

Dear Guests,

Leiden University College (LUC) is very pleased to host the 2018 Student Research Conference (SRC). The SRC's goals to celebrate and stimulate undergraduate research fits perfectly with LUC's mission to provide a high-quality research-led teaching environment for talented bachelor students who have what it takes to make valuable contributions to academic inquiry. The list of nominated projects for this year's conference clearly shows the breadth and depth of what undergraduate students can do when higher education institutes take them seriously and providing a stimulating learning environment.

Such a learning environment is precisely what LUC strives to create within the inspiring context of the oldest University of the Netherlands. The Latin motto of Leiden University is *libertatis praesidium*, which translates to Bastion of Liberty. The liberty to absorb knowledge and study topics and themes from different points of view, the liberty to form your own opinions, and to develop into open-minded individuals and critical thinkers. This year's SRC program promises to welcome many such students who are a testimony to the great things that can be developed when ambition, talent, and education meet.

The program highlights the value of collaborations between experienced academics and motivated undergraduate students in their journey towards intellectual development. And what better way to journey towards bigger things than by being inspired by giants whose shoulders afford us a view of the endless plains, oceans, forests, and mountain ranges that hold promises for exciting futures. But as a caution against simply emulating others, I will quote some giants who urge you to "Think wrongly if you please, but in all cases think for yourself" (Doris Lessing), who want you to realize that "The greatest people were never versions of someone else. They were themselves" (Neil deGrasse Tyson), and who emphasize that "It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation" (Herman Melville). With this in mind, I wish all of our SRC students the inspiration and power to find and travel their own unique paths.

I am truly looking forward to seeing the work of the nominees and attendees in more detail and speaking to them about their findings and ambitions!

Prof.dr. Judi Mesman  
*Dean of Leiden University College*  
*Chair of the 2018 Student Research Conference*