

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

University Fund Limburg

Bridge between
science and society
for 60 years

 Maastricht University

 Universiteitsfonds Limburg





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FOREWORD



It was a particularly special year for the University Fund Limburg: in 2025, we celebrated our 60th anniversary. This milestone invited reflection on the past while also giving us fresh energy for the future.

Our anniversary year was filled with inspiring and heartfelt encounters. For example, we enjoyed a wonderful dinner at Hoogenweerth Castle with many current and former board members, committed ambassadors and researchers. During the evening, we looked back on the founding of Maastricht University. One particularly special moment was hearing a historical recording in which Dr Sjeng Tans could be heard passionately advocating for the establishment of a university in Limburg, driven by his deep conviction that knowledge dissemination and accessibility are essential for social progress. It was a moving reminder of the ideals on which both the university and our Fund are built.

Another anniversary event took the form of a festive gathering with the Fund's close relations. Our researchers spoke with great enthusiasm about why support for science is so vital, and about the difference it can make, both today and for future generations. These meetings were deeply heartening. They gave my team and me not only a great deal of energy, but also renewed inspiration to continue our mission with full conviction.

We also took a number of important steps in 2025. We were proud to organise our first meeting on the theme of legacy giving. More and more private donors see the University Fund Limburg as a valuable and trustworthy partner who can put their estate to meaningful use. Often they hold causes such as healthcare or equal opportunities close to their hearts, and they want to be sure their assets will be used carefully and purposefully to address the social challenges of the future.

At the Fund, we take this responsibility very seriously, investing time and care in recording, safeguarding and honouring the wishes of our testators.

Additionally, we began preparations for the first large-scale fundraising campaign in the Fund's history, built around a strong Case for Support. Broad public backing and further research funding for this Case for Support should enable UM once again to make a significant mark on society, as it has done continuously for the past 50 years.

My team and I are immensely proud to play a part in this work, year after year. Together with our donors, ambassadors, researchers and partners, we remain committed to a university that stands at the heart of society and contributes to solutions for the challenges of tomorrow.

Bouwien Janssen

Director, University Fund Limburg | SWOL
Director, Development & Alumni Relations
Maastricht University



ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

FUND LIMBURG

Mission and vision

The University Fund Limburg aims to strengthen research and education at Maastricht University. Our mission is to connect academic excellence with societal needs by bridging the gap between the university and society. We do so, among other things, by supporting UM's further development and by actively raising funds in collaboration with the regional business community, public authorities, philanthropic foundations and private individuals, including alumni.

In our view, co-creation is essential for achieving lasting impact. High-quality scientific research is costly, while support from traditional funding sources is under pressure. Thanks in part to the Fund's support in bridging the gap with society, UM has, over the past 50 years, developed into an institution of international renown. Its innovative education and pioneering research contribute to solutions for the challenges of today and tomorrow, both in our own region and far beyond.

Our purpose in pursuing this mission is to contribute to a healthy, green and fair world. When it comes to shaping the world of tomorrow, research and education are inseparable not just from universities but also from sustainable development. We see them as indispensable building blocks for a society that values themes such as physical and mental health, sustainability and equal opportunities. Through knowledge and innovation, we can address urgent societal issues, both regionally and internationally.

Looking back on 60 years of impact

The University Fund Limburg, then called Stichting Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs Limburg (SWOL), dates from 8 November 1965. The Fund was created at a time when Limburg faced major economic and social challenges. The region was vulnerable due to the impending mine closures and a shortage of highly educated workers. At the same time, the national government wanted knowledge institutions to be better distributed around the country. For Charles van Rooy, then King's Commissioner for the Province of Limburg and founder of SWOL, the goal was clear: to establish a university in the province.

In 1976, the Rijksuniversiteit Limburg – the predecessor of today's UM – was founded with the support of the business community and broad backing from society: 300,000 people signed a petition in favour of the new medical faculty.

Sixty years later, the Fund can look back on a rich history. The university now has six faculties and has grown into an internationally recognised knowledge institution. During this time, the Fund has made numerous projects possible that have contributed directly to social progress, from innovations in healthcare to the promotion of equal opportunities and poverty reduction.

During the Fund's anniversary in 2025, we reflected on the impact it has made. An extensive communication campaign and two events marked the 60th anniversary and highlighted the strong bond between the university, the region and society. At the same time, the Fund's original mission remains as relevant as ever. The challenges facing society today in the areas of health, sustainability, digitisation and social resilience call for multidisciplinary research and collaboration. With a solid foundation, a clear vision and strong ties to UM, the Fund remains committed to a future in which science and society continue to strengthen one another.

The organisation

The UM Department of Development and Alumni Relations (D&A) is responsible for implementing the Fund's policy. It also houses the central Alumni Office. The department has been led by Bouwien Janssen since 2018. Alongside this role, Janssen is also responsible for the UM Academy for Lifelong Development. Through the Academy, and in collaboration with the lifelong development units of the various faculties, UM aims to streamline, further professionalise and expand postgraduate education and align it closely with the changing labour market. Given the overlap between lifelong development, alumni relations and fundraising, these strategic pillars will be further integrated in the future. In 2025, the D&A team comprised 11 staff members working either part or full time, supported by student assistants. A list of staff can be found in the appendix.

Professionalisation

In 2025, the Fund's Executive Board expressed its appreciation for the ongoing professionalisation efforts, which were reflected in the

“For 60 years, the University Fund Limburg has pursued the same mission: to promote academic education in our province. From the very beginning, the Fund helped lay the foundations of the university and joined forces with partners and donors – sometimes across borders – to create new prospects for Limburg. Today, our region faces major challenges in areas ranging from health and vitality to sustainability and equality of opportunity in education.



The Fund and the university continue to work closely together on solutions that accelerate innovation. As chair, I'm proud to be able to reflect on 60 years of impact and look forward to what we can achieve together in the coming decades.”

Emile Roemer

Board chair and King's Commissioner in the Province of Limburg

achievement of the Code of Good Governance quality mark, the improved website, the successful events for key relations, the quantitative and qualitative growth in donations and the increase in external visibility. The communication campaign surrounding the Fund's 60th anniversary also generated publicity both within UM and around the region. This course will be continued in 2026 through innovative fundraising campaigns and the implementation of a new communication strategy, which will contribute even more effectively to the Fund's strategic objectives. Our strong current position also gives us room to look ahead and think strategically about the use of future resources. By striking a careful balance between short- and long-term needs, the Fund can further strengthen its financial position and increase its societal impact.

1. RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND FUNDRAISING

Remuneration policy

The team's personnel costs are covered by UM. The board members do not receive payment for their management duties. However, they may be reimbursed for any expenses incurred (e.g. travel costs) related to their work for the Fund.

The board

The Fund has a General Board and an Executive Board, led by chair Emile Roemer and vice chair Rianne Letschert. The appendix provides an overview of the board members and a summary of the changes made to the membership in 2025. Alongside the existing committees – the Finance Committee and the Anniversary Campaign Committee – a Strategy Committee was installed in 2025, consisting of a delegation from the General Board.

FIN Code of Good Governance

At the start of 2025, the Fund was awarded the Code of Good Governance quality mark. This distinction is granted by FIN, the association of philanthropic foundations in the Netherlands, with a view to promoting effective governance and responsible operations. The Code helps us to function responsibly, effectively and efficiently, and provides confidence and clarity both within and outside the Fund. To retain this quality mark, the Fund must declare each year that it complies with the Code. In 2025, the Fund submitted the Annual Declaration of Compliance with the FIN Code of Good Governance for the previous financial year, which was published on the FIN website. ➔

In 2025, 1,740 private and business donors contributed a total of €2,012,871 to the Fund. This was an increase of 31% compared to 2024, when 1,134 donors contributed a total of €1,534,580. To achieve this result, a range of fundraising activities and events for key relations were organised in 2025, aimed at both increasing the Fund's visibility and strengthening long-term relationships with our supporters. This chapter highlights a selection of these initiatives.

Leaving a legacy to science

When drawing up a will, few people immediately think of leaving part of their estate to science. Yet doing so can have a lasting impact on future generations. Following a joint campaign with the 14 Dutch University Funds that successfully raised awareness of this option, we organised our first meeting on legacy giving to UM in the autumn. Notary and board member Thomas de Klein explained the options for tax-friendly donations, while researchers Dr Marcel Aries and Prof Onno van Schayck spoke about urgent health themes that require ongoing support. For some participants, the evening marked the start of their legacy-giving journey; others were already exploring the causes they would like to support.

UM Dinner 2025

Since 2007 we have organised the annual UM Dinner, a networking event that brings together academics from UM and representatives of the business community in a culinary setting. In 2025, we continued this tradition in the banquet hall of the Provinciehuis (the provincial government building), where executives from leading companies gathered with professors, external guests and UM administrators. "These conversations regularly lead to new insights and even surprising regional partnerships," says chair Emile Roemer. Once again, the dinner helped strengthen cooperation between the business community and the university. This year's guests included several new companies as well as familiar faces, whose presence once again underlined the value of the UM Dinner for the region.

Young Talent and Innovation Award

During the UM Dinner, three talented researchers were given the opportunity to present their work. Dr Marlies Gijs is working on the detection of Alzheimer's disease through tear fluid, Konrad Köllnig on European data and AI legislation, and Charmayne Siebers on bottle-to-bottle recycling – all topics closely aligned with pressing societal challenges and UM's strategic themes.



Guests cast their votes anonymously, after which the project with the most votes was awarded the Young Talent and Innovation Award, including €10,000 in research support. The two runners-up each received €2,000 as an encouragement prize.

This year's winner was Dr Marlies Gijs. She used the prize money to buy materials and has since become one of the first researchers in the world to identify new brain-related substances in tear fluid. The next step is to measure these substances in patients with brain and eye disorders. "My research focuses on detecting specific biomarkers for Alzheimer's disease in tear fluid," she says. "Although tear fluid has long been used in ophthalmology, for example to diagnose dry eye, its use in relation to brain disorders is still very new." Her ambition is for tear-fluid collection to become a standard part of clinical care. "My hope is that this fast and non-invasive method can eventually replace an epidural."

IN 2025...



Total number of alumni

111,937



International alumni

53,958



Alumni events

38



Alumni living in the Netherlands

69,960



Alumni donors

323



Alumni circles

38

Preparations for large-scale fundraising campaign

In 2025, the Fund began preparations for a Capital Campaign, a major initiative aiming to raise substantial funds for a UM project. The project responds to current societal and regional challenges that can only be addressed through collaboration and at scale. Through this campaign, we also aim to further strengthen philanthropy within UM. An initial fundraising proposition – a Case for Support – was developed in early 2025 in consultation with internal and external partners. This was followed by a feasibility study, during which strategic relations and donors were interviewed. Findings highlighted a strong commitment to UM, with a particular interest in projects related to health and equality of opportunity. Respondents advised us to further sharpen the focus and to concentrate on fundamental research projects with a clear societal impact and a distinctive profile. The revised Case for Support should be completed in the first half of 2026. By then, the Fund expects to be able to take a final decision on how and when to launch the campaign.

Lasting relationships with UM alumni

The alumni community continues to grow strongly: in 2025, it comprised more than 110,000 graduates. Many look back fondly on their time at UM as a period that laid the foundation for their careers. As a result, more and more of them feel a desire to give something back to their alma mater. Our aim is to further strengthen the tradition of ‘giving back’ as one of the pillars – alongside networking and lifelong development – of our alumni policy. The ambitions in this area will be developed further in the Alumni Policy 2026–30, in collaboration with relevant colleagues at the faculties.

Anchoring the ‘giving back’ pillar

In 2025, proceeds from ticket sales for the UM Connect Day and the UM Star Lectures – two annual alumni events – were donated to the Equity and Inclusion Programme. This funding, amounting to a total of €16,616, will be put towards scholarships for talented changemakers. Additionally, during the alumni Christmas events held in six German cities, special campaigns were set up in support of equal educational opportunities. These campaigns were organised in cooperation with local alumni committees and together raised more than €900.

“Maastricht University has been a key contributor to my professional success. Supporting the great work of the University Fund Limburg is a way for me to express my gratitude and to feel connected with my alma mater. Especially projects providing equal chances are close to my heart.”

Mehregan Kazemi
SBE alum and Commercial Director at Procter & Gamble



through personal contacts and special partnerships with committed, impactful and financially able alumni, for example through donations to scholarships or innovative research projects. At the same time, we see that alumni not only give back financially, but also actively contribute to student guidance and serve on advisory boards, where they help shape developments in education and other areas.

Reflecting on our 60th anniversary

We marked the special milestone of the Fund’s 60th anniversary together with various target groups whose support has made it possible for us to reach this point and bring our goals to fruition.

Anniversary evening

Without our donors and loyal partners, we would not have the financial means to support cutting-edge research and education. To give something back to this group, we organised a festive evening dedicated to reflecting on six decades of impact and looking ahead to the Fund’s ambitions for the future. Researchers Prof Onno van Schayck and Dr Sophie Leijdesdorff spoke about the importance of supporting scientific research and showed what can be achieved through philanthropic contributions.

Board dinner

During a special anniversary dinner at Hoogenweerth Castle in Maastricht, we brought together current and former board members of UM and the Fund to



thank them for the indispensable role they have played in the Fund’s successes. Looking back on its history, researchers Dr Bart Zwegers and Dr Annemieke Klijn gave presentations on the origins of the Fund and its earliest activities. Professor Lorenzo Moroni then presented innovative research in the field of regeneration, creating a bridge between past and future.



“The University Fund Limburg has been the common thread throughout my relationship with ‘my’ university. UM was able to become what it is today thanks to the Fund, and that’s something we should be grateful for. At the same time, we should be aware that this also brings with it a shared responsibility for the future. Together, we will continue to build the future of UM.”

Jeroen van den Biggelaar
LAW alum and former board member of the University Fund Limburg

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a powerful way of generating support for research projects addressing urgent societal issues. It also fits seamlessly with the Fund's preferred approach to campaigning: visible, accessible and rooted in engagement from a broad cross-section of society. In 2025, four fundraising initiatives were conducted through our crowdfunding platform UM Crowd, ranging from a sporting campaign in support of severe brain injury to an innovative solution for making cooling systems more sustainable. The platform also gave employees leaving UM the opportunity to support the Fund in place of receiving personal gifts. More and more committed ambassadors and board members are making use of this option, with the funds raised benefiting initiatives such as the Equity and Inclusion Programme. In total, 1,306 donors contributed €59,936 to these projects.

Spotlight on two campaigns

On the bike for brain research

Exercise benefits everyone's health, and this is what 18 'brain warriors' literally put into practice in April 2025 when they tackled the Limburg hills with great energy during the Amstel Gold Race Tour. More than 800 donors supported this special campaign, raising over €27,400. The proceeds went to the Brain Battle Fund, which supports innovative research on treating acute brain injury and improving patients' quality of life. The initiative also had symbolic value, as the Brain Battle Fund is likewise committed to raising awareness of bike safety.



Supporting the future of cooling

The iGEM Grand Jamboree is a global event that brings together researchers, students and companies to present innovations in synthetic biology, with awards for the most forward-looking projects. The UM team, led by associate professor Erik Steen Redeker, showed that technological progress and care for the planet can go hand in hand. The students developed a sustainable solution for cooling systems in healthcare institutions and data centres that both saves energy and reduces CO2 emissions. They brought home a gold medal, the award for 'Best Wiki' and a nomination for 'Best Presentation.' Thanks to broad donor support, the crowdfunding campaign raised almost €8,000. Their success shows how young researchers, backed by the community, can take concrete steps towards a more sustainable future.

Annual Fund Campaign

For Each Other 2025/26: for a healthy and equitable society

For 16 years, the UM community has come together to support projects that make our society stronger and fairer. In 2025, that sense of belonging and solidarity was stronger than ever, thanks in part to the milestone of the Fund's 60th anniversary and the upcoming 50th anniversary of UM. The Annual Fund Campaign drew attention to four unique projects for 2025/26:

Give for ... scholarships for talented changemakers

Many young people want to contribute to a better world and see higher education as the key. Yet some are held back by social and financial barriers, meaning valuable talent goes untapped. To address this, the University Fund Limburg is launching the Changemaker Scholarship: a scholarship within the Equity and Inclusion Programme that gives talented young people the opportunity to study at UM. The scholarship also offers scope for personal development and networking, enabling students to focus on growing into engaged citizens who can contribute to society. Our aim is for four new changemakers to begin in the 2026/27 academic year.



Donate to ... improved detection of brain tumours

Glioblastoma is one of the most aggressive forms of brain cancer, affecting over 1000 people in the Netherlands every year. It has a very bleak prognosis: on average, patients live only a little more than a year after diagnosis. For many, daily life is overshadowed by fear: painful biopsies, long waiting times and results that often raise more questions than they answer. To change this, researcher Dr Eva Cuypers is developing an innovative blood test that can detect glioblastoma more quickly and reliably and less invasively.

Contribute to ... a voice for children in conflict zones

Worldwide, 473 million children live in war zones, including 9 million in unrecognised states. These children are especially vulnerable because they are not covered by international legal protection. Families are often focused primarily on survival, leaving little room to talk with children and help them process their experiences. This can lead to serious mental health problems. Researchers Dr Marieke Hopman and Dr Guleid

Jama want to change that. In their Child Peace project, they explore how children from three unrecognised states – Gaza, Sool/Sanaag and Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh – can take part in peacebuilding activities with a view to a brighter future.

Support ... all researchers to make a difference through innovation

Imagine how much is lost in the innovation chain when knowledge and potential remain untapped because some UM researchers are either overlooked or not supported and encouraged to translate their work into societal impact. Diversity is essential for innovation, but researchers from marginalised groups, such as women and members of the LGBTQ+ community, are less likely to be named on patents and involved in university spinoffs. This is why the Knowledge Transfer Office is launching the Impact Beyond Gender programme. The programme will serve as a springboard to support talented researchers in their valorisation journey, promote inclusivity at UM, and contribute to the Brightlands ecosystem and regional growth.

Equity and Inclusion Programme

Talent is everywhere, yet access to education is not universal. At the Fund, we want to prevent personal circumstances from determining how far a young person can go. Equality of opportunity is one of our strategic priorities, with the Equity and Inclusion Programme providing a tangible way of achieving that ambition. This programme supports young people who want to study, but are held back by social or financial barriers that unjustly stand in the way of their talent. In recent years, the programme has seen significant growth. In 2025, donors ranging from alumni to companies and philanthropic foundations contributed a total of €27,816. Thanks to their support, more and more young people are being given the chance to fulfil their potential. We work closely with organisations committed to equality of opportunity and talent development. At the same time, we see a growing willingness among UM alumni to contribute specifically to initiatives aimed at equal opportunities. They know from personal experience how valuable and enriching it is to study at UM, and they want to help extend that opportunity to young people for whom it would otherwise remain out of reach.

A new scholarship programme: Changemaker Scholarship

Financial barriers, health problems, a limited social network or an unsafe home situation can hinder talented young people in achieving their ambitions. Yet it is often precisely these people who are most driven to improve their community and the world around them. For that reason,

it was decided in 2025 to launch the Changemaker Scholarship in collaboration with TSH Talent Foundation. This scholarship supports students who want to pursue a one-year master's degree and make a societal impact. The support goes beyond tuition fees and housing. Students also receive mentoring, meet professionals and leaders from all over Europe and take part in small-scale peer-learning groups. "In this way, students learn to connect their personal story to a societal challenge, experiment with initiatives, and build the confidence to influence institutions," says Hemant Kumar, programme and impact manager at TSH Talent Foundation.

Philanthropy among UM colleagues

A valuable tradition is taking root at UM: colleagues who use their PhD defence, inaugural lecture or farewell lecture as an opportunity to raise funds for worthy causes within the university. Professor and former board member Mirjam oude Egbrink, for example, gave a charitable slant to her retirement. Her farewell lecture raised €1,403 from 39 donors, intended in part for a scholarship for first-generation students. Huub Meijers followed suit and linked his retirement to equal educational opportunities, raising €450 from 13 donors. This growing movement shows just how strong the connection with UM is, and how academics want to give something back, especially at important moments in their careers. ➤



2. FUND MANAGEMENT

An important share of our financial resources come from donors who want their contributions to be used for a specific purpose. These are allocated to Named Funds administered by the University Fund Limburg, with funding distributed by spending committees composed on the basis of relevant expertise and commitment. A list of Named Funds can be found in the appendix.

New Named Fund: Smart Tears Fund

In a remarkable discovery by UM researcher Dr Marlies Gijs, tear fluid appears to contain specific substances that can be used to detect Alzheimer's disease. This method is far less invasive than an epidural and opens up new possibilities for monitoring the course of the disease. Following a successful crowdfunding campaign, including an art auction, a Named Fund was established with broad support from societal partners. This fund will make it possible to develop and finance follow-up research in the promising field of tear-fluid diagnostics.



New Named Fund: FPN Spearhead Fund

In 2024, the Fund received a major bequest of more than €414,000. The testator requested that the funds be used for new research of societal relevance at the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience. In consultation with the faculty, the intended use of the funds was determined in 2025 and a research plan was drawn up. This led to the establishment of the FPN Spearhead Fund, which will support four research projects focusing on the faculty's three spearheads: mental health, cognitive and applied neuroscience, and applied psychology. The projects encourage collaboration between different departments within the faculty and with researchers from other faculties.

New Named Fund: Riet Drop Fund

Thanks to a generous donation, the Riet Drop Fund was established in 2025 to support sociological research projects focusing on food and nutrition. Food takes on different meanings as our life circumstances change, and our eating habits also adapt to our environment.

Understanding this relationship is essential if we are to gain a better understanding of dietary behaviour and develop initiatives that help to prevent disease and epidemics. The fund is also a tribute to Riet Drop, who was appointed professor of Medical Sociology at the Maastricht medical faculty in 1980. During her impressive career, she also chaired the University Council and a committee of the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

New Named Fund: Housing and Household Finance Fund

The Housing and Household Finance Fund was established in 2025 under the coordination of Professor Dirk Brounen to study housing-market issues from multiple angles: households, the real-estate market, the financial sector and government. This chair will fund research projects that deepen our understanding of the relationship between housing and household finance. The aim is to explore how a better balance between the real-estate market, the financial sector and government can contribute to a sustainable outlook for households and for society at large. The chair will also promote collaboration by developing new knowledge in co-creation with different stakeholders.

Discontinued Named Fund: Chair of Youth, Nutrition and Health

The Chair of Youth, Nutrition and Health was established to investigate young people's eating behaviour and develop interventions that encourage healthy eating. It also played an important educational and societal role: students learnt how scientific insights could be translated into concrete applications. The knowledge and insights gained provide a valuable foundation for future initiatives aiming to improve young people's health and contribute to the development of the North Limburg region. We would like to thank all those involved for their generous and longstanding support of this chair.

Donation to cancer research

In 2025, the Fund received a special donation from the Hanarth Fonds for the third time, intended to support research on the development of an AI tool for ovarian cancer. The Hanarth Fonds believes in the potential of AI and machine learning to improve cancer diagnosis,

"At the Hanarth Fonds, we are proud to support Professor Lambin's research into an AI tool for ovarian cancer. In most patients, the disease is diagnosed at a late stage, which has a negative impact on survival chances. The development of an AI tool for ovarian cancer will lead to faster diagnoses and better personalised treatment outcomes. By contributing to this, we are taking steps towards a future that offers more hope to patients."

Judith van Gasteren
Director of the Hanarth Fonds

treatment and outcomes. The research into this new AI tool is led by Professor P. Lambin, a pioneer known for his ability to translate new medical insights rapidly into clinical practice. The Fund also received a donation for research focused on the use of AI to improve the assessment of peritoneal metastases on scans. This work is led by Professor I. De Hingh, who specialises in complex oncological procedures. We are extremely grateful to the Hanarth Fonds for these valuable donations.

Donations to the Healing Heart Fund

As in 2024, the Healing Heart Fund, coordinated by Dr Rogier Veltrop, received a major donation in 2025 from a private donor from the United States. This Named Fund also received a substantial donation from a consortium in Germany. Both donations will support PhD research into the mechanobiochemistry of heart failure and lamin disease; follow-up steps in Dr Veltrop's groundbreaking stem-cell research.

“Carrying on after my own experience of heart disease only feels valuable when scientific and financial contributions touch real lives, because behind every study is a patient counting on progress. By correcting defective genes, testing new drugs, simulating daily life in the lab and working intensively with patients, we are closing in on a definitive solution for cardiovascular disease. Every step brings us closer to preventing, and ultimately even curing, a condition that affects so many.”



dr. Rogier Veltrop
Researcher at CARIM, Department of Biochemistry

Continuation of the Peter Elverding Chair

The Peter Elverding Chair, which has been funded by a consortium of five companies over the past five years, will be continued with a number of existing partners. Coordinated by Professor Rob Bauer (School of Business and Economics) and Professor Mieke Olaerts (Faculty of Law), the chair focuses on research, education and collaboration with professionals in sustainable business practices, corporate culture and long-term value creation. In the coming years, it will continue strengthening UM's sustainability profile and contribute to the development of business regulation.

Sustained commitment to existing funds

Every year, in collaboration with partners in the field, we organise a range of activities under the banner of existing Named Funds. It is encouraging to see the continued commitment to increasing the visibility and achieving the objectives of these dedicated funds. The Brain Battle Fund is a notable example of what cooperation and collective effort can achieve. The fund is supported by people with lived experience, researchers and a large network of volunteers – a broad reflection of society.

Brain Battle event for relations

During an end-of-year gathering, the Brain Battle Fund looked back with pride on a successful 2025. More than 90 attendees gathered at the Shimano Experience Centre in Valkenburg to reflect on the results achieved and the impact of their support. The evening provided space for personal stories from volunteers, updates on future plans for research into brain injury and road safety, and presentations on the latest findings by researchers supported by the Brain Battle Fund. The event highlighted the strength of the movement the group has built together and the continued potential for hope and progress. ➤



“What appeals to me about the Brain Battle Fund is the combination of important scientific research and a focus on prevention, such as promoting the use of bike helmets to prevent serious brain injury in the event of a fall. After all, prevention is better than cure. The driving force behind the fund, Dr Marcel Aries, excels at inspiring volunteers and keeping them engaged. As a figurehead, he uses every opportunity to bring ‘his’ fund to the attention of the media and potential donors. It’s a pleasure to spend time with him. Whether it’s picking apples for the sale of apple juice, taking part in the tour version of the Amstel Gold Race or auctioning works of art, Marcel turns everything into a party. And the results are impressive: together with volunteers, substantial research funding has been raised and bike helmets are firmly on the agenda. But this is only the beginning. Much more research is needed, not to mention funding, and bike helmets are not yet mandatory. The work isn’t over yet!”

Camille Oostwegel sr.
Founder and Supervisory Board member, Oostwegel Collection



3. ALLOCATED FUNDING

Grants

The Fund places great value on projects and initiatives that contribute both to society and to a thriving university community. This is why, several times a year, UM staff and students can apply for a grant from the Fund to support their innovative projects and events. Two separate committees review the submitted proposals: the Committee for Academic Expenditure (CoBes) and the Committee for the Support of Student Activities (CooSa). A total of €244,936.48 was awarded in 2025, spread over 59 projects.

CooSa project: Battle of the Faculties

One of the fondest memories young people often take from their student years is the friendships they make. Inspired by the desire for connection among students – including with students from other faculties – the student association Kaleido came up with the idea of organising a Battle of the Faculties together with other student associations. The event consisted of three championships, with each faculty fielding its own team. During the Battle of the Brains, students put their critical thinking and intellectual skills to the test. The Battle of the Fittest featured football, rowing and tug-of-war, while for the Battle of the Bands, each band performed two songs. The faculty that received the most points overall was declared the winner. This initiative promoted student engagement and interaction between faculties, both of which are crucial for a thriving university community.


CoBes project: Huntington's disease


Huntington's disease is an inherited neurodegenerative disorder in which nerve cells in the brain die. This leads to involuntary movements, cognitive decline and psychiatric symptoms. Yet patients do not bear this burden alone: their loved ones are often confronted with chronic stress, care tasks and anticipatory grief, all of which can have lasting psychological consequences. Dr Maud Daemen's research, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, focused on gaining a better understanding of this hidden impact. The aim was to provide greater insight into the quality of life and experiences of patients' loved ones, as well as the impact on their social lives and work. This knowledge forms an important foundation for the development of targeted support for this group.

Scholarships

The Fund provides various scholarships to talented young people who dream of a university education, but for whom this is unfortunately not a given. To make this possible, we work with a wide range of organisations, private benefactors and foundations. The scholarship recipients come from many different countries, including the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Greece, France and the Czech Republic.

CoBes


 **Total amount granted**
€228,479,51

 **Approved applications**
50

Grants per faculty		Grants per project type	
13 FHML € 69,186,25	3 SBE € 7,500,00	26 projecten € 181,644,75	
11 FPN € 69,372,50	6 FASoS € 27,599,76	19 events € 38,834,76	
10 LAW € 26,735,00	1 MUO € 1,000,00	5 crowdfunding € 8,000	
6 FSE € 27,086,00			

CooSa

 **Total amount granted**
€16,456,97

 **Approved applications**
9

Grants per faculty		
5 FHML € 6,731,20	1 FSE € 3,500,00	1 FASoS € 1,540,00
2 SBE € 4,685,77	0 FPN € 0	0 LAW € 0



Scan the QR code for more inspiring projects and events that have received funding over the years.



Special encounters during scholarship event

Autumn 2025 saw our second scholarship event, an inspiring afternoon during which students and scholarship providers met and the official scholarship certificates were presented. Several recipients shared their personal stories, explaining how the scholarship had changed their lives and future prospects. A number of scholarship providers also spoke about what motivates them to invest in equal opportunities in education. The event made clear just how powerful and inspiring these encounters can be. We are pleased that, together with our scholarship providers, we can truly make a difference for talented young people within the Equity and Inclusion Programme.

Study story: Lieke van Gils

From an early age, Lieke van Gils knew she wanted to become a doctor. After enrolling in medicine, she received a message about the UM First Generation Student (FGS) Scholarship. She qualified for the scholarship and applied straight away. Under the lottery system, she was not initially allocated a place in the medical programme. But in the first week of the academic year, a place unexpectedly became available and she was able to join the programme after all. Having completed her bachelor's degree, Lieke is now looking forward to her clinical placements. She hasn't yet decided what to specialise in, but she does know that she wants to help students like herself. "I often hear people say: my father's a doctor too, or my brother or sister. But that's not a requirement, so don't let it put you off. There's no reason you can't be the first doctor in your family." With her determination and perseverance, Lieke shows how powerful opportunity can be when talent and support come together.

Prizes

For the past three years, the University Fund Limburg has contributed €1,500 to the annual UM Student Idea Competition, now called the Brightlands Challenge. The Fund will continue to support this prize for the next three years, from 2026 to 2028. The award ceremony is organised by the Student Project Team of the Student Services Centre. Through this support, and along with its continued backing of the other annual prize for scientific talent – the Young Talent and Innovation Award – the Fund continues to invest in the innovative potential of UM students. ↪

“Some young people in the Maastricht region aspire to a university education, but financial barriers stand in their way. De Ridder Foundation finds it important to help these motivated young people by covering their tuition fees. These scholarships give them the opportunity to lay a solid foundation for a successful future.”



Lisette Schermer
Board chair, De Ridder Foundation

UNIVERSITY FUND LIMBURG SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME 2025/26



Total number of scholarship holders 39



Newly awarded scholarships 16

Candriam Scholarship     

LKPU Management Consulting Scholarship  

Professor Jo Ritzen Scholarship  

North Limburg Regional Scholarship 

De Ridder Scholarship     

Mia Keulaerds Scholarship        

UM First Generation Student Scholarship              

Rachel & Alan Wyatt STS Scholarship  

 ongoing scholarships

 new scholarships



4. INVESTMENTS

New asset manager

In 2024 a tender was launched for the management of the Fund's investment portfolio. This was required by our articles of association following the completion of the previous five-year term. In selecting a new asset manager, particular attention was paid to the vision for the structure of the investment portfolio, risks and returns, sustainability ambitions and cost optimisation.

During the first two months of 2025, the portfolio was gradually transferred to the new asset manager, which assumed responsibility for the entire portfolio at the end of March.

Developments in the global market

Financial markets in 2025 operated amid gradually declining inflation and stabilising interest rates. The investment climate was marked by considerable market volatility caused by the new policies of the Trump administration. Given the turmoil in the financial markets and heightened tensions in the Middle East, predicting investment returns remains challenging.

Investment portfolio

Within the moderately defensive sustainable portfolio, the focus remained on European government bonds (around 70%), which offered stability and predictable income streams. The equity component (approximately 30%) was invested in Amundi Index funds^[1] and iShares

MSCI funds^[2] based on the MSCI World Index, providing additional diversification and exposure to global equity markets. This allocation remained in keeping with the Fund's moderately defensive and sustainable investment profile. We achieved a gross portfolio return of approximately 2.58% (net 2.40%). Despite fluctuations in the financial markets, this can be regarded as a solid result.

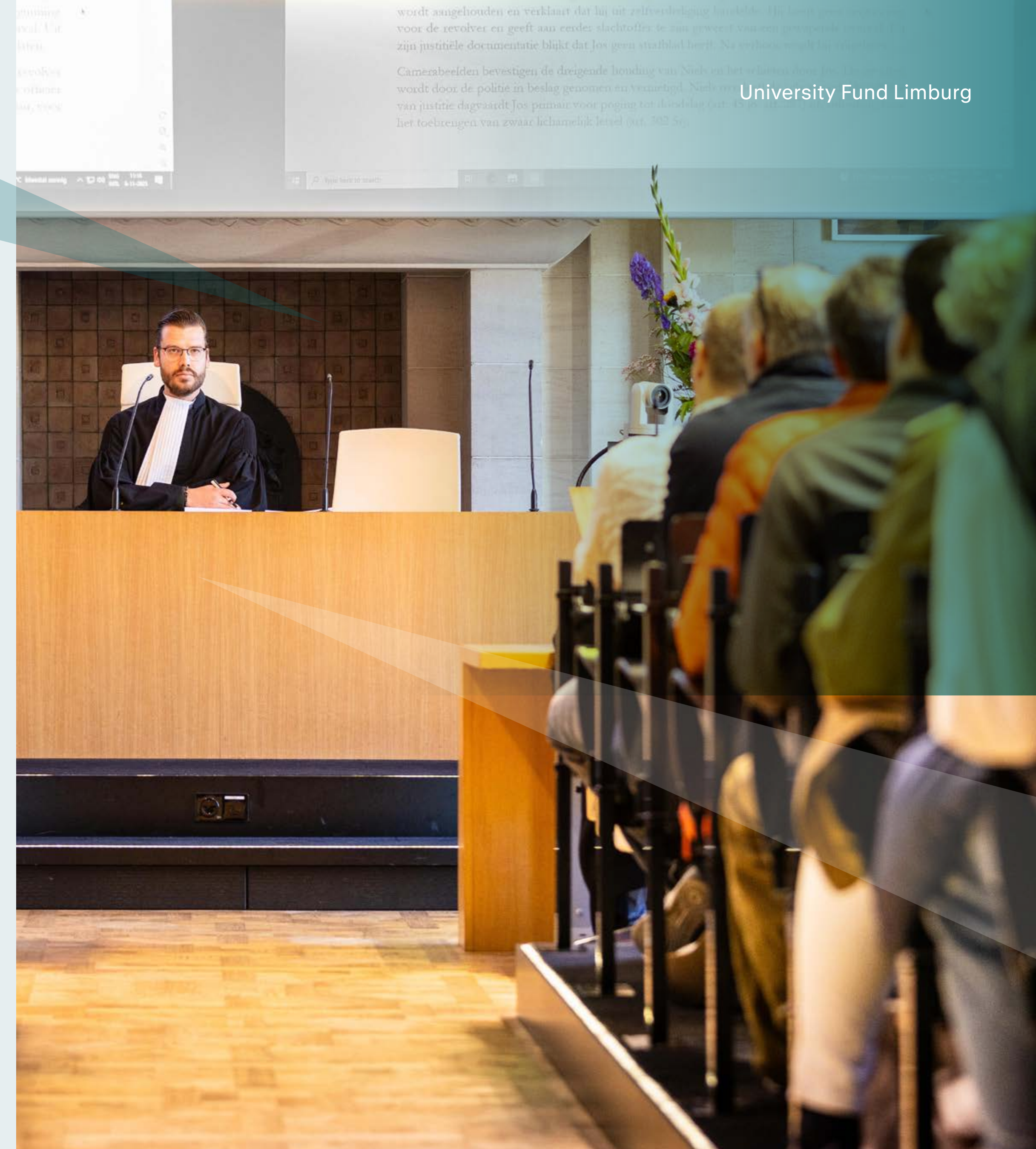
Sustainable investing

The investment portfolio forms part of a broader development in which institutional investors are increasingly integrating sustainability and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria into their investment policies. According to analyses by our asset manager, the sustainable finance market is growing, with green bonds serving as an important instrument. European governments are contributing to this by issuing green sovereign bonds. The equity component, invested through sustainable index funds from Amundi and BlackRock, incorporates ESG criteria into our portfolio.

The investment reports show that the portfolio is well-attuned to the Paris climate targets. Additionally, the Fund monitors the extent to which the portfolio contributes to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations. Particular attention is paid to human capital management, sustainable and good governance, and the transition to net-zero emissions. ↪

[1] ISIN: IE000VML2GZ3 / LU0390718863 / LU1861138961

[2] ISIN: IE00B52VJ196 / IE00BYX8XC17



Profit and loss statement, 2025	Realisation 2025 €	Budget 2025 €	Realisation 2024 €
Scholarships and funds received	595,847	326,000	455,465
Scholarships and funds awarded	-535,924	-287,000	-345,719
Change in balance sheet	-59,923	-39,000	-109,746
Result: scholarships and funds	0	0	0
Named Funds received	1,417,024	850,000	1,079,115
Grants awarded by Named Funds	-1,480,404	-768,000	-1,135,607
Result: Named Funds	-63,380	82,000	-56,492
Investment income, incl. capital gains	349,292	220,000	664,858
Other income	37,370	41,000	37,891
Release of past grants	21,600	30,000	49,486
Grants awarded	-244,937	-272,000	-283,079
Costs	-137,734	-178,000	-93,950
Result: other activities	25,591	-159,000	375,206
Total operating result	-37,789	-77,000	318,714

LOOKING AHEAD

IN 2026...



... we mark UM's 50th anniversary and involve our partners in the university's impact and future ambitions



... growing numbers of private parties see science and scholarship as a cause worth supporting, and want to contribute actively



... we expand the tradition of giving back within our alumni community and organise a major alumni 'homecoming' in honour of UM50



... our innovative fundraising campaigns linked to the anniversary year are well underway



... we strengthen our relationships with donors and partners while building new connections with private and corporate supporters



... together with other Dutch University Funds, we continue to draw attention to legacy giving to academia.

APPENDICES

Board

Members of the Executive Board

These members also sit on the General Board.

- Roemer, E. (chair; King's Commissioner for the Province of Limburg)
- Letschert, R. (vice chair; UM president)
- Leers, K. (treasurer; partner, Assurance Services, EY Accountants BV; SBE alum) (as of June)
- Niessen, N. (secretary; partner, Boels Zanders Advocates; LAW alum)
- Pluymakers, R. (treasurer; regional managing partner, Ernst & Young) (until June)
- Schreinemacher, M. (managing director, KRECO NV; FHML alum)

Members of the General Board

- Bauer, R. (professor of Institutional Investors, SBE; SBE alum) (until June)
- Blaauw, D. (consultant, ORGfit; LAW alum)
- Bos, J. (professor of Banking & Finance, SBE; SBE alum) (as of June)
- Coenen, R. (chair, Limburg Employers' Association)
- Egbrink, oude, M. (vice dean of education, FHML; Department of Physiology; School of Health Professions Education; FHML alum) (until July)
- Hillenaar, W. (mayor of Maastricht)
- Klein, de, T. (notary, Noto Notarissen, specialising in bequests)
- Meer, van der, Y. (professor of Sustainability of Chemicals and Materials, FSE; scientific vice director, Aachen-Maastricht Institute for Biobased Materials)
- Schok, T. (surgery oncologist and gastro-intestinal surgeon, VieCuri Medical Centre; FHML alum)

- Teunissen, P. (professor of Workplace Learning in Healthcare, vice dean of education, FHML; School of Health Professions Education) (as of November)
- Thissen, P. (honorary ambassador, Province of Limburg; former chair, Ondernemend Venlo)
- Vorst, van de, F. (manager of new business, Next Nature Foundation; LAW alum)

Changes to the board membership

In June 2025, the exceptional third term of Rob Bauer as board member and member of the financial committee came to an end. Thanks to his expertise in investments, he will remain involved with the financial committee in an advisory capacity. In the same month, the exceptional third term of Richard Pluymakers as treasurer also ended. From June 2025, Karin Leers took over the role of treasurer and Jaap Bos joined the General Board as a board member. Peter Thissen was reappointed for the period from 1 September 2025 to 1 September 2029. Mirjam oude Egbrink's previous one-year reappointment ended in July 2025. From November 2025, Pim Teunissen joined the General Board as a board member.

Staff

- Buck, A. (event manager and commercial fundraiser)
- Brink, van den, A. (communications officer) (until March)
- Franssen, Y. (senior account manager) (until July)
- Haemers, J. (communications officer)
- Hanneman, E. (financial consultant/data analyst)
- Heidendaal, V. (fundraiser) (as of October)

- Houben, J. (commercial support officer)
- Janssen-Kuijpers, B. (director)
- Klिंगenstijn, M. (office manager; board and CoBes secretary)
- Pesch, C. (event and community coordinator)
- Reijnen, N. (communications officer) (as of July)
- Vanderbroeck, G. (senior adviser)
- Verslegers, J. (alumni officer/data analyst)

Members of the Committee for Academic Expenditure (CoBes)

- Bijsterveld, K. (FASoS) (until October)
- Bruin, de, A. (FHML) (as of October)
- Bulic, B. (FSE)
- Engeland, van, M. (FHML) (until October)
- Janssen-Kuijpers, B. (University Fund Limburg, chair)
- Klिंगenstijn, M. (University Fund Limburg, secretary)
- Klip, A. (LAW) (until October)
- Lente, van, H. (FASoS) (as of October)
- Marques dos Santos, C. (SBE)
- Moerland, R. (LAW) (as of October)
- Sagana, A. (FPN)

Members of the Committee for the Support of Student Activities (CooSa)

- Ata, G. (Erasmus Student Network Maastricht; Nov 2025–present)
- Buck, A. (University Fund Limburg, secretary)
- Bauer, L. (Alles is Drama; Mar 2024–Dec 2025)
- Beek, van, N. (University Council; Mar 2025–present)
- Bogers, W. (University Council; Nov 2025–present)
- Bots, L. (Board of Independent Maastricht; Dec 2024–Apr 2025)
- Chrobat, A.A. (Student Representatives FASoS; Nov 2025–present)
- Dohmen, J. (SV Koko; Nov 2025–present)
- Geest, van, G. (Kaleido; Dec 2024–Apr 2025)
- Hendrickx, B. (Student Services Centre; permanent committee member)
- Janssen, J. (Student Services Centre; permanent committee member)
- Janssen-Kuijpers, B. (University Fund Limburg, chair)
- Maistrenko, S. (Eloquentia; Nov 2025–present)
- Mol, J. (Circumflex, also on behalf of Tragos and SV Koko; Dec 2024–Apr 2025)
- Pol, A. (MUSST; Nov 2025–present)
- Stas S. (Board of Independent Maastricht; Nov 2025–present)
- Tavares, J.S. (Kaleido; Nov 2025–present)
- Verstegen, F. (MSV Pulse; Nov 2025–present)
- Wehrens, L. (MUSST; Oct 2024–Apr 2025)

NAMED FUNDS



General academic support

- Nanne de Vries Professors' Fund
- Science Practice Fund
- Strategic Chair in Sociology of Technology and Inequality



Poverty

- Health in Slums Fund



Culture & Heritage

- Friends of the Maastricht Academic Heritage Fund
- Geert Hofstede Honorary Fund
- Hofstede Fund for Culture Research



Sustainability

- GRESB Research Fund
- Housing & Household Finance Fund
- Human Animal Sustainability Fund
- Peter Elverding Chair



Equal educational opportunities

- UCM Fund



Health

- A-KO Fund
- Brain Battle Fund
- Brain Injury Fund
- Brains Unlimited Pioneer Fund
- Excalibur Fund
- Healing Heart Fund
- Limburg Fund for Rehabilitation
- Mark Post Research Fund
- M4I Fund
- Queen of Hearts fund
- Riet Drop Fund
- SHE Fund
- Smart Tears Fund



Youth

- Chair of Youth, Nutrition and Health (discontinued as of September)
- Solberg–Verlinden Chair



Mental health

- Age@Minds Fund
- FPN Spearhead Fund



Rights

- Children's Rights Research Fund
- Jassim Aba Al-Khail Fund
- Prof. Dr. W.A. Wagenaar Fund
- Theo van Boven Fund



Technology

- Atoms2Anatomy Fund
- Knowledge Transfer Fund

Credits

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