, had Caroline voorgesteld deze zin weg te laten. Het hangt er inderdaad een beetje los bij.