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A Leading European Business School

*Little cat
little cat
walking so alone
Tell me
who's cat are you?
I'm damned well my own
Piet Hein*

Our decision to run as candidates for the NHH rectorate election has not been triggered by a particular desire to take on positions of power. We are very happy with our current academic positions and have not actively sought this nomination. We would also like to point out that we act neither as representatives of our specific departments at NHH, nor as agents for the current leadership. We are not even spokespeople for the students, although they are the ones who have nominated us.

The reason we are running for election is that we both have an immense interest in the future of NHH. We believe that we can positively influence this future through our leadership and more importantly, we believe that the election of leadership positions at NHH should be based on a competitive process.

Our ambition is to make NHH a leading European Business School. This implies having researchers with an international reputation for rigor and relevance in their particular discipline, academic programs that compete for the best students in Europe, and that our candidates are highly attractive on the national as well as the international job market.

These goals are both realistic and necessary. Unless we systematically and continuously aim to become better, we are sure to face stagnation.

We propose five means for reaching our goal:

- Become (even) more internationally oriented
- Put quality before quantity
- Create market-oriented study programs
- Develop teaching methods that are aligned with the digitalization of education
- Learn to collaborate better

We have organized our program along the five bullet points above.

Internationalization

NHH needs to become considerably more internationally oriented in order to excel in the European market. While we can be proud of the existing student exchange programs and the formalized collaborations we have through CEMS and PIM, the next four years must go well beyond our existing international activities. We must increasingly focus on:

- (1) securing that our candidates are highly attractive both on the Norwegian and international job market

- (2) providing access to the best international graduate programs for our students
- (3) making our programs attractive for topnotch international students
- (4) publishing in highly ranked international journals and collaborating in international research networks

Considerable progress needs to be made on all of the above four points.

We believe that moving forward requires a broader approach towards internationalization. Internationalization should not be viewed as *one* activity but rather as the backbone of everything that we do at NHH. This entails restructuring our study programs to fit with international standards and international demands, encouraging our own bachelor students to pursue their master degrees abroad, and providing financial (and other types of support) for developing and maintaining international research networks, as well as actively working to internationalize the job market opportunities for our candidates.

In short, internationalization has to become the foundation for everything that we do within our study programs, teaching and research activities.

Quality rather than quantity

The second founding principle in our proposed plan is to put priority on quality rather than quantity. It is important that we build on our strengths and we want to do this by supporting and rewarding individuals and groups who do an excellent job – within research, teaching or external relations. The best possible working conditions for high-performers should be more important than having the largest possible number of employees. Likewise, we believe it is more valuable to have high quality courses than a large selection of courses.

In addition to focusing on high quality in everything we do, we will need to evaluate the current incentive systems at NHH. We need to consider whether we currently have a system that rewards the right activities (excellent research, teaching and external relations), which at the same time is perceived as fair.

Market-oriented study programs

NHH needs academic programs that are:

- Aligned with the European standard
- Meet the demands of European students
- Internationally competitive in terms of quality

The Bachelor Program appears to be on the right track. The structure of the program seems appropriate, high-quality electives are continuously being developed, and there is considerable work being done to develop new teaching methods for large groups.

The Master Programs also contain many good aspects, but we believe that the current structure and profile of these programs need to be assessed. Other leading business schools in Europe (such as HEC, Bocconi og LBS) offer specialized programs (such as within finance or management), while this is currently not within the NHH portfolio. We are also among the few schools who do not offer master programs for students without a bachelor degree in business.

If elected, one of our immediate actions will be to take a closer look at NHH's portfolio of Master Programs.

We must also improve our offerings to students who are looking at our highest level programs, such as those aiming for more specialized training, and in particular those who are interested in pursuing a PhD. While the best business schools in the US admit bachelor candidates directly to their PhD programs, NHH (and other European Business Schools) require that students first complete a two year master-program, without ensuring that these two years prepare them for higher-level PhD studies.

Important work has already been initiated in this respect. A proposal for a "research master" has been developed and we believe this can be a first step towards a new and improved academic research program. These plans can also contribute in making the PhD program at NHH more attractive.

Aligning teaching methods with digitalization

While we must always work to improve our teaching methods, the digitalization of education brings new challenges. If our students can stream lectures by the very best experts on a global basis, then we may need to entirely reconsider how we use our limited teaching resources. Rather than providing similar (but lower quality) lectures, we may want to draw on the global digital resources and supplement them with new approaches towards teaching.

We believe we need to get started immediately on finding the best strategies for responding to the opportunities brought by digitalization. We propose to charge an expert taskforce consisting of external and internal members with drawing up a set of alternative strategies that can serve as a basis for decision making and action.

Teamwork

The final and most important issue we want to address has to do with *how* we work at NHH. We would like to see much more and better collaboration across departments, fields and positions.

It is often claimed that NHH is governed in a bottom-up fashion. To be sure there are great opportunities and a large degree of autonomy for individuals and/or groups to shape their own worklife. This is a cultural trait we value and would like to build on.

However, rather than viewing this as purposeful bottom-up governing, one might also argue that it shows a certain lack of governance. We want to do something about this. Not by governing top-down, but by further developing the leadership team to become an effective and unified governing body.

More specifically, we want to provide maximum autonomy and responsibility for the departments by placing the responsibility for collaboration and higher-level decision-making in a governing body consisting of the rector, deputy rector, heads of departments, deans and student representatives. This leadership team should meet regularly each week to ensure sufficient information sharing and communication and negotiations about key issues. The goal

is that collaboration and teamwork becomes the norm for decision making rather than confrontation.

NHHs dual leadership model further requires that there is a close and well-functioning relationship between the Rector and the Managing Director. Rector has the responsibility for the academic staff and acts as Chairman of the Board. As such, Rector at NHH has traditionally been *primus inter pares*. This implies the overall responsibility for both the academic and administrative functioning of NHH. While Rector must collaborate closely with the CEO to fulfill this role, it is also important that the CEO is provided sufficient discretion and autonomy to do his/her job.

In order to collaborate effectively we will need to develop a culture that reinforces teamwork. Cultural change cannot be enforced, but instead requires long-term systematic work. Formal leadership and governance structures are important in this respect. We are deeply committed to making an effort at developing the NHH culture in a more collaborative direction.