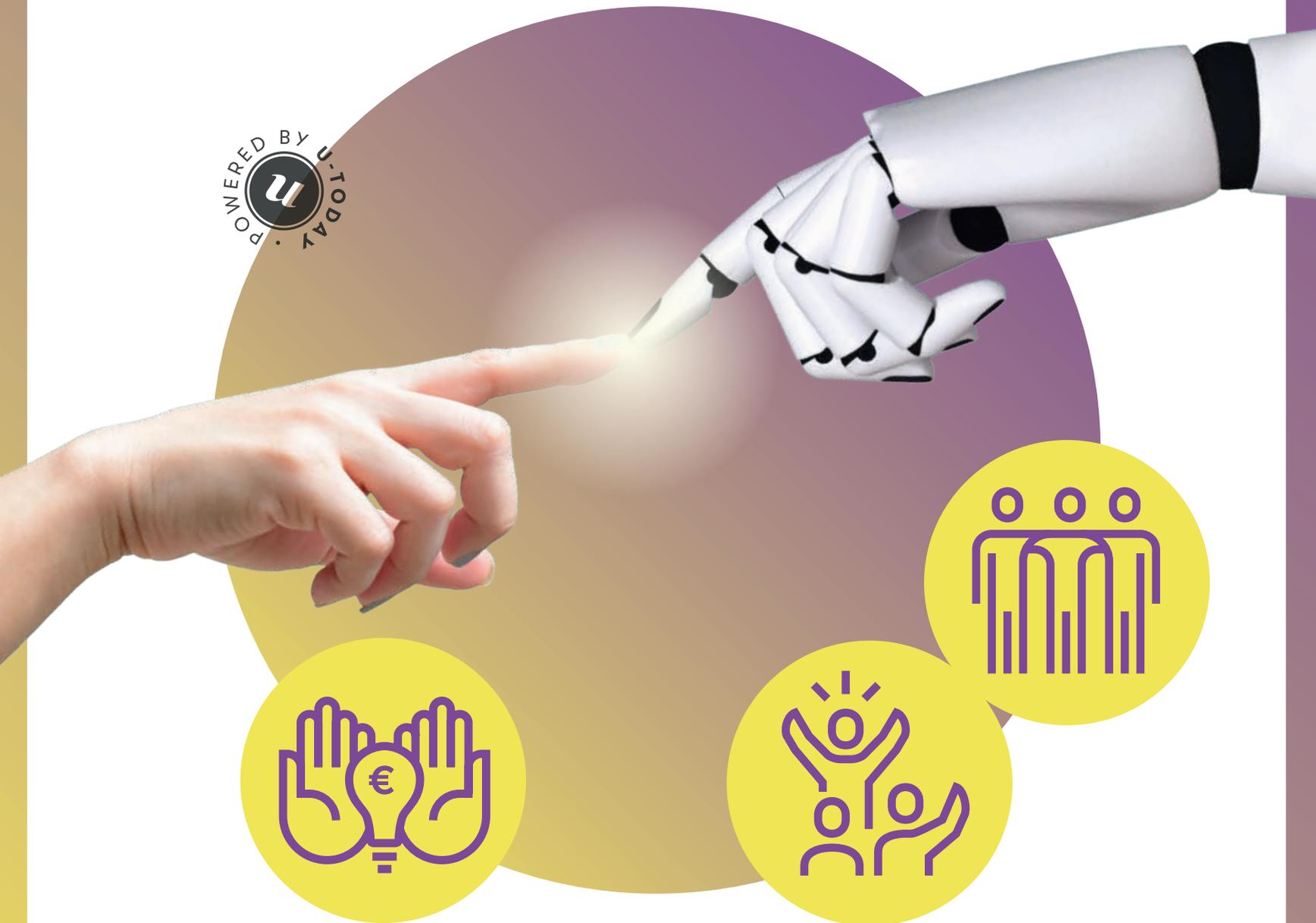


JULY 2021

This special issue is a publication by U-Today

# SBD

## *Strategic Business Development*



**The three pillars of SBD explained:**  
Grants Office, Impact Development  
and Project Management Office

**'You don't have to  
do everything yourself'**  
- Sonia García Blanco

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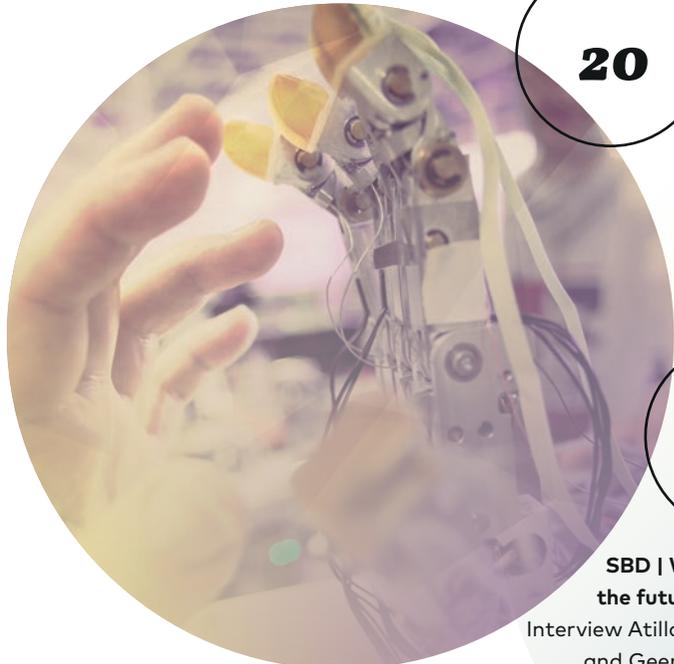
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## FOREWORD

### Colophon

This SBD special was created in collaboration with U-Today, the independent journalistic medium at the University of Twente.

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# Achieve the best results

A popular Dutch cartoon recently showed a junior scientist in a classic chemistry lab with glass equipment and boiling liquids. Obviously proud of the result he had just achieved, he had asked his Professor to come and have a look in the lab. The Professor said 'You really took me off my grant application writing, for this?'

It seems a bit exaggerated, but there is some element of truth in it and that is a worrying one. Do our top talents really spend most of their time writing proposals instead of teaching, doing research and coaching young talent? From what I hear, the percentage of time spent on proposal writing seems to run out of hand. If, at the same time, the success rate is quite low, this leads to frustration. Why do young scientists, after a successful tenure track for example, have to spend so much time trying to get funding?

There's a lot to be said about this, about the Dutch research climate. But equally important is that the university has a lot of facilities to offer. I am convinced that the scientific basis of the proposals is not the problem. But you also have to convince people that are not in your line of work. There are political and interpersonal aspects you will have to deal with.

The University of Twente has people who can help you with this, to help you prepare your proposal, to try out your presentation and keep you sharp. It is one of the many services offered by Strategic Business Development.

The same holds for contacts with the business world. Your scientific story may be great, but so many more aspects will play a role. A major recommendation from my side would be: start on time. In doing so, you will notice that SBD will be able to relieve your workload and help you achieve the best results. Just let the examples in this special issue convince you!

### Tom Veldkamp

Rector Magnificus



# *'We help make connections'*

From left: Jorien van Loon, Telma Esteves and Janneke Hoedemaekers



*Our expertise  
assists at many stages  
of the R&D value chain:  
ideating, securing  
funding, generating  
contracts*

.....

The three pillars of Strategic Business Development (SBD) - Grants Office, Impact Development and Project Management Office - cover a wide spectrum of tasks, such as securing funding, organizing large public-private initiatives and running research projects. All of this has only one common goal: to ease research and collaboration. The three pillar heads - Telma Esteves, Janneke Hoedemaekers and Jorien van Loon -, explain how SBD supports the UT community and their external partners.

#### **What is each pillar responsible for?**

Telma: 'Our Grants Office team assists researchers with funding acquisition. To acquire competitive funding, researchers are asked to write down their ideas on how to achieve certain solutions, but this process is complex. That is where the Grants Office comes in. We call ourselves the "architects" of calls for funding. We understand funding and we try to bring this knowledge to researchers, helping them develop proposals. Next to that, we would like to work with the organization, the management, on setting up a funding acquisition strategy for the future. We also promote training, preparing the community in skills needed to get funds. Everyone in all stages of their career can count on us for the knowledge on how to produce the best competitive proposal.'

Janneke: 'This is a nice bridge to impact development. As Telma indicated, these calls and funding schemes are highly competitive and often require collaboration, so consortia need to be formed. Within the Impact Development pillar, we support researchers and management to develop larger multidisciplinary public-private partnerships. This can ensure us higher

success rates in these calls and improves the UT visibility and reputation. While the Grants Office has knowledge on national and European instruments, we help researchers build and maintain these larger relations and to develop propositions. We try to align the roadmaps of the University of Twente and the external organizations, which can be companies but also NGOs and hospitals. It comes down to more than just research, but also education and talent development. We try to connect the activities and challenges of the organization to the UT, and vice versa.'



#### **SBD TEAM VIEW**

*'You can make the difference between getting research funded or not. Sometimes you see just what the researcher does not see.'*

**Noortje van der Knaap**  
Dutch Grants Advisor  
& Liaison

## EXPERTISE

### Three SBD expertise

Strategic Business Development combines special expertise:



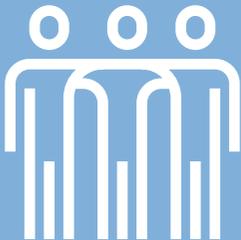
#### 1- Grants Office lead by Telma Esteves

'We understand funding and we try to bring this knowledge to researchers, helping them develop proposals'



#### 2- Impact Development lead by Janneke Hoedemaekers

'We support researchers and management to set up larger public-private partnerships'



#### 3- Project Management Office lead by Jorien van Loon

'We support researchers whenever they are coordinating larger projects'

Jorien: 'And this is a nice introduction to what we do at Project Management Office (PMO). When these proposals or projects have been granted, that is when we come in. We support researchers whenever they are coordinating larger projects. We all know the workload of researchers is really high and we would like them to be able to focus on their own expertise and research topic. They are the best in what they do. When you have a large research project, there are so many other things coming at you. We will take care of that. We will take care of all the parts researchers are usually not fans of. While doing these things, we ensure the proper implementation of the proposal as well. If a project is not properly implemented, the funding agency may reduce the final grant and the UT may actually lose money. For us it is the end of the chain: we are securing the funding and the academic reputation of the UT as well. This will lead to more proposals granted and better relationships with partners.'

#### With what questions or a goal in mind should a researcher contact each of you?

Telma: 'Ultimately we hope they contact SBD, because they see the value of large integrated approach to funding. It is ultimately about that. It is about making research possible and real - and making the best plan possible. It can be a researcher who sees potential impact in an idea, but is not sure where to take it. We can assist in the ideating and working together on definition of the potential impact.'



#### SBD TEAM VIEW

*'Working at SBD provides me with the opportunity to collaborate with extremely talented scientists who are experts on a wide range of areas ranging from photonics and batteries to smart industry and photoacoustic imaging. In this challenging environment I am continuously learning new things while keeping me informed of the latest scientific insights and breakthroughs.'*

**Maarten Emmerich**  
Impact Development Manager

We need to stress that we also need a proactive community; we don't just come up with opportunities ourselves. Yes, we do trend watching, but we always need critical mass and collaborative will from the community.'

Janneke: 'We help people define a pathway on how to get something rolling. We help make connections – with businesses, funding schemes or even just internally with scientists at the UT who have worked on the topic in the past.'

### **Does that mean a researcher can contact you at any point with any initiative?**

Jorien: 'Yes, we can help across the entire chain: ideating, securing funding, helping get contracts. The help can also be quite practical during projects, such as writing deliverables, organizing consortium meetings. We also function as a sort of a helpdesk. All of us are contacted by researchers who have questions. There are many practical questions that will cost researchers a lot of time if they have to figure it out themselves. Now they can give us a call and their problem may be solved easily.'

Telma: 'We welcome any request, but we are also clear on our possible contributions. We focus on strategic priorities of the university. As Janneke said, we also connect internally because many requests can be addressed by the Faculties. We have good relations with other departments and we collaborate where suitable.'

Janneke: 'Grants office and Project Management Office are the links to the internal structure, the world of the Faculties and the support there. At Impact Development, we have more focus to the external world, how are companies organized, what are the networks where businesses connect and what do they expect from universities. We often get approached with questions such as: Artificial Intelligence is now a relevant theme, how can I connect to it? We then make the translation to the initiatives we support and our partners. Overall, as a team, SBD strives to work as a single point of access to researchers and our partners.' ●

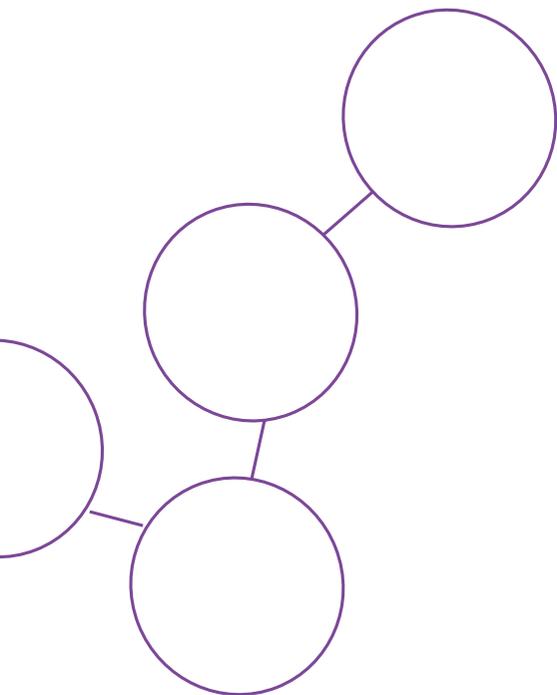
### **SBD TEAM VIEW**

*'As project manager, I like the interaction with the multicultural participants of the European projects.*

*Being able to assist a coordinator to crack a complex managerial task in such a manner that the coordinator and project members can maintain their focus on the scientific breakthrough which benefits society, makes my work as project manager special and worthy.'*



**Jan Beerens**  
Project Manager



## SBD Team View

*‘There are many reasons why I love my job. One of them is the diversity of my projects: from a regional cooperation between industry and academia leading to ground breaking solutions for commercial applications to a cooperation with international teams on the future European education leading to more sustainable communities across Europe’*

## SBD | FACTS AND FIGURES

# HELLO!

*We are pleased to meet you*

**Strategic Business Development supports the UT community in connecting excellent research to external needs, ultimately favoring both.**

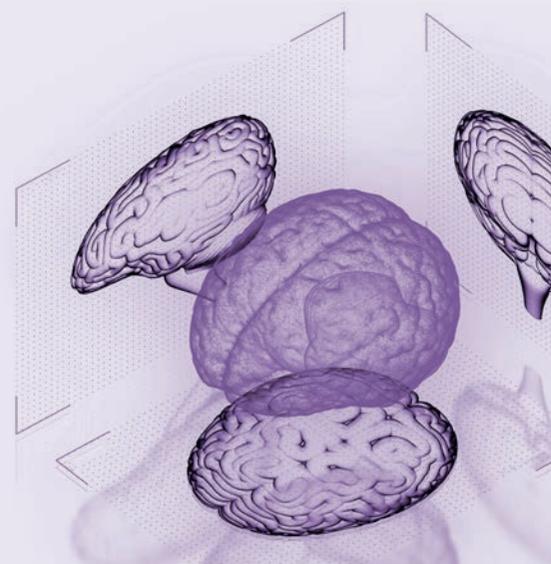
Having started as a UT department in January 2021, SBD teams already have a track record working at the strategic and operational level. SBD means to work as a direct extension of the research organizational structure, supporting on the definition and implementation of ambitions. In this, SBD cherishes links to UT staff with a strong connection to research: managing directors of research institutes and grant advisors, together with capacity for project management and business development, policy, communication, finances and legal support. In these pages, a snapshot of our activities and some related facts.

Magdalena Majchrowicz  
Project Manager



## Did you know?

Partly due to the hard work done by the Digital Society Institute, UT's Artificial Intelligence Hub East is known as one of the Netherlands' six innovation hubs in the field of data. SBD has assisted UT's participation intensively.





## Fact

# Special Envoy

IJsbrand Haagsma serves as Special Envoy for Public Affairs for the University of Twente. As Special Envoy, a joint initiative from the province and the university, Haagsma wishes to bring UT's research to the attention of politicians, ministries and other public organisations. It's something like a forward operating base for the UT in The Hague. Haagsma represents the region and serves as ambassador for the major research and education programmes of the UT.

## Did you know?

SBD's Office regularly organises webinars and online sessions at Faculties to inform UT researchers about funding opportunities and train on proposal development skills.

## Did you know?

SBD's Project Management Office works side by side with UT research coordinators to manage over 70 million in project funding.

## Good to know

# 10 Veni grants

Last year, ten young scientists received a Veni grant from the Dutch Research Council (NWO). With this grant (worth up to €250,000), they can spend three years further developing their research at the UT. Veni is one of the NWO's talent programme (Veni-Vidi-Vici), designed to reward promising researchers who have only recently obtained their doctoral degree. SBD's Grant Office has a track record supporting researchers with personal grants applications, including Rubicon, Veni-Vidi-Vici and ERC.

## FOR YOUR INFO



# Joining forces

UT and Thales Group will be working together more closely in the fields of cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Last September, both parties signed the renewed cooperation agreement, which creates room for the development of joint knowledge and technology.

'By working together, we can execute projects faster and submit joint research proposals for national and international funding. That makes Thales an important partner for all UT faculties,' says Geert Dewulf, Chief Development Officer of SBD.

UT and Thales have been working together for years. One product of their collaboration is T-Xchange, a collaborative project in the field of game-based learning for professionals. For ten years, UT and Thales invested in a 'strong, technological position' in the field of serious gaming.

Now, they have set their sights on cybersecurity and AI. 'These topics have only become more relevant as a result of the corona crisis,' Dewulf states. 'We are joining forces by acting together on national and international agendas.' (Source: U-Today)

# *We cherish our international backgrounds*

.....

What characterizes the SBD team? Many exciting features! For starters, we are driven and proactive, both in our jobs and our personal lives. Our passion shines through in our work, family and hobbies—which includes professional wine-tasting, horse-back riding, to carnival... you name it! The ingredient driving our team's success? In part, it's our diverse international background. We believe diversity is a pillar of innovation—it helps ensure our problem solving approach includes inputs from different perspectives, and as a result, the solutions created are hopefully more equitable and innovative.

*A multinational team of various nationalities*

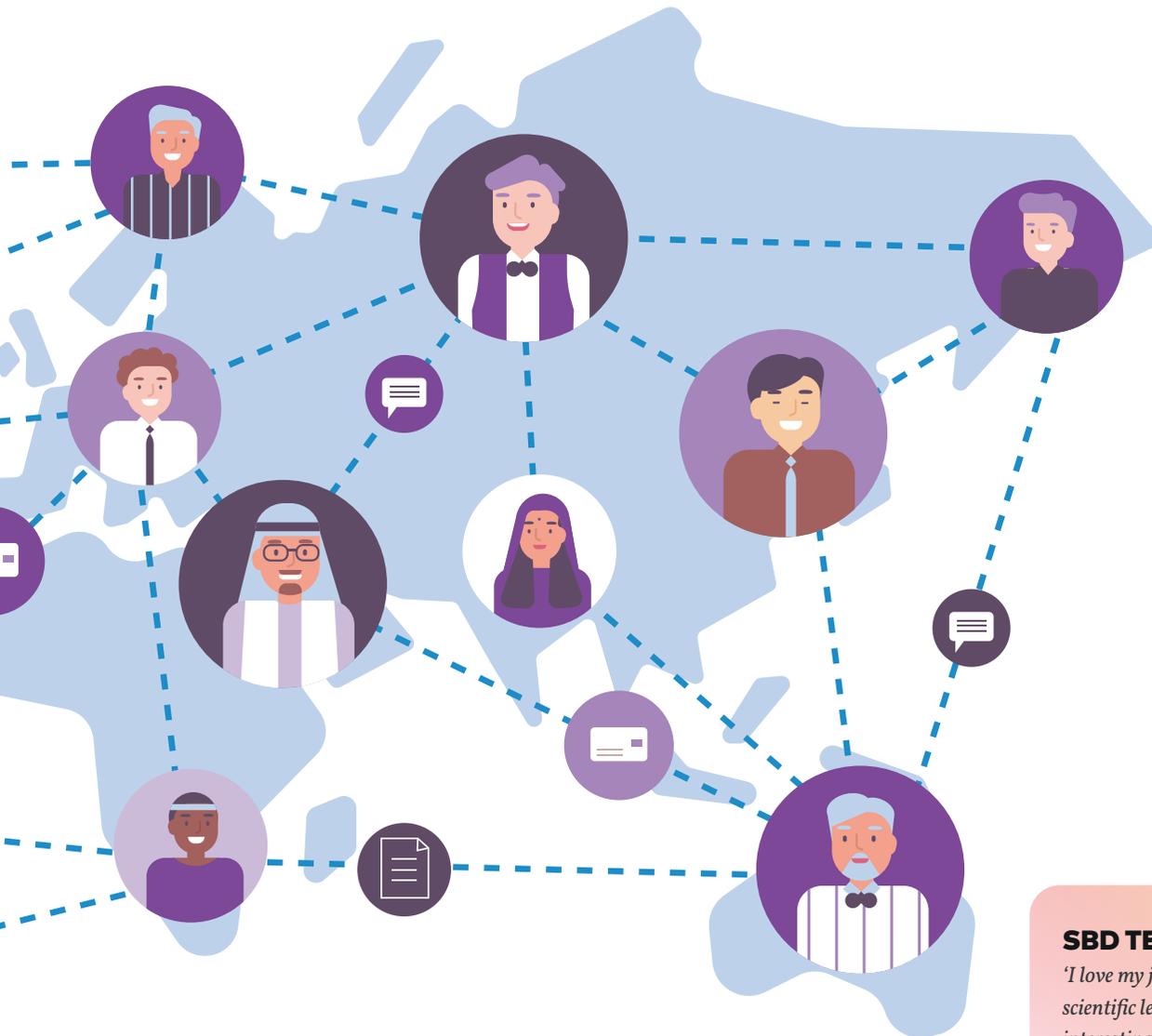


### SBD TEAM VIEW

*'Bundling strengths with an international team and working towards reaching incredible results and common goals is what gives me energy and inspires me every day. What I appreciate most when it comes to my role as project manager is the huge variety of tasks and personalities that you encounter when managing European projects. As a project manager I actually fulfill multiple roles and there are different challenges to solve from day to day. Furthermore, I enjoy the collaboration with and the knowledge exchange among the different European partners very much.'*



**Maren Bödding**  
Project Manager



### International study and work experience



### A team of multi-cultural descend



### SBD TEAM VIEW

*'I love my job as I get to interface with world renowned scientific leaders and passionate students in diverse and interesting fields. As project managers, I enjoy that we are the oil that helps the multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural and multi-component machine move as smoothly as possible along its journey to attain its objectives.'*



**Bridgette Connell**  
Project Manager

**INTERVIEW**



Text: Rense Kuipers

Photos: UT archive

## SBD | RESEARCH

# ‘My advice to fellow researchers? You don’t have to do everything yourself’

.....

As the saying goes: teamwork makes the dream work. Aided by the Strategic Business Development department, Professor Sonia García Blanco was able to secure multiple major European grants over the last few years. ‘SBD helps me to focus on the things I am best at as a scientist.’

**A**t the end of 2020, García Blanco was able to secure a multi-million Horizon2020 project, acronym OPHELLIA. She knows there are a lot of pieces of the puzzle that need to fall into place before it comes that far. ‘The odds of a research project being granted are quite slim. In the case of these big Horizon2020 projects with multiple stakeholders involved, it can go between 2 and 12 percent success rate. And it goes without saying that it is incredibly demotivating for every researcher if a proposal gets rejected after one and a half months of working on it fulltime.’

### Answering the right questions

The researcher at the Optical Sciences group looked for support at SBD’s Grants Office – not for the first time. ‘Already back in my ERC Consolidator Grant application, Telma Esteves was very helpful in giving some key advices in the writing of my proposal. Reviewers are often focussed on a set of specific questions. They might attach great value about the innovative aspects of a project, for instance. The Grants Office helped me to find the answers to these kinds of questions, so I could incorporate them in the proposal. After getting on the shortlist, I also received help in my presentation for the committee.’

Also after the stage leading up to submitting the OPHELLIA proposal, SBD aided García Blanco greatly. ‘Maarten Emmerich, an impact development manager, really went the extra mile and got his hands dirty, by helping to coordinate the consortium and receiving contributions from all the partners. Once the project started, I received help from Sofya Kopelyan in project management and coordination. This management part



### SBD TEAM VIEW

*‘I enjoy coordinating support for researchers to give them the opportunity to write the best proposal they can, all the while collaborating in an excellent team, which will create a happy researcher at the UT and bring new scientific discoveries in this world.’*

Sanne de Wit, Dutch Grants Advisor

doesn't come easy to me as a researcher, so this is really helpful. The effort SBD puts in as a whole, helps me to focus on the things I am best at as a scientist.'

### Team effort

In the OPHELLIA project, García Blanco is working on developing laser sources for LiDAR technology, to enhance both the resolution and range of the technology for drones, autonomous trains and safety sensors in harbours. While it is a big project of four years, it doesn't stop her from pursuing other research projects. 'Last year, some partners flagged a Covid-related programme, just five days before the deadline. I thought, let's go for it!', says the researcher. Despite the reservations due to short time to deadline, the initiative was identified as strategic, so SBD came on-board. With the help of Janneke Hoedemaekers, Sonia managed to find partner companies and made the deadline. Unfortunately to no avail, as the proposal was put on a reserve list. 'Even though it was excellent in science, according to the reviewers. It is a shame, but that is how it goes. Even though our hard work didn't result in the ideal outcome, it is good to remember that such a team effort can pay off. That would also be my main advice to fellow researchers within the UT: you don't have to do everything yourself. The university provides this important service, so go out and ask for help!'



### *'We are generalists with a passion for research'*

SBD Project Manager Sofya Kopelyan, helps out researchers like Sonia García Blanco in coordinating research projects. 'We are there so scientists can focus on the things they do best. The key word for my activities is coordination. In these big projects like OPHELLIA, you need someone who has a bird's eye view. There needs to be a plan and there needs to be someone who makes sure everyone sticks to the plan. We want a project to be of top quality.'

For Kopelyan, it boils down to taking multitasking to another level. 'Think of, for example, coordinating meetings within a consortium, quality management, risk management, finances, team building, arranging deliverables in time, making sure documentation is in order, staying in touch with our internal and external network for legal advice and business development. As project managers, we need to know a little bit about everything, which is always challenging and never boring. We are generalists with a passion for research.'

**Sofya Kopelyan**, Project Manager

'At SBD, I have had the privilege of helping Sonia and her consortium to write the proposal for the ongoing project OPHELLIA. Together, we managed to write a successful proposal in only a very short time. Sonia's excellent writing skills, intelligence, kindness, and drive to succeed made it a very enjoyable collaboration worth repeating. Knowing that through this collaboration I have been able to make a contribution, however small it may be, to the realization of LiDAR systems for future and emerging technologies, is what makes it such a pleasure to have the privilege to work at SBD.'

**Maarten Emmerich**  
Impact Development  
Manager



### Next steps

If it were up to García Blanco, the SBD department could grow in both numbers and activities. 'For the Covid-project, we were collaborating with LEITAT, in Barcelona. They had a big support network, with three people from their support office working on the proposal simultaneously. If our own SBD department keeps developing, it will surely lead to more experience and more and better research proposals.' ●

# Support with drawing up joint doctorate agreements

Text:

Stan Waning

Photos:

UT archive

**Frank Leferink's work benefits from the so-called European joint doctorate networks, opportunities for scientists to take part in projects that transcend sectors and national borders. Strategic Business Development served as a sounding board to the definition of UT participation in these networks, and assists with project management. 'Do not underestimate the role that SBD plays.'**



**O**ur MSCA projects in SCENT (Smart City EMC Network for Training) provide innovative opportunities for career and knowledge exchange by facilitating international and inter-sectorial mobility for researchers', Leferink says.

The Project Coordinator knows that a joint doctorate is not for everyone. 'For now, only a fairly small group of scientists has taken on that challenge. The competition is fierce. The success rate lies between seven and nine percent. We currently have five ongoing projects in our group. UT is coordinating three of those, and they will ultimately result in a joint doctorate for the involved doctoral candidates. This means that the doctoral candidate will receive guidance from multiple European universities in her/his project. At the moment, nine doctoral candidates who work at UT are taking part in these projects, alongside ten others who are not contracted by the UT.'

## Reviews and feedback

According to Leferink, the importance of SBD's role in these projects should not be underestimated. 'SBD's grants advisors serve as a sounding board during the application process and as an important source of information due to its ties to Brussels.

Furthermore, they offer reviews and feedback. SBD's project managers also assist in the drawing up of the Joint Doctorate Agreement between the universities or the graduate schools, which is quite a daunting task because of the many - usually minute - differences between each institution's regulations.'

Leferink advocates for even deeper support. 'We could also use brokers during project applications, facilitating collaboration between different universities. For scientists, it is good to know that there are opportunities waiting to be seized. There is a growing focus on joint doctorates at the European level as well.'

Multiple universities being involved in a single project is nothing new, Leferink knows. What sets these projects apart, however, is the fact that at least three universities from different countries are involved. In that context, having to deal with differences in insights and regulations is to be expected, Leferink says. 'That is exactly where SBD plays such an important role; to share experiences, for example. I think we are doing good work in Twente in this regard. Wonderful things are happening, but it is important to keep improving.' ●



*'It is inspiring to work in a multicultural environment with international experts. It is a great challenge to manage the consortium to achieve ambitious goals, such as the recently established joint doctorate with three international universities in SCENT. The feeling to achieve such important milestones together with other scientific breakthroughs is fantastic.'*

**Marco Raaben**  
Project Manager

# *‘SBD helped set up a single service point for expertise and research’*

.....

During the corona crisis, the number of cybercrime incidents grew by 600%. Likewise, everyone can still remember the recent hacks of institutions such as municipalities and hospitals. It is clear that the new Twente University Centre for Cybersecurity Research, or TUCCR, has its work cut out for it. SBD supported the onset of this initiative in which researchers from the University of Twente and representatives from various businesses and institutions work together.

**T**here is an enormous need for more knowledge about cybersecurity. TUCCR brings together all expertise and research in this field,’ says co-initiator and Professor of Secure Data Management, Willem Jonker. The people involved in the initiative not only consider the technical aspects of cybersecurity, but also business processes, ethics and human behaviour. ‘It goes without saying that we have a solid technological foundation. Still, there is a reason why the UT’s slogan is ‘High Tech, Human Touch.’ No matter how secure your system is on paper, when employees choose easily guessable passwords or write their passwords down on sticky notes, all your hard work will be for nothing. The human factor must always be taken into account.’

The centre opened its doors on March 5 this year. Getting to that point, took a lot of hard work and preparation. ‘SBD helped us out tremendously, e.g. by establishing contacts with partners and entering into partnerships, assisting with the organisational structure and design as well as other practical matters such as contracts and legal aspects. Its strength lies in their ability to design an initiative in a way that ensures it can be embedded easily within the overall structure of the UT itself. Of

course, SBD has extensive experience with supervising public-private partnerships, so their approach is highly effective. TUCCR is now up and running and properly embedded into the organization’, Jonker says.

TUCCR will now move on to the execution phase by setting up and implementing cybersecurity projects. Students will be involved in these projects, which contribute to the development of their talents. ‘We are already dealing with a major shortage of computer scientists, especially in the technically complex field of cybersecurity. We also hope to use this to draw new talent to the region, which in turn is needed to keep existing businesses in Twente and stimulate the development of new businesses. This will allow us to strengthen the economy of the region.’

In this way, both the region (by attracting and retaining talent), business and institutions (by a wealth of expertise and research) and students (by enriching the study offer) benefit. It is TUCCR’s ambition to grow in the years to come. ‘Once again, we can rely on SBD. If and when we are ready to expand our operations, we can count on their advice and expertise in various fields.’



## FACTS & FIGURES

The Twente University Centre for Cybersecurity Research (TUCCR) is a public-private partnership where experts, professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers and students from industry and knowledge partners collaborate to deliver talent, innovations and know-how in the domain of cybersecurity.

TUCCR's mission is to strengthen the security and digital sovereignty of our society by performing top-level research on real-world data and network security challenges. To achieve significant societal impact, TUCCR combines technical, socio-economic and ethical know-how and is equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure ranging from security labs and testbeds to data lakes and dedicated attack-defence environments such as cyber ranges. Key outputs include innovation in the shape of technologies, tools, minimum viable products, startups and top-tier scientific publications, as well as first-class graduates at the Bachelor, Master and PhD level.

TUCCR brings together professionals and researchers from various fields of expertise, including computer science, behavioural and social sciences, quantum physics, electrical engineering and mathematics. It encompasses a total of 250 FTE. And the centre offers cybersecurity education to more than 1,000 students in Computer Science BSc and Computer Science MSc programmes. To date, the UT has fostered more than 1,000 startups. TUCCR wants to do its part to further stimulate the development of new businesses in the region. ●

„ SBD strength lies in its ability to design an initiative in a way that ensures it can be embedded easily within the overall structure of the UT itself „



‘Together with the TUCCR community, I helped create a business plan, thereby translating and grounding all the good ideas into a solid case. With this case, we were able to lobby and move people in the right direction, both at the UT and with external stakeholders. It was extremely gratifying for me to see that this step was a crucial one to get all stakeholders on board and to be able to create TUCCR and to capitalise on the great potential that we have under this public-private partnership on cybersecurity. In the end, it is about people, but the business case gets them moving.’

Marc Zinck, Impact Development Manager



Text: Stan Waning

SBD | BUSINESS

# 'SBD showed me the economic and research landscape I was entering'



.....

**Professor Sebastian Thiede has been working at UT for about a year. He is involved in research and development in the field of manufacturing systems and has benefited greatly from the role of SBD, especially during his first weeks and months at his new employer.**

**T**hiede's work consists of developing innovative technologies, methods and tools in the field of Advanced Manufacturing, a range of technologies that are important for meeting the requirements of Industry 4.0. The professor himself focuses mainly on processes and systems for manufacturing systems and factories. 'I work on improving both planning and operation,' says the professor. 'Typically, I don't just look at one process, but rather at the whole picture. Digitisation is a crucial starting point, as are the questions of what factories will look like in the future, and how you can plan a complete process chain that is efficient, flexible and sustainable?'

Thiede, who previously worked at the University of Braunschweig in Germany, is also a researcher of the Twente Centre for Advanced Battery Technology. This is where all activities related to battery research at UT come together. 'It is a collaboration perfectly suited to an umbrella service provider such as SBD, which is very valuable. It provides coordination, especially in the communication with large companies and overarching regional and national initiatives. It is not

that we don't have contacts there, but SBD's help makes it much easier to switch gears.' He uses an example to illustrate the position that SBD occupies in the collaborations he is involved in. 'Recently, I worked with ITC and Faculty of Science and Technology on behalf of the ET faculty. In such a case, the use of SBD is helpful, because we all fall under that umbrella, and they have a better idea of what is happening everywhere.'

## Central role

Especially when Thiede first arrived in the Netherlands as a researcher, he appreciated the support he received from SBD. 'It gave me a good overview of UT as a whole. It is not that SBD gave me a picture of the cultural and political background of the area, but it did show me the economic and research landscape I was entering. Especially when you are new, it's nice to find out quickly what's going on. SBD played an important role in this process for me,' says Thiede, who also praises SBD's efforts during the corona pandemic. 'It's much more difficult to organise events and activities right now. That also goes to show just how important SBD's central role is.' ●



## SBD TEAM VIEW

*'I love to work for SBD! Being able to connect people and organisations creating synergy is very rewarding. The aspect of working both with the internal UT community and with many external organisations makes my role diverse. At the UT, great things happen and I am in the fortunate position to share that with the world. At the same time, I bring the outside perspective to the UT community.'*

**Marleen Kuipers**

Impact Development Manager

# ‘We enrich each other’s knowledge’

Text:  
**Frederike  
 Krommendijk**  
 Photos:  
**UT archive**

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VDL ETG, a leading player in the high-tech systems industry, will conduct a joint research programme together with the University of Twente. ‘We can complement and strengthen each other’, says **Jaap Brand**, who works at VDL ETG (part of the VDL Groep) and became a fellow at UT in 2019.



‘Our company has grown significantly, as has the number of developers. We have more than five hundred now,’ Brand says. ‘We possess a wealth of knowledge. However, in order to further expand our competences, we also want to make use of UT’s fundamental research. SBD helped us connect the challenges that our business faces to this fundamental research.’

## Enriching knowledge

VDL ETG plays a major role in the development and manufacture of the latest generation of machines that are used to produce chips for, for example, ASML. One of the studies centres around the cleaning of the mirrors inside those machines that reflect the extreme ultraviolet light. ‘We build the frames that these mirrors are mounted on, among other things. Every single component has to be exceptionally clean to prevent contamination from negatively affecting the lifespan of the mirrors. However,

no measurement method exists yet with which to assess the cleanliness of the final product. Instead, we have to conduct every step of the process in an ultra-clean environment and do not know exactly what the most critical steps are. It is important to know that because we want to improve our quality even further and extend the lifespan of the mirrors for our clients. At UT, there are people who are highly knowledgeable about the surface layer of those mirrors, while we know a lot about the environment that they are used in. In this manner, we can enrich each other’s knowledge,’ Brand explains.

## Stimulating creativity

For UT’s researchers, VDL ETG offers challenges that call for practical solutions. ‘If you want to solve a concrete problem, you have to operate within a framework of preliminary conditions. Those differ from when you are conducting fundamental re-

search. I find that our – sometimes practical – issues stimulate the researchers’ creativity to come up with the best possible solution within the applicable boundaries.’ In recent years, VDL ETG already hired several PhDs from UT. ‘For us, UT represents an enormous pool of new talent. Our business is growing rapidly, so we are always looking for highly trained professionals.’

## Finding the right people

SBD played a valuable role in the development of the partnership, Brand believes. ‘They helped me find the right people within the departments to solve our issues. I organised the process on VDL’s side, while they took care of things from UT’s side. SBD also has experience with subsidy programmes, and it knows how to get in touch with subsidy providers. Lastly, they help us make clear agreements regarding property rights, for example.’



'Working on the development of the joint R&D programme between the University of Twente and VDL ETG has been very exciting. Closing a deal like this is truly a team effort. As SBD colleagues, together with colleagues from the legal department and the contract office of S&T, you consult each other, and you do your own specialistic part. Principally, SBD coordinates and initiates and on top of that each department or specialist contributes their unique part to prepare and build the consortium; UT researchers and company engineers formulate detailed plans, on a higher level liaisons discuss the framework requirements of the programme and align interests, one colleague drafts the programme as a whole, a grant advisor like me makes sure that we comply with government requirements to acquire additional funding, the legal department makes sure the contracts are correctly drafted and signed and the contract offices are responsible for the financial soundness. Everybody is doing their special part, making it a complex preparation, and it is at the same time exciting once you see that the collaboration is really taking off as you envisioned as a team.

It is also exciting because our UT programme with VDL ETG contributes directly to the University of Twente's strategy and SBD's goals, connecting private enterprises with excellent academic researchers who want to make an impact. The collaboration with VDL ETG not only encompasses research and development but also educating staff, supporting talent development at VDL ETG and UT, ultimately producing proofs-of-principle and new technologies that can be introduced in the market as well. In this way, the programme provides a tailor-made approach to the needs of VDL ETG, and this is also the reason why no fewer than three departments are working with VDL ETG in this programme.'

**Arend Zomer**, Dutch Grants Advisor & Liaison

The partnership is such a success that VDL Groep is eager to expand its scope and set up similar research programmes for more of its subsidiaries. The collaboration with VDL Energy Systems (formerly Siemens Hengelo) is already taking concrete shape. 'It would be

great if we could work together with a group of businesses in the region and with UT to set up a research project centred around a joint issue. SBD can certainly contribute to that. Meanwhile, researchers can focus on what they do best: conduct research.'

### Added value

SBD's Janneke Hoedemaekers also recognises the major added value of strategic business partnerships like the one with VDL Groep. 'We link the challenges that business face to the broad pallet of research being conducted at UT. As account holder, SBD is something like a director. For example, we organise semi-annual meetings to discuss policy, strategy and our joint programme. We also assisted with the research application, among other things. We build knowledge together, which is also valuable for UT. Our researchers can publish their results, and it leads to new research ideas.'

For UT's students, working with VDL presents excellent career opportunities. 'The business has a strong need for new employees. Our presence at UT gives students of mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and physics the opportunity to see what VDL Groep has to offer. That makes it easier for the company to attract top talent and for students to get to know the company.' This programmatic approach to collaboration really works, and we also use it for other partners. 'We invest time from both sides. Our close collaboration leads to new and surprising initiatives, for example, with other businesses that are part of VDL Groep.' ●



### SBD TEAM VIEW

*'I enjoy very much the interactions with the people working in the fascinating world of research. The feeling of unity in a smooth-running project is unique and very rewarding.'*

**Gabi Maris**  
Project Manager

# Some of SBD's closest allies

..... SBD's work field covers both the University's own activities and the world outside. The service works together with institutions, faculties and researchers at every level of the University of Twente. At the same time, it enters into partnerships with businesses, social organisations and the political field. An overview of some of SBD's partners.



## *'We utilise SBD's brainpower, network and intelligence'*

ECIU University consists of a European consortium of twelve European universities and one associate partner from Mexico. Together, they want to create a European university and work together with social and business partners to develop solutions for our modern-day challenges.

'At ECIU University, we have various work packages. One example is challenge-based innovation, in which SBD plays a major role. They provide us with input on a conceptual level. What is challenge-based learning, research and innovation? What does it look like and what does it entail? How can we make sure this concept takes off within the UT? We utilise SBD's brainpower, network and intelligence. At the same time, they utilise ours. ECIU University tries things out and experiments. The lessons learned there are brought back to the UT.'

Rianne Kaptijn, Local Ambassador ECIU University

## *'Connections to science are of great importance'*

'In light of the mission-driven innovation policy in Europe and the Netherlands, we see that the concept of an ecosystem and its development plays an important key role in enabling companies to start and accelerate in the right environment. In addition to economic growth, companies are also challenged to make an impact. For companies in the region, but also for those outside, connections with science, among others, are of great importance in order to come to solutions for social issues. SBD uses its network to connect these companies to the knowledge of the University of Twente, thus making a direct and indirect contribution to solving social issues. These connections are also the indispensable links between all the players, in this case government, the business community, knowledge institutes and social organisations, which determine the strength and success of the ecosystem.'

Theo Föllings, Vice-President Oost NL





**T**he SBD Core Team is the centre platform for collaboration of SBD, UT institutes and Novel-T; it combines essential know-how and expertise from different departments and individuals at the university. Consisting of SBD MT members, institute managing directors and Novel-T representative, the SBD Core Team plays an important role in identifying, combining and expanding strategic research themes at our university. With their activities, SBD and Novel-T each do their part to lay a solid foundation for the most entrepreneurial and best-valourising university in the country. Although we each have our own methods and focus, there exists a strong connection between our organisations. The University of Twente strives to create impact in our society and the economy. On the one hand, we develop new knowledge with industrial partners. On the other hand, we put this knowledge into practice for the good of our society via new spinoff businesses. SBD works on and is inspired by strategic lines of research and focuses on its collaboration with the industry; Novel-T complements SBD's efforts via its strong ties to regional industrial

partners. This combination lays a solid foundation for partnerships that lead to direct economic returns. Additionally, Novel-T is responsible for stimulating and facilitating entrepreneurship among students and researchers. For example, entrepreneurial students can count on the support of Novel-T in combination with incubator Incubase. The Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO), which forms part of Novel-T, plays a crucial role for entrepreneurial researchers. The KTO's business developers scout and screen research looking for results with the potential to be brought to market. They support researchers with developing a business case and plan, acquiring pre-seed funding and bringing the results of their research to market. In most cases, this is either done via a licensing deal or by setting up a spinoff. In addition to direct support from a business developer, Novel-T offers a wide range of workshops, bootcamps and programmes centred around the various phases of entrepreneurship, as well as access to an extensive network of e.g. investors and market parties. ●

**Jaap Beernink**  
CEO Novel-T

### *'Reaching out to existing and new partners'*



'The SBD Core Team combines essential know-how and expertise from different departments and individuals at the university. In close collaboration with the institutes IDS, TechMed and MESA+, the SBD Core Team plays an important role in identifying, combining and expanding strategic research themes at our university. Only by working closely together we are able to gain the necessary traction and achieve the highest possible impact. Increasingly, impact requires embedding activities in regional, national and international ecosystems. Reaching out to existing and new partners is an important focus and strong point of the SBD Core Team.'

**Pieter Telleman**, Managing Director MESA+

### *'A classic train depot'*

'Strategic Business Development has grown over the years and has also become much more visible externally. I compare its role within the university to that of a classic train depot. The train of 'good idea for a technological, social or economic task' must first be put on the desired track and provided with the necessary wagons before the locomotive is brought to steam. This requires the necessary preparation. The department or the researcher sits in one of the carriages. And the driver can be someone from a cooperation partner, a company or a government organisation. Next, the switches have to be set properly and it has to be monitored whether the destination is actually in sight. From R&D to innovation via financing to the use phase is a challenge every time. The university is bursting with ideas. It helps us as a province that SBD helps to work up proposals, both from the inside and from the outside. The distance to sources of financing is often big, and the university and province are becoming increasingly good at finding each other's way. Without SBD, the social value of the UT for the region is limited.'

**Joost Kuijper**, Province Overijssel





SBD | RESEARCH



## ‘We shed light on the expectations of the funding agency’

RE-SAMPLE, a large-scale European project coordinated by the UT, is funded by the EU’s Horizon 2020 with a grant worth six million euros. SBD’s Grants Office played a crucial role in the development, preparation and finalization of the strategy for this project.



Text:  
Jelle  
Posthuma

The RE-SAMPLE project focuses on patients with COPD and comorbidities (two or more chronic conditions), says Project Coordinator, Monique Tabak. ‘The number of chronic conditions in Europe is on the rise. Half of the people with a chronic condition suffer from multiple chronic conditions. This makes healthcare more complicated due to overlapping symptoms and risk factors. With our project, we want to improve our understanding of COPD and comorbidity by combining clinical data with real-world data and clinical guidelines. In this way, we can provide proactive healthcare, instead of relying on reactive measures, to prevent hospitalization and healthcare utilization. Our aim is to provide future-proof care that is centred around the patient.’

### Understanding the funding game

RE-SAMPLE is a Horizon 2020 project. This programme was set up by the European Commission (EC) to stimulate research and innovation. ‘In 2019, we showed this funding possibility to Monique and other UT researchers,’ says Maria Luisa Carosso, EU Grants Advisor at SBD. ‘We always try to shed light on the expectations of the funding agency, in this case the European

Commission, to make sure that these expectations are fully addressed in the research proposal. Thanks to SBDs tips and tricks, our project proposal was successful. Then there is the help with the consortium formation and the preparation of the agreement once the funding has been obtained. You won’t find any of this stuff on paper, but these are exactly the things that SBD can help with. There is also one more very important thing: Maria Luisa has helped to keep me sane during this process,’ Tabak laughs.

### Acquisition machine

The RE-SAMPLE project is related to the Personalized eHealth Technology (PeHT) programme, a strategic research programme at the UT. Several UT research groups and scientists working on eHealth are joining forces in this programme. The so-called ‘acquisition machine’ is an important element of PeHT. ‘When there are calls that may be of interest to our scientists, we get together with the grant advisors of SBD. They provide us with a more detailed explanation of the call,’ Tabak explains. ‘In this way, these brainstorm sessions form the starting point for a research proposal. That is exactly how it went with RE-SAMPLE.’ ●



### SBD TEAM VIEW

*The cooperation with researchers is what makes her work so exciting, says Carosso. ‘Our scientists excel at their work, they don’t need me for that. Thanks to me, the European grants are, in a way, opened up to the researchers. That is what I enjoy the most.’*

**Maria Luisa Carosso**  
EU Grants Advisor

### Partners RE-SAMPLE

RE-SAMPLE stands for Real-time data monitoring for Shared, Adaptive, Multi-Domain and Personalised Prediction and decision making for Long-term Pulmonary care Ecosystems. It is a collaboration between multidisciplinary partners from the Netherlands (University of Twente, Medisch Spectrum Twente, Roessingh Research and Development) and other European countries (Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain).

# 'SBD helps researchers focus on their core activities'

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**UT professor Mariëlle Stoelinga succeeded in securing several highly prestigious research grants. According to her, SBD played a decisive role in this. 'They look very carefully at the criteria of a call.'**

**S**BD is an important pillar of support for talented UT researchers. Mariëlle Stoelinga, UT professor of Risk Management, says she received help with several of her projects, sometimes in quite extraordinary ways. 'In preparation for an interview for an ERC Consolidator Grant, SBD's Grants Office actually arranged a test interview for me. Former UT rector Ed Brinksma was invited to serve as chairman of the funding agency and right before the test interview they made me wait for a long time. All this was done to simulate the tension of a real interview as well as possible.' In 2019, Stoelinga received an ERC Consolidator Grant worth two million euros. That same year, her research project PrimaVera was honoured by research funding agency NWO and the industry. SBD also played an important role in this project, says Stoelinga. 'The Grants Office looks very carefully at the criteria of a call. An ERC Grant is all about fundamental research, whereas PrimaVera was aimed mainly at the 'BV Nederland,' for which valorisation is very important. You need to emphasise these aspects in your research proposal. SBD helps you with that - although the contents of the proposal are your own responsibility, of course.'

In many cases, there are also more 'implicit criteria,' says Stoelinga. The Grants Office helps researchers include these in their proposals. 'In the case of a European proposal, for example, it may be strategically important to ensure that Eastern European or Southern European partners are involved.'

In another case, gender may be an important element. Although this is not always explicitly mentioned in the call, it is of significant importance nonetheless. With its feelers in Brussels, the Grants Office knows what implicit requirements are important in a proposal and how a researcher can incorporate these. Moreover, the Grants Officer can ensure that certain subjects are put on the agenda in Brussels and thus ultimately end up in the calls.'

## Follow-up

After a project proposal has been granted, an intensive process of negotiation begins, Stoelinga knows. SBD also plays a crucial role during this follow-up process. 'Preparing a contract that involves various partners is a complex matter. There are often different interests at stake. While scientists want to publish as much as possible for a wide audience, commercial parties are more likely to have trade secrets that must be protected. Balancing these interests is a difficult task. Fortunately, SBD can help, for example by arranging legal assistance.' Ultimately, the success of a research proposal depends on excellent research and an excellent consortium, Stoelinga emphasizes. 'Thanks to SBD, however, researchers can focus on the contents of their proposal without worrying about the other aspects, which are nevertheless very important.' •

Text: **Jelle Posthuma**

Photo: **UT archive**



‘The Grants Office has its feelers in Brussels’

**SBD | WHAT WILL THE FUTURE BRING?**

# *Giving scientists the chance to shine*

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Exploring the world of politics, seeking out or initiating cooperative alliances and helping researchers present themselves: Strategic Business Development does it all. Realising impact is a long-term goal and one that is difficult to measure, but that does not make the service any less ambitious. 'We are successful when our scientists score,' say Atilla Kerpisci, Managing Director, and Geert Dewulf, Chief Development Officer.



**S**trategic Business Development concerns itself with bringing together everything that happens within and outside the UT. Kerpisci: 'For scientists, we are a centre of expertise. With our impact academy, we help research talent present itself more effectively.' Dewulf adds: 'As a university, we can only realise true impact when researchers bring us in at an early stage. I should note that we do try to manage people's expectations: not every idea is strategically relevant enough to go all-in on.'

### Exploring and probing

What is strategically relevant? Dewulf: 'We are developing feelers for that. We see what is going on in The Hague, at the Dutch Research Council and in Europe and translate those opportunities into UT research. Vice versa, we also assist with the optimal embedding of scientific ideas in our society.' Kerpisci: 'Especially for the impact team, it is all about exploring and probing. Working together with businesses calls for trust and a long-term perspective, as well as the ability to adapt quickly when the world suddenly changes - as it did last year.' That coordinating role is very important at SBD, Dewulf explains: 'Funding applications are also becoming increasingly complex. In the past, you would ask budget for a couple of PhD candidates. Today, it is about funding entire consortia and a diversity of resources. SBD plays a proactive and coordinating role in this process. We combine everyone's strengths and feed the strategic discussion about what we should focus on as a university.'

### Showcase

Kerpisci sees that SBD is not only involved in research, but also in the development of education. 'We are exploring the role we can play in life-long learning projects and e.g. the ECIU cooperative alliance, which centres around challenge-based learning, research and innovation. We recently began setting up a one-stop shop, a platform for everything the UT has to offer to businesses and institutions in terms of business and innovation (see text box). This platform will

also allow us to help SMEs quickly find their way through the UT's organisation,' he says. Although the regional position is important, SBD also strives to facilitate collaboration at the national level. 'We match portfolios related to such topics as cybersecurity, AI and energy using strategic impulse programmes. These are coalitions made up of many different partners from businesses, research institutes or educational institutions.'

### Indirect impact

'For major consortia or cooperative alliances, it takes years before we can finally reap the rewards of our efforts. Furthermore, the faculties are the ones who benefit, not we,' says Kerpisci. Nevertheless, SBD's indirect impact can be measured to some extent, he continues. 'We monitor the satisfaction of the scientists and businesses who come to us for help and the effect of our training sessions. We also record how many portfolios we manage and how many strategic partnerships we enter into. The number of cooperative alliances and subsidy applications we play a part in is a directly measurable target.'

Dewulf: 'Of course, it is important to bring in more indirect government funding and commercial funding, but our mission is more comprehensive than that. We want to give scientists the chance to shine so that the UT maintains its leading role and for the betterment of society: healthier, more sustainable and more liveable. To do that, the entire UT community has to contribute. In the end, everyone should feel part of SBD to some extent.' ●

## Platform for innovation and cooperation

There are many possibilities for cooperation with a university, but as an external party it is not always easy to find your way in what you can do with a university and in what ways you can cooperate. In order to simplify and facilitate this information provision and interaction between external parties and the university, SBD has taken the initiative to set up a special 'platform' for this purpose. The platform will provide optimal access to the UT's expertise and bring together many of the UT's 'business' components in a single portal.

This is in line with the UT's vision of 'Shaping 2030' to involve companies, organizations and institutions more closely in education, research and valorization. In time, the platform will also offer opportunities for more activities, for example by facilitating thematic knowledge and innovation hubs, round table conferences, training courses, scouting, matchmaking, various challenges, think tanks and other affiliate and membership programmes. In this way, experiences and expertise will be shared, learning from each other and access to talent is provided. It also stimulates the formation of partnerships and consortia, in order to jointly submit successful applications for research and innovation projects.



### SBD TEAM VIEW

*'I like my job because it makes me touch upon many different research topics and technology fields, which makes it a very stimulating working environment.'*

**Andrea Guarise**  
EU Grants Advisor

