



# Centrale Studentenraad

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Bijlage(n)	-		
Betreft	<b>Sustainability Vision</b>		

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*Dit betreft een Engelstalig advies*

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Dear Executive Board,

With this letter, the Central Student Council (CSR) hopes to give you a starting point for a university-wide Sustainability Vision. From April 1<sup>st</sup>, a central policy worker for sustainability will be appointed. The CSR hopes to provide this person with a head-start by proposing this Sustainability Vision. In recent months we have already discussed smaller sections of this Vision and some projects are already starting to take shape. The CSR is delighted to see the CvB is taking such an active stance with regards to setting a more sustainable university in the present and for the years to come.

For clarity sake, the vision is split in different sustainability themes ranging from the visibility of sustainable projects to renewable energy that the University of Amsterdam (UvA) produces. The CSR hopes to collaborate in finalizing this vision before the start of the academic year 2019-2020.

## **Visibility**

Nowadays, sustainability is a topic of great importance throughout every aspect of life. The CSR has noticed this and wants the UvA to take more action. The UvA is already doing a lot of work regarding sustainability. However, the UvA does lack in its ability to show the staff, students, and outsiders what the UvA is doing on this aspect. By improving the communication aspect, the CSR believes that the UvA will create a more general awareness regarding sustainability. This awareness could influence the different employee, student, and societal groups that already exist. As we know, Facility Services already provides great statistical data of this type, but the general public is not aware of this. That's why we have two suggestions regarding visibility.

The first suggestion is that the UvA audio- and visual equipment (e.g. TV-screens) are used more often for sustainable projects and goals. One concrete example is showing the energy generation of the UvA solar panels on the UvA's TV-screens. The second proposal is that the UvA should make an extensive yearly sustainability report that is shown and known throughout the university. The CSR proposes that such a document would be available to all. Preferably shown in interactive ways to make sure that people understand what sustainability entails. These two

suggestions are concrete examples of what can already directly be done regarding the communication effort on sustainability. However, this does not mean that visible sustainability is the end goal, but it should be integrated into every level of sustainable projects.

### **Student Initiatives**

The CSR believes that the UvA should actively encourage student initiatives and organizations that wish to organize events, stands, or showcase any projects that aim for a more sustainable world. Student organizations such as Green Office, Green UvA Platform and Students for the Future should be promoted and supported by the UvA. Concretely this can mean that the UvA supplies the students that undertake such actions, with financial compensation and/ or ECTS for their work. Adding to this, the UvA could promote these types of initiatives even more by starting competitions for the most sustainable projects in collaboration with the mentioned student organizations and IIS. Students should be encouraged to share their academic work/projects on sustainability topics across the UvA and beyond. For instance, the university could organize public events for other students and academics, as well as the wider society, where the authors of sustainability projects can demonstrate their research and findings. This also increases the visibility of sustainability at the UvA and can motivate students to focus more on sustainable topics.

There ought to be (a) recognized organization(s) within the UvA that facilitate(s) students who have interesting sustainability project ideas. Students should be made aware of such platforms and take advantage of them if they decide to pursue their ideas. As a suggestion, the Green office could potentially take on this task and/or play a bigger role in it.

### **Finances & Investment**

The financial background of the UvA can be of great help or disruption to sustainability efforts. For example, the type of bank that is used by the UvA can be of great influence regarding the general sustainability of society. The CSR is pleased that the CvB has shown interest in changing the current bank of the UvA to a bank that has sustainability higher on their priority list. A second proposal is to create a student investment fund, like ASIF, that is completely focused on sustainable start-ups. Generally, the UvA should prefer the sustainable approach in any financial decision that the UvA makes.

### **Education**

The core business of the university is split between Education & Research. By including sustainability in education, the UvA is able to broaden the view of a lot of people. This way, students who have followed a Bachelor and/or Master program at the UvA have a better view on what sustainability really entails and how they, as students or as alumni, can contribute to this. The challenge in changing the perception of sustainability through educational means is that education is mostly organized in a decentralized manner. By setting up a central policy, the UvA can pave the way for more decentralized implementation of sustainability in cooperation with the faculties.

The CSR has four concrete proposals regarding sustainable education. Firstly, every Bachelor and Master program should include a subject that integrates sustainability with their own subject matter. For example, an Economics' course that focusses on the inclusion of ecological externalities. Secondly, the CSR would like to add more interesting sustainable courses to the curriculum of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS), which is well known for its interesting and collaborative programs. These programs should be accessible to all UvA students and without any entry requirements. The third concrete proposal concerns a more project-oriented course. At the UvA we have an enormous number of talented students and staff that can create the most amazing things. By using this talent, on a project type bases, the UvA can start-up sustainable projects lead by their own students and staff. These projects can take shape in different forms and can change every year but should be

focused on sustainability on a practical level. Lastly, students, staff, and programs should focus more on cooperation with already existing sustainable initiatives such as the Green Office. By realizing these proposals, the CSR hopes to inform and involve students and staff more with the practical and educational part of sustainability.

### **Research**

As stated above, Education and Research are the core business of the UvA. By integrating sustainability into education, the UvA can make a huge impact on how sustainability is perceived by students and staff alike and can connect people to this subject. However, researchers have freedom in their work and integrating sustainability into research can be somewhat challenging due to the university being decentralized. Solutions should be found in creating incentives so that researchers voluntarily choose to research topics related to sustainability. The CSR believes that by offering Bachelor and Master students the ability to win a prize for the 'most sustainable thesis of the year' that the students would strive for more sustainable research. Secondly, by allocating more money to research on sustainable topics of every kind, the research that the UvA itself provides can be made more sustainable. Finally, the research done by researchers should be done in the most sustainable fashion. This can lead to solutions, for example by using electronic devices for surveys instead of handing out paper surveys.

### **Emissions & Pollution**

In general, emissions are the most direct form of sustainability that can be tackled. Currently, it is unclear in what direct way the UvA contributes to this problem. That is why the CSR wants to ensure that it is revealed how much every department emits, regarding every aspect of sustainability. This can help the different departments to decrease their ecological footprint by knowing their own ecological footprint and striving to lower it every year. This can quickly be arranged by, for example, printing less, using more sustainable materials or by using other sustainable ways of conducting research, education, and general educational support.

### **Housing**

The UvA is an old university and therefore we have a lot of very beautiful and historical buildings, which unfortunately are not very sustainable. For example, in historic buildings, it is not always allowed to install double glass for extra insulation. Other sustainable options, such as solar panels, are often also not permitted either because of the historical sight. Nevertheless, loads of other options remain. Warmth-Cold pumps are one of the biggest solutions to this problem, which is why FS tries to install these as much as possible. These proposals are only a few ways in which the UvA can be forward thinking regarding sustainability.

The current policy of the UvA is that all UvA-buildings should be almost energy neutral ("*Bijna Energie Neutraal*"). The CSR understands that, due to the historic nature of the UvA, it is not possible to make every UvA-building energy neutral, but it does believe that overall the university can achieve energy neutral status. This can be achieved through different methods, such as the Warmth-Cold pumps mentioned before, but also by compensating climate negative solutions with climate positive solutions in other places. Adding to this, the CSR believes that in a number of years no UvA-buildings should be relying on any gas consumption anymore; electrical energy and other sustainable solutions should be the main and only sources of energy. The electrical energy should be supplied by an energy supplier that supplies most, if not all, energy through sustainable methods.

Lastly, the UvA should consider various sustainable projects regarding its (new) housing development. The first one is that the mode of personal transport should always remain focused on either bicycling or public transportation. Regarding the logistical aspects of the UvA, the CSR advises that transportation should be done by electrical shipping or vehicles as much as possible. The second aspect is that all university grounds should have sufficient green space to ensure that all staff and students have access to recreational areas on university grounds. The third facet is that the UvA owns a lot of roof space that could and should be used effectively. The CSR

proposes to use every rooftop either as green space or to fill it with solar panels, if logically applicable. The CSR also likes to refer to the concept Energy Vision that the Housing Development department of the UvA is working on at the moment: "*Energievisie Universiteitskwartier*".

### **Renewable Energy**

This theme is mostly a reiteration of the themes Emissions & Pollution and Housing. The UvA should in every possible way become less dependent on any energy supplier that it uses. By making sure that the UvA creates as much of its own sustainable energy as possible (by using solar roofs, wind turbines, and Warmth-Cold pumps), the UvA could achieve this goal of making the university a more sustainable place. Becoming less dependent on external energy supplies also means that moving to a more sustainable energy supplier would become easier. The UvA can also achieve this goal by cooperating with nearby companies, residents, and housing corporations.

### **Catering**

The CSR believes that the catering of the UvA directly impacts the sustainability of its students, staff, and the UvA itself. For this topic, the CSR refers to their letter d.d. 20-02-2019.

### **Travel**

The CSR is in favour of setting a 'UvA Green-list' for any travel done by university staff and students regarding their university-related work. The CSR, in cooperation with the FSR's, will send a letter regarding this topic on a later date.

To conclude, the CSR wants to UvA to be a more sustainable university. By giving the UvA the first draft regarding a Sustainability Vision the CSR believes that this will be achieved. The CSR is looking forward to the final version of the Sustainability Vision, which will be discussed in later stages. In the CSR's view, sustainability is a major aspect of modern life and the UvA should be, as a high impact organization in society, as progressive as possible in this regard.

We look forward to your reply, as well as further discussion of the subject.

With kind regards,



Roeland Voorbergen  
Voorzitter CSR 18|19

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