Policy Plan of the Student Council of 2023-2024

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INTRODUCTION

Dear students, staff, and management,

We are excited to share the Policy Plan for the upcoming academic year that we have been working on as the AUC Student Council (AUCSC) of 2023-2024!

In our Policy Plan, we present our objectives for the year that we have settled on according to what we believe is in the interests of the student community. It is important to note that our goals are not fixed and rigid. Instead, we are committed to fostering transparency, accommodation, and student involvement. We will do our best to represent the AUC student body and use our influence to positively impact students' lives, making changes to satisfy the student body's needs and see that these changes are carried out until the end. The student body has a right to be represented, and it is the Student Council's job to ensure their concerns and interests are heard.

As we are all in this together with the communal interest of striving for an environment where all students feel valued, empowered, and supported on their journey at AUC, we would appreciate an open floor of communication in which, from our side, we welcome any input from the student body and staff members, as it will help us better advocate for and implement the necessary changes. So, do not hesitate to reach out to us!

Thank you for your trust and support in this journey. We look forward to collaborating with all of you! Let's bring amazing transformations this year!

Love,
AUC Student Council 2023-2024
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TRANSPARENCY AND VISIBILITY

What is a Student Council without students? Nothing.
To represent the student body, listen to what the students have to say and convey their messages to AUC, we need the students to know about us and to have a clear idea of what we can do for them. Therefore, our board has made it a priority to focus on its visibility. We aim to cover this task with different measures, which will primarily include, but not be limited to, taking advantage of social media platforms. Transparency is another important, and not separate, aspect to consider. We want to be seen and trusted. We will communicate our projects, their progress, and any occurring changes.

Basic Transparency

We plan to make the decision-making processes in which we are involved more public to bring the student body along the journey with us. As student representatives, we consider transparency crucial and plan to make an effort to facilitate clear communication between AUC and its student body.

    a. We plan to hold some open council meetings, available to anyone interested in seeing how we approach and discuss issues between us. These will not be participative but observational.

    b. We want to endorse personable interaction with bodies at AUC, so we plan to continue introducing the bodies on Instagram, like the last Student Council, and find ways for the staff and students to meet on equal ground to get to know each other.

Open Assemblies

We will introduce Open Assemblies for the student body. These assemblies have a twofold purpose. On the one hand, these assemblies will allow the Student Council to keep the student body up to date and, thus, be more transparent. On the other hand, this initiative will help get input directly from students and give students an easily accessible space to bring their concerns up with the Student Council. By creating open assemblies where students can express their thoughts, concerns, and aspirations, we can foster a sense of control and collaboration in shaping the future of our community.

Continuity of Projects

    a. There are some specific projects that we would like to keep alive.

    b. We will continue Voices of AUC as a platform for discussing solution-oriented issues with students and staff. This is an attempt to build a bridge between the AUC student body and management and introduce each to the other's point of view. This is also a vital brainstorming moment that will help us, as the Student Council, get a general opinion temperature check on specific topics.

    c. Following the previous Student Council, we plan on sending out a monthly newsletter to the whole student body with updates on our progress and any information we think would be useful to know, such as advertising upcoming

Student Council events and sending out periodic surveys to get a general feel of the climate around specific topics.

d. We would like to continue Office Hours twice or thrice a week for visibility. We plan on having two or three Student Council members at the lunch stand in the academic building multiple times a week to be physically visible and available for students.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

As student representatives, we understand the urgency of a well-structured and helpful mental health and wellbeing system. Because of the excellence strived for in our programme, we aim to significantly focus on improving this system at AUC and the Student Council's connections with the Well-being Team so that students can easily access help in times of need.

Mental Health and Support Services

This year, we plan to continue strengthening our ties with the Well-being Team to promote mental health resources for all students.

a. We plan to continue having regular meetings with the team and prioritise the Mental Health Guide annual revision cycle while putting more emphasis on international students as they are often unaware of the Dutch system.

b. We want to focus on working closely with specific mental health support systems, such as Peer Support, to gain better insights into the students' concerns and help in initiatives to improve students' wellbeing.

c. We want to improve the accessibility of Student Life Officers (SLOs) at AUC so that students can take advantage of this valuable resource and clarify how to use it.

d. We want to explore options for situating an accessible psychologist for AUC students or a better referral system. We want to facilitate them specifically at AUC, as the UvA psychologist offers limited support and may not necessarily be aware of AUC's environment and the struggles students may encounter.

Tutor System

Students' dissatisfaction with the AUC's tutoring system has been acknowledged during the previous year. Despite this, we have found that the system is crucial for the structure of AUC. Therefore, we want to strengthen the bonds between students and teachers. In coordination with the Senior Tutor, we intend to prioritise changes to overcome these problems.

a. We want to provide tutors with mental health training and enhance communication with the wellbeing team.

b. We want tutors and tutees to share the same major to foster empathy, and additionally, we want to make switching tutors easier.

c. To get input on the experience, we plan on improving the tutor evaluation form together with the senior tutor.

Overall, the objective is to develop a more accommodating and efficient tutoring system that caters to the various requirements of students.

Menstrual Care Initiative

Continuing the amazing work developed in the previous year, we want to ensure that free menstrual products continue to be available to AUC students. Considering the unexpected amount of success this initiative had, we plan to provide students with a more

effective re-filling system and sustainable period products. We will also work towards implementing more dispensers in the academic building. By collaborating with more UvA and VU student councils and unions, we hope to accomplish the institutionalisation of this initiative within AUC.

Physical Health

The safety and physical health of students are also a concern for us.

    a. We want to implement accessible first-aid support in the AB. Our main goal would be to have specifically assigned staff members be trained in first aid for any kind of emergency. However, considering the difficulties of finding such people, a first-aid kit accessible to all AUC students would be a good start.

    b. Our board is particularly motivated to promote sexual health and awareness of STIs. With this, we intend to continue to spread awareness on the existing seminars about these topics, done with workshops organised by Our Bodies Our Voices (OBOV) and other existing public organisations and resources at the beginning of the year.

    c. We plan to work closely with OBOV to look towards creating an AUC Consent Board related to sexual health and safety.

    d. We believe that students should have easy access to contraceptives. The possible implementation of condom dispensers could do this.

Canteen

The well-being of students is greatly influenced by what they eat on a regular basis. Hence, we want to explore the possibilities of making healthy and nutritious meals offered at the AUC canteen cheaper and providing more options for dietary restrictions. We would like to look into initiatives at UvA to explore what we can do to make this possible in AUC. Additionally, our board would like to see the implementation of a kettle next to the microwave available to all students and staff members.

ACADEMICS

As Student Council, we recognise the paramount importance of academics in the AUC experience. Our mission is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to excel in their studies in their own way.

Academic Standards and Procedures (AS&P)

We are committed to ensuring high academic standards, promoting fair academic procedures, and fostering an inclusive learning environment.

 a. AUC students bring diverse backgrounds and prior knowledge to their studies. Students should have the opportunity to be exempt from introductory courses if they possess sufficient knowledge in a particular subject area. We will actively engage with the Director of Education (DoE) and the Board of Studies (BoS) to create transparent guidelines and procedures for exemption requests, ensuring that students' prior learning experiences are duly acknowledged.

 b. As student body representatives, we are committed to ensuring that the revised attendance policy strikes a balance between promoting student engagement and allowing flexibility for personal circumstances. We will actively engage with the academic administration to monitor the implementation and impact of the new policy and take action to bring about further change if the student body is not satisfied with the policy.

 c. We would like to reconsider the organisation of assessments in light of the upcoming changes to the academic calendar with the BoS. With the many deadlines and exams that require a lot of time and effort from students, there is little time for us to engage with the actual course material. The Student Council would like to explore alternatives in distributing and making graded components with BoS to foster a better learning environment and adjust to the new academic calendar.

Course Offerings

The Student Council is eager to initiate a dialogue with the staff to discuss the existing course offerings.

 a. Towards the end of the academic year 2022-2023, several humanities courses unfortunately were cancelled. This situation poses significant challenges for humanities students in meeting graduation requirements and accessing diverse courses at AUC. This has a negative impact on the student experience promised at AUC. Importantly, the Performing Arts courses have always been cherished and advertised as unique features of AUC, and their removal due to staffing issues is a significant loss for the program.

 b. A significant concern raised by students is how tracks end up being forced onto one's three-year course plan. The combination of graduation requirements and course prerequisites makes it hard for a student to find the time and space to take courses outside of their track. At the same time, AUC promotes itself as a university

with a flexible programme each student can take advantage of to explore different fields of academia. Therefore, we will advocate for a review of the prerequisite system.

Capstone

The Capstone process sometimes poses challenges for students.

a. Many supervisors are booked two years in advance, making it difficult for students to secure a supervisor for their chosen topic. We aim to ensure students have equal opportunities and support finding a suitable Capstone supervisor.

a. We believe that Academic Research Writing (ARW) can be optimised to prepare for the Capstone process. In the spirit of aligning ARW with the Capstone process, we propose creating major-specific classrooms with dedicated major teachers for ARW. This arrangement would allow students to receive focused feedback and guidance from instructors specialising in their chosen major. We will also encourage the course coordinators to allocate more time to brainstorming for the students' topics, emphasising the significance of topic selection and development.

Community Projects and Internships (CP/I)

In addition to academic coursework, community projects and internships are an integral part of the AUC experience. To ensure that students have access to a wide range of opportunities, we will work towards making various CP/I opportunities more visible by promoting the CP/I group chat and encouraging contact with the individuals who can provide support and guidance. As the policy for CP/I has changed, we will look out for the reactions among the students to this policy and advocate for change when needed.

Decolonising Course Syllabi

AUC course syllabi are often Euro-centric, and there is, at times, a lack of sensitivity and awareness in addressing topics related to race, gender, class, disability, and sexuality. Course syllabi should go beyond the traditional canon and incorporate diverse perspectives. Especially because AUC markets itself as a global and diverse college, it should take responsibility for changes to the curriculum and how it is taught.

a. There should be no support for syllabi or teachers who use discriminatory narratives and vocabulary. This should be a primary concern, as students may feel unsafe in the class environment. The Student Council will actively engage with course coordinators and faculty to encourage including a broader range of voices and perspectives in the syllabi.

b. We will strive to give non-course coordinators a platform to contribute to the syllabus creation process, ensuring a more inclusive and comprehensive academic experience for all students.

c. To further enhance the academic experience, we will seek regular input from students regarding the courses they would like to see offered to ensure courses align more closely with the interests and needs of AUC students.

Enhancing Lectures

Diverse perspectives and experiences are key to enriching the academic discourse.

a. The Student Council will ensure that the inclusion of diverse guest lecturers, including professionals from various fields, as stipulated in the Framework and Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (FAPDEI), provides students with a broader understanding of the subjects they study.

b. To encourage continuous improvement in teaching quality, the Student Council will establish a platform where students can provide feedback on courses and lecturers. This platform will be a confidential space for students to share their experiences and suggestions, enabling faculty members to enhance their teaching methods and create a more engaging academic environment.

c. We think course manuals should be accessible to everyone to gain more insight into a course when a student is interested in taking it. In this spirit, we would like to work with the academic administration to develop a user-interactive website where students can share material and course advice with each other.

d. To make class readings more accessible and sustainable, we will encourage making readings available on Canvas or make sure they are available online.

Supporting Postgraduates

We recognise the importance of supporting students transitioning from AUC to postgraduate programs or careers. The Student Council will collaborate with the Alumni Association to organise information sessions, workshops, and networking events that provide valuable guidance and insights for postgraduate pursuits. By leveraging the expertise and experiences of AUC alums, we can better equip students with the necessary resources to navigate their future academic and professional paths.

DIVERSITY

Diversity is an integral part of studying at AUC. As the student representatives, we aim to understand the diversity of our college and fight for inclusion on all fronts, addressing problems we encounter around the college while regularly listening to and addressing concerns brought up by other students.

Diversity Commission

We aim to strengthen the ties between the Student Council and the Diversity Commission. We hope to have regular advisory meetings with the Commission to discuss ways the Student Council can further improve and keep a check on the diversity and inclusivity of AUC.

Accessibility and Accommodation

We aim to make AUC more academically and socially accessible so each student's needs can be cared for and have a positive experience throughout their AUC career.

   a. We want to increase the visibility and implement the Disability Handbook. The Disability Handbook outlines avenues for addressing students' needs to make learning and examination as accessible as possible. We strive to ensure that all the accommodations students need are duly noted and provided to and by the lecturers in classes and exams.
   b. We aim to work with staff and students to envision a diverse and accessible future at AUC to have greater visibility regarding diversity and accessibility in AUC's social and academic environment.
   c. We will continue to encourage the normalisation of pronouns within AUC staff and students, as using incorrect pronouns creates an uncomfortable and unwelcoming situation for individuals. Having name cards and stickers with pronouns during the first few classes will assist in promoting this inclusion.

Framework and Action Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (FAPDEI)

In our ongoing commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion at AUC, it is essential to regularly revisit and refine our existing Framework and Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (FAPDEI).

   a. As we reflect on the existing document, it has become apparent that many students are not familiar with its purpose and significance or its existence. This lack of awareness raises concerns as it underscores the importance of effective communication. Additionally, we have observed that the FAPDEI is often seen as a supplement to AUC's policies rather than a policy of its own, which may contribute to its relative obscurity. To rectify this, we strive to make the framework more visible and accessible to the student body; all students have the right to know and engage with these crucial policies that shape our campus community. While the FAPDEI is being revised, we plan to open up the discussion to include a wider

group of students; all members of the AUC community must be represented in shaping our understanding of "diversity."

b. We recognise the significance of accessibility as a fundamental aspect of our commitment to inclusivity. To address this critical aspect adequately, we propose elevating accessibility as a separate pillar within the framework. This will enable us to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by students with varying abilities and ensure that all community members can fully participate in all aspects of campus life.

EXTERNAL CONNECTIONS

Although we are, first and foremost, AUC students, we are also entitled to services available to UvA and VU. It is often hard to navigate the parent universities' resources, as we are unfamiliar with their systems. Our board aims to make these opportunities more easily accessible to AUC students.

Off-campus Courses

Off-campus courses are an opportunity for AUC students to engage with different people and class environments than in our college, as well as providing access to courses that are not offered in AUC and may help further explore one's track. However, it is often confusing for AUC students to go through different channels than the usual registration system and know how to get approval from AUC. For this reason, we wish to reintroduce the workshop to inform students about the procedures to get into an off-campus course and continue to set up a stand at the Course Market to offer support throughout the process. We aim to provide a clear and step-by-step guide on applying to both UvA and VU courses and make it easily accessible to students (and possibly also tutors).

Dorms

Comfort in the dorms is vital to ensure the well-being of students. Given that students live on campus, it is AUC's responsibility to take care of relations with DUWO and be able to intervene if students encounter issues in the dorms.

   a. We would like to work on making changing rooms for students affected by bad relations with their roommate(s), neighbours, high noise levels, or poor accessibility of their apartments easier and faster.
   b. At the end of last year, a petition by the previous Student Council went out for living rooms to stay open and gained many signatures, showing the relevance of this issue to students. Thus, we plan on bringing this up with DUWO and ensuring access to common rooms for students is restored to foster our community.
   c. We will work on the project of the previous Student Council to get the Tenants Association working again and try to work with DUWO to include students in the decision-making process concerning the dorms.

Access to UvA and VU Facilities

AUC should take full advantage of the laboratories and facilities available at the VU and UvA. The Student Council will collaborate with the academic administration to explore opportunities for AUC students to enjoy these resources. By leveraging these external facilities, we can enhance the academic experience by providing students with expanded hands-on learning and research opportunities.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is essential for the well-being of our community. With this in mind, we plan to implement an overarching sustainable approach to all of our pillars while trying to foster a relationship with SusCom to get advice on sustainable policies.

Canteen

We believe the canteen should be more environmentally aware.

a. In addition to what was previously mentioned, we envision making products mostly plant-based and as local as possible.
b. A reusable bowl and cutlery system would also be something to work towards. This system would include reusable cups from the coffee machine (as UVA has already started implementing).

Energy Use in the Academic Building

To make a bigger effort to save energy, we want to see the possibility of keeping the air conditioning and light usage to the strictly necessary amount. In addition, we plan to continue having an annual Sustainability Tour.

Menstrual Products

We plan to make all the menstrual products available in the dispenser in the AB as sustainable as possible and make sure such essential products are available to students and staff to help combat period poverty.

Thank you for taking the time to read our Policy Plan! Hopefully, we have painted a clear picture of what we want to work on throughout the year and how we envision doing so. Our main driving force is the notion that students have a voice and the right to use it. In this spirit, we hope to be a loyal student megaphone by listening on one end (student body), reporting back to the other end (management) and implementing policy to improve the campus community.

Your questions, feedback, and concerns are important to us! So please reach out anytime during the academic year. Although we have limited our pillars to Transparency and Visibility, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Academics, Diversity, External Relations, and Sustainability, we are eager to hear out initiatives outside these realms. We look forward to expanding and redesigning our goals throughout the academic year with your help and insights!

Thank you again for your confidence in our role as student representatives, and good luck in your AUC journey, whichever one it might be!

From your Student Council,
Cat, Ema, Emma, Mickey, Wanji