

Nomination for the Willis Harman Spirit at Work Award 2003

Hereby I kindly present to the Willis Harman Spirit at Work Awards Committee the following (self)nomination:

1. Name of the organization:
Windesheim University of Professional Education at Zwolle in The Netherlands and more particularly its Geert Groote Institute, the Center for the Study of Identity and Inspiration .
2. Location of the University and of the Institute: Campus 2-6, PO Box 10090, 8000 GB Zwolle, The Netherlands.
Tel. of the University 0031.38.4699911.
Tel. of the Institute 0031.38.4699148.
Website of the University:
[www. Windesheim.nl](http://www.Windesheim.nl)
3. Contact person: Aad Kik, Coordinator of Inspirational Programmes of the Geert Groote Institute, Tel. 0031.38.4699132, email:A.Kik@Windesheim.nl
4. Windesheim University is one of the largest universities of professional education in the country as a result of the merging of some ten individual colleges in 1986. The name Windesheim comes from a village in the vicinity of the city of Zwolle (capital of the eastern province of Overijssel), where in the 14th century the religious and social pre-reformation movement, the Devotio Moderna, established its central monastery and community houses for "the common people".

Geert Groote was the spiritual and practical leader of the Movement. Thomas a Kempis became its world famous theological master (*De Imitatione Dei*).

Windesheim University embraces some seven faculties (Business & Management, Engineering & Technology Management, Humanities & Social Care, Health Care, Journalism & Communication, Education and Information Technology), each counting a number of different professional programmes. In cooperation with the Free University of Amsterdam Windesheim University offers programmes leading to bachelor and master degrees in all these fields.

At present Windesheim University counts some 12,000 students and over 1,100 employees.

In 1994 the Board of Directors of the University asked Dr. Aad Kik, a theologian and social scientist, to reformulate its statement of mission and Christian values. The outcome was to be the leading chapter for a new five years' strategy plan. While working on this assignment Aad Kik came to the idea that such a new formulation alone would hardly make any difference in the life and work of all those related to Windesheim. At best it would land among the many interesting documents on a shelf. He, therefore, proposed to the Board of Directors and to the Board of Trustees that a center be set up in the heart of the university for the continuous debate on and implementation of its mission and values. Such a center should not claim to always have the right answers, but, rather, to pose the right questions. The two Boards accepted the proposal and Aad Kik received a

new assignment for the development of such a center, which would be named Geert Groote Institute, after the great Devotio Moderna leader.

In the course of 1995 the plan for such a center was completed and warmly welcomed by the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors as well as by the various faculty teams. In February 1996 the Geert Groote Institute (GGI) was officially inaugurated under the leading motto "Learning and working with depth".

Though modest in size (3 part-time staffmembers and an assistant), the Geert Groote Institute soon became known and familiar to many of the employees (its first target group) and also among students (its second target group) and to people in the area around Windesheim (the third target group).

In the first two years activities included lectures on religious (often ethical) issues and on cultural topics with spiritual aspects, film and debate programmes, publications on values and inspiration, etc. Audiences included a mixed public of teachers and other university employees, students and interested fellow inhabitants of Zwolle city and the region. In addition staffmembers of the Geert Groote Institute advised university and faculty management in strengthening value orientation in policy making and curricula.

It was in the year 1999 that Aad Kik presented a plan for a continuous offer to all the university's employees for reflection on the condition of their motivation, their inspiration and spirituality. He worked out a two days' programme under the title "Time for Reflection and Inspiration" for retreats to be held off-campus in a monastery or a similar religious center. The staff of the GGI and the Board of Directors of the University warmly endorsed the idea. The Board allowed employees take part in such retreat courses during worktime and made available funds to facilitate free-of-charge participation.

It took quite some effort to recruit the first and also the second group of participants from among the employees. So far, it was "not done" to spend time for courses other than, e.g., improving skills, learning new methods, or obtain new strategic insights, all directly related to educational tasks. Managers found it difficult to allow their team-members to take leave for "reflection on inspiration". Likewise, employees hesitated to ask their boss to allow them to be away for two days of "spiritual re-courcing". Nevertheless, a nicely mixed group of 15 men and women, of different age, from various departments and positions applied and had a great time. The same was true for the second group of, again, some 15 employees who returned with great satisfaction.

After these two trials, the Board allowed the GGI to make a systematic offer to every university employee to participate in such a retreat course. Including the start in 1999 "Time for Reflection and Inspiration" has now been organised 12 times and included some 180 participants from all levels and corners of the university. It has become the backbone of the GGI's task to contribute to a meaningful Spirit at Work climate. The retreat programme, led by Aad Kik as the chief trainer and a female co-trainer from inside or outside the university, gears at refreshing the participant's contact with his/her inspirational and spiritual resources. These need not necessarily be officially Christian or solely religious of nature. There is room for each individual to follow his/her own path towards inspirational renewal.

The programme includes a wide variety of methods and activities to reach that goal, including small group exchange, video portraits of spiritual leaders, body-and-mind activities, meditation, poem writing, mime and other artistic expressions. If the location where the course is held houses a religious order or group, we usually partake in their prayer sessions. If not, we have our own intervals for prayer and silence.

After some two or three months each group is invited to a short retrospect and follow-up meeting. On such occasions almost all the participants report that the retreat has helped them to make a decision or take a step toward improving the quality of their personal life and/or their professional performance.

The overall evaluation of the experience has, for the vast majority of the participants, been extremely positive (see quotes further on). Almost everyone of them noted that he/she would recommend colleagues to also take part in such a retreat. And, indeed, many of them successfully made the suggestion to someone else, which results in a constant flow of applications. The retreat "Time for Reflection and Inspiration" is gradually becoming a natural component of HRM practices at most levels of the university.

In many of the evaluation forms it was also suggested to the GGI to offer follow-up programmes along this line. It was on the basis of such requests that Aad Kik was asked to work out a format for a second type of retreat course. That would then be offered after one and a half year to participants of the first rounds.

In the course of 2001 Aad developed "Search for Meaning and Spirituality", a retreat programme, in nature similar to the first, but with more depth and challenge. Again the GGI team and the University Board of Directors were very positive about this new programme and, once again, decided to make room and funds available to make such an offer to the employees concerned.

Participants of the first three rounds of "Time for Reflection and Inspiration" were asked if they were interested in participating in this new retreat. Some 80 % of them reacted positively; 40 % of them took part in the first round and 40% in the second round of "Search for Meaning and Spirituality". And, again, this flow is continuing, so that soon now the fifth round of this follow-up retreat will be held, now totalling some 70 participants.

In the meantime the suggestion was made to also develop a course in which reflection on spirituality would be related to management roles. After some extra study and orientation outside the university, Aad Kik presented a draft programme for a course "Inspirational Leadership". Its main purpose is to help managers to move away from traditional controlling leadership to inspiring and caring leadership. A successful tryout was made with a group of 15 management potentials. On the basis of their strongly positive evaluation, the course will soon be offered to all the managers of the university and will be integrated in the university's official HRM development programme.

The newest fruit of this tree is GGI's initiative for monthly inspirational lunchtime meetings, called "Sandwich with Substance". To be honest, the idea was copied by Aad Kik after an inspiring visit to Marian College, Fond du Lac, WI, last year, where he participated in such an activity.

In a mixed group of some 15 university employees a topic related to spirituality or inspiration is shortly presented by a GGI staffmember or guest speaker, after which discussion in small table groups follows. Not only is there a growing interest and active participation among many of the university employees, but the idea is also copied into similar lunchtime meetings in some of the university's departments.

A next field to be explored is the development of a retreat programme for students along the line of "Time for Reflection and Inspiration". In most of the faculties attention is already given to courses in Ethics and the like, but usually with a strong focus on professional performance. Little or no time in the educational programmes is given to study and exchange of the students' personal values, beliefs and spirituality. Like in the case of the university employees it is felt that the quality of the life and study process of the student will benefit from such inspirational retreats. The staff of the GGI, together with representatives of each faculty staff team, is preparing such an offer to be made in the next academic year.

By now Windesheim University has been provided with a strong Spirit at Work programme through the successive initiatives of its Geert Groote Institute. Managers are becoming more and more convinced that a programme of this kind adds to the quality of the collective working climate, to the individual wellbeing, to the value of our academic programmes and to the impact on our environment. Growing numbers of employees are becoming aware of the fact that maintaining a sound balance between body, mind and soul, between professional and private life and between energy and performance requires a regular break for reflection and inspiration.

In all humbleness it is fair to state that Windesheim University is unique in the country with such a systematic programme geared to strengthen the spiritual quality of its organisational climate. Other colleges, universities and companies, having heard of the positive experiences at Windesheim, are now approaching the Geert Groote Institute with requests to assist them in developing similar Spirit at Work programmes in their organizations too. Although the GGI has no marketing ambitions in this respect, it is of course prepared to "share its blessings" with likeminded people and institutions. In order to meet the growing interest from within the university and to respond to requests from outside, the GGI is now working on a train-the-trainers programme and the recruitment of potential co-trainers and coaches for its growing scheme.

(for quotes from employees, see attachment 1)

5. As under 3 (Aad Kik)
6. See attachments 2 and 3
7. Partly as mentioned under 2.

Other information (in Dutch) on the work of the Geert Groote Institute as part of Windesheim University and more particularly on its Spirit at Work activities can be found

in: "Outlined", magazine for Windesheim University Personnel,

in: "Trouw", national daily newspaper, several articles on start and progress of the GGI.

Attachments

Attachment 1

Quotes (taken from extensive written evaluation by each participant and from statements made in the follow-up meetings. Ninety percent of the evaluation is as positive as below)

from participants of "Time for Reflection and Inspiration"

"This retreat has enriched me greatly. I now have a lot to share with others"

(Klaas, financial controller)

"Making contact with colleagues on the level of the spirit was an exciting experience"

(Joe, teacher)

"Such an opportunity for rest and meditation is a wholesome treat" (Aalt, consultant)

"Sharing what really matters in life - as we did- leads to high quality contacts"(Rob, teacher)

"Working on my inner balance was an inspiring activity"(Willy, administrative assistant)

"It was amazing to feel safe and at home with one another so easily, once we had left the daily strife and competition behind us"(Ronald, senior lecturer)

"In times of frequent burnouts this retreat serves as an oasis" (Betty, student counselor)

"I didn't know I had colleagues with so much warmth and inner richness" (Peter, supervisor)

from participants of "Search for Meaning and Spirituality"

"More than many other 'technical courses' this programme provided new energy" (Ralph, caretaker)

"A 'must' for every colleague !" (Marion, student information officer)

"A retreat like this adds immensely to my motivation and sense of mission"(Hugo, lecturer)

"This course has helped me to gain a clearer view on my life mission"(Chris, consultant)

"Make retreats like this an integral part of HRM policies"(Rob, lecturer)

"This was one of the best treatments to overcome my depression and burnout" (Bert, tutor)

"The depth and high quality content of the retreat have helped me to renew contact with my sources of inspiration"(Paula, communications officer)

"Never before has Windesheim University given me such an important opportunity for learning" (Linda, management assistant)

from participants of "Inspirational leadership"

"This is a 'must' for all of Windesheim's managers !"(Hans, assistant manager)

"This was the most enriching part of the whole management training programme"(Erica, Public Relations consultant)

"This course was not only inspirational. It also helped to relate more strongly to the university as a community"(William, lecturer)

"An essential element in the preparation for management responsibility"(Jolanda, librarian)

"I learned that there is no real progress without time to rest and to listen to voices of inspiration"(Luke, assistant manager)

from participants of "Sandwich with substance"

"Beautiful offer to take an inspirational break" (Egbert, IT consultant)

"This strengthens companionship among colleagues"(Jo, senior management advisor)
"Time to listen to others and to my own inner voice. Very worthwhile !" (Sybille, lecturer and student coach)
"The open climate helps sharing different sources of inspiration" (Bert, lecturer)
"Making contact at soul level with different colleagues was a real surprise!" (Chiel, equipment supervisor)
"It made my day !"(Judith, teacher)
"A wonderful idea, worth copying in our own department"(Margareth, IT instruction coordinator)
"A real help in carrying sometimes heavy responsibilities"(Elisabeth, student counselor)
"A stimulus to open up in contacts at work"(Marian, finance controller)

Attachment 2

(1) Endorsement from the Board of Trustees of the Association (in Dutch: VU Vereniging) of the Free University and the University Hospital, at Amsterdam, Netherlands
De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam, Netherlands. Tel. 0031-20-4445291.
e-mail: j.slothouber@dienst.vu.nl (original copy officially signed by Mr. J. Slothouber)

Amsterdam, The Netherlands
December 4, 2002

Dear members of the Committee,

Through this letter I want to endorse the nomination of Windesheim University for Professional Education at Zwolle, The Netherlands, and its Geert Groote Institute for the 2003 Willis Harman Award through your Association Spirit at Work.

It is my firm belief that time devoted to reflection and search for inspiration in organizations like universities is of utmost importance. This is even more true for institutions like Windesheim and our own Free University which derive their mission from Christian values. I am impressed by the programme which Windesheim has allowed its Geert Groote Institute to develop in the past few years and which, by now, is firmly rooted in the University.

As part of a wider process of growing cooperation between our two universities, we are also investigating the possibility of inviting the Geert Groote Institute to make a similar offer to the employees of the Free University and of the related University Hospital.

No wonder that I warmly recommend Windesheim and its Geert Groote Institute for your consideration.

With kind regards,
J. Slothouber, Secretary General

(2) Endorsement from Miss Dr. Lenette Schuijt, Management Trainer and Director of Crystal River Consultancy (Amersfoort, The Netherlands), author of several books on Inspiration in Organizations and member of the Programme Committee of the Center for Meaning in Work, at Vught, The Netherlands . Several of the retreats organised by Windesheim have been held at Vught and Miss Schuijt has served on the retreat staff team several times.
(original copy officially signed by Miss Schuijt)

Vught, The Netherlands
December 9, 2002

Dear members of the Committee,

In this letter I would like to express my endorsement of the Windesheim University for Professional Education and its Geert Groote Institute at Zwolle, The Netherlands, for the 2003 Willis Harman Award through your Association Spirit at Work.

In many organizations people are merely a means to achieve corporate goals. I believe that in our time it is vital for organizations to be genuinely interested in the people who work there and in their deepest drives.

I have come to know Windesheim as an inspiring organization which is truly committed to its staff and is willing to invest in their development. Through the Geert Groote Institute it offers

programmes which enable employees to nourish their souls, to live their working life in line with their values and to create conditions for meaningful work. Many lives have already been affected by the programmes. Through a train-the-trainer programme the Geert Groote Institute will soon be able to expand its activities to an even wider audience.

I therefore warmly recommend the Windesheim University Geert Groote Institute for this year's Willis Harman Award.

With kind regards,
Lenette Schuijt