

Profile for President of the Executive Board



Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (in short VU Amsterdam) has a clear ambition: to contribute to a better world through outstanding education and ground-breaking research. VU Amsterdam strives to be a university where personal education and societal involvement play a leading role. A research university where people from different disciplines and backgrounds collaborate to achieve innovations and to generate new knowledge.

Our teaching and research embrace the whole spectrum of science – from the humanities, the social sciences, and the exact sciences through to the life sciences and the medical sciences – all structured into four profile themes: Human Health and Life Sciences, Connected World, Governance for Society, and Science for Sustainability. This is how we encourage multidisciplinary cooperation, which is exactly what is needed to tackle the societal issues of today, and those of tomorrow.

VU Amsterdam actively encourages working in accordance with the principles of open science and is devising new ways of recognition and reward in which scientists, lecturers, and employees, in all their different roles, jointly contribute towards knowledge that further benefits society. In pursuing its aim of open science and social impact, VU Amsterdam is firmly committed to the participation of everyone, worldwide. This applies to students and employees, as well as to the way in which we apply knowledge.

For the coming years, VU Amsterdam has chosen an ambitious strategy: [VU Amsterdam Strategy for 2020-2025](#).

The strategy centres on three priority areas - sustainability, enterprise, and diversity. Each of these priorities guides our actions and the nature of our core tasks of education, research, valorisation, and operational management.

The VU campus is easily accessible, located in the heart of Amsterdam's Zuidas, a truly inspiring environment for teaching, research, and valorisation. Over 5,600 employees work at the university, with more than 30,000 students being taught in nine faculties.

Organisation

The Executive Board is charged with the administration and management of the university, with regard to both the development and implementation of policy. The Executive Board consists of three members: a president, who is responsible for institutional strategy, national/international external relations and valorisation; a Rector Magnificus, who is responsible for teaching and research; and a third member, who is responsible for operations. As a collegial

Board, the Executive Board manages VU Amsterdam in close cooperation with the deans of the nine faculties and the directors of the nine staff departments. The members of the Executive Board are appointed by and accountable to the Supervisory Board of the VU Foundation. The areas of focus of the members of the Executive Board are evenly divided into portfolios. The Staff Council is responsible for employee participation at university level. The Staff Council holds meetings with the University Student Council (USR) about joint dossiers in the Joint Assembly.

The guiding principle for the development of the university is the VU Amsterdam Strategy for 2020 - 2025, with a mission statement that has been formulated jointly by the EB and the broader organisation:

We take responsibility for people and the planet by delivering university-level, value-driven education, research, and knowledge transfer. We educate and train students and professionals, imbuing them with know-how and a broader mind. We pursue pioneering research, both within and between academic disciplines. As free thinkers with a focus on diversity, meaning, and compassion, our students and staff have a deep connection with one another while being fully engaged with society as a whole. That is the mission of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Within the university, the Executive Board would like to see a climate in which people reflect on their own conduct and that of others, complement and enable each other

to realise their full potential, call each other to account and deal openly and constructively with contradictions, dilemmas, and conflicts. The Executive Board promotes this manner of cooperation and sets an example in this regard. The Executive Board actively strives to ensure a clear allocation of responsibilities, based on the notion that the skill of the professional is key and must be able to flourish. This emanates from the university's core values - responsibility, openness, and personal engagement.

Priority areas

The three priority areas formulated in the VU Amsterdam Strategy for 2020-2025 serve as the guiding principles for action within the university:

Sustainability: Proceeding from taking responsibility for humans and the planet, 'sustainable' is interpreted broadly within VU Amsterdam. Sustainability is about more than just the environment: it also extends to economic, human, cultural, and societal aspects. Sustainability is also a vital issue for VU Amsterdam as an organisation.

Enterprising: Proceeding from the need to create added value for society, to cooperate and to innovate, an enterprising attitude is important. This entails recognising, creating, and taking advantage of opportunities. Being creative and courageous. Taking personal responsibility. Daring to take risks and not being afraid to experiment.

VU Amsterdam leadership profile

Leadership at VU Amsterdam, and the related collaboration methods, is set out in four principles under the heading, 'the Art of Engagement'.

Contribute to the greater whole

This entails thinking beyond our own boundaries to consider what would be best for VU Amsterdam and committing to mutual agreements.

Display the courage to take firm decisions

This entails daring to make decisions and standing by them. Allow others space and confidence for application.

Be clear and transparent

This entails clear expression and calling other people to account, keeping an open mind with regard to interests, and making information widely available from a position of trust.

Listen and allow space for growth

This entails delaying judgement, listening carefully, giving and receiving feedback, and creating a safe and open climate.

The Executive Board also applies these principles to its own actions and calls other people within the organisation to account with regard to practising this Art of Engagement.

Diversity: Diversity is woven into the very identity of VU Amsterdam, and it contributes to the quality of its teaching, research, and collaborative partnerships. Everyone in the VU Amsterdam community should be capable of bridging differences in terms of ethnic, cultural or religious background, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, educational background and academic discipline.

The role and responsibilities of the president

The president is in charge of the strategic direction and the general management of the university, in conjunction with its faculties and staff departments. VU Amsterdam has drawn up an ambitious strategic plan for the years 2020 up to and including 2025, and asks the president to implement the strategy in close collaboration with the other members of the Executive Board. The president's ambitions are consistent with the university's values. The joint realisation of the objectives requires of the president that they are able to identify with the vision on which the strategy is based, and are able to use it to inspire both the academic community and the outside world.

The implementation of the current strategic plan, the embedding of this process in a sustainable and effective organisation, and giving direction to a new strategy are key features of the president's mandate. This means the president has the task of setting up the strategic development process for the next planning period. The president will be asked, in consultation with the academic community and the support services, to develop a new strategy that both takes forward the current course and allows space for new areas that require attention in a national and international context. One of the priorities will be the securing and expanding of many recent initiatives and innovations, such as in the field of entrepreneurship and external relations. VU Amsterdam has the aim of developing its organisation into a professional community with effective decision making and where collaboration is a matter of course. An ambitious and extensive programme of change designed to make the organisation future-proof has been set up in order to achieve this. The Executive Board will be asked to keep this process on course and to monitor it to ensure that the expected results lead to a firmly embedded relationship between the faculties and departments and to tangible improvements in the culture and working climate.

The president understands the importance of the university serving as a continuous source of inspiration to the outside world. Many people are involved in upholding and strengthening this reputation and profile. The president

will be expected to take joy in portraying the positive image and positioning of the university, while recognising the importance of the role played by the whole of the management and the academic community. Actively seeking out different ways of fulfilling the role of ambassador as broadly as possible is part and parcel of a modern and inclusive presidency and helps make VU Amsterdam more visible in the region, as well as nationally and internationally. The president has a good overview of social and political developments and is able to fulfil the ambassadorial role for VU due to their network and personality. The higher education landscape in the Netherlands and the external context of VU Amsterdam also require the president to have the ability to align the management agenda of the university to that of its environment in a convincing manner, and to understand the importance of doing so. The president must also be able to operate effectively in public and political settings, in The Hague and in Brussels.

Unifying and sound leadership are part of the ethos of VU Amsterdam, as described in the Art of Engagement. As an active member of the community, the president is a visible standard bearer and reliable anchor point for employees, students, alumni, and external partners, and has a role in promoting a healthy and supportive environment for students. The president demonstrates how modesty and pride go naturally hand in hand.

The style of the president is characterised by consistency and maturity, visibly driven by transparency, integrity, and collegiality. Using his or her management experience in a similar setting, the president will have a continuous focus on team building and the team spirit in the Executive Board and ensures that the various portfolio holders are able to work productively and positively with the deans and directors. By supporting talent, involvement, and drive, the president will make a difference and create a high-performance organisation that is a pleasure to be involved with and where diversity and inclusiveness serve as fundamental values.

Profile

The candidate meets the following profile:

- Extensive management experience in a complex environment and proven qualities for sustainably embedding innovations and initiatives.
- A genuine interest in the interests of students and employees and experience of and affinity with effectively shaping relationships with the staff and students participatory bodies. This includes visibility within the organisation.
- A strong academic profile and extensive experience of and affinity with the academic world and the academy community, and insight into the complexities of a university organisation in which professionals work.
- The new president will have an understanding of the primary processes in the organisation and will rapidly acquire a thorough knowledge of them. Patience and understanding in this context will result in coaching and facilitating action.
- A strategic and analytic mind with the ability to act and set a course based on a long-term vision, in order to achieve results. The new president will have the ability to help steer this process of sustainable change in a creative and unifying way, without losing sight of the need to maintain overall efficiency.
- Experience of and affinity with fundraising and relationship management.
- Strong communication skills and an open and transparent style. The new president will have experience as a team player of building a community and will, together with the Executive Board, display leadership as a unifying and inclusive standard bearer. Given the international character of the VU community, a sound command of both Dutch and English is required.
- Experience of complex stakeholder management. In their interaction with others, the new president will have a resilient personality capable of easily accepting criticism and of reflecting on their own conduct.

Terms and conditions of employment

The appointment will be for a period of four years, with the possibility of reappointment. The terms and conditions of employment will be in accordance with the Senior Executives in the Public and Semi-Public Sector (Standards for Remuneration) Act.

Selection procedure and applications

Executive search firm Perrett Laver has been asked to assist the Supervisory Board with the recruitment procedure for the President of the Executive Board of VU Amsterdam. Please indicate your interest in this position by uploading your letter of application, stating your motivation, and a current curriculum vitae to the Perrett Laver website, www.perrettlaver.com/candidates stating reference number **6386**. If you have any questions or require any information, please contact Feride Yetis at Feride.Yetis@perrettlaver.com or on **+31 (0)20 2409344**.

Responses must be received by **Monday 10 April 2023, at 09.00**.

Applications will be assessed by the selection committee in mid-April. At the end of April, Perrett Laver will hold the first in-depth interviews with candidates on the longlist, after which the selection committee will meet in mid-May to decide on the shortlist. The individuals on the shortlist will then be invited to formal interviews for the position; these are due to take place before the end of May.

A development assessment will form part of the procedure.

The selection of and negotiations with the most suitable candidate will take place in June 2023. Starting date by agreement. The Supervisory Board would like to introduce the new president to the academic community during the opening of the academic year.