

Annual policy report 2016 – 2017
University College Student Representatives of the Netherlands
Book year 2016 – 2017

September 4, 2017



University College Student Representatives of the Netherlands

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To whom it may concern,

This year was filled with great moments. Some of these milestones include visiting the Ministry of Education with our own goodie bag, the release of our awesome promotional [video](#), our public letter to the future Minister of Education and our tour of the UCs. Personally, one of my favourite moments is the UCSRN Tournament. Seeing 600 people doing sports, debating, arts and other activities – competing while meeting new friends – gave me something tangible to be proud of. Especially the lobbying efforts of the UCSRN can be quite abstract. It requires a large amount of time and energy to get even the smallest results.

This year report is the first of its kind for the UCSRN. It is accompanied by a more factual financial report. We structured this document similarly to our mission statement at the start of the year. I hope that future boards will continue to publish such an elaborate reflection on their year for the sake of the advancement of the organisation.

One thing I am particularly proud of is the great connection we made with UC Tilburg. We hope that Extra Muros will join the UCSRN at the start of next board year. In the (near) future we might get be joined by new colleges in Haarlem and Friesland. A new college in Venlo is now entering their second year. We should consider extending our reach and view to those colleges too, should we want to represent all UC students in the Netherlands.

One important thing to note is that the achievements noted in this document are not achievements of the 'Executive Board' or of the 'Social Committee'. Without the help of our members and students, but also with the great advice we received from the advisory body and the impartial input from the independent body, we would not have been able to shape the organisation to what it currently is. For all their contributions, whether they were solicited or unsolicited, I thank them.

Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow board members. Hannah, Jonathan, Ola & Bas, without your hard work, never ending calls and great energy, this year would have turned out quite differently. I wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the Executive Board 2016 – 2017,

Joris van Schie
Chairperson



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Executive Board

Promotion

One of our aims was to become more known to University College students and external parties. One of the core tasks of the Executive Board was to promote the association.

Website

At the beginning of the year, a new website was launched. By uploading all necessary information about the UCSRN, including but not limited to, General Assembly agendas, the budget and minutes, the website has helped to become more transparent and open to our community.

Furthermore, various (opinion) articles and press releases have been published on our website to strengthen our position in the educational landscape. These articles were received very positively and attracted a lot of attention. Especially our more opinionated articles sparked debate on Facebook and in our community, for example on what it means to be a University College student or our letter to the future Minister of Education.

Facebook page

The number of likes on our Facebook page increased by more than half: from 1300 to ca. 2000 likes. Our Facebook page was used in order to communicate to students directly. As a result of Facebook's paid advertisement service, several posts reached up to 9000 people. We became more transparent about what we did, but, more importantly, we reached people outside of the University College community and became more visible as an organization.

Newsletter

We continued sending out monthly newsletters to keep our students informed on the UCSRN's current affairs and what activities they can look forward to. We have also added new sections to the newsletter: the financial update and University College specific events. Newsletters are generally not read by everyone; therefore, we have also shared important updates on our website and Facebook. The treasurer does not recommend the next treasurer to continue with the financial updates due to a lack of engagement: the bi-monthly updates published on the website are already sufficient.

Members

The General Assembly is the most important body of the UCSRN. The Executive Board invested to build and maintain good working relationships with our members.

Visiting the UCs

In order to learn more about the University College community, several UCs were visited at the beginning of the year. The Executive Board got to know the boards of the respective associations and councils and developed an overall understanding of the subtle differences between the colleges. This is something we greatly recommend the next board also does.



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UCSRN weekend

Direct participation of our members was of great value to the Executive Board this year. A UCSRN weekend was organized to discuss the future of the organization with all of our members. Based on these discussions, the long-term vision and large changes to the Policy Manual were developed.

University College Tilburg

The UCSRN follows the University Colleges Deans Network (UCDN) when it comes to admitting new members. Since UC Tilburg became part of the UCDN, the student association of UC Tilburg, Extra Muros, was contacted to explore if they were interested in joining the UCSRN. After a constructive meeting in Tilburg and then visiting the UCSRN Tournament in April, Extra Muros was invited to present itself at the last General Assembly in May and formally meet the other Members. Extra Muros will most likely hand in a membership proposal before the first General Assembly of the coming year.

Representation

Our core task is to represent the interests of University College students in the Netherlands. The UCSRN is relatively young and in the past years has mainly focused on the form and structure of the organization. To improve the UCSRN's position and ability to effectively reach its academic and social goals, we believed that external relations had to become one of our main priorities.

Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO) & Landelijke Studenten Vakbond (LSVb)

The Executive Board had constructive meetings with ISO and LSVb in March, from which it was concluded that the UCSRN could work together on various points with ISO and LSVb. Among other things, the possibility of becoming partner organizations was explored, a project which will be taken up by next year's board. The UCSRN is currently in the process of becoming partner organization of the LSVb. Although the Executive Board has agreed on becoming partners with ISO as well, formal talks with ISO have not started yet.

Hans Adriaansens

Prof. Dr. Adriaansens founded UCU and UCR and is currently (informally) involved with the founding of UC Haarlem. He is also the founder of the European Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ECOLAS). He has given us advice on the future of UC education, our strategies and long-term vision. Furthermore, he connected us with the Ministry of Education.

MasterMind Europe

Mastermind Europe is a European initiative to improve master transition. Kees Kouwenaar, the coordinator of the Erasmus programme, heard from the VSNU that the UCSRN is aiming to improve the transition from bachelor to master for UC students. Therefore he invited the Chair to present the UCSRN's vision on the final conference of the Mastermind Europe project in July.



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Vereniging Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten (VSNU)

As it is one of the most influential educational interest groups in the Netherlands, the Executive Board has had regular contact with the VSNU. Because of this, the UCSRN was brought into contact with the Mastermind Europe project and got invited to the most recent VSNU café.

European University College Association (EUCA)

The Executive Board attended this year's three-day study visit of EUCA to Amsterdam to get to know the organization and its members. EUCA and the UCSRN have discussed the possibility to collaborate on developing exchange programs and study trips in the future. The next board will be in touch with them to explore opportunities to further develop this relationship.

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Through Prof. Dr. Adriaansens the UCSRN was brought into contact with the diversity officer of the Ministry of Education. After a constructive meeting on socioeconomic diversity, the UCSRN was invited to a diversity conference at the University of Amsterdam.

Policy manual changes

Platform for discussion

In the past years, the emphasis of the committees was on organising events for students. In this year, a change was started: committees their main purpose is now to be a platform for discussion for topics that engage with the daily topics students deal with instead of organizing events. There will still be UCSRN events, but these will be organized by separate teams at the UCs instead of the Social and Academic committee. To students, the committees are platforms to which they can express concerns or opinions which are relevant to more than one college. For study associations and academic councils, the committees serve as learning platforms to exchange best practices and knowledge.

Long-term vision

While the focus in the first year was on creating a solid organisation foundation, this second year of the UCSRN was marked by optimizing organisation processes and creating a vision for the coming years. Noting the input from our members during the year, especially at the UCSRN weekend, the General Assembly assessed the priorities for the UCSRN to be as follows:

1. A gateway to the University College community
2. Stimulating excellent education
3. Promoting diversity and accessible education
4. Connecting classroom to community
5. Providing opportunities after college
6. A connected organisation
7. A platform for discussion
8. A participating society



A long-term vision with pointers on how these goals entail can be found on our website. There is enough space for future boards and students to create a clearer vision on what actions they will pursue to reach these goals.

Independent Body

This was the first year in which there was an official Independent Body (IB). The IB was elected at the first General Assembly and consisted of students from several University Colleges. The IB audited the accounts of the Executive Board and acted as an appeal court to settle a dispute between the Board and a student. In doing so, the policy manual was not followed completely, which will be addressed at the first General Assembly of next year. Upon recommendation of the General Assembly, the next board will invest in the professional development of the Independent body.

Advisory Body

The Executive Board had regular contact with the Advisory Body (AB) and met members of the AB twice. The AB provided both solicited and unsolicited guidance and advice to the Executive Board. As most members of the AB were part of the UCSRN in 2015 – 2016, the Executive Board should strive to diversify the AB in the following years according to position and board year. The next board will remain in close contact with them.

Financial

Policy aims

A fairer division of financial resources between the academic and social committee was aimed for. The lack of expenditures on the academic committee's side prevented a fair division of financial resources in the result. The aim to raise funds for events has partly been achieved: the budgeted amount for the Tournament has been collected, while the budgeted amount for academic events was not collected due to the events being cancelled.

In that light, we are happy to see that the contribution fee is lowered for 2017 – 2018. We believe a lower contribution fee will encourage the organisation to collect more external funds and force us to focus on our core tasks.

Reimbursement Policy

A reimbursement policy has been formalized in the document of September 27, 2016 to inform members and students of the reimbursement process. In March 2017, the reimbursement policy was formalized with a new article (4.4) in the Policy Manual. The new policy is a compromise amongst the members. It was created in the idea that a per-event approach to reimbursing costs is made: in the budget, it is agreed upon which members get their travel costs reimbursed and how much they get. Delegates, (advisory) board members, independent body members and committee members always get their costs reimbursed if this is necessary.



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Subsidy request / fundraising

The process of requesting a subsidy from the Ministry of Education has been started. The new treasurer has been recommended to continue with the subsidy request and file it. Additionally, the new treasurer has been recommended to look into fundraising opportunities.

Bank switch (English language)

The bank account has been switched from Triodos Bank to ING for their lack of English service.

Academic Committee

Master's event UU

In collaboration with the UCSRN, the science faculty of Utrecht University organized a special master's event for University College students. The day was well-organized and produced many positive responses from UC students. The initiative is certainly worth repeating and might also work at other universities.

Events

The Academic Committee failed to organize any events this year: the committee did not have enough time, experience, but more importantly, dedication for the UCSRN to organize activities. The master's conference did not take off at all, whereas the academic conference was first postponed and then cancelled.

Journal

Despite various calls via our communication channels, the UCSRN did not receive enough articles for the journal to be published. Therefore, we have decided to publish the journal, not in print, but online. A digital version of the UCSRN journal will hopefully be published next year.

Social Committee

Spotlight

Organizing the spotlight was quite a bumpy road and required direction from the Executive Board. The task division between the Social Committee and the EUCSA appeared to be flawed and unclear, which caused several problems. The EUCSA only found a venue last minute and failed to deliver hosting for students. There were fewer tickets sold than expected, but the event did not make a loss. Afterwards, the Spotlight was evaluated with the Executive Board, Social Committee and EUCSA.

Tournament

This year's tournament was organized by a separate tournament team at AUC which operated almost independently from the Social Committee. The tournament team took care of all the organizational practicalities, while the Social Committee sold tickets and arranged



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transportation. Unfortunately, the tournament team did not find hosting for Students and decided to rent out a gym instead, which meant that students had to pay more than expected.

District Fest

A new event was developed by UCU this year: District Fest. Inspired by the 'Hunger Games' University College students participated in all kinds of games to compete for eternal glory. Instead of University Colleges playing against each other, students from different UCs were mixed together in teams. The afterparty that followed was not as well-attended as expected, but the atmosphere was very good. The event is certainly worth repeating!