

CONNECTED WORLD

DREAM TEAM 2023-2024

Connected
World

VU 

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS
TOPIC DREAM TEAM**



CONNECTED WORLD is one of four profile themes at the heart of Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam. The profile theme wants to start a new Dream Team for the academic year 2023/2024. With this call we wish to invite colleagues to propose a Dream Team project they would be willing to mentor.

What is a Dream Team?

A Dream Team consists of an interdisciplinary group of (MSc, possibly PhD) students, who together with VU researchers take on a concrete social challenge, in which the learning experience of the team members is central. Dream teams are managed by the students themselves; they involve public and private partners in the project, acquire extra contributions and provide media communications in collaboration with the Communication and Marketing department of the VU. They usually consist of between 12 and 24 people, are formed for an academic year and will receive a starter budget of €10.000,-.

Dream teams are mentored by a *team around the team*, coordinated by at least one senior researcher/teacher. With the present call we invite you to become this mentor and to propose a Dream Team project and accompanying 'team around the team'. Throughout the academic year, the 'team around the team' is expected to meet with the students regularly, as well as to answer ad hoc questions. It should also be willing and able to open up relevant networks for the students to success.

Dream team challenge design

- The challenge should facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration; in May VU University will launch an open call for students from all studies, to join the Dream Team.
- There should be a clear focus on **what** the students should achieve, and **when** they should achieve it; the challenge should be specific and measurable
 - Analogous a the solar car dream team: the challenge is to win a race the solar car race. Note that societal challenges may be equally specific and objectifiable
- There should be **sufficient room and creativity for the students to explore how** they are going to achieve their goal
- Ideally, Dream Team topics should incorporate **a competitive element** that the students can either achieve or win:
 - E.g., are student teams from other universities working on the same challenge? Does a national / European / global competition of student teams exist?
 - If not, could such a competition be set up, for instance in the context of Dutch universities, universities part of the Aurora network, or otherwise?
 - Can students work towards a final, meaningful and substantial presentation of their work; e.g. an exhibition or performance of sorts for a wider public?
 - Could you use specific metrics that the subsequent teams can improve upon year after year?

Why a Dream Team?

Many students are attracted by the enterprising and socially engaged character of the VU. They have a strong drive to put innovative ideas into action and to contribute to society. They would like to gain experience in this broader context. To meet this need, various 'Dream teams' have been set up at the VU, namely multidisciplinary teams of students who carry out an innovative, socially relevant project with which they profile themselves and the VU. A well-known example of a Dream Team in which Human Movement Sciences students from VU Amsterdam and TU Delft students have been participating since 2010 is the Human Power Team, which focuses on improving the world speed record on a human-powered bicycle. In addition, Human Movement Sciences students from the VU participate in two other Dream Teams, namely WASUB (a project aimed at the development of a fast human-powered submarine) and Pulse (a project aimed at promoting the cycling performance of spinal cord injury patients with the aid of functional electrical stimulation (FES) (see website <https://cybathlon.ethz.ch/en/event/disciplines/fes>).

How are the teams supported and embedded within the universities?

The teams are supported in three ways:

1. Team around the team

With the present call we invite you not only to propose a Dream Team project, but also to indicate the contours of a 'team around the team'. A 'team around the team' consists of senior researchers guiding the Dream team in terms of content; what knowledge can they use, which relevant network contacts are available, how to make decisions and how to evaluate them? To achieve the challenge, insights from different disciplines should be integrated; ideally, expertise on a majority of these topics is present in the "team around the team"

The team around the team is asked to act as ambassador and mentor for the dream teams. Throughout the academic year, they are expected to meet with the students regularly, as well as answer ad hoc questions. The team around the team should be willing and able to open up relevant networks for the students to succeed.

2. Process support

The Demonstrator Lab provides a 'landing space' and coaching on how to make progress on a process level. DreamTeams are invited for *regular check-ins*, during which progress, concerns and challenges are discussed and whenever possible addressed. Together with M&C; at the beginning and end of the academic year a *start and closing event* is organized.

As part of the M&C activities tied to the VU's profile themes, communication and outreach of the team's activities are supported. Additionally, in collaboration with DURF, possibilities for strategic collaboration with, and sponsorship from societal partners are explored.

3. Training program

A training program consisting of 5 training sessions by a professional trainer is offered for the Dream Teams throughout the year. During these sessions, they will learn how to work together in a team, how to set goals, work in a project-based manner, how to divide roles, and how to address conflicts.

Deadline for application

Deadline for submission proposals:
April 23, 2023 before 23:59 hrs.

Communication of winning proposal:
second week of May, 2023

All required documents have to be sent in one pdf to connectedworld@vu.nl. Applications have to be written in English.

Funding amount

Financial resources are available for the academic year 2023-2024 to provide a Dream Team with starting capital for each profile theme. Additional resources may be raised by the team itself depending on the nature of the project. In addition to a budget, the VU is committed to making suitable physical spaces and other facilities available for the Dream teams.

How to propose?

A complete application must include a cover letter by the applicant (max. 1 page A4; including a 200-word abstract) highlighting the interdisciplinary collaboration in the project;

Selection criteria

The winning proposal is selected on basis of its inter- and multidisciplinary, social relevance and engagement, concreteness of the challenge, and the relation to the Connected World theme.



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