Tuesday 31 August 2004 was one of the more significant days in the recent history of Middelburg. Tout Zeeland had convened in the Burgerzaal of the ancient City Hall. There, in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Beatrix, Roosevelt Academy was officially opened. Later that day, in the Nieuwe Kerk, the Rector Magnificus of Utrecht University delivered the opening address of the academy’s first academic year. That Rector was me and I spoke about The Art of Science as Roosevelt Academy is a liberal arts and science college sailing under the academic flag of Utrecht University.

I remember the first preparatory visit of a deputation of Zeeland celebrities to the Administration Hall of Utrecht University, a year or two before. Of the visitors, I recall the presence of the Commissioner of the Queen Van Gelder and former State Secretary Mrs. Ginjaar-Maas. We were sitting at the round table in the Curatorenkamer and I was truly amazed when finally I fully understood the aim of the Zeeland mission. Would Utrecht University be willing to cooperate in founding a university college in Middelburg? In the Utrecht boardroom such an extramural endeavour had never been discussed before. Yet, it took only a relatively short time before the Board agreed to do so.

Certainly, the foundation of this Academy is unmistakably the tangible result of the vision, courage and decisiveness of many, including the city, the province, the government, and a man whose name is also connected to University College Utrecht, Professor Hans Adriaansens, founding father and first Dean of Roosevelt Academy. Without his vision and determination I am sure Zeeland would not have had an honours university in Middelburg today.

Over the years I have followed the development of RA. Initially as Rector of Utrecht, but later as guest lecturer in the course taught by my spouse Dr. Christine Gispen-De Wied. And indeed, Zeeland’s dream came true. For, already during its relatively short period of existence Roosevelt Academy made its reputation in the Netherlands and abroad. How is that possible? Well it’s simple: the reputation of a given college is measured by the quality of its graduates. Young and determined students who graduated in Middelburg continue their academic endeavors at renowned universities in the Netherlands, Europe or North America. Don’t be surprised if you run into Roosevelt graduates at London School of Economics, Sorbonne Paris or UCLA in California.

As of 1 November 2011, I serve the Roosevelt Academy as Interim Dean. I find it a joy to work with such an inspired academic community in Middelburg. During a long train ride from Utrecht to Middelburg I reflected on the significance of teaching to the furthering of the careers of those who will constitute the next generation of academics. And I thought of what Newman once said:

‘It is the education which gives a woman or a man a clear conscious view of her or his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It prepares her or him to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility. She or he has the repose of a mind which lives in itself, while it lives in the world.’

Graduates of Roosevelt Academy make the difference, anywhere and anytime!

Willem Hendrik Gispen
Interim Dean Roosevelt Academy

Roosevelt Academy: Gateway to Success
A Mark of 7.5 for 2011

The Managing Director of RA, Jorrit Snijder, did not have to think too long about his answer to the question of what he considered to be the most memorable result during 2011: “For the first time in seven years, RA won the already legendary rowing competition known as King of the Channel from the Hogeschool Zeeland*. I thought that was a magnificent achievement!”

Nevertheless, a lot more has happened in 2011 such as the Occupy campaign at RA, a departing Dean and top-notch teamwork with Harvard. An eventful year in which not everything went smoothly, but for which Snijder gives a 7.5 as a mark when he reflects on 2011.

On 23 January 2011, the founding father of Roosevelt Academy, Hans Adriaansens, reached the age of 65. Even for this figurehead of RA, time takes its toll, although thankfully Adriaansens was not yet prepared to stop. And so he continued working until 1 October 2011. In the meantime, a new Dean had to be found. Certainly not an easy task, especially because there were a number of parties who had to agree on this: the Management, the Executive Board of the Foundation and the University of Utrecht. During the procedure, it became very clear that finding a successor was far more complicated than at first thought. It was a goal which indeed was not reached. Fortunately, however, an excellent interim Dean was found, the former Rector Magnificus of University of Utrecht, Willems Hendrik Gispen.

There was also another successful occurrence. Since the start-up of Roosevelt Academy, it has not received complete university funding, which is a difficult position for a stand-alone institute. This means having to be extremely careful about spending, whilst the ambitions of excellent education have to be realised and effectuated. This situation will change in 2012. The Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs and Science (OCW) is prepared to extend its contribution – although this was not without a struggle. Years of discussions had previously taken place, as well as evaluation research being done. RA comes out very positively in this evaluation: high quality with regard to place, as well as evaluation research being done. RA comes out without a struggle. Years of discussions had previously taken place, as well as evaluation research being done. RA comes out without a struggle.

The Ministry is of the opinion that high quality education is more expensive. RA must therefore ask more than the normal tuition fee. For many years, Hans Adriaansens was against this. His maxim was always that top-quality education should be available to everyone and should not be more expensive. But, when all is said and done, OCW has the upper hand. Additional government funds must go hand-in-hand with additional institutional fees such as already apply to other University Colleges, or are planned to be implemented. Nevertheless, Adriaansens’ creed is deeply rooted in the students. An informative meeting which took place about extra institutional fees developed into the first Occupy campaign in Zeeland. A few dozen students occupied the Hogeschool building and spent the night there amongst protest banners and posters in order to show their displeasure at the instigation of institutional fees. Their campaign was not entirely unsuccessful; students and management discussed together the extent of the institutional fee and the way in which it will be distributed. From 2012, the tuition fees will increase by €500, which makes RA still definitely the cheapest University College in the Netherlands.

In mid-June, a very interesting event occurred. The Director of the Derek Bok Center of Harvard, and his Deputy, took the plane and landed a few hours later at Schiphol Airport. From there, they travelled on to Middelburg to conduct the Summer Course of ‘Excellent Teaching through Excellent Training’ together with Michael Burke and Rene Diekstra. Teachers from Universities and Hogeschoolen participated in the course, and they were all extremely satisfied afterwards. The Summer Course not only emphasised the quality of RA, but it was also high-profile within Dutch higher education. Moreover, the course had arrived at a most opportune moment: as a consequence of the educational problems at the Hogeschool InHolland, students all too easily gained a diploma, a quality of higher professional education is under a lot of pressure.

Participating in such a prestigious course contributes to the fact that the hbo* sector is making a serious job of good education.

The prospects for 2012, bearing in mind the more adequate financial resources, are looking reasonably bright; a new common house for students, scholarships for students who don’t have much money and more space for courses. In addition, more scope for international recruitment and - undoubtedly - a new Dean. And maybe even the winner’s prize again in The King of the Channel? Who knows! We shall wait and see...
Seven Years Down the Road

On 1 June 2007, a group of about a hundred splendidly dressed young people gathered together in Middelburg’s Nieuwe Kerk. They were the knowledge conveyors for the future. After three years of hardwork, they had gained their Bachelor’s Degree at Roosevelt Academy in Middelburg. These were the first students to complete their studies at this young offspring of the university tree. They were addressed by an extremely proud Dean, Hans Adriaansens, who emphasised in his talk what a promising future these graduates would have. Some of them already knew that they had been admitted to Oxford and Cambridge.

On a somewhat hazy day on 1 June 2007, what would appear to be an entirely successful story had also known the pangs of birth. In order to understand this, however, we must go back further in time. Hans Adriaansens, Dean of Roosevelt Academy, was also the former Dean of Utrecht University College; this was the first University College in the Netherlands which opened its doors in 1998. Adriaansens is, without doubt, the importer of the University College system which is a very customary type of higher education in the United States. Undergraduate higher education in the U.S. is a much broader concept; the deepening of knowledge and insight comes in the Master’s phase. However, this was not the only reason for Adriaansens to import the system.

Seven Years Down the Road

In 1998, he managed to set-up University College Utrecht on the terrain of the former Kronhout Kazemeer (Military Barracks), nearby De Luthof and the FC Utrecht football stadium. He also became the first Dean of the College, which is now renowned, although the College has never quite been able to shake off the stigma of being an elitist institute. A few years later, in 2003, Adriaansens attended a congress in Eindhoven about ‘Development Education’, and it was there that the idea greatly appealed to him. Why not in his hometown? He made a telephone call to the Province of Zeeland and the locals saw it rather differently, thinking of spoilt students from wealthy families, where the local people of Zeeland would in general have no involvement. In Zeeland, the (Dutch) expression of just behaving normally is particularly used in this province, not to mention the other expression of not standing out amongst others. Nevertheless, Adriaansens managed to get the Province of Zeeland and the University of Utrecht to give their support to a second University College.

Thus, Adriaansens started his second College in a small office on the Market Square in Middelburg above the Drukkerij Book Shop, which is the former printing establishment of the Provinciaal Zeeuwse Courant PZC (the regional newspaper). He was able to attract a handful of employees, and it was here that the first students were selected by way of interviews. The study material was, in part, copied from University College Utrecht.

The College is residential and students sleep on the campus. On the case of Middelburg, the city is the campus. This aspect also caused quite some birth-pangs, and not without reason. Residents of the Begijnhof were offered €6,500 from Woongoed (the Housing Corporation) and were expected to leave their rented homes. Students were arriving to replace them. Protest banners and posters appeared rapidly in the street bearing the text: ‘No students in this street!’ There were also Parliamentary questions from the SP (political party) although these were never handled because the Housing Corporation had acted within the law. The elderly grey-haired residents in the Roggeveenhof also had to move. They were given a new home just outside Middelburg, no more than a couple of hundred metres out, but nevertheless…

Finally, at the end of August 2004, the time had come for Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands to open Roosevelt Academy. The second College was a fact. Adriaansens became, once again, the first Dean, in the first years, the focus was on pioneering. Students worked extremely hard, sometimes more than 60 hours, also due to the fact that teachers gave them too much work. A few years later, in 2007, some of them already knew that they had been admitted to Oxford and Cambridge.

Zeeland with the message that he would like to set-up a University College in Middelburg to be situated in the Abbey. A few days later, there was a telephone call from the Queen’s Commissioner for Zeeland, Van Gelder. The Abbey was not available, but the City Hall would soon be free…

Let’s go back to the pangs of birth. Adriaansens decided to take up this offer. But how do you convince the University of Utrecht that a second College in Middelburg – of all places! –should be set-up? Moreover, at a distance of about 170 kilometres away, which is far for the small-scale Netherlands an enormous distance. The Province of Zeeland had indeed made an offer, but the people of Zeeland and the locals saw it rather differently, thinking of spoilt students from wealthy families, where the local people of Zeeland would in general have no involvement. In Zeeland, the (Dutch) expression of just behaving normally is particularly used in this province, not to mention the other expression of not standing out amongst others. Nevertheless, Adriaansens managed to get the Province of Zeeland and the University of Utrecht to give their support to a second University College.

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Roosevelt Academy

Faculty & Staff (51 fte)

Faculty:
- 40 fte (79%)
- Instructor: 15 fte (37%)
- Instructor/tutor: 25 fte (63%)
- Staff: 11 fte (21%)

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Faculty & Staff (51 fte)

Faculty:
- 40 fte (79%)
- Instructor: 15 fte (37%)
- Instructor/tutor: 25 fte (63%)
- Staff: 11 fte (21%)

GPA Distribution

Distinctions
- Summa cum laude: 3.90 to 4.00 GPA: (15%)
- Cum laude: 3.50 to 3.89 GPA: (36%)
- Honors degree: 3.00 to 3.49 GPA: (28%)
- No distinction: 2.00 to 2.99 GPA: (21%)

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11
much homework. There was also an enormous eagerness to make Roosevelt a success. Not everything was ready at that stage either. There were hardly any offices; they appeared slowly in the course of time. Nevertheless, the achievements in the first year were most impressive.

In 2005, the students were most satisfied with the education and facilities at the Roosevelt Academy, which ensured the Academy the first place in the Elsevier Keuzegids (Choice of Academic Study – Elsevier Magazine). In 2007 and 2008, it enjoyed the same top position, and in later years occupied the second best place. But it didn’t stop here. In 2007, the NVAO (Netherlands Flemish Accreditation Organisation) granted the Roosevelt Academy the ‘label of excellence’, which means that RA has been accredited by the NVAO as an excellent institute. And in the meantime, the numbers of students were steadily increasing, which means that Roosevelt Academy allows annually about 200 students to enter the Academy. In addition, there is also research to be borne in mind. Not only is there a strong emphasis on research during the study programme, in particular because students can undertake Independent Research Projects, but also due to the setting-up in March 2010 of a separate institute for undergraduate research called Eleanor, which is evidence of this.

Not only do students work hard, but they are also very involved and have heart for the Academy. This was so at the start-up, and it is still the case. This is evidenced by a number of achievements. Let us illustrate this with a few examples:

- Back in November 2004, the Roosevelt Academy Student Association (RASA) was set up similar to the Utrecht model. Jesse Coleman was the first Chairperson. RASA is the umbrella student association which represents the interests of students and which supports them in the social and academic area.
- In September 2006, the rowing competition with the name King of the Channel was initiated, in which students from the Hogeschool Zeeland rowed against Roosevelt Academy students. Up to 2011, this competition has always been won by the Hogeschool Zeeland.
- In 2006, the first edition of Ad Astra was published, in which articles are included from students’ undergraduate research. Students themselves are involved in the editing.

### Roosevelt Academy student Body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch:</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western European nationalities:</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern European nationalities:</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Euro-Asia:</td>
<td>1,7%</td>
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<td>Asia:</td>
<td>1,7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>South America:</td>
<td>0,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America &amp; Canada:</td>
<td>3,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>2,7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dutch:
-71%
Western European nationalities: 9%
Eastern European nationalities: 6%
Euro-Asia: 1,7%
Middle East: 1%
Africa: 1,7%
Asia: 1,7%
South America: 0,7%
North America & Canada: 3,5%
Other: 2,7%

West European: (excluding the Netherlands) Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and UK
East European: Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania
Auro-Asia: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine
Middle East: Iraq, Israel, Jordan and Oman
Africa: Cameroon, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe
Asia: China, Japan, India, Pakistan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam

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In April 2007, the students started a Culture Week. For a week the students organise all sorts of cultural activities for students, teachers and the residents of Middelburg.

In June 2007, the Alumni Association of Roosevelt Academy was started up with the name of Aurora. The association functions as a link between Roosevelt Academy and its graduates.

In the Spring of 2008, the students started the Night of the Talents. A night full of music, theatre and culture for, and by, students.

The good educational assessment in the Elsevier Keuzegids (Choice of Academic Study) as well as the Keuzegids Hoger Onderwijs (Study Choice in Higher Education), in which Roosevelt was at the top in 2010, has meant that the outside world is now more aware of that small, but apparently extremely good university, in far-off Middelburg. At the opening of the Academic Year in 2010, the then Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Jan Peter Balkenende, opened the new year in his speech at Roosevelt Academy. The present State Secretary, Halbe Zijlstra, visited the institute two years later, in 2011. A television programme of the VPRO called Tegenlicht dedicated a complete documentary to Oxford in Zeeland, as the programme was called. Another special event was the arrival of Derek Bok in 2009. This American educational guru of Harvard visited Roosevelt Academy and entered into discussions with teachers about the Liberal Arts and Sciences model.

When I came outside after the interview, I was still confused… No news is something he can't do. He's as comfortable meeting with a student as with meeting the prime minister. He always has five speeches in his head, which he can combine to be used for any occasion. Even though he likes to be prepared, it's amazing what he can come up with on the spot.

Leo de Wit, director of Education

I had a good time at the RA and learned a lot. I think that Hans Adriaansens succeeded in founding a high quality university college. I am very proud to be the first graduate.

Eveline Noordhoek, Class of 2005

I am currently studying at the University of Chicago, where I am pursuing a graduate law degree (J.D.). Although I studied law in Belgium for 4 years before attending the LLM, I must honestly say that it was RA that trained me and prepared me the most to the American teaching and studying method. Please, convey my gratitude to Dean Adriaansens for this.

Stephanie Rossello, Class of 2007

Currently I'm studying Atmospheric & Climate Science at the ETH Zürich in Switzerland and I'm writing my master's thesis (working with) the Swiss Olympic Sailing Team to analyze the weather patterns for the sailing races in Weymouth Bay & Portland Harbour for the 2012 Olympic Games.

Louisa Ververs, Class of 2009

I am still busy with my Master's program in Child & Adolescent psychology. I have been a bit delayed because it was very hard to find an internship, but now I have finally found one which I will start with in February. It's quite a good one in the field actually, namely at Curium, which is related to the LMC (Lund's Universitet Medicinsk Centrum). After this internship, in November 2012, I will be graduating.

Jet Sichterman, Class of 2008

I have finished medical school and I am now working in the Tjoeighersborn hospital in Heerlen at the surgery department as part of my training to become a tropical doctor. My plans are to go to South Africa in two years from now, as soon as I finish this new education.

Jannie Wijma, Class of 2007
Bicycles parked higgledy-piggledy, narrow streets full of student-houses and a variety of trendy snack bars. Maybe Middelburg is not yet a fully-fledged university city, but it is very clear that the city swings as never before! ‘Let me tell you something, Sir, when the weather’s good there’s a lot of lively fun everywhere.’

When we enter Crostini’s at about 1 o’clock, it’s still rather quiet. But only a few minutes later, the place is full again. After a morning of studying in the old City Hall on the Market Square, it is high time to eat one of the already famous Italian bread-rolls which Monique prepares in her attractive little shop on the Vlasmarkt. How many does she sell daily? ‘Sometimes I sell sixty a day, and sometimes a hundred-and-fifty – it’s a bit unpredictable.’ Certainly three quarters of her customers are students, and the small room above the shop can accommodate a good number of graduation dinners. ‘The Roosevelt Academy plays an important role in my business,’ says Monique, whilst she hands a customer a bread-roll containing the day’s special offer (ham off the bone, with sauce and rucola). ‘Without the students, I wouldn’t have much of a business.’

Over the past years, a number of other snack bars have also opened their doors in the neighbourhood of the Market Square. Their turnover contributes towards the 12.7 million euros which the Province of Zeeland ‘earns’ from the Roosevelt Academy. This is the conclusion of research carried out last year by Alexei Karas, a faculty member of the Roosevelt Academy and the University of Ghent, into the economic significance of his organisation for Zeeland. In the report ‘Zeeland and RA, also written by Professor Koen Schoors from Ghent and the Roosevelt-researcher Mark Kamphuis’, Alexei Karas calculates that the Academy contributes in this way 0.1 percent towards the gross regional product of the province. That means that RA, quite apart from its own employees, helps to create about 170 extra job opportunities,’ says Karas from his office in the Stadhuisstraat. ‘That’s not a great deal, because in similar research carried out in Maastricht, the University was responsible for one percent of the gross product of the region. Nonetheless, that University is a lot larger than our College.’

A Great Enrichment to the City

Roosevelt Academy

Time Line

A small team headed by Hans Adriaansens starts preparations for a small scale international College in Middelburg.

First Open Day Roosevelt Academy

First interviews with applicants by Hans Adriaansens

January 2003

September 2003

Fall 2003

Roosevelt Academy
Zeeland and its favourable climate

Karas only examined the added value of RA and its students. He states that there are no figures available as to whether the region of Middelburg has a greater appeal to knowledge-intensive businesses, but he is absolutely certain of the fact that there is indeed an enormous attraction. ‘I carry out research for a business which develops software. On that basis, the company has just received government subsidy, and in fact one should also include such an amount when taking into consideration the economic impact of RA. The Director said recently that a centre of knowledge such as Roosevelt Academy makes the region for him a great deal more attractive. He would be less inclined to work together with a university outside Zeeland.’

Former Director of the regional newspaper PZC, Koos Scherphuis, endorses this. ‘During recent years, we have had RA students carry out a variety of research, one of which was the feasibility of a Panorama Walcheren. In the past, we always had this type of research done by students of the Hogeschool Zeeland. At that time, one often heard: oh well, they’re only hbo students. We didn’t hear such comments with this feasibility report, which had clearly more content.’

For Rob van Renterghem, Director of the Chamber of Commerce, the importance of RA for Zeeland’s business location policy is very evident. ‘In a region with a shrinking economy, it’s crucial to keep amenities at a high level, or even improve them, to avoid businesses moving away. Good quality higher education is absolutely essential. In regions such as Twente and Eindhoven, you see that the universities can have a fly-wheel effect and spin-off on the business activities. That’s what we also want here.’

The presence of the Roosevelt Academy and of knowledge-intensive businesses has the extra advantage, according to Van Renterghem, that there are sufficient well-trained managers in Middelburg and surrounds. ‘Not only do civil society organisations profit from this, but also the discussion about the future of Zeeland is raised to a higher level. In fact, that is mainly thanks to Hans Adriaansens with his convinced view that Zeeland should behave like a lion rather than a lamb.’

Cultural Life

If we return to the Market Square, the eye of the visitor is almost automatically directed towards the futuristic glass façade of De Drukkery bookshop. With its enormous choice of international newspapers, a busy and popular brasserie and a very varied selection of books, the bookshop has the air of a big city. The Manager, Dick Anbeek, is more than ready to admit that the presence of an internationally oriented college has certainly contributed towards this. ‘Even the simple fact that, in consultation with RA, we have all of the textbooks in stock for the students, makes a world of difference. Not only for the turnover but also for the quality of the discussions.’
my access to the English and American market. I have much more of a foot in the door than before, which means that we have a sort of extra fishing-net (to use a fishing term used in Zeeland!) which has enabled us to greatly expand the rest of our English-language selection of books. And we are able to supply much more quickly. In the past, I often only received a consignment of books once a week from England and America; now the suppliers come here almost every day. There are a number of other reasons why the student-town of Middelburg is advantageous for De Drukkerij, according to Anbeek. ‘Not only do our lectures attract more public interest, but we also sometimes organise activities together with the students. In return, we allow them to use the kitchen of our brasserie when they are organising festivities on the Market Square.’

Besides the catering industry, it is mainly culture which profits from the presence of almost six hundred students, according to Ton Brandenburg who is the Chief Librarian of the Zeeland Library. ‘You notice in a number of ways that they give something extra to cultural life here. There’s a Roosevelt Choir which sometimes performs in town, there’s a film-house where students are active, and they participate in debates, some of which take place here in the library. Their presence is an absolute enrichment to the city.’

Brandenburg says that the arrival of Hans Adriaansens’ college has the additional advantage that his library ‘also functions rather like a pseudo-university library. We have some PCs here especially for Roosevelt students, and we have a direct connection with the library of the University of Utrecht. This means that we can supply the most recent books for students and employees very quickly.’

The Director of the Zeeland Museum, Marjan Ruiter, says that up to now the cooperation with the Roosevelt Academy has been limited to a few projects. ‘But they have certainly had an added value. Last year we had an exhibition here with the title “Porcelain Pirates”, the theme of which was the first load of Chinese porcelain which was seized from the Portuguese by pirates from Zeeland. A result of the exhibition was that two teachers from RA organised a mini-symposium in the Museum about Zeeland Pirates’’, the theme of which was the first load of Chinese porcelain which was seized from the Portuguese by pirates from Zeeland. A result of the exhibition was that two teachers from RA organised a mini-symposium in the Museum about Zeeland Pirates’’.

In Return the Mayor of Middelburg, Kees van der Lee, says: ‘It’s not really so bad. There are indeed a few small streets which have been totally rebuilt into a student campus and some of the people living nearby have had to get used to it. And sometimes parked bicycles are a bit of a mess. But things have never really got out of hand at all. What has certainly helped is that for a short time now a very pleasant, motivated student participates in the organised discussions with residents living in the town centre. That always creates goodwill, as equally do the Christmas drinks which the students organise for the neighbourhood.

The local people of Middelburg will sometimes think: goodness me, what’s happening here? But I come from the big built-up city area, and in comparison with cities such as Utrecht and Leiden, I think the students here are pretty well-behaved. Now and then I think that it could all be a bit livelier!’

Pride

On the Market Square, three elderly people from Middelburg confirm what van der Lee has said. ‘Shall I tell you something, Sir, I think that Middelburg has improved enormously. When there’s good weather, and all of the terraces are full of students, it’s all very lively and fun.’ But are the students sometimes a nuisance? ‘No, not at all, anyway not where we live’. And at night? ‘Oh no! At our age we don’t go out at night anymore. No, the city has most certainly become much better, and in June – when the traditional graduation ceremony takes place – they even feel a bit of pride. ‘That’s when we say to one another: Just look at all that happening in Middelburg, who would have ever thought it could happen here.’

For Burgomaster Koos Schouwenaar such words go straight to his heart! When asked about his views on the importance of Roosevelt Academy, the very first thing he says is the feeling of pride that Middelburg can nowadays present itself as a ‘university city’. I always emphasise this in my contact with others. Sometimes, a first reaction is for people to laugh, but when I tell them about what’s happening here – that we have a study-programme with a success-rate of which other universities can only dream – shop-keepers found the bicycles a great nuisance. ‘Some people complain that the streets look cluttered, others find it difficult to weave their way through the bicycles, and shop-keepers object that the bikes are often parked up against their shop-windows. The Municipality feels that traffic safety is endangered. In the streets around the City Hall, there are sometimes bikes on the street. Whether there is a link with the nearby Roosevelt Academy, the Municipality cannot definitely say. However, it is well-known that the students are very easy-going with their bicycles’, according to the spokeswoman.

The city-centre’s Neighbourhood Manager, Karel van de Beek, gives a grin when asked whether the students cause much trouble. ‘It’s not really so bad. There are indeed a few small streets which have been totally rebuilt into a student campus and some of the people living nearby have had to get used to it. And sometimes parked bicycles are a bit of a mess. But things have never really got out of hand at all. What has certainly helped is that for a short time now a very pleasant, motivated student participates in the organised discussions with residents living in the town centre. That always creates goodwill, as equally do the Christmas drinks which the students organise for the neighbourhood.

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then the laughter changes to respect.’

Schouwenaar also agrees that the presence of RA students has enormously livened up the scene on the streets of his city. He is particularly delighted with the fact that the former City Hall has been given such an exciting new purpose.

‘In fact, it is now even more accessible than before. In the past, the historical halls and rooms were only used for ‘big-shot’ events; now everyone is welcome to attend lectures and concerts. So even from that point of view, the arrival of the Roosevelt Academy is an enormous asset.’

Finally, let’s look at how a former student views her former university town. After three years at RA, Maan Leo left in 2007 to go to Utrecht. She now has a Master’s degree, and is back in Middelburg, working as the Recruitment and Communications Officer of the Roosevelt Academy. One of the major things which struck her in Utrecht was the enormity of the city and the great efforts she had to make to organise any sort of social life for herself there.

‘What I miss in Middelburg are the places like Ekko and Helling (pop podia). And I’m not exactly crazy about the theatre in Middelburg; their programming is pretty limited to Jenny Arean, River Dance and lots and lots of cabaret and that’s it! But otherwise, as a student, it’s perfect here. I noticed in Utrecht how socially and physically lazy you become in Middelburg. Here, everything’s within walking distance, the College and your lectures, as well as the snack bars and your friends. You hardly need to organise anything yourself, because everything’s already nearby. In Utrecht, after lectures, everybody disappeared. If you wanted some sort of social fun, you had to organise it yourself. It took me a long time to get accustomed to that. And with lectures in the Kromhoutkazerne and in De Uithof, I had the feeling that I was on my bike for hours and hours! No… I expected a lot from Utrecht, but in retrospect I have to admit that in that stupid Middelburg I had a much finer time as a student.’
Portrait of an Audacious Charmer

A pioneer and a visionary. These are the words often used to describe the characteristics of Hans Adriaansens. And it is not surprising for a man who, against all odds, has been successful in instigating an educational concept which is now being copied in wide circles in the Netherlands.

It is very clear that, for both friend and enemy, the introduction of the American College model is definitely his major work and entirely to his credit. Sijbolt Noorda, the Chairman of the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands) indeed referred to him a year ago as ‘the most important innovator of his generation.’ Jan Veldhuis, former Chairman of the Executive Board of the University of Utrecht (UU), endorses that ‘Hans understood the approach of a different era. He recognised, as one of the very first people, that although we had reached a good average level in our higher education, nevertheless we were not adequately represented at the top. He instinctively felt that it was time to give credit to excellence by way of competition and selection, and he has given this aspect recognition in the most sublime way. Not only did he have the innovative idea, but he also developed the entire concept including the curriculum. This in itself is an achievement of great stature.’

Understandably, there is great appreciation for Adriaansens’ visionary ideas, but maybe even more appreciation for his unorthodox style. Maarten Rook, who used to be the Financial Director of UU, remembers his visit to the Kronhout Kazerne (Military Barracks) as if it were yesterday. ‘Hans had launched his idea for a college in the grounds of the Kazerne to the Executive Committee of the UU, but it was never formally discussed. But he couldn’t care less about these sorts of details. He thought it was time to take action and so, on a certain day, Hans and I (together with our Head of Building Works) wandered over to the Kazernepoort (Barracks Gate). Could he please speak to the General? No… the General wasn’t there. However there was a Lieutenant-Colonel present who showed us around the complex, after which Hans said, as coolly as you please: Nice terrain, we want to buy it. The Lieutenant-Colonel almost fell off his chair and said, ‘This terrain isn’t for sale at all, it belongs to the Armed Forces.’ At such a point, Hans is absolutely at his best, because a ‘no’ isn’t an adequate answer.

‘Listen to me a moment’, he said to the Lieutenant-Colonel, ‘it’s much better for our country if you do sell. And, anyway, we have just had to hand over a piece of ground to Defence for a military hospital, so actually we want to have the Kazerne free of charge.’ Rook laughs as he recollects what happened. ‘And all of this was happening whilst the Executive Committee knew nothing about it at all. Hans is then at his best – a unique combination of impudence and charm’.

This all sounds very familiar to former colleague Arie de Ruijter. ‘Hans has a vision and by God he will see to it that his vision is enforced. I still remember clearly that, in the first instance, we received a “no” from the KNAW (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) to our request for a new research school. That put the cat among the pigeons! The school was Hans’ idea, and how dare they have the cheek in Amsterdam to say: this doesn’t satisfy our requirements. Anybody else would probably have gone along to the Commission with his hat in his hands and the question: Have I written it down incorrectly? Can I possibly give you any more information? But not Hans. He went directly to Minister Ritzen (former Minister of Education) and what do you think happened? The school became a fact!’
If we listen to Koos Scherphuis, a former Director of the PZC (Zeeland’s regional newspaper): ‘Hans has an incredibly huge network in the politics of The Hague. At a certain moment, there was a problem with the financing of the Roosevelt Academy. Then, at eleven o’clock in the evening, he has the nerve to phone Mark Rutte (who was then Secretary of State for Education). And he simply keeps on doing this until he gets his own way.’

‘Hans’ strength is that he thinks in new systems,’ says former Director Sjef Czyzewski of the Faculty of Social Sciences (of the UU). ‘And, of course, he prefers to work with people who think as he does. But that doesn’t mean that he can’t take any criticism. On the contrary. Although he does want to be intellectually stimulated. He had as little with people who think as he does. But that doesn’t mean that everything was alright! I have no idea how he did it, thanks to the good contacts which Hans had with a female Alderman of a progressive party. She was like wax in his hands.’

According to De Ruijter: ‘Hans is a sailor who gets kicks when the wind is against him. If he’s only expected to keep to the rules.’ Veldhuis tells us: ‘Hans is very adept in presenting people with a ‘fait accompli’. I can clearly remember when UCU (University College Utrecht) was already successfully working, that during my activities with the Roosevelt Study Center, I met up with a prominent citizen of Zeeland. This gentleman began to thank me profusely for setting-up the Roosevelt Academy. I almost choked! Naturally, I managed to smile politely, but on arriving home I got in touch with Hans immediately: “Hans, what on earth is going on here?” I knew nothing about it.’

‘I like that sort of style,’ laughs De Ruijter. ‘It didn’t cause me a problem, although Hans could be as hard as nails if things had to be accomplished. I can still see him together with Director Sjef Czyzewski on their way over to the Administration Building when there was a row with the Executive Committee, with hardly concealed smiles on their faces at the thought of what sort of bloodbath they would yet again cause.’

Veldhuis: ‘Hans is the only person whom I have ever actually thrown out of my office during my 18 years of chairmanship.’

‘Now, now,’ is Czyzewski’s laughing reaction, ‘we were always very friendly towards the Executive Committee. What they found annoying was that we operated so strongly as a team. At a certain moment we thought that, because of the growth of the Faculty, more money was necessary. Normally it would be the Director who makes such a request. They would easily be able to give him the brush-off. But in our case, it was Hans as Dean who spoke and, as he was also a member of the WRR (Advisory Council on Government Policy), there was nobody who dared to contradict him.

Cartoonist Niels Bongers, who was at that time policy advisor in the Faculty of Social Sciences, still has lively memories of the pestering way in which Adriaansens could sometimes behave towards his boss in the Administration Building. ‘On one occasion, Jan Veldhuis came along with copies of an official publication. So so…, said Hans with a dead-pam face… from millionaire to newspaper boy. On another occasion, Hans received from Jan two bottles of wine as a gift. ‘I’ll come along sometime and help you drink them at home,’ said Jan. Hans looked pensively at the labels and said, with the most innocent of smiles: “I’m not sure whether I can put this quality of wine in front of a Chairman of the Executive Board.”’

Veldhuis describes his former Dean in just a few words, as a complex person: ‘He can be audacious, but he can also be extremely charming. The fact that we got such cooperation for the University College from the Municipality of Utrecht was not only thanks to Burgomaster Opstelten, but also thanks to the good contacts which Hans had with a female Alderman of a progressive party. She was like wax in his hands.’

A former RA student, Maan Leo, also saw the ‘charmer’ Adriaansens in action. ‘I was in one of the very first groups of students and during the Open Information Day there was hardly anything at all except Hans standing on a podium saying: We’re going to start something stupendous here. I thought it all sounded wonderful, but my Mother had her doubts. Could this possibly be all that it pretends to be? Hans became aware of this, and took her apart. At a certain moment, she was like wax in his hands.’

According to Maarten Rook, Hans is also a good orator. ‘In the past, I have given presentations with him about higher education. I always spent a few weeks working on such a talk, but Hans usually arrived, asked what the evening was going to be about, and shortly afterwards
RA Alumni Jannie Wijma (Class of '07) and Johanna Gröne (Class of '08) won Top 3% Award for being the best student of their respective years in the A-KO Medical Program of Maastricht University.

December 2009

Institutes for Undergraduate Research

Eleanor officially launched

March 2010

First graduation on the Abbey Square

May 2010

Halfè Zijlstra; Secretary of State, Ministry of Education visits RA

April 2011

fact a real provocation, but at the same time he was utterly serious. My first thought was: what’s going on now? But a bit later on, I realised: I think he’s damned well right.

According to Niels Bongers: ‘What I found praiseworthy in Hans was that, in a period in which your status as a scientist was mainly measured by your research, he made every effort to improve the status of education. His pioneering role in the setting-up of University College Utrecht is naturally well recognised, but fewer people know that he was the one to initiate what is now the generally accepted system of educational qualifications in which you can also make a career as a teacher. As a boss, he was not only witty but also genial; he was also open to suggestions and often asked for them, which is something I haven’t encountered often in previous bosses.’

Former student, Marilien Mogendorff of the University College in Utrecht, who has been active in the theatrical world for many years, particularly praised the involvement of her Dean on the website ‘Talking Post’. ‘When I entered UCU, I thought I wanted to be a doctor but knew deep in my heart that I wanted to do something with theatre. During my interview with Dean Adriaansens, he said, “The moment you start talking about theatre there is light in your eyes” and he went on to say, “I will let you into this school, but you have to promise me that you will listen to your passion for theatre and be open to that road. You can try pre-med, that’s fine, but I want you to listen to your heart and do theatre as well.” I took his advice!’

How passionately Hans Adriaansens lives for education and for his RA, became apparent to Koos Scherphuis last year. ‘Hans was in sack and ashes because he had a fantastic plan for a Teaching and Learning Centre, but there was no money for it. And Hans very surprisingly, knowing him, didn’t dare to go to the Province and the Municipality to ask for yet another contribution. By way of a Zeeland Innovation Fund in which I am involved, I was able to release money on the very same day. You should have seen Hans! He was just like an excited young child, he almost hit his head on the ceiling from happiness!’
First inaugural lecture at RA by prof. Barbara Oomen

Occupation of Eleanor by students against the institutional fee
I am currently doing my co-schappen kindergeneeskunde in Helmond. I am doing the third year of the A-KO program. Everything is going well. I received another scholarship for my studies, the UM HighPotential. This is to complete my third and fourth year of my program, after receiving the Huygens Scholarship for my first two years.

Ali Mohammed Al-Turaihi, Class of 2009

I am working at UNHCR, as an Associate Legal Officer. I am currently interviewing asylum seekers from Somalia and Sudan, therefore specializing on African context, and writing legal assessments based on international refugee and human rights law. I am very happy with my job, and I appreciate every simple law course that I had at RA and during my exchange semester at South Africa.

Sila Sonmez, Class of 2010

I graduated last June of 2011. I decided to take a year off to determine which Master’s program best suits me. I’m currently working for the Tanzanian Embassy Washington.

I graduated from a Master’s degree in Community Development and Planning in May this year. Currently I’m doing a temporary job at the UNHCR, as an Associate Legal Officer. I am currently working at RA.

Lacey Bruske, Class of 2011

I graduated from a Master’s degree in Community Development and Planning in May this year. Currently I’m doing a temporary job at the Tanzanian Embassy Washington.

D.C. Mugendi Zoka, Class of 2008

At the end of my application interview for RA, as he pressed a photocopy of a map of Middelburg in my hands and marked out the route to the Bagijnhof. He told me he could already go and take a look at the new student housing. Little did I know that I’d end up in a ‘very busy’ construction site. This memory characterizes the pioneering spirit of Hans Adriaansens and RA, where I felt most at home.

Lindsay Hasenj-Gooisens, Chair of Aurora

Every month we had a meeting with the Chairman of the University Board. Hans always parked the car right in front of the building where no one else would ever dare to park and he always got away with it.

Paul Hermans, former senior tutor

RASA never lost the pioneer spirit from the early days. I remember Hans coming to the very first RASA General Assembly in the Zeeuwse Bibliothek in December 2004. He left again after 10 minutes (a busy man as always), but not before he said that it was good. He had chosen a group of students that were building a student association and culture from scratch. Infusing Middelburg with a true college atmosphere was no easy feat. He appreciated the challenges of building something from the ground up, but he gave me and all the other students who were busy organizing student life free rein to turn Middelburg into a campus city, which was a truly unique experience.

Hans was the person who smoothed this pathway.

Mark Rutte, in the publication of a farewell to Prof. Dr. Hans Adriaansens.

Hans is a man of ideas

A contribution from the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, in the publication of a farewell to Prof. Dr. Hans Adriaansens.

Do you have an anecdote which might describe him?

I don’t have a real anecdote, but I do remember something he told me which has always remained in my memory. He once told me how very impressed he was in the United States with the many top-class professors who were enormously committed to education, even at undergraduate level. Or, as he later phrased it: ‘All of those chaps who wrote the books we read here, are also giving lectures to first-year students’. Hans found this inspiring and thought it was also very necessary here in the Netherlands, and I agree with him. That’s a reason for me to still regularly plea for the professor who gives his lectures to first-year students. Who is more capable of enthusing and pulling students in to a specialism than the head of the Guild himself? I am thus indebted to Hans Adriaansens, whom I wish all the best in many new plans and activities.

What would you describe as characteristic of him?

In a single word: Hans is a man of ideas. He’s always brimming over with energy and plans, and he doesn’t allow anybody to fob him off. Without that kind of Sturm und Drang, the University College Utrecht and Roosevelt Academy would never have come into being. With those two breeding grounds of academic talent, he has properly shaken up our rigid and uniform system of higher education. Anyway, shaken it up over with energy and plans, and he doesn’t allow anybody to fob him off. Without that kind of Sturm und Drang, the University College Utrecht and Roosevelt Academy would never have come into being. With those two breeding grounds of academic talent, he has properly shaken up our rigid and uniform system of higher education. Anyway, shaken it up over with energy and plans, and he doesn’t allow anybody to fob him off. Without that kind of Sturm und Drang, the University College Utrecht and Roosevelt Academy would never have come into being. With those two breeding grounds of academic talent, he has properly shaken up our rigid and uniform system of higher education. Anyway, shaken it up

What were the circumstances in which you got to know Hans Adriaansens?

I got to know Hans in 2004, at the beginning of my period as State Secretary for Education. I came from Social Affairs and before that I worked as a HRM* employee with Unilever, so I really had to work myself into the field of education. Hans was one of my guides in this, and I always think back with enormous pleasure to the talks which we had together. My tender spot for education and for the people who are involved in it started in that period. And it was particularly thanks to meeting up with such inspiring and inspired people as Hans Adriaansens.

What would you describe as characteristic of him?

In a single word: Hans is a man of ideas. He’s always brimming over with energy and plans, and he doesn’t allow anybody to fob him off. Without that kind of Sturm und Drang, the University College Utrecht and Roosevelt Academy would never have come into being. With those two breeding grounds of academic talent, he has properly shaken up our rigid and uniform system of higher education. Anyway, shaken it up enough for this cabinet to enter into serious discussions with universities and HBO’s about more excellence in education. Nowadays, this doesn’t surprise people anymore. Hans was the person who smoothed this pathway.

What is also typical of him: he does not need to seek status.

I am absolutely convinced that Hans could have become the senior professor who gives his lectures to first-year students. Who is more capable of enthusing and pulling students in to a specialism than the head of the Guild himself? I am thus indebted to Hans Adriaansens, whom I wish all the best in many new plans and activities.

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