

The Collegium Fjellheim-Vinje-Weltzien for NMBU

Continuity, Quality, and Competence

Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) aims to be an international, research-intensive university with a close link between education, research, and innovation. The knowledge produced at NMBU will be crucial in addressing the regional, national, and global challenges society faces. We aspire to be a university that not only describes problems but actively contributes to developing solutions that support sustainable development.

We live in a time characterized by significant societal changes and global challenges. In uncertain times, the university shall be a solid and continuous institution that upholds the fundamental principles of research and education—free, independent, and socially beneficial knowledge. We aim to ensure continuity in leadership through these turbulent times. Our commitment and experience in core activities, combined with our broad and extensive leadership expertise, will be essential in strengthening the academic focus of the rectorate. As a rectorate, we will be clear, inspiring, and inclusive, and we will develop the university together with employees and students. We will build on NMBU's strengths as a small and agile university, ensuring an open, trust-based, and innovative organization. NMBU should be characterized by quality, and our goal is for the entire university to work together as one team to fulfill our societal mission. Every day, we will strive to ensure that everyone who works and studies here can focus on their core tasks and take pride in being part of NMBU.

Our Ambition

NMBU shall be a research-intensive, internationally recognized university with high-quality research. At NMBU, we aim to educate highly qualified and action-oriented candidates across all our disciplines. We strive for research-based education—every day. NMBU shall be a driving force for positive change in society and contribute to solutions for sustainable development regionally, nationally, and globally. NMBU shall be an attractive and inclusive work- and study place characterized by a culture of quality, relevance, innovation, and collaboration.

Who We Are

We are a collegium with a passionate commitment to NMBU, its people, and its disciplines. We have strong academic expertise, solid experience in both education and research, and significant leadership experience from faculty and university management. We will lead the university based on openness, collaboration, and presence, with clear direction and high ambitions. Together with students and staff, we will create a university that both inspires and delivers: an NMBU prepared for the future!

Our University Community

We live in a world and time characterized by great uncertainty. Academic and democratic values are under pressure in many parts of the world, making it more important than ever for NMBU to be a steadfast and continuous institution that makes research-based knowledge accessible to society. At a time when misinformation and fake news threaten democracy, trust, and unity, the university should be the place where politicians, decision-makers, and the public seek answers.

Our people are the cornerstone of our university. We will work to ensure that everyone feels pride in being part of the NMBU community. NMBU should be an inclusive and inspiring workplace and study environment for all staff and students. Well-being is fostered by finding meaning in daily work. Everyone should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and find purpose and value in their work and studies.

To achieve this, we will prioritize:

- Ensuring that NMBU remains a source of free and independent knowledge development and dissemination, while maintaining public trust in research. We will facilitate research communication and training and work to strengthen influence on public policy.
- Further developing a highly competent technical-administrative staff. We will promote experience-sharing across units through mobility and secondments.
- Enhancing employees' competence in digitalization and artificial intelligence (AI) by promoting existing training opportunities and establishing a HUB for AI competence development.
- Creating spaces for academic discussions, community, and culture on campus, with active participation from the rectorate and university leadership.
- Promoting equality and diversity while ensuring co-determination, participation, and transparent processes through strengthened collaboration with the labour unions and the occupational health and safety service.
- Advocating for open recruitment processes that prioritize quality and long-term considerations.
- Following up on the campus development plan to ensure good working facilities and access to research and education infrastructure.

Adapting to a New Reality – Continuity in Uncertain Times

The framework conditions for universities are changing, and we must adapt to a new and more challenging financial situation. The introduction of a new university governance model with an elected rector presents a unique opportunity to transform and further develop NMBU. We will ensure an organization that is agile and aligned with the needs of its core activities, where strong academic foundations underpin strategic

decisions. A dynamic administration can contribute to increased efficiency, better support for the university's core tasks, and a more flexible approach to change. This transition allows us to address challenges related to organization, structure, and decision-making processes, with strengthened co-determination and participation as key elements.

At the same time, continuity in leadership is crucial in turbulent times, and we are ready to guide NMBU through the challenges ahead. We are a collegium with solid experience, and we will use our knowledge and expertise to develop NMBU into a strong, excellent, research-intensive university of the future, despite a changing world.

To achieve this, we will prioritize:

- Ensuring a smooth implementation of the new governance model and fostering good collaboration between the university director, rectorate, and university board.
- Achieving financial balance by implementing ongoing measures and developing new initiatives in the current transformation process. We will ensure comprehensive, well-thought-out solutions through a program that engages all units at NMBU, with a focus on preserving and further developing high-quality research and education.
- Ensuring open and trust-based processes with strong participation and involvement throughout the transition. As a rectorate, we aim to be engaged and present during the transition process.
- Developing competent, confident leaders with a focus on strong relationships and trust in employees through competence-building initiatives and cultural development.
- Strengthening the role of the Research Committee and the Education Committee as the key collegial and strategic bodies providing advice on the academic development of core activities. These committees should be integrated into and support the work of the rectorate.

The Sustainability University

We believe that the student's statement that "NMBU is a community for people who want to make a difference" is a vivid description of what NMBU should be. Contributing to sustainable development is part of our societal mission, and NMBU should have a key position in this work, both nationally and internationally. As a small yet diverse university, we aim to be among the best at solving major societal challenges.

To achieve this, we will prioritize the following:

- Strengthening and further developing the Center for Sustainability in Higher Education and contributing to knowledge sharing about sustainability aspects in higher education in Norway.

- Facilitating the development of NMBU as a living lab for sustainable transformation of society, where innovative ideas can be tested and realized in collaboration with societal actors.
- Strengthening the connection between research, education, and innovation, and fostering collaboration across faculties and with external partners by continuing the NMBU Sustainability Arenas.
- Educating students with both theoretical and practical skills, emphasizing critical thinking and problem-solving to analyze complex sustainability challenges.
- Collaborate cross our organization to define annual targets for making university operations more sustainable, such as reducing energy consumption through further development of the Smart Campus project. We also aim to encourage the use of our research in promoting environmentally sustainable operations.

Research is the Foundation

NMBU should be a research-intensive university with a natural place in the international research landscape. A strong research culture should define NMBU, and we will safeguard values such as academic freedom, research ethics, open science, and institutional autonomy. We will cultivate groundbreaking, long-term research while also developing interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research that addresses major societal challenges. We will ensure that our researchers have the best conditions to succeed in securing external funding and conducting high-quality research.

To achieve this, we will prioritize the following:

- Strengthening the ability of academic staff to secure external research funding and professionalizing project execution. This includes working to provide more continuous time for research, establishing interdisciplinary administrative "BOA teams," and further developing incentives and mentoring programs.
- Enhancing efforts to succeed in competitions for prestigious research projects and larger research centers, particularly Free Project Grants (FriPro), European Research Council (ERC) grants, and Centers of Excellence (SFF), as these contribute to increased research quality and long-term impact.
- Expanding fundraising efforts and targeted work towards establishing a national research fund to attract private-sector funding.
- Facilitating larger strategic academic initiatives, guided by external evaluations, while safeguarding academic autonomy.
- Strengthening efforts related to research infrastructure, including developing a joint roadmap in collaboration with faculties. At the same time, we will actively seek public and private funding for new investments and continue the holistic implementation of the leasing model, including increased visibility and shared use of existing infrastructures.

- Expanding internationalization in research, including in the Global South, through active participation in alliances, institutional collaborations, and networks such as the Euroleague for Life Sciences (ELLS) and the Global University Academy (GUA).
- Promoting increased international mobility for students and staff and actively engaging with policymakers to reverse measures that hinder internationalization.
- Strengthening efforts for sustainable and ethically responsible use of AI in the research process through systematic work in the Research Committee and the HUB for competence development in AI usage. This includes reducing energy consumption, ensuring sufficient transparency, and promoting responsible AI-assisted writing.
- Continuing efforts to enhance the quality of research education by:
 - o Ensuring that PhD candidates and early-career researchers are included in robust and active research groups, both academically and socially—especially for internationally recruited candidates.
 - o Strengthening career development and career guidance for PhD candidates and early-career researchers, including expanding and targeting course offerings and closer collaboration with SoDoc.
 - o Working to ensure better alignment between the expected time frame and the quality and scope of PhD dissertations. We aim to increase the completion rate (within six years) for PhD candidates from the current 65% to 80%.

Students in the Center

NMBU should continue to have the most satisfied university students in the country. We will ensure that students have the best conditions for academic success while experiencing an inclusive and engaging student life. If you have studied at NMBU, you should have the opportunity to go far! We achieve this by offering high-quality education, relevant and socially beneficial studies, a strong student community, and comprehensive student welfare services. Through close collaboration with student organizations and local actors, we will further strengthen students' roles, well-being, and engagement.

To achieve this, we will prioritize the following:

- Supporting student democracy and student volunteering. Students should have an active voice in the university's decision-making processes. We will facilitate participation and encourage engagement through close collaboration with the Student Board and student leader, who should be a natural part of the rector's leadership group. At the same time, students should be represented in the academic strategic committees.
- Strengthening efforts for psychosocial well-being and an inclusive student environment. Collaboration with Ås Municipality and SiÅs will continue to ensure

students' well-being and role in the local community. Additionally, together with students, we will identify new arenas and initiatives to promote this.

- Launching a project to assess social spaces and improve existing student rooms, with the goal of strengthening student activity on campus. Bringing students back to campus is important to us.
- Promoting and supporting innovation work and initiatives from students so that their creativity and ideas contribute to development both at the university and in society.
- Continuing efforts to ensure that the university's facilities, learning resources, and services are universally designed, making them more accessible to all.

Education for the Future

Our ambition is to educate highly qualified and action-oriented graduates with solid expertise who can meet society's needs and the complex challenges of the future. By combining academic depth with generic skills, we aim to shape problem solvers with the ability to drive innovation and positive change in their fields. Our programs will naturally be research-based, and at NMBU, students will meet lecturers who are not only knowledgeable about the research frontier but are also an active part of it. As a small university with long traditions and a diverse educational offering, we provide a unique learning environment characterized by flexibility, adaptability, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. This is a strength we want to build on.

To achieve this, we will prioritize the following:

- Ensuring high-quality education, with a special focus on academic excellence, innovation, problem-solving, and practical action competence.
- Maintaining research-based teaching to ensure that our graduates are relevant and qualified for leading positions in their fields.
- Recognizing our students as a valuable resource for the university. We will facilitate their involvement in research, innovation, and academic projects throughout their studies. Initiatives such as "Students in Research" and various student-driven innovation activities should be available to all NMBU students, regardless of their field.
- Strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration and communication through project-based and active learning, where students develop solutions to real societal problems.
- Better equipping the organization to develop and offer flexible, tailored studies for different target groups. We will conduct a study to assess opportunities and markets for increased flexibility, either to reach new audiences or fulfill our societal mission.

- Intensifying strategic efforts regarding the educational portfolio. Close collaboration between study programs, faculties, study committees, the Center for Continuing and Professional Education, and the study administration will ensure holistic, high-quality education and more efficient resource use.
- Strengthening recruitment efforts for more students, including closer collaboration with vocational schools and high schools to ensure that strong candidates consider NMBU. At the same time, we must work broadly to create greater public interest in our fields and programs.
- Providing our educators with the freedom to explore and develop their teaching and assessment methods, with support from the university. Through systematic knowledge and experience sharing, we will enhance teaching competence across NMBU.
- Ensuring that our students develop knowledge and confidence in using AI. Through training and practice, they should learn to apply the technology in a sustainable and ethically responsible manner and understand how it can optimize learning.
- Working to integrate global perspectives into NMBU's programs and making students competitive internationally. We will facilitate international experiences during studies and utilize existing networks, such as ELLS.
- Increasing the number of international students and strengthening student exchange, both outgoing and incoming. This will be achieved through strategic visibility of international mobility opportunities and intensified recruitment efforts for international students.

Engaging with the World Around Us

Our research and education form the foundation for knowledge-based societal development. Strong regional, national, and international collaboration is essential to ensure the application of this knowledge, and NMBU should be a visible and active player in society.

To achieve this, we will prioritize the following:

- Continuing to develop NMBU's innovation ecosystem, centered around BIT Innovation Center. We will also work to strengthen innovation competence and culture among our employees and students, in collaboration with Ard Innovation and Aggregator.
- Further strengthening student innovation through the Student Innovation Committee, StartUpSmia, and student-driven initiatives (EikLab, Cre8, Helix, UrbanLab, FoodLab, StartNMBU, Eclipse). We will also work to establish more comprehensive funding schemes, such as early-stage seed funds and pre-incubation funds, in close collaboration with external partners.

- Continuing to strengthen collaboration with our campus partners to realize the potential of Campus Ås through joint projects related to research, innovation, and infrastructure, as well as joint governmental advocacy.
 - Strengthening regional collaboration and anchoring, including realizing the Follo Innovation District for Green Industries in close cooperation with municipalities, the county, and relevant businesses.
 - Enabling our employees and students to develop as communicators and actively participate in public debate and other arenas for influence.
 - Working towards increased and more targeted governmental advocacy to strengthen the university's framework conditions and promote research-based decision-making in politics and society.
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The Future NMBU

With this platform, we commit to further develop NMBU as a university for outstanding research, education, and innovation, in line with NMBU's strategy. By 2030, we envision NMBU as an open and trust-based organization where employees and students thrive and contribute to developing knowledge for the benefit of society. We will have strengthened our position as a research-intensive university with a focus on quality and relevance, and we will be an indispensable partner in solving global challenges.

Our collegium will work every day to ensure that all employees and students have the best conditions for success in their work. Through the measures in this platform, NMBU will continue its transformation process to create space and scope and build a university characterized by collaboration, innovation, and a strong foundation in our values—where employees and students take pride in being part of a strong NMBU.

Together, we create a university that both inspires and delivers: An NMBU prepared for the future!