



STUDENT  
COUNCIL

# BI-YEARLY REFLECTION REPORT

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Written by the UC Student Council '22-'23



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Fall

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# ABBREVIATIONS

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AAO	Academic Affairs Officer
BoS	Board of Studies
CAR	Campus Affairs Representatives
FLISS	First Generation Low Income and Scholarship Students
MT	Management Team
GDA	Gender Diversity Alliance
UCSA	University College Student Association
UCSRN	University College Student Representatives of the Netherlands
UCUC	University College Utrecht Council

# INTRODUCTION

The bi-yearly reflection report is written by the UC Student Council every year. The UCSC constitutes the student side of co-governance at UCU: members sit on various governing bodies of our college and are part of the making and checking of academic and non-academic policy. One of our primary roles is representing the student voice in these processes – which means that we actively seek student input on matters being discussed. This year's UCSC members are:



**Sifra van de Gronden (She/Her)**  
Chair, Vice-chair UCUC



**Charlotte Smeets (She/Her)**  
AAO, Student Rep. UCUC



**Emma Verbeek (She/Her)**  
Student Assessor, student member MT, visiting member BoS



**Ella Weiss (She/Her)**  
AAO, Student Rep. UCUC, UCSRN Academic Rep.



**Max Furda (He/Him)**  
Secretary, Student Rep. UCUC



**Johan Wiersma (He/Him)**  
AAO, Student Rep. BoS

Our work is in part determined by the themes and activities of the respective bodies in which we hold positions and in part by the day-to-day work that comes with running our own board. Additionally, every UCSC board plans out several aims and projects to work on during their board year.

In this report, we will outline the progress in regard to the aims we set for our board year, but also highlight other relevant achievements. Having presented our goals to the student body at the beginning of the academic year, this report serves to provide students with an update on past and upcoming work. This also works towards our aim of increasing the transparency and visibility of our work and gives students a means of holding us accountable. There are also internal benefits as it serves as a checkpoint to provide all of us with an overview of our work thus far and allows us to consider the remainder of our board year. This report will also give our successors a clear overview of our year's work. As such, we continue to strongly recommend that future boards make it standard practice to write and publish these bi-yearly reports.

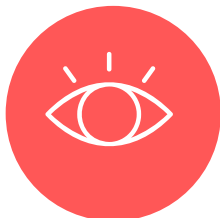
# THE AIMS OF 2022-2023

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## **Innovation**

We encourage each other, the student body, and all UCU staff to think through how we can improve the college. We aim to stay imaginative in our daily to-dos and larger-scale projects and to be open to new initiatives, approaches or views.



## **Clarity**

Both UCU and the UU have a wide array of resources available to students, but there is an overall lack of clarity. We aim to clarify these resources in order to improve their accessibility for UCU students, while also aiming to clarify the role of the UCSC to improve communication between students and the administration.



## **Wellbeing**

UCU is a fast-paced and high-intensity educational program. We are aware that the program can take its toll on the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of students. In our work, we aim to improve the support systems present and raise awareness in College Hall about this topic.



## **Inclusivity**

Everyone on campus should be able to enjoy our education without feeling excluded, discriminated against or otherwise disadvantaged. We plan to work together with different bodies on campus in order to increase inclusivity and to address those aspects that are currently underrepresented in the discussion of diversity on campus.



## **Presence**

The effectiveness of our work relies on input from the student body. We will continue to work on the UC Student Council's presence on campus and digitally so that everyone knows when or how they can approach us with any issues they face or input they wish to share.

# LOOKING BACK

## BODIES & TEAMS

All members of the UC Student Council take part in various co-governorship bodies, teams, and groups. In this section of the report, we reflect on our activities in the UCUC, BoS, MT, NPO Committee, Green Team, UCSRN, Voorzittersoverleg, Relocation Group, and the Sexual Misconduct Task Force, FLISS and the GDA.

### The UCUC

The University College Utrecht Council is a body within the College that ensures that the interests of students and the staff are represented. The UCUC is comprised of four staff/faculty members and four UCSC members. Within the council, we have discussed, advised, and approved a variety of topics so far this academic year. One of these is examining and approving the budget for 2022-2023. Another vital task of the Council is combing through the course evaluations and creating summaries of the valuable feedback given. These summaries are then examined to find areas of improvement and are brought to course instructors, fellows, cluster chairs, and the BoS. Most recently, we took part in a seminar by TAQT in order to bring an even deeper understanding of the overall structure of Faculty Councils and Educational Committees. This training was incredibly useful, and therefore, we will recommend the future UCSC/UCUC boards to take part in the training at the beginning of the academic year.



### The BoS

In the Board of Studies, we have discussed everything from educational vision and interdisciplinarity to approving new courses. The BoS consists of the BoS AAO, the Student Assessor, the Director of Education, the Head Tutor, and all five Cluster Chairs. The role of the two UCSC members is to provide the student perspective in all decisions regarding the curriculum. In discussions about the evaluation of new courses, the AAOs supplied the Board of Studies with important additional student feedback. During the spring semester, Emma and Johan contributed to the development of the newest courses in the curriculum, including the Morocco field course. You can expect to see new courses to be announced shortly on topics such as public health, elementary chemistry, engaged citizenship, and more!



### The NPO Committee


Together with the NPO committee, we have reviewed and approved funding for many initiatives and ideas that have emerged from within the UCU community. Projects include workshops on inclusivity, social safety, self-development, and sexual health and safety. We have helped fund the UCU Pride Boat and a new initiative to create a communal professional kitchen for all UCU students to use. There are also various other projects still in the making, which we will continue to review with the aim of strengthening our community and improving student well-being.



# LOOKING BACK



## BODIES & TEAMS

### The MT





In the MT meetings this year we discussed many things, ranging from UCU's budget to relocation. In the MT's Strategy and Leadership session we have now established that wellbeing, of both students and staff, will be the college's number one priority in UCU's Strategic Plan. In order to achieve this, we are establishing a student work pressure committee, commissioned by the Dean and made up of both students and staff. This committee will research the root causes of student stress at UCU and create a formal report to advise the MT. Furthermore, we are also working with the Dean to create more awareness about sexual misconduct among both staff and students through professional trainings, as well as providing bystander training to students. Funding for these initiatives have been approved by the NPO committee. To bring issues of student wellbeing to the MT we also organized a Town Hall in which students could share their experiences with the staff in an informal setting.

### The UCSRN



Being a part of UCSRN allows UCU to stay connected with the other University Colleges in the Netherlands and ensure that the quality of education at all universities is being held to a high standard. There have been frequent meetings to plan academic events across the University Colleges and allow for consistent check-ins. The UCSC was invited to partake in the EUC Interim Program Assessment, which occurs every 6 years to evaluate the liberal arts education at Erasmus University College. The panel consisted of the dean of UCG, the previous dean of AUC, a professor at Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, and Ella Weiss as the student representative. The Assessment involved an intensive weekend of conversations with the Management Team, staff members, and students, and the report will be used to improve and further the education at EUC.

### The Relocation Group





Together with student members from UCSA and CAR, academic and support staff, the Relocation Group meets every few weeks to discuss the physical relocation of the University College Utrecht campus. After having completed the vision document in the last academic year, we are now, together with the Utrecht University's Real Estate Team exploring different scenarios for UCU's relocation to the South-Eastern part of Utrecht Science Park. This work will continue in the Spring Semester.

# LOOKING BACK




## BODIES & TEAMS

### The Green Team




The Green Team has made significant progress in the past semester by setting up initiatives that will be launched this spring aimed at promoting sustainability on campus. After finalizing our vision document, the team's efforts have been directed toward creating a more environmentally friendly and biodiverse campus environment. During the Fall semester, the Green Team held numerous events in collaboration with PoliticsCo, LawCo, and PubquizCo. After conducting a survey on the sustainability of our campus, we submitted a proposal for funding to the UCU NPO Committee, which will be used to kickstart various projects in collaboration with College Hall to improve the outside sustainability and to promote biodiversity on our campus. The implementation of these projects will take up the majority of our time this Spring. Nevertheless, we will continue to advise UCSA and College Hall on sustainability-related topics, and we aim to establish an expert board of UCU staff by the end of this academic year.

### The Sexual Misconduct Taskforce



This year, Bella (UCSA) and Emma chaired the Sexual Misconduct Task Force, in which we discussed how to make UCU safer with many different groups in the college. We have gone over Amnesty International's "Let's Talk About Yes" Manifesto for universities and have made a plan for how the various points can be implemented and strived for at UCU. Furthermore, we are in the process of creating a document that compiles all resources regarding Sexual Misconduct, both within the university but also external resources. We have also extensively discussed codes of conduct within various student bodies as well as our new Social Honor Code.

### The Voorzittersoverleg & URAAD



UCU governance functions within the larger institution of Utrecht University. To stay informed about what is happening in other faculties, the UCSC Chair attends the monthly 'Voorzittersoverleg' (Chairs Meeting). In this meeting, the staff- and student chairs of UU's eight faculties discuss what has been on the Faculty Council agendas and exchange useful information or resources. Additionally, we stay in close contact with the URaad through monthly meetings. We use these meetings to gain perspectives from outside UCU, find a knowledgeable sparring partner, and (like the Voorzittersoverleg) exchange information or resources. The promotion of co-governorship positions and proper compensation/payment has been a recurring topic during these meetings.

# LOOKING BACK

## BODIES & TEAMS

### The Gender Diversity Alliance

The Gender Diversity Alliance, formerly known as the Pronouns Team, has progressed steadily in its vision and goals. Although the work of the GDA emphasizes slow change through patience and understanding, there have still been strong steps to cement the importance of the work. The report from the GDA and the UCSC in 2019, based on a survey regarding gender inclusivity at UCU, has been used as the foundation of multiple UU advancements and policies. Following this encouragement from UU staff, the GDA is working on rebranding itself (with a more representative name and upcoming logo), creating a booklet to pool together information/resources, and increasing visibility through open meetings.



### First Generation Low-Income Scholarship Students

FLISS aims to raise awareness, provide support to students, and advocate for official changes at UCU. Following the info sheet created introducing this newly founded group, there were multiple exciting advancements made this semester. The official launch of the team took place on October 4th as an open pizza dinner. The turnout was great! It was one of the first steps that FLISS has made to become a more visible and official group on campus, and it was incredibly successful in making more students aware that such a group exists. The meetings with FLISS have been held for the purpose of supporting them in their visions and goals, and in collaboration with College Hall, there have been conversations about future projects with FLISS, such as an Alumni Support System.



### The Wellbeing platform

The Wellbeing Platform is a body wherein the wellbeing team, CAR, UCSA, and the UCSC collaborate. The aim of this platform is to share ideas and progress to all of the bodies within it about progress regarding student wellbeing. During meetings, representatives from each body will provide an update as to what recent initiatives they have worked on and plan to work on in the future and a discussion on how these bodies might be able to collaborate is held. Many parties on the Wellbeing Platform have exciting events related to student wellbeing coming up in the spring semester.





# LOOKING BACK

## PROJECTS

Besides the formal positions that the UC Student Council holds, every board focuses on a few goals and projects in their board year. This section of the report reflects on our projects' activities and achievements thus far in the academic year.

### The Year Plan Presentation

The UC Student Council hosted their very first year plan presentation at the beginning of the semester. In previous years, we presented our goals and projects to the student body during the UCSA Budget General Assembly. To improve our communication and transparency, we decided a separate event would allow for more dialogue and space to elaborate on our activities. Additionally, we paid special attention to the daily activities of the different board positions, so that the audience was informed who to approach for specific questions or comments. Overall, the presentation was a success: track representatives, board members and individual students came to listen to our plans for the upcoming academic year and asked wonderful questions. By hosting the event in the bar, students and student council members could continue their conversations in an informal setting after the presentation.

### Improving the Communication Strategy

We have worked on revamping our Instagram page to make it more informative and to increase the visibility of our initiatives. We have also built a website where we can compile our events, resources, and information about what we do (visit [ucstudentcouncil.com](http://ucstudentcouncil.com)). We have explored different kinds of promotions, including videos, Facebook posts, Instagram posts, and stories. We also send out monthly updates, which include a "looking back" section with the different events, initiatives, and projects we did that month, as well as a "moving forward" section with the opportunities and events that students can attend in the coming weeks.




### Midterm Feedback Form

Last semester, the Academic Affairs Officers created a Midterm Feedback Form, to encourage teachers to gather student feedback halfway through the semester and potentially make some small adjustments to improve the overall course experience. Our form was shared with all teachers around midterms and contained questions regarding class structure, environment, workload, and suggestions for the second half of the semester. The form can be filled out by students digitally or by hand, but teachers are encouraged to also incorporate the questions in an informal in-class discussion with students. We will share the form again and encourage teachers to use it this Spring semester and aim to have this become a standard practice in all courses.

# LOOKING BACK



## PROJECTS

### Principled Spaces





Last semester, Johan collaborated with Gerard van der Ree, Markha Valenta, and Dusan Jankovic and developed a workshop and worksheet on how to set up a principled space in a classroom environment. This project was initiated subsequent to Dusan's internship with the Diversity Committee. Principled spaces are better suited than safe spaces to create the environments UCU wishes to develop: we can commit to adhering to a set of principles that guide and shape the space and increase the possibility of safety for all involved. We hosted a workshop for professors and tutors on a teacher training day, which was received incredibly well. In the spring semester, we are hosting more workshops and will also be reflecting with teachers that created a principled space in their classrooms.

### UU Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award



In November, we submitted a nomination for the UU Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award 2023. This distinction is awarded every year by the University of Utrecht's Executive Board to a teacher who has been nominated by one of the study associations of the faculties of UU. In addition, there is also a Teacher Talent award for a teacher who has been teaching for less than five years. This year, we nominated Patricia Post-Nievelstein - the UCU Teacher of the Year 2022 - for the Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award 2023. She is greatly valued by her students for her passion for her courses, her dedication to teaching, and her attention to students' personal lives. The selection for the award consists of various qualifying rounds. Unfortunately, Patricia did not proceed to the next round. However, a nomination for this award is already very valuable. It shows the student body's appreciation for the teacher, it creates more visibility of UCU within the wider UU, and winning the award can have a huge impact in terms of networking and career opportunities.

### Track Representatives



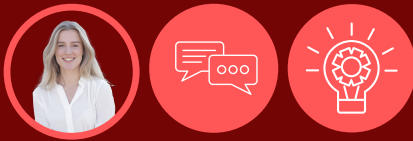
This year, we are continuing the previous board's efforts to institutionalize the track representative position and increase their visibility among students. In summer term, to strengthen the continuity of their work, we introduced a transition meeting for each track where the former track representative transitioned the newly chosen track representatives. In Fall introweek, we organized 'Guess the Major Bingo' - a new event in which track representatives were introduced to all first-year students. Throughout the semester, several track representatives also organized events such as info sessions about masters and thesis and even a movie screening! In collaboration with Nina Köll, we hosted a decoloniality workshop for track representatives.

# LOOKING BACK

## EVENTS

The UC Student Council aims to host a few public events every year to promote the interaction between the UCSC, the student body, and staff members. In this section of the report, we reflect on our hosted events during introweek, the Afternoon at the Bar, the Track Market, and the Town Hall.

### The Town Hall



In November, we helped organize a management team Townhall where students were able to meet the Dean, Director of Education, and Managing Director of UCU (and eat pizza). The purpose of this was to allow students to raise any questions and concerns that they might have as well as get to know the management team in a more informal setting. Thank you to all the students that came and engaged in productive discussion!

### Afternoon at the Bar



Afternoon at the Bar is an event organized by the UCSC every month. It is a great opportunity for students to meet the wonderful staff at UCU in an informal setting. This year we started doing themed afternoons at the bars including a "Game Night," where students were able to play table tennis and darts with staff.

### The Track Market



The Track Market is one of the most exciting and fulfilling events that the Academic Affairs Officers organize. The event took place in Dining Hall, and each track was represented with its own stand. Both the track representative and the fellow of each track were present, and they ensured they were fully prepared with syllabi, track outlines, and textbooks. The turnout was amazing, with many first-years learning about the various courses offered at UCU and the tracks they could pursue. For second and third years, we also had a stand for futures and internship opportunities.

# LOOKING BACK

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## EVENTS

### Improving our Introweek Presence



Introweek is the very first introduction to the members of the UC Student Council and the board's activities for many students. Therefore, we wished to improve our presence during this important week and support the UCSA. There are several public events we hosted:

### Craft-Your-Curriculum Workshop

Our board decided to reinvent the 'Craft-Your-Curriculum Workshop' to make it more enticing and interactive for the incoming students. We aimed to involve the new students by asking questions, using a mentimeter, and handing out empty curriculum templates so that they could begin imagining their own curriculum for the next three years and familiarizing themselves with the requirements and options offered at UCU.

### Guess-the-Major Bingo

During our Guess-the-Major Bingo, we introduced the incoming students to sixteen of our track representatives. We aimed to make track representatives more visible and introduce the new students to all the different tracks available at UCU. By stationing these track representatives all over campus and providing a map and a bingo sheet, we aimed to create a fun and engaging alternative to the previous classroom impressions event. All groups were rewarded with ice cream, and the first team to complete the bingo sheet won house plants for the full family.

### The Meet-the-Staff Borrel

The Meet-the-Staff Borrel boasted an open tab for beer, soft drinks, and snacks, as well as an opportunity for incoming students to introduce themselves to professors and staff members at UCU in a relaxed environment. We were thrilled with the student engagement, as the turnout was great, and all parties were enthusiastically participating in the conversations.

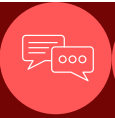
# LOOKING AHEAD

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## Student Work Pressure Committee

As the Management Team has established that 'wellbeing' needs to be the number one priority of the college, the Dean has commissioned a Student Work Pressure Committee. This committee will be modeled after the Staff Work Pressure Committee which was conducted throughout the previous year. The new committee will consist of both staff and students, and will aim to collect data and produce a report to advise the MT on how to reduce student work pressure, ultimately contributing to improved wellbeing for students at UCU.



## Website launch

The UC Student Council has worked hard this past semester to build our own website in order to clarify what we do and to ensure that students can easily access essential resources. The website includes information about our daily activities, goals, and projects. Additionally, one can use the website to navigate all the different clusters, tracks, and their representatives. Interested in running for the UC Student Council? You can find all the information about elections and transition on [Ucstudentcouncil.com](http://Ucstudentcouncil.com).



## Elections & Transition

In the very near future, the candidates running for the UC Student Council '23-'24 will be announced. As we prepare for the election season, we look forward to hosting an amazing set of events where candidates can talk to the student body about their vision and ideas. Before the election week, we host multiple info sessions and open meetings to invite everyone curious to explore whether a UCSC board year would fit them. After the elections, we are excited to transition the next board, as it is a vital first step to a successful board year. Transition includes position-specific meetings, intensive work weekends, and plenty of time to bond and get to know each other.

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# LOOKING AHEAD

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## **Strengthening the Tutor System**

As the UC Student Council, we advocate for policies and decisions that promote student well-being in several governing boards. For instance, in MT, we pushed for a large-scale Student Work Pressure Committee (see section up). However, student representatives have not yet been institutionally included in the Tutor Team, even though it plays a large role in UCU students' academic journey. Therefore, the UC Student Council will host a large focus group to gather student input about their experiences, needs, and suggestions to improve the tutor system. We will share and discuss the outcomes of this focus group with the head tutor. Our ultimate goal is to hold bi-monthly meetings with the head tutor and be a visiting member during the Tutor Team meetings at least once a semester. In this way, we aim to represent the students' voice in the tutor system, so that decisions and policy will reflect students' needs.

## **Course Market: AATB Edition**

After the successful Track Market last Fall semester, we aim to organize a new spin-off event this semester: the UC Student Council Course Market. The event will be a themed edition of our monthly event Afternoon At the Bar, which will take place in April, around the time when students need to choose their courses for the next semester. During this event, the track representatives of all tracks will be present. With this event, we want to create an opportunity for students to talk to the track representatives, other fellow students, and teachers, about their experiences with the different courses that are offered.

## **Lustrum**

In 2023, UCU will celebrate its 25th anniversary. For this occasion, four days of lustrum celebrations will be organized in June. Charlotte and Sifra are part of the large Lustrum Committee that is organizing these festivities, which consists of staff members, students, and alumni. They are mainly responsible for a part of the program on the Friday of lustrum: a large symposium-like event that will showcase 25 years of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

# CONCLUSION

As we look back at the fall semester, we are happy to note that we have completed several projects that we had planned earlier this year. These include the creation of our own UCSC website, an independent year plan presentation, improving our UCSC Introweek presence, hosting a track market, a decolonization workshop for track representatives, and the creation of a midterm feedback form.

We have and will continue to work and collaborate on other projects with external parties as well. Examples of this include the Pronouns Team, Wellbeing Team, Green Team, the Sexual Misconduct Task Force, and UCU FLISS.

There are numerous ongoing projects that will increasingly be put into motion in the spring semester. This, in part applies to our portfolios on the tutor system, student well-being, and the election and transition of the new board.

Furthermore, some key projects that we will be focusing on include the student work pressure committee, Lustrum, and Afternoon at the Bar: Course Market Edition. Our plan for this board year was extensive, but we feel as though we have prioritized our energy and time well and are on track with our aims.

We have many upcoming projects and events in the spring semester, which will require a lot of our time – but we are energized and excited to continue doing so. Having learned to work together as an organized board over the course of the last semester will be an advantage going into the next one. It has been a joy representing the student body so far and we look forward to continuing to do so as the rest of our projects and initiatives come to fruition during the second half of our board year!

- Your UC Student Council 2022-2023

# ANY QUESTIONS?

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## Feel free to contact us through

### Our Email

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### or visit our Office Hours

Monday 12:45-13:45

Wednesday 12:45-13:45

Our office is located in Dining Hall  
(on the right side when coming in)  
(we have complimentary coffee, tea and snacks!)

### or send us a message on Facebook/Instagram



[uc.student.council](https://www.instagram.com/uc.student.council)



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