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# Dutch scientist gets his dream job

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[robbert\\_dijkgraaf1.jpg](#)

**Dutch mathematical physicist Robbert Dijkgraaf has been named the new director of the prestigious Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. Albert Einstein worked there, as did another 26 Nobel laureates.**

"You can't apply for this job," says Professor Dijkgraaf, currently president of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), "your name is put forward by members of the scientific community. I was first approached in June this year, when there was still a larger group of candidates. That gradually became smaller until I was asked to take the position."

The IAS was founded in 1930. Robbert Dijkgraaf is only the second non-US citizen and the first non-native English speaker to head the institute. His 'dream job' starts in July 2012.

## Stringent

Professor Dijkgraaf is no stranger to Princeton. He worked there as a young scientist in the 1990s. He specialises in string theory, quantum gravity and the borderline between mathematics and particle physics.

The Princeton institute has a permanent faculty of 28 professors, the cream of the international scientific community. There are four schools: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Historical Studies and Social Science. Each year 200 stringently-selected young scientists are admitted to do research.

Robbert Dijkgraaf regards the IAS as a 'sanctuary for scientists'. As director, he will ensure that the faculty members can continue their research undisturbed and he will also be expected to communicate 'the importance and beauty of science'.

## Ambassador

In an interview with Dutch daily *de Volkskrant*, he comments:

*"You have to get out there, go to places where people aren't particularly aware of the role played by science."*

That's typical Dijkgraaf. As president of the KNAW he has become the face of Dutch science and a tireless ambassador. He has a column in the authoritative Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* and regularly appears on the popular TV programme *De Wereld Draait Door*.

He hopes to be able to recruit top Dutch scientists to Princeton. Professor Dijkgraaf regards the quality of Dutch science as 'staggering'. "You can see it in the results and positions of Dutch people elsewhere in the world." He believes this may well have had an influence on his appointment.

(imm/hs)

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