



*Team Solve*



Election Platform for the Rector Election at NMBU  
– 2025

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*Primary Goals for Our Footprint in Four Years:*

- We have created a more open organization with better dialogue, participation, and collaboration.*
  - We have established a workplace with ample room for personal development within common strategic frameworks.*
  - We have made clear priorities that have resulted in a healthy economy with strong financial flexibility.*
  - We have achieved more flexible education and improved cooperation across faculties.*
  - We have succeeded in making continuing education (EVU) an important part of NMBU's operations and financial foundation.*
  - We have supported and freed up more time for high-quality research, education, dissemination, and innovation.*
  - We have proactively leveraged the opportunities provided by AI, achieving significant efficiency gains and interdisciplinary collaboration.*
  - We have achieved an even more sustainable and environmentally friendly campus operation.*
  - We have strengthened unity and the NMBU team spirit.*
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## Introduction – The world and NMBU in 2025

Our university is at a crossroads. Global crises challenge the climate, ecosystems, and political relations, while knowledge is being questioned, and the autonomy of universities is weakening—even in Western democracies. Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming work processes and competency needs, bringing both challenges and opportunities. At the same time, we are far from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

NMBU's strategy states that we shall develop knowledge and expertise for a sustainable future. Three years after this was written, our societal mission is more important than ever. Yet, universities face increasingly tight financial conditions following years of budget cuts. While Norway reduces its investment in research, our neighboring countries are increasing theirs, and we are experiencing a demographic decline in the student base.

In such a situation, university leadership may be tempted to respond with unstrategic crisis measures and tighter top-down control to weather the storm, hoping for a return to normal. Some immediate actions may indeed be necessary to cut costs, but the question is: is it the same normal we should return to? Crisis can also spark creativity and open new opportunities—if we engage the entire university in shaping our future.

This is what motivates us in Team Solve to run in the 2025 rector election. In this election platform, we present our key goals for NMBU's next four-year period.

## «NMBU towards 2030»

Solve led the development of NMBU's strategy for 2019–2023 as pro-rector, centered around the vision "*Joint Efforts for a Sustainable Future*". This strategy, which emphasizes research and education to solve complex societal challenges, was revised in 2022 and extended to 2030 without major changes. We believe the vision and goals remain highly relevant. The key focus now must be on concretizing and implementing the strategy's core elements.

In 2030, the world will take stock of the Sustainable Development Goals, and time is running short. NMBU has positioned itself as "*Bærekraftsuniversitetet*" (The Sustainability University) increasing the visibility of our research and education. At the same time, all universities should be sustainability universities, and collaboration within Norway remains strong. With growing global attention on the role of research—both in support of and in opposition to sustainable solutions—we must champion and strengthen NMBU's leading academic communities. It is these environments that develop the future's solutions and expertise, **forming the backbone of our joint efforts for a sustainable future.**

Moreover, to maintain credibility as an ambassador for sustainability in research and education, we must *practice what we preach*. We will work to ensure that NMBU maintains a continuous focus on environmentally friendly and sustainable campus development through strong monitoring routines and climate accounting.

## A learning, competent, and action-oriented organization

A key goal for us during this coming four-year period is to provide all employees with greater opportunities for learning and professional development. The government's trust reform has only just begun to take effect at NMBU, and we believe that the increased trust from the top must be carried forward throughout the organization. "*Quality at all levels*" requires that we all have the opportunity to grow and develop in our work, within shared strategic frameworks. This approach builds a *competent organization* characterized by accountability, reliability, and knowledge-based processes—strengthening NMBU as an attractive workplace.

### To succeed, we will strengthen the principle of *Visibility – Dialogue – Action*:

- **Visibility:** NMBU must become more open and transparent. Information should be more accessible to increase insight, participation, and ownership of decisions. The rectorate must also be more present and actively support the university's core activities.
- **Dialogue:** We will re-establish closer collaboration with labor unions and employee representatives. The Norwegian work-life model provides a strong foundation for developing a "*learning organization*", but at NMBU, the distance between leadership/administration and employee representatives/staff is perceived as too great. This hinders collaboration on organizational development and culture-building. To lead strategically, we must listen to those who know the core tasks best. We also aim to foster dialogue across disciplines to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration and use technology to bridge different academic cultures. Close dialogue with student leadership, student organizations, and SiÅs will continue to be a priority.
- **Action:** Leadership must engage directly with practical fields and student environments to understand and learn. NMBU has strong traditions in research and education within key disciplines that society depends on. We must continue to build on these, but rapid and sometimes unpredictable societal changes require us to combine our solid academic traditions

with an adaptive approach to change—where we test and pilot new solutions rather than committing to large, resource-intensive projects.

Through this, we are building an NMBU that is more action-oriented, knowledge-based, and adaptable.

## A competent organization in transition

Competence entails accountability, and strategic development requires **prioritization** when financial constraints tighten. We must be critical and targeted in our use of time and resources, continuously assessing whether initiatives genuinely strengthen education and research. Measures that do not lead to visible improvements should either be paused or discontinued. This also applies to administrative processes, which must be efficient and support academic development without creating unnecessary bureaucracy. Through clear prioritization and responsibility sharing, we will ensure that resources are used where they have the greatest impact.

In addressing these challenges, it is crucial to build **innovation competence** and a willingness to change within the organization. We must be open to new ways of working and foster a culture that embraces change. This involves developing innovation skills among employees and at the organizational level, including change management, new solutions, new work methods, and the ability to adapt to evolving conditions. We must also strengthen both individual and organizational capacity to handle uncertainty and adapt to future demands. This creates a work environment where employees are motivated to contribute to continuous improvement.

To secure NMBU's position, we must prioritize what strengthens the **core tasks**, using the principles of visibility, dialogue, and action as guidance. Participation and transparency are essential in identifying the best priorities during transition. The restructuring project at VET in 2024 shows that local processes, anchored in faculties and units, with broad participation and trust within well-defined frameworks, are the most effective approach. Major changes are best managed step by step and with local expertise, ensuring they do not become unnecessarily extensive or bureaucratic before they even begin.

Greater openness and **improved dialogue** between the rectorate, the university board, and faculty leadership are also essential. With a new governance model where the rector chairs the board, we see greater opportunities to use the board as a strategic support for the university's work. This can shift the board's focus back to core academic priorities after years of administrative emphasis. Even with reduced funding, it is vital that the board remains academically and strategically oriented.

## Education in step with the times: Flexibility, collaboration, and international opportunities

Societal developments have led to more students combining part-time work with their studies, as it has become difficult to be a full-time student without additional income. Many students work part-time to gain practical experience, while at the same time, continuing and further education (EVU) is becoming increasingly important in a labor market characterized by constant change. The needs of full-time students and working professionals seeking further education are converging, and NMBU must develop more **flexible learning pathways** for both groups.

Demographic changes and the need for **lifelong learning** make it essential to utilize educational capacity more efficiently, as several master's programs struggle with admissions. Today's students demand greater flexibility and the opportunity to choose smaller programs early in their studies, which can also make it easier for working professionals to return for further skill development. There is also potential to develop alternative pathways into higher education, such as the Y-pathway, for those who do not qualify through traditional admission processes.

These changes challenge our established study model. To meet these needs, we must rethink the organization of study programs, which can strengthen recruitment and relevance, increase credit production, and secure future revenues.

Global collaboration is crucial for addressing major societal challenges, resolving political conflicts, and achieving sustainable development. Considering this, NMBU should strengthen its **international position** in the coming years, particularly in the field of education. The introduction of tuition fees for students outside the EEA makes it more difficult for students from the Global South to study with us, a challenge we must address. NMBU is a partner in several strategic networks, such as Euroleague for Life Sciences (ELLS), Association for European Life Science Universities (ICA), European University Association (EUA), Global University Academy (GUA), as well as mobility programs like UNIS, Fulbright, and Nordplus. Through international networks and dialogues, we can develop new strategies to attract international students and partners while maintaining our role in knowledge exchange within a global context.

**What can we do together to further develop education at NMBU? Here are our proposals:**

#### *Equalizing EVU with Regular Education*

- Remove unnecessary distinctions between lifelong learning and degree programs.
- Offer modular and flexible education that caters to both students and working professionals.
- Develop comprehensive programs, experience-based courses, and subjects where both EVU and degree programs can benefit from shared teaching resources.

#### *Increased Flexibility in the Educational Offerings*

- Create more accessible, modular solutions that provide students with greater choice, including adapting administrative structures to support this.
- In a time of scarce resources, avoid overlapping or overly similar courses and programs; instead, coordinate and collaborate where it is academically and resource-efficient.
- Strengthen collaboration with the labor market, vocational schools, and secondary schools to create seamless transitions.

#### *International Expansion through Strategic Collaboration*

- Establish and further develop partnerships within networks and with leading Life Science universities such as SLU and Wageningen to offer joint degrees and courses.
- Offer international programs and courses (fully digital and hybrid with local partners) based on our strengths in fields related to the green transition, planning, urban infrastructure, international development and environmental studies, public health, veterinary medicine, food safety, agriculture, and agricultural technology. This could include differentiated tuition fee models, scholarship schemes, or partnerships with local institutions to ensure access to educational opportunities.

- Explore new markets for international recruitment based on thorough needs assessments and strategic partnerships while enhancing NMBU's international profile on its website

#### *Smart Use of Resources and Support for Faculty Development*

- Utilize academic expertise across disciplines to strengthen collaboration and create synergies in the development and implementation of educational offerings (we aim to continue sandbox innovation and piloting as a working method, a measure already initiated and anchored within the faculties).
- Strengthen the interaction between faculties and administration to ensure effective support systems for development work.
- Develop administrative solutions that contribute to efficiency rather than bureaucracy.
- Allocate risk-mitigating capital to pilot projects that can pave the way for new educational models.

### Research – Greater flexibility

NMBU is strong in research, and in several areas, we are internationally leading. Our research contributes to solving national challenges and operates in symbiosis with education, strengthening both fields. Among higher education institutions in Norway, NMBU is one of the best at securing **external research funding**, both from the Research Council of Norway (RCN) and the EU. We must continue to develop this capacity.

At the same time, we face challenges such as reduced base funding and rising research costs, which create tighter financial constraints. Therefore, it is crucial that we work to establish greater **financial flexibility**, allowing us to prioritize our own initiatives rather than relying solely on external funding. Expanding this flexibility requires leadership to facilitate more time and focus for research while providing support to researchers at all levels.

**PhD students and postdoctoral** researchers play a central role in NMBU's research and represent the future of academia. Significant improvements have been made in PhD supervision, and new routines for postdoctoral follow-up are under development. However, there is still a need for further improvements in support and completion rates, especially for those in the early stages of their research careers.

Research is largely driven by individuals and research groups, but **collaboration** across groups, faculties, and institutions is becoming increasingly important. This is essential for success in the large-scale research programs that now dominate the funding landscape. The growing trend toward interdisciplinary research and increasing requirements for user involvement make such collaborations even more critical for securing future research success.

**What can we do together to further develop research at NMBU? Here are our proposals:**

#### *Better collaboration between faculties, especially for large grant applications*

- Research takes place within the faculties, and we are entirely dependent on researchers having both the time and motivation to develop their work. At the same time, an increasing share of research funding comes from larger programs and centers, which require collaboration and strategic coordination. We need to improve our ability to work across disciplines and faculties, as there are significant research opportunities in combining insights across established disciplines and research groups.

### *Engaging faculties in a more systematic dialogue with businesses and organizations*

- Collaboration between research and industry yields the best results when built over time. Several research groups already maintain structured and systematic relationships with businesses, but there is untapped potential to systematize this further at the NMBU level, where multiple faculties coordinate their dialogue with their respective sectors. The "NMBUtre" initiative, initiated by Erik, is an example of such coordination.
- We must carefully assess what we, as an organization, have the capacity to initiate and sustain, but we also need to make necessary improvements in this area through a more strategic and systematic approach to collaboration with industry and organizations.

### *Improving routines and expertise in research project management*

- Research is organized through projects, yet there is varying expertise in project planning, project management, and financial administration. The current tools are often perceived as difficult to use. This is an area with clear potential for improvement. Enhancing competencies and project management routines—tailored to researchers' everyday work—will lead to better research outcomes and improved financial management at NMBU.

### *Strengthening financial sustainability by increasing project coverage of fixed salary costs*

- The base funding for research and education, along with the overhead from temporary positions, does not sufficiently cover the costs of permanent academic staff. Therefore, we must ensure that research projects contribute an increasing share of salary costs for permanent positions. We will work to improve understanding and establish effective routines for this.

### *Enhancing recruitment and support for phd students and postdoctoral researchers*

- Doctoral research is demanding, challenging, and, for many, a solitary experience—especially when there are few people in the hallways. Significant progress has been made in strengthening PhD supervision and developing routines for postdoctoral researchers. We will continue to follow up on this work and ensure that faculties consistently focus on the working environment and support for early-career researchers.
- Additionally, we need to offer better career development guidance and training for PhD students and postdocs to help them prepare for their future careers.

### *Research communication and impact*

- Our research is valuable, but it must also be made accessible to society to have an impact—whether as a basis for political decisions or as public knowledge to counter new, subjective trends in society. Research communication is becoming increasingly important, and many NMBU researchers actively engage in public outreach. However, this is not a given; it has largely been driven by the personal commitment of individual researchers. Science communication is a distinct skill, and we will work to strengthen capacity-building in this area. This aligns with our overarching leadership philosophy of encouraging individual professional development within agreed-upon frameworks and roles. We will also allocate resources to support faculties and research groups in their outreach and societal engagement efforts. By increasing the visibility and societal influence of our research communities, we enhance NMBU's position in an increasingly competitive research and education landscape.

### *Infrastructure and technical support*

- Pilot facilities and infrastructure such as SHF, SKP, Matpiloten, laboratories, and research models are central assets that provide NMBU with comparative advantages in research and

education. We must work systematically to secure long-term funding and active utilization of these resources. The lease model (leiestedsmodellen) is a key framework for ensuring the efficient use of critical infrastructure at NMBU. It offers potential benefits by providing an overview of access, quality, renewal needs, and depreciation of equipment and facilities. This, in turn, enables better strategic planning in collaboration with the academic environments responsible for the infrastructure. We will continue to support the implementation of the lease model for this purpose.

## A strengthened focus on student innovation

Today's job market demands candidates with innovation competence, which is essential for solving complex societal challenges and creating sustainable solutions. At NMBU, we have many excellent extracurricular and student-driven initiatives where students can choose to get involved on a voluntary basis, gaining valuable practical experience in innovation. While there are course offerings in this field, there are still limited opportunities to formally develop such **innovation competence** within the framework of existing study programs. If NMBU is to fulfill its strategy stating that all NMBU students should have the opportunity to acquire innovation competence within their field of study during their academic journey, a more comprehensive approach is needed to integrate student innovation at NMBU.

**What can we do together to further develop student innovation at NMBU? Here are our proposals:**

### *Boost for student innovation*

- Develop and coordinate more courses and programs in innovation and entrepreneurship (e.g., create an honors certificate in innovation worth 20 ECTS).
- Connect students more closely to user-oriented research projects, key actors, and student initiatives within the innovation ecosystem, allowing them to gain hands-on experience in innovation work. Develop models where students can earn credits for this (“Students in Innovation” / “Innovation Internship” / “Student-Driven Education”).
- Further develop the master’s thesis to include individual entrepreneurship projects, which will enhance the quality of idea generation and foster advanced innovation competence. This could lead to more opportunities for securing funding for student ideas through STUD-ENT (Innovation Norway’s grant scheme for student entrepreneurship, offering up to NOK 1 million).
- Establish a student innovation seed fund – NMBU should work to create a dedicated funding scheme for students to test and further develop their own innovation ideas, which can then be advanced to STUD-ENT.

## Artificial Intelligence: A ‘Game Changer’ for Academia

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming many processes in society, and as a university, we must take a proactive approach to this development. We need to leverage AI to streamline workflows and improve operations and administration while also addressing potential unintended consequences. This requires increasing AI competence among both staff and students. The potential for efficiency gains and quality improvements is significant, and this must be a high priority.



## What can we do together to further develop the benefits of AI at NMBU? Here are our proposals:

### *AI-competence*

- AI can simplify time-consuming tasks in teaching, research, and administration, and a successful competence-building initiative can free up capacity for other important tasks. The Learning Center (Læringscenteret) already offers courses, KI1 and KI2, focused on education, and we will further develop practical AI courses targeting other work areas as well.
- As an educational institution, we must recognize AI's impact on student learning. **AI should support learning, not replace it.** Our students need competence in critical AI usage, emphasizing critical thinking, study techniques, metacognition, and creative thinking to enhance their learning opportunities. Without this, the gap between those who use AI constructively and those who do not may widen.

### *AI Technology as a Tool*

- AI and other technologies, such as smart sensors, can play an important role in many administrative areas, for example, in campus operations (Smart Campus). We will use our campus and buildings more as pilot arenas for smart and environmentally friendly AI applications.
- Large language models (LLMs) can improve dialogue across disciplines and promote interdisciplinary collaboration. New AI agents can support processes such as project planning, coordination of (research) collaborations, and information management.

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## Who are we in Team Solve?

### Solve Sæbø (Rector candidate):

I have been a professor of statistics at KBM since 2012, but I took a break from my academic position from 2017 to 2021 while serving as Pro-Rector for Education at NMBU. My time at Campus Ås began in 1994 as a student in biometrics (now applied statistics). After completing a PhD in the same field in 2004, I have remained at Ås, teaching and conducting research in various positions up to the present day. Learning, as a phenomenon, has been a common thread throughout my career—both in the form of statistical learning, but also human learning - understanding how students (and people in general) actually learn, while also recognizing that we all learn differently. My research on learning, incorporating knowledge from statistics, neuroscience, psychology/psychometrics, pedagogy, and technology, led to the creation of Norway's first MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) in statistics in 2014–2016, an award for best lecturer of the semester (2013), and, more recently, research on new bio-inspired algorithms for artificial intelligence (NeuroAI). I also brought this knowledge into my role as Pro-Rector for Education, where my main focus was on improving learning quality, student well-being, and mental health. This knowledge also strongly influences my leadership philosophy.

As Pro-Rector, I also led the development of NMBU's overarching strategy, "Joint Efforts for a Sustainable Future" for the period 2019–2023, and I participated in the launch of the National Committee for Agenda 2030 in Higher Education in Norway from 2018, a committee for sustainability collaboration across the university sector. At the same time, I also chaired NMBU's Environmental Committee. The major challenges we face today, both locally and globally, are complex wicked problems, where the best solutions must be found through informed societal participation and interdisciplinary approaches, well-supported by both focused disciplinary basic research and broad, cross-disciplinary research. There are strong interactions between economic, environmental, and

social factors that must be considered when making decisions on such matters. With my background in multivariable methods, I find these to be highly interesting challenges, also from a leadership perspective.

As a researcher in artificial intelligence, a deputy board member of NORA ([www.nora.ai](http://www.nora.ai)), and the chair of NMBU's AI committee for research, I have solid insight and oversight of AI developments both locally, nationally, and internationally. There is no doubt that AI will reshape work and learning processes at our university in the years to come. I believe it is crucial for NMBU to stay ahead of developments in AI so that we can both take advantage of the opportunities it offers for efficiency and learning, and remain mindful of the challenges it presents.

My strengths: Deeply engaged with and well-acquainted with NMBU; highly committed to student and staff learning, well-being, and opportunities for personal development; broad-minded, forward-thinking, and strategic in addressing complex challenges; a team player, approachable, and jovial.

### Elin Kubberød (Candidate Pro-Rector education):

I am the current Pro-Rector for Education at NMBU and have been invited to join an exciting new team. As a leader, I am passionate about facilitating the development of our educational programs in line with competency needs across disciplines, functions, and faculties. I am a professor and a distinguished educator in entrepreneurship and innovation. My affiliation is with the School of Economics and Business at NMBU, where I have served as a research group and program leader, as well as a faculty board member for two terms. Additionally, I have experience as a team leader for the technology transfer office (now Ard Innovation) and as a senior advisor in the research department, where, between 2009 and 2013, I worked on innovation culture, industry collaboration, and innovation activities for students and staff.

Since 2013, I have built a recognized master's program in entrepreneurship and innovation, which led to NMBU's Education Award in 2018. My research focuses on successful practices and strategies for startups and entrepreneurial ventures in the food sector, agritech, and high-tech entrepreneurship. I am particularly interested in how small businesses leverage their networks and limited resources and how they learn to develop a sustainable market for their innovations. In this area, I have studied female high-tech entrepreneurs' opportunities to attract growth capital and establish companies in a male-dominated industry. Additionally, I have a strong pedagogical research portfolio in entrepreneurship education and have collaborated extensively with my students in research projects.

My background is interdisciplinary, with a Cand. Agric. in Food Science from NMBU and a PhD from the Department of Marketing at BI Norwegian Business School. I have broad research and leadership experience from both the research sector and industry, including positions at Nofima, Ringnes, and as a marketing manager for a startup specializing in omega-3 products based on sustainable marine resources. I am frequently engaged as a speaker and expert in external councils and committees, and I serve as a subject matter expert for innovation projects in the Research Council of Norway (RCN).

In 2024, I was asked to step into the role of Pro-Rector for Education in the middle of a term. This was an unexpected career shift, but I saw it as a meaningful opportunity to contribute to NMBU in a new way—and now I am not planning to stop anytime soon. I have already initiated several pilot projects in the field of education in collaboration with faculties and administrative functions, and I am highly motivated to continue and strengthen the good work we have started together. I am a relationship builder with an extensive internal and external network. I hope to use my commitment and drive to benefit NMBU in the next four-year period. I believe that my expertise will be valuable in the current challenges we face, where we must turn difficulties into new opportunities.

My strengths: Committed to high-quality learning and development, goal-oriented and effective in achieving results, strong leadership skills, engaging and motivating, a network builder, attentive and open to different perspectives in problem-solving, visionary and creative, informal and approachable, a skilled educator who enjoys helping others succeed in reaching their goals.

### Erik Trømborg: (Candidate Pro-Rector research):

I am a professor of forest economics and head of the Renewable Energy and Forest Science section at MINA. I hold two master's degrees—one in forestry from NMBU and one in forest management from the University of Wisconsin-Madison—as well as a PhD in forest economics from NMBU.

At NMBU, I have worked as a research assistant, researcher, and professor, and I now divide my time roughly equally between teaching and supervision, research on renewable energy and forest sector analysis, and leading a section with more than 50 employees. I was the initiator of the renewable energy program at MINA and have been actively involved in its development. Currently, I teach multiple-use forestry and bioenergy.

Previously, I worked in practical forest management at Statskog SF and as a leader and advisor in consulting services related to the forest owner cooperative, where I was involved in forest certification and developing GIS solutions for forest owners. In 2007, I co-founded Nettskog AS, and as its managing director, I have hired many NMBU graduates over the years.

I have international experience from studies in Tacoma, Washington, and Madison, as a visiting researcher at UC Davis, and from a year spent as an advisor on a forest sector transition project in Uganda. I also served on the Climate Committee 2050, which led me to focus extensively on climate, nature, and transition issues over the past two to three years, participating in numerous public debates as part of this work.

I have broad academic interests and am particularly engaged in the challenging trade-offs between nature conservation, reducing fossil fuel use, and societal development. On a more personal note, I have a son studying forestry at MINA and a daughter pursuing a PhD at KBM, ensuring that NMBU traditions continue in the family for years to come.

*My strengths:* Strong understanding of economics, leadership experience across various organizations and projects, experience in private business, skilled at identifying opportunities and solutions, and enjoy achieving results through collaboration. I am efficient, structured, and energetic, with a strong sense of roles and responsibilities, high social competence, and a passion for lively debate!

### Our strengths as a team:

We are a team with extensive **leadership experience** at various levels, from different roles both within and outside the university, strong **role awareness**, and a broad collective competence profile. With deep insight and familiarity with the processes currently underway and recently completed at NMBU, we will be able to operate effectively as a rectorate from the start. We will represent both **continuity and necessary change**, supported strategically by the university board and the organization.

All of us have studied at NMBU and understand the importance of student participation and student-driven initiatives in creating a strong learning environment. And last but not least, we (at least in our own opinion) believe we are friendly, **driven** individuals with a good sense of humor and self-irony.

Let's Solve it!