



The UCSA through the years

by Meike Eijsberg

Today we celebrate the 20th birthday of the University College Student Association. A reason worthy of a big celebration on the quad. But what happened throughout the past 20 years? In order to find out, I contacted a handful of former UCSA board members and interviewed them about their days at this beautiful campus. So whilst you soak up the sunshine and enjoy your exam-free days, take this opportunity to read up on your UCSA history. Who knows, you might learn something new.

Humble origins

It all started in September 1998. Although UCU had only opened its doors a few months prior, several committees had already been set up. None of them had budget, and had to personally request it via College Hall. But the number of committees was increasing which made it nearly impossible for College Hall to evaluate every single budget request, whilst doing its regular work at the same time.

Five individuals, Maarten Stikkelman, Carolien van Oene, Simcha Jong, Joeri Maas and Lara Yocarini, therefore came up with the bright idea that these various committees needed a group that would coordinate them. After pitching the idea to College Hall and sorting out the statutes, the first UCSA board was then officially born on April 1st, 1999.

A first-time celebration

The first Lustrum was a grand one. A special committee was set up to help organize this celebration. Not only did the current UCSA board

at that time contribute, but so did the previous one. Joris Wiemer, chair of the 2003/2004 UCSA board remembers: "Claire Stamrood, treasurer of Board Year 2002/2003, chaired this committee. This made a lot of sense, as the board of 2002/2003 had laid a lot of groundwork for the Lustrum, including a basic outline and a budget for activities to be organized throughout the year." A special General Assembly was even organized to discuss the Lustrum budget.

But as the celebration date was drawing closer, the UCU community started to realize that a lot of money was being spent on all these various activities. "A heated debate ensued, triggered by a Boomerang article actually," Joris explained. "There were divergent expectations, both intercultural and interpolitical, on how extensively to celebrate the Lustrum." The discussion sparked a debate about what was important to the people that would be celebrating the Lustrum. In the end, it was decided that a part of the budget would be allocated to the scholarship fund. Joris was definitely happy with it: "A great outcome if you think

about it: a lasting contribution to the accessibility of UCU."

When the day finally arrived, it was without doubt a success. A lot was organized: a symposium, a fair, parties and a Lustrum book commemorating 5 years of the UCSA. Joris recalls a particular event: "I remember wrestling the BarCo Chair in sumo suits during the fair. I forgot who won."

Upholding the tradition

Fast forward ten years and things are looking a little bit different. The UCSA is still a young teenager, at 15 years old, but is growing into a bigger and better institution every day.

In these days, every Kromhout unit still had its own laundry and dryer, Sodexo had just taken over from Eurest as caterer, the clock tower was emptied due to asbestos, and Maarten Diederix turned the football field into an ice rink when it froze. The 2013/2014 board, chaired by Sil Boedi Scholte, implemented a lot of policies that are still visible today. The standardized budget form for committees, for example, was introduced that year along with the custom to share the entire collection with all students. That was not all. "We made big changes to the statutes and the policy manual together with the students during one of the longest General Assemblies ever, in order to shift more power from the UCSA board to the students," Sil explained.

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Sil was also part of organizing the 3rd Lustrum. Together with a great big team of students, the UCSA board organized what would be called the "UCSA Spring Festival." The celebrations would last for one weekend, with the Inter-UC tournament taking place on Saturday (which UCU won) and the festival on Sunday. Sil: "This was great, since many students from the other UCs stayed over to celebrate our Lustrum together with us." There was music, dance, theatre, tours around campus, and local food producers providing catering for free. "We even built a big bar outside!" Sil said. "On top of that, we had a sunny day, so it was a big success."

Overcoming new challenges

Today we celebrate the 4th Lustrum, organized by the 2018/2019 board. Main organizers Max Sanders, Megan Chalcraft, and Pip Jones have been planning this event for a while.

Max recalls: "I've been thinking about it since September when I went to a campsite where I got the idea of having a giant festival outside,

followed by a party and then a sleepover in this beautiful place. That was the beginning of the idea pool."

Throughout the year, ideas started flowing and festivities grew bigger. "We've actually got a lot of interest from committees wanting to be involved," Megan said. "This is really lovely, as the UCSA would not function without the committees."

The Lustrum celebrations are also a chance for the current board to reflect upon their year. According to Max, there wasn't just one highlight, "it's been a highlightable year." But the months didn't pass by without any setbacks. The biggest challenge, according to Pip, was the app. "We were trying to do something new. Half of the people loved it, but others we're like 'we hate this, no one uses it!'" But, as Megan indicated, it is truly impressive what a change you can make in a year, if you really try hard and stick with it.

Of course, the board hopes that these new policies will remain in place and create new UCU history. "That's why you run for the UCSA," Pip

said. "You see what you like and what you don't like, and you see if you can do anything about it."

Looking forward

In five years, the 5th Lustrum will be organized. Although the majority of us will not be at UCU anymore during that time, it's still important to reflect upon the importance of continuing Lustrum celebrations. "For alumni, it is an opportunity to recognize their contribution, and to see the road travelled since they were on campus," said Joris. Sil adds that: "It's easy to forget that the UCSA only exists for 20 years. The campus we have built in all those years is something worth celebrating with all generations that made it to what it is today."

Perhaps, in 2024, we'll all receive an invitation to return. But until then, we have to make the most of it. In the words of our very own Max: "Yes, the bubble is restricting. Yes, the bubble doesn't represent real life. But as long as you know that, take these three years to enjoy because life will never exist like this again."