

Annual Report

AUC Student Council 2022-23



Marcello, Lola, Miriam, Lexa, Gilda

Table of Contents

1. Table of Contents	2
2. Preface	3
3. Board Year Evaluation	4
4. New Achievements	6
5. Continual Projects	9
6. Recommendations	12
7. Outlook	15

Preface

Dear reader,

Thank you for taking the time to read through the AUC Student Council '22-'23 Annual Report. On the first day of our term in September 2022, we were thrilled to be able to publish our [Policy Plan](#) detailing our goals and expectations for the upcoming year. We wanted to show staff, lecturers, partners, and above all, the student body what we aimed to achieve in our term. This Annual Report will somewhat encapsulate our term, while providing an outlook to the future.

We are extremely grateful for the opportunity we were provided with this year in being the AUC Student Council, and notably the trust students provided in us. We hope to have done you proud.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact the AUC Student Council at info@aucsc.nl.

With love,

Marcello Benedett, Gilda Sadeghi, Miriam Crane, Lola Collingbourne, and Lexa von Vultejus
AUC Student Council '22-'23

Board Year Evaluation

Achieving our policy plan goals, creating a healthy work environment, and being in the disposition of the students were among our overall objectives as a board. We believed that achieving these in an effective and healthy way would not only strengthen our rapport with students and staff but also have a positive impact on the overall lifestyle at AUC. These reasons lead us to initiate various forms of board evaluation. We designated considerable time in meetings, as well as substantial mid-way sessions, to reflect on our progress and approaches in tackling obstacles, challenges and decision-making processes. The feedback and outcomes were always tried to be implemented to the best of our capacities. We firmly believe that ongoing evaluation in our team is instrumental in driving continuous improvement and maintaining a cohesive team spirit.

As a board, we pursued several overarching objectives, namely the achievement of our policy plan goals, the establishment of a conducive work environment, and fulfilling our commitment to the students. We firmly believed that the successful attainment of these objectives, executed in a proficient and healthy manner, would serve to not only strengthen our connections with both students and staff but also to contribute positively to the overall quality of life at AUC. This conviction led us to embark on a multifaceted approach to board evaluation. We devoted substantial time during our regular meetings, as well as during mid-term sessions, to engage in critical reflection regarding our progress and our methodologies for addressing challenges, obstacles, and the decision-making process. We made thorough efforts to integrate the feedback and insights obtained from these evaluations to the best of our capabilities. Our strong belief that regularly assessing our team's performance helps us improve and keeps our team united shows how dedicated we are to this process.

In the following paragraphs, we would like to offer a recap of the measures we undertook to realize these goals. Foremost among these measures was a concerted effort to understand our roles and responsibilities, enabling us to commit our full capacities to our mission as Student Council. Consequently, we embarked on a dedicated training aimed at acquainting us with our rights, the historical context of student councils, and effective issue resolution techniques. Unfortunately, we attended this training somewhat midway in our term, due to a lack of prior advice to even engage in the training. However, it is our belief that for Student Councils, or any analogous organizational entity, early engagement in such training can yield more robust outcomes from the beginning.

Given the integral role of the AUC Student Council in our daily lives as AUC students, characterized by close cohabitation with fellow students and frequent interactions, we recognized the challenges in treating our responsibilities as a job rather than an extension of our daily routines. To address this, we established clear boundaries from the start. These included channeling all Student Council-related communication through official channels, defining limits on working hours, and delineating weekends as off-limits for official duties among others. The implementation of these pre-established boundaries yielded positive results, fostering a harmonious dynamic within our board. The size of our team, consisting of six members, including our assistant, facilitated adherence to these boundaries. We acknowledge, however, that sustaining this with a larger team could be more challenging. In periods of exceptional demand, such as the hectic month of May, and emergency situations there were instances where we had to temporarily deviate from these boundaries. We recognize that such situations are inevitable in any team or profession. Nonetheless, our dedication to transparent communication, the reminder of the exceptional nature of these circumstances, and our unwavering commitment to offering support and assistance as needed, proved ways to navigate these challenges.

Creating spaces for open dialogue and active listening constituted another area of focus for our board. We conducted one-on-one evaluations every other month, where we aimed to establish safe and non-judgmental environments for members to candidly express their thoughts regarding our work, team dynamics, feedback, and commendations. These evaluations were facilitated reciprocally by the co-chairs for each team member. The far-reaching positive outcomes of this practice, particularly in terms of building trust and enhancing understanding among team members, were readily apparent. It helped us to adapt to each other's working styles and personalities effectively.

Collaborating with other student bodies of AUC, such as AUCSA, Peer Support, and Sustainability Commission, students who contacted us for their personal projects, as well as external groups like those we encountered in CoBos, proved to be an enriching experience. It provided us with insights into their working methods and allowed us to blend our ideas for projects that would benefit the student community.

In short, our commitment to self-reflection and collaboration has been pivotal in enhancing the work of AUCSC and the AUC experience, and AUCSC remains dedicated to these principles in our service to the AUC community.

New Achievements

In this section, we would like to highlight the accomplishments of the Student Council, which were made possible through the dedication of board members, the support of the staff, and the active participation of students who shared their opinions and voices. Starting small, one of our first new endeavors involved hosting a casual Policy Plan information session. The goal was to have a chat with the students, explaining our Policy Plan for the year in our own words so they would be aware of our objectives. We were also keen to hear their valuable insights, opinions, and ideas on how to bring our goals to life.

One of our significant achievements was the publication of the "[Student Perspective on the Attendance Policy](#)". Given the varying opinions on AUC's attendance policy among students and staff, we recognized the need for a formal document that could consolidate these diverse viewpoints. This document would serve as a valuable reference during the revision and discussion of AS&P. To compile this report, the Student Council conducted a questionnaire and organized focus group discussions among students, with an impressive 365 responses received, representing nearly one-third of the student body. The high participation rate was a testament to the student's interest in the topic and our intensive promotional efforts. The results of the questionnaire and the focus group discussions were quantitatively analyzed and documented in the report. This report was warmly received by both students and staff, introducing fresh perspectives to the ongoing discussion. It played a pivotal role during the AS&P 2023-2024 revision cycle, leading to a new version of the AUC's attendance policy. While we anticipate that the report will remain a valuable resource for future AS&P revision cycles, we also recommend conducting similar research in the near future, recognizing that perspectives on the policy are subject to change, especially with the implementation of the new policy.

Other successful reports were a result of Voices of AUC. This year we decided to organize two Voices of AUC events, one during the [Autumn semester](#) and another in the [Spring semester](#). The purpose behind these gatherings was to provide a safe and open forum where students and staff could engage in discussions lasting approximately two hours, focusing on AUC-related topics of mutual concern. We took the initiative to revamp the event's structure and content, actively seeking feedback to foster a conducive atmosphere for constructive dialogue. Valuable insights from the first Voices of AUC event played a pivotal role in enhancing the setup for the second. The outcomes of both events were documented in two comprehensive reports, summarizing the discussions and offering recommendations to

improve the AUC experience for students. These reports garnered high appreciation from staff, even those who couldn't attend the events, as they provided diverse perspectives from various stakeholders within AUC.

One of our most recent projects was the creation of the "[Report on Stress and Mental Health at AUC](#)," which emerged through an unexpected collaboration with third-year students enrolled in the Wicked Challenges in Health course. This collaboration arose from our excitement upon discovering that AUC students shared an interest in a topic that we had emphasized in our Policy Plan since the beginning of our term. This collaboration with students proved to be exceptionally fruitful, as it allowed us to engage with individuals who had no other responsibilities at AUC apart from being students themselves.

Our accomplishments extend beyond reports and policy changes; they also include the introduction of new services. The inclusion of free menstrual products in the AB generated considerable enthusiasm within the community. From its inception as a mere concept to conducting a survey among students to gauge how free menstrual products could benefit them, the idea garnered substantial excitement among the community. We received responses from 257 students, representing nearly one-third of the student body, and the insights they shared were instrumental in substantiating the need for free menstrual products at the AB. Fortunately, we were able to implement a dispenser with free menstrual products in the second half of the school year, as our proposal received approval from the management and a budget allocation for the products. The news of AUC providing free menstrual products garnered attention from various external sources, including other faculties of UvA, external social media platforms, and even a menstrual products company, all of whom reached out to express their appreciation for the efforts of AUC in destigmatizing menstruation. Currently, there is one dispenser in the AB, and AUCSC members are responsible for its replenishment. Hopefully, we anticipate that this service will become more institutionalized and readily available in all the AB's bathrooms.

Receiving acknowledgment from external parties is gratifying, but what's even more valuable is building connections with them. In the realm of Student Councils and Student Associations in the Netherlands, one of the most effective ways to achieve this is through the traditional and renowned Constitutional Borrels (CoBos). We had the opportunity to attend some in Amsterdam through our term. But, unfortunately, AUCSC hasn't been able to host its own independent CoBo for some years due to factors such as COVID, budget constraints, and limited visibility. Nevertheless, this year, we resurrected this enjoyable event and foster

connections with other student groups from across the Netherlands. We hope that this tradition continues for future AUCSC boards.

Shifting gears to another significant development this year, we had the privilege of hosting elections within our council for the first time in two years, which marked a pivotal moment for our team. Hosting these elections was not only a positive step for our board but also for the AUC students, as now they were able to choose the candidates that better represented their interests. This process brought fresh perspectives and new energy into our team, reinforcing our commitment to serving the interests of our fellow students.

Furthermore, we maintain a positive outlook on the collaborative efforts we foster with staff and other student bodies. Throughout our term, we worked to enhance the visibility of these groups to students through initiatives like "Bodies of AUC." Our goal was to create a more vibrant and interconnected AUC community, where students could readily access the resources and support provided by these organizations.

As we reflect on these achievements, we recognize that the journey to improve the AUC experience is an ongoing one. We remain dedicated to our mission, ensuring that the positive momentum we've built continues to benefit future AUCSC boards and the entire AUC community.

Continual Projects

Every year of the AUC Student Council is different, which invites a new breath of creativity and opportunity into ongoing projects. From our predecessors to the future Student Councils, we hope to have brought a new perspective into the mix of what the AUCSC means for the student body in these projects.

This year's Introweek was a great success, warmly inviting new students into their new home at AUC. We were delighted to have been given the opportunity to play a bigger role than in previous years as one of the two student representative bodies at the college. Both AUC and AUCSA were very supportive of being able to present ourselves to students, and what they could rely on us for. While many incoming students did not yet have any concerns, we noticed throughout the year a much greater number of students, especially first-years, come to us. We wanted to focus on providing a familiar face for students during Introweek, and having distinguishable hoodies helped.

Throughout our term, we made it a point to provide regular Office Hours for students to come to ask questions, discuss concerns, or anything else during the lunch hour at AUC. For the 16-week period, we held these three times a week, and twice a week during the intensive. Even though students may not come up to us every time, the times they do, it is crucial to be there. Providing a presence for students was helpful for us to gauge student opinions informally. A few times during our term, we encountered issues regarding the placement of our Office Hours. However, we knew just how crucial these are to accurately fulfilling our duties as Student Council. While this was the first post-Covid year, we would like to invite AUC and future AUC Student Councils to innovate the method of student outreach during Office Hours, as our presence is only beneficial for students.

Our successes in Introweek and Office Hours were greatly facilitated by our positive relationship with AUCSA this year. In the past, AUCSA and AUC Student Council have not always gotten along well, both boards this year made it a point to change this. While we may only share an office together, it has been a joy to do so, as well as work on certain projects such as Introweek and Office Hours. Their support this year has made the work bearable, and we hope to have been worthy office mates as well. It has been crucial to establish this link this year, as the two main student representative bodies at AUC, we share similar experiences, frustrations, and celebrations. Even though our work and goals are vastly different, we have been grateful for the opportunity to experience this term (somewhat) together.

An ongoing discussion among Student Councils, not just in AUC, but at different universities, is about transparency. Primarily to the students we represent, it is crucial to be reachable and able to discuss issues with students, as many changes concern them. After all, AUC is a college for students. This year, we have continued publishing our internal meeting minutes, and began publishing our Consultation Meeting minutes on our [Canvas](#). We have also made it a point to publicize ongoing efforts we are working on, such as starting the AS&P revision cycle to request input directly from students. There is an ongoing struggle between the confidentiality of certain changes at AUC, and wanting to engage the student body, which remains to be perfected. We have had various internal discussions about transparency policies we should have as the AUC Student Council. On the one hand, we are a small-scale college, and trust that our student body has valuable insights into changes. On the other hand, too many chefs in the kitchen make a difficult situation to work in. As student representatives, we are trusted with carrying the student's voice, but full transparency is a tough method of change. In general, we are content with the balance we struck, but invite all students to approach Student Council members with concerns they may have. While processes at any institution including AUC take a long time, changes do happen, even when they are mostly behind-the-scenes. This has been another difficulty, especially concerning the attendance policy, which is how much we can communicate with the student body before it is finalized. While we want to promote all the changes we do make, we must respect the processes at work, which might run counter to transparency.

Thankfully, transparency is not a double-bind strictly at AUC. Other Student Councils share similar concerns, which we have known thanks to increasing our external relations as AUC Student Council. As mentioned before, we were able to host our own Constitutional Borrel (CoBo), which is somewhat central to being a student representative in the Netherlands. We also were able to attend a couple of external CoBo's from UvA and VU Student Councils and Student Associations primarily. Exiting Covid, there were more CoBo's than in previous years, and they allowed us to gain connections at UvA and VU, who in turn could assist us with tips and difficult situations. Having a larger external presence also helped showcase AUC. Namely, our menstrual products dispenser initiative has been discussed now with UvA as a way to provide an example for other universities. Our External Affairs Officer, Lola, kept our external image up to other universities through the VU presidiums, and UCSRN, among others. We have made much progress in this regard, but there is always more to do. As they say, AUC is somewhat of a bubble, but that should not mean the AUC Student Council is restricted to it.

Expanding the circle of expertise for outside advice has been a true blessing, and we recommend all future Student Councils to continue.

Finally, an important achievement for us has been the successful course markets. In collaboration with Celestine at AUC, we assisted in putting together and promoting the course markets taking place before course registration opens. Not only was the attendance by students increased than previous years, but also the level of information was higher. Our presence was to assist students with any questions, but specifically about off-campus courses. It was a great way to promote our expertise in this domain, and we were assisted by the Board of Studies student members in the first one. This event is an example of a great student-staff event. Interaction among the two was great to hear, and we received positive feedback from students.

Recommendations

After working at AUC for almost an entire year, we have noticed certain recommendations we would like to make for the future. While we did not have the time or motivation to work on most of these, some have only begun with our term, but we could not go much further. Above all, what has been difficult for recent AUC Student Councils, ours included, has been the lack of institutional history. While we are in communication with the previous board, any information beyond that has been essentially lost. Unfortunately, this does impact how the Student Council (can) work. Often, decisions made previously are lost between generations, and current councils must defend these without accurate information. This also creates a large information gap compared to other more institutionalized bodies at AUC, such as the Board of Studies and Management Team, which have members from previous years. While this issue does contain various factors, it does somewhat put the AUCSC at a disadvantage. Every year, we find new information from previous years that is already known by these bodies. In our term, we have made it a point to archive documents, advice, approval, and any other document that might be important for future councils. We also provided a different transition period for our successors. This, coupled with the beginning of an AUCSC alumni community makes us positive for a change to increased institutional history.

Early in our term as AUC Student Council, we had to approve the final version of the AUCNext outline for the upcoming five years. While we had various recommendations since it was our first official look at AUCNext since being in office, there are still many issues we are concerned about. The changes we suggested at the time have since been incorporated, but there are many sides to AUCNext we believe are rushed. Together with the Board of Studies, we have voiced our concerns about the need to take slower steps regarding implementing AUCNext, namely, communicating more often with the community directly about the changes.

A difficult issue for the AUC Student Council has been visibility, and as mentioned before, we have made strides in this regard during our term. Even more banal issues such as mixing up AUCSA and AUCSC have noticeably declined, but continue to happen. Future Student Councils should continue to work on increasing their visibility, and other parties at AUC should be open to collaboration with us. As a legal body, students need to be aware of our presence, and we would like to invite others to jointly promote the inner workings of AUC to students. Coupled with this, we would like to underline that some projects at AUC have dismissed the Student Council, while we do have valuable insights into the AUC community, as is our right and duty to do so.

One of the many achievements from this year we are particularly proud of is the installation of free menstrual products dispensers in the Academic Building. This project began with our predecessors, and our council brought it fully to fruition with the collaboration of the Management Team. While this has various benefits for menstruators and destigmatizing menstruation, we do believe it would be beneficial to institutionalize this initiative. One of our points for this dispenser is that it is attached to the wall, making it seem more permanent in the eyes of students and externals to AUC. It sends a strong message of support and innovation that AUC should be proud of. This year was somewhat of a trial run for the dispensers, and it has been widely successful. The Student Council members have been in charge of filling it up and checking on its maintenance, but we believe this should be taken on by AUC in the future in order to truly cement it in the college. Furthermore, there should be more dispensers throughout the building, which we encourage future Student Councils to explore. Our colleagues at the VU and UvA have enquired with us on our menstrual products dispenser achievement, which should also not be taken lightly.

Working with staff at AUC has been a joy on many occasions, and we are beyond grateful for the cooperation we have had this term. The positive changes we were able to ensure for students in most cases would not have been possible without close collaboration with AUC staff. We encourage more of this in the future. While the AUC Student Council is busy, we always welcome initiative and inquiries from staff. There have been moments this past year where the staff has felt inaccessible to us, which greatly impedes our capacity to fulfill our legally-binding duties. On top of this, AUC's close working quarters means that it is sometimes easier to approach someone personally, which we believe has been lacking at AUC. While we are AUC students just like any other, we also need to access staff more often than the average student, which should not be made more difficult. We encourage establishing work boundaries with colleagues, but that also includes informing us of when we can and can not contact you rather than leaving us out of the loop.

Finally, we would like to touch on an aspect to joining the Student Council that has had a tumultuous history at AUC, namely its perks and sacrifices. These have been discussed internally a few years back, and we do not want to re-open this can of worms, but rather bring it to light. As members of the AUC Student Council, we work upwards of 15-20 hours a week on top of our heavy studyloads. However, unlike other universities, we are not allowed to take a year off to participate in the Student Council. Furthermore, we are only given a fraction of the compensation other Student Councils receive at the VU and UvA because we should not encounter study delay. However, we are allowed to use our time on the Student Council as a

CPI, thus gaining only 6 credits on top of a reduced sum of money. While these perks should not be the reason anyone joins the Student Council, the perks we receive do not come close to the amount of work we put into bettering AUC. Again, we do not wish to engage in a discussion about our status as happened a few years ago, but want to underline the lack of recognition often felt by AUC Student Council members, resulting usually in lack of motivation and burnout. Furthermore, participating on the AUC Student Council impacts the general livelihood of each member. For example, we often encounter financial difficulties from not having the time to find a job on top of classes and this work. This all coincides to impact how the Student Council functions as a whole. Students are less likely to run and hold elected office because of the lack of recognition and perks, while the toll taken on the student is high. In order for the participatory governing bodies such as the Student Council to work as intended, it needs students to be able to hold the position for an entire year. For some, this is (financially) not possible.

Outlook

To wrap up this report, we wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone we've had the privilege of working with throughout the year. While there are too many individuals to mention individually, we'd like to offer special thanks to those with whom we've shared significant time and collaboration. This includes members of the Management Team, Martin van Hees, Marianne Riphagen, Ingrid van Loon, and Belinda Stratton. We also want to express our appreciation to our colleagues in the MZ3, the Board of Studies and the Works Council. Finally, we are eternally grateful for our lovely student assistant, Laure Durang. While we may be passing the torch, we know that these names will continue to be intertwined with the Student Council's journey. Looking ahead, we have every confidence that the incoming SC board, consisting of five amazing students, will achieve remarkable things, and we eagerly anticipate witnessing their future accomplishments. We hope that everyone continues to support and recognize the valuable work of the Student Council for years to come.

The upcoming SC '23-'24 board:

- Co-Chair: Cat Gelderloos (she/they) cat.gelderloos@aucsc.nl
- Co-Chair: Ema Torcato (she/her) ema.torcato@aucsc.nl
- External Affairs Officer: Emma Ricci (she/they) emma.ricci@aucsc.nl
- Communications Officer: Wanji Kabanga (they/them) wanji.kabanga@aucsc.nl
- Visibility Officer: Mickey Luzzatto (she/they) mickey.luzzatto@aucsc.nl

Of course they will not be alone and will have support from the Advisory council constituted by Marcello and Miriam (SC '22-'23), Freya Baker (SC '21-'22), and Nico Antunez de Mayolo Daly (student assessor to management in '22-'23).

The '22-'23 board is transitioning into a new phase as their time with SC comes to an end. Miriam and Marcello will remain at AUC to complete their third year, which comes with its own set of challenges, including the capstone project and future planning. Both will take on new roles as secretaries: Miriam as the secretary of the Cuisine committee, and Marcello as a student representative serving as the Secretary of the AUCSA Board. Lexa and Laure are pursuing their Master's degrees; Lexa will be studying International Affairs at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, Germany, while Laure will focus on peace and conflict studies at Uppsala University in Sweden. Lola, on the other hand, will continue her adventures and travel, with plans to spend time with her family in Australia. Lastly, Gilda has chosen to take a gap year in Amsterdam and will be working during this time.

Thank you to everyone and it was a pleasure to be your AUC Student Council.

Best wishes,,

Gilda, Marcello, Lola, Miriam, Lexa

