



Amsterdam University College Impressions of the Grand Opening

22 September 2009





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Excellence and

in a Global Cit

University College

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Guests enter the Main Hall of the Royal Tropical Institute







Welcome
R.M. Smit, MSc, President VU University

Welcome and Opening

René Smit, MSc
President VU University Amsterdam

Dear Mr. Mayor,
dear Ms. Consul General,
dear ladies and gentlemen,
colleagues and students,

Welcome to the Grand Opening of
Amsterdam University College!

We are proud to celebrate today,
together with you, the official start
of a unique initiative, jointly taken
by our universities: the VU Univer-
sity Amsterdam and the University
of Amsterdam.

We have successfully joined our
forces in creating a new under-
graduate college that provides for
a very necessary type of higher
education: international, interdiscip-
linary, intensive, and selective.

Leaders of the future will have to
be successful in working together
across the boundaries of nation-
alities, cultures, and disciplines
They will have to perform on an
international competitive level in
scientific, corporate, and public
service sectors. Moreover, today's
issues can only be solved in an

interdisciplinary way. The global
city of Amsterdam with its two ma-
jor research universities is a per-
fect context where excellence and
diversity can meet very naturally.

Although this University College
is new in Amsterdam, we have of
course benefited greatly from the
experiences of the University Col-
leges which were previously cre-
ated in The Netherlands, notably
by Utrecht University, thanks to
the willingness and openness of
our colleagues to share these
experiences with us.

The great tradition of the liberal
arts colleges in the United States
was also of great value to us. Much
has been said about the "Califor-
nian Model". The lessons learned
focus on the importance of en-
suring both access and excellence
in the system. Differentiation in
institutional missions and type
of programmes offered is an
important condition for this.
The creation of University Colleges
has enhanced the differentiation in
the Dutch system, now also recog-
nised by our Minister of Education.

The characteristics of this type
of education will be explored in
more detail by our speakers this
afternoon. The importance of both
excellence and diversity in the con-
text of globalisation by Marijk van

der Wende; the role of the sciences
by Robbert Dijkgraaf; the challenge
of diversity by Halleh Ghorashi; and
the richness of the city as a context
for learning by James Kennedy.

We expect AUC itself to be an in-
spiring, challenging, and ambitious
example to our two institutions of
what can and should be done at
undergraduate level. University
Colleges underline the value of the
Bachelor phase as an educational
cycle in its own right. However,
AUC will not be an isolated initi-
ative, but an occasion to rethink
teaching and learning at large.
Excellence cannot be reached on
its own account and by itself.

AUC should serve as a lighthouse
of good practice from which we can
all benefit. Lighthouses are what
we need, as the waves of higher
education policy and management
will only become higher in the
coming years. Exactly a week ago
we heard the government set out
its agenda at the State Opening
of the Parliament. We will have
to face numerous challenges:
a much greater influx of students
combined with reducing budgets.
At the same time quality should be
sustained and even improved.

That also has to do with the reason
why my colleague from the Uni-
versity of Amsterdam (UvA), Karel

van der Toorn, is not present here this afternoon. He represents the UvA and the VU at the important demonstration in The Hague today, organised by the union of students. Students, teachers, professors will express their concern about the future of higher education.

Karel van der Toorn will speak at the occasion and I am sure he will do this in an inspiring way!

Because, ladies and gentlemen, The Netherlands are at risk from our point of view. If the government is not prepared to invest seriously in higher education, a brain drain will follow. To quote Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance".

Creating an initiative of excellence like AUC has proven to be possible thanks to the support of the City, the Ministry and corporate sponsors. Indeed society at large will have to demonstrate support for

higher education in the time to come. Especially in a time of crisis. As the Secretary General of the OECD stated: "Investments in human capital will contribute to the recovery".

Finally, I have a very happy announcement. The date of this celebration was carefully chosen as we were ensured of the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Máxima of The Netherlands. Unfortunately, we learned very recently that she has had to give priority to another pressing obligation – she will be addressing the UN today in New York on the theme of micro loans. She has informed us that she regrets her absence very much, that she is very supportive of Amsterdam University College, and that she will visit AUC in the near future to meet personally with the students and the faculty. We are already looking forward to this event!

“We expect AUC itself to be an inspiring, challenging, and ambitious example to our two institutions of what can and should be done at undergraduate level... a lighthouse of good practice from which we can all benefit”

R.M. Smit, MSc, Grand Opening Amsterdam University College



AUC and the Amsterdam Academic Alliance

Dr. Job Cohen,
Mayor, City of Amsterdam

Dear Ms. Consul General,
dear ladies and gentlemen,
dear students,

Let me start with a quote of a great thinker: an elaboration on the academic world of the 19th century.

“All branches of learning have thus been so much enlarged that he who would “do something” has to pursue no more than one subject and disregard all others. In his own subject he will then, it is true, be superior to the vulgar; but in all else he will belong to it. [...]

An exclusive specialist of this kind stands on a par with a workman in a factory, whose whole life is spent in making one particular kind of screw, or catch, or handle, for some particular instrument or machine, in which, indeed, he attains incredible dexterity. The specialist may also be likened

to a man who lives in his own house and never leaves it. There he is perfectly familiar with everything, every little step, corner, or board; much as Quasimodo in Victor Hugo’s “Nôtre Dame” knows the cathedral; but outside it, all is strange and unknown. For true culture in the humanities it is absolutely necessary that a man should be many-sided and take large views; and for a man of learning in the higher sense of the word, an extensive acquaintance with history is needful. [...]

It is precisely minds of the first order that will never be specialists. For their very nature is to make the whole of existence their problem; and this is a subject upon which they will every one of them in some form provide mankind with a new revelation. For he alone can deserve the name of genius who takes the All, the Essential, the Universal, for the theme of his achievements; not he who spends his life in explaining some special relation of things one to another.”

It is the grumpy philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer who said this in one of his essays on universities and science.

And although he is, of course, exaggerating for the sake of the argument, he essentially pinpoints

the *raison d’être* of Amsterdam University College. AUC is the answer to the need for a broad, interdisciplinary approach. I don’t know if AUC students will aim for “the Essential” and “the Universal”; as Schopenhauer would want them to. But the scientific, economic, and societal issues of today definitely require a broad, general approach.

Let us consider the lifelong education of an academic. A baby is learning the whole day: playing, eating: everything is education. Later, when in school, education entails a wide range of subjects: from drawing and gymnastics to reading and geography. In secondary education the youngster chooses a limited number of subjects but even then he is educated in at least seven or more fields: mathematics, languages, economics, natural sciences, biology, and so on. And then, already at the age of eighteen, one has to choose only one subject one should dedicate the following years to, or even the rest of one’s life! In the words of Schopenhauer: “he who would “do something” has to pursue no more than one subject and disregard all others”. There is something odd about that ... But it is – in my opinion – certainly no reason to dismiss all specialists, as Schopenhauer

does. For specialisation is crucial as well. In the liberal arts and science model of AUC, the choice for one single subject – the moment of specialisation – will be postponed until one chooses his or her Master's.

Quite interesting on this matter is asking a group of academic people my age what they studied, back in the 60s and 70s. For a majority have chosen an occupation that is totally different from the field of study they chose when they were eighteen. Economists have become deans, linguists have become entrepreneurs, and – for that matter – law students have become mayor ...

I am convinced this is quite different these days. Efficiency and a result-driven approach forces students to choose the right discipline at once and not to linger and get involved in all sorts of projects on the side, as my generation did. I do not mean to re-open this ongoing debate on quality and quantity in higher education here, but we can safely conclude that this development in the last decades resulted in more narrow specialist disciplines with a solid job perspective. Whilst – as I said – paradoxically, many of the

current global issues ask not only for the knowledge of specialists but also for an integrated, more general approach.

Therefore today is a memorable day. For we are here at the dawn of an institute that opposes this development. A Bachelor that brings together students from all over the world and provides them with an intellectual training of academic excellence, where the classic boundaries between disciplines are gone. The AUC will contribute to the much-called-for differentiation of Dutch higher education.

The establishment of Amsterdam University College is memorable for more than one reason. It is the result of perfect teamwork between the two Amsterdam universities, which makes this initiative all the more strong.

The city of Amsterdam supported the initiative because we are aware of the need of upholding and enhancing Amsterdam as a centre of knowledge.

Amsterdam University College contributes to this profile and we will all benefit: from international business to scientific research and public administration.

And I am very pleased that Amsterdam University College, by offering a scholarship programme supported by the private sector, makes the highest academic standard accessible not only for students who can afford such a programme, but also for talented individuals. AUC is exclusive on the right grounds. And truly lives up to the motto "excellence and diversity in a global city".

The need for talent, the need for high-level graduates with an open, inquisitive, and critical mind is these days greater than ever. Therefore I thank the founders of Amsterdam University College for the aim to provide society with these much-needed graduates.

Thank you for your attention.

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“The city of Amsterdam supports AUC because we are aware of the need of upholding and enhancing Amsterdam as a centre of knowledge ... we will all benefit: from international business to scientific research and public administration”

Dr. M.J. Cohen, Grand Opening Amsterdam University College

“We believe that both
excellence and
diversity matter,
as both competition
and cooperation are
key to success in a
globalised world...
leadership does
not only require
excellence, but also
the understanding
and valuing of
diversity”



Excellence and Diversity in a Global Century

*Prof. Dr. Marijk van der Wende
Dean, Amsterdam University College;
Professor of Higher Education,
VU University Amsterdam*

Dear Mr. Mayor,
dear Ms. Consul General,
dear ladies and gentlemen,
colleagues and students,

The start of the 21st century, and with that the new millennium, gave rise to important reflections on the role of higher education in society. The “knowledge economy” and “globalisation” were the key concepts for framing its important mission in educating future generations of graduates, emphasising their economic significance and the required span of their social and human abilities. Great expectations were further fuelled by assumptions about the role that technology would play, through e-learning and even entirely virtual universities.

Shortly after the turn of the millennium the “e-bubble” burst, and with 9/11 the world started to change more and especially in other directions than expected,

bringing old and new fears and realities (back) to the centre. Consequently, new and more critical dimensions entered the debate on higher education.

In the USA, the events at the wake of the century served as a wake-up call for higher education. A thorough critique emerged on the achievements in undergraduate education. Global knowledge, such as foreign languages, international understanding, and intercultural awareness, was virtually lacking in most programmes, including those run by top-level institutions. Basic levels in academic skills such as mathematics, writing, speaking, and critical thinking were not achieved by the majority of students (Bok, 2006).

In search of new avenues and solutions, and considering the requirements from globalisation and the innovative character of the knowledge economy, a revival and revaluing of the liberal arts and sciences tradition occurred. This model especially develops essential capacities, as it engages the big questions in science and society, connects analytical skills with practical experience, and helps students master the arts of inquiry, analysis, and communication. The major issues and problems of our time – from ensuring

global sustainability to negotiating international markets to expanding human freedom – transcend individual disciplines. It was found that the traditional modular and disciplinary curriculum has become dysfunctional, as it results in a fragmented and incoherent educational experience, whereas the frontiers of knowledge call for cross-disciplinary inquiry, analysis, and application (AAC&U, 2007).

Clearly, the liberal arts and sciences tradition regained focus as an exemplary model for undergraduate education in the 21st century. This was confirmed by President Obama, when he stated in a recent interview with the New York Times: “I would argue that anybody – that young people generally are going to benefit from a good, solid liberal-arts education. That’s what I got” (NYT, 14 April 2009).

In Europe, the new millennium started for higher education with the implementation of the Bologna process. The new structure underlines the importance of undergraduate education as an educational cycle in its own right. It was increasingly realised that the Humboldtian tradition with its blessed link between research and education and its strong emphasis on the disciplines, has led to too

early (over) specialisation. With Europe's aim to become the world's leading knowledge economy, the higher education system clearly has to adapt in order to prepare college graduates better for the complex realities of this new global world, in which Europe wants to play an innovative role.

In the context of these Bologna reforms, liberal education has reappeared as a subject of interest in discussions about breadth and depth in the curriculum. Connections exist with the more philosophical and 19th-century concept of *Bildung*. However, liberal education has not been high among the priorities on the European educational agenda. As Rothblatt (2003) correctly noticed, the values of liberal education are less widely voiced in Europe, as the scene is dominated by government steering, national agendas, and budgets, and a large and important private sector committed to liberal education is missing. In contrast, with respect to international knowledge and intercultural awareness, the situation in Europe is developing much faster than in the USA. With fast-growing flows of mobile students, second and third language acquisition, joint degrees, etc., Europe's progress in educating global citizens is evident.

Dutch higher education basically follows these developments and has recently been able to catch up on internationalisation. The presence of international students is increasingly understood as a condition for creating an international learning experience for all, rather than as a source of institutional income. At secondary level, bilingual education (English–Dutch) and the International Baccalaureate are rapidly expanding. Consequently, the demand for internationally oriented, English-taught programmes at Bachelor level is increasing.

The OECD has repeatedly stated that Dutch higher education demonstrates an insufficient level of differentiation. Excellence is underrepresented, the international dimension should be enhanced, and too early specialisation should be avoided.

These different concerns and trends at international, European, and national levels, have inspired us in creating Amsterdam University College. We had the extraordinary chance to create a new undergraduate programme from scratch, drawing on the most imminent scholars in all disciplines from two strong research universities. In only a few but very inspiring encounters they defined, across disciplinary boundaries,

what should be taught in order to equip graduates for success in the 21st century. This was the origin of AUC's curriculum approach to "the big questions" and the themes that appear in its already famous curriculum circle.

Our ambition is expressed in our motto: excellence and diversity in a global city. We believe that both excellence and diversity matter, as both competition and cooperation are key to success in a globalised world.

Excellence in education is a new and somewhat uneasy territory for discourse in The Netherlands. AUC defines excellence as a reciprocal commitment to demanding academic standards and engagement on the side of both the teacher and the student. We are aware that excellence is foremost a matter of effort and energy. As Clark (2004) said: "Excellence is difficult to acquire; once acquired, it is catching; once caught, it must be sustained."

In the Dutch public debate, excellence is often confused with elite, or even elitist. Let me say this: every society, albeit locally, nationally, or globally defined, needs an elite; that is, people who are able and willing to accept responsibility beyond their own individual lives and personal interests and to

demonstrate leadership in public, political, scientific, and corporate sectors. If we find that such leaders of the future have chosen to enrol as undergraduates at AUC, we will only be proud and even more dedicated to providing an undergraduate education as the best possible basis for such roles and careers.

Leadership does not only require excellence, but also the understanding and valuing of diversity. "Diversity matters: the experience of arriving on a campus to live and study with classmates from a diverse range of backgrounds is essential to students' training for this new world". This goes to the heart of the argument that diversity must be present in the student body, not only in the curriculum (Chatman, 2008).

Consequently, our student body also includes those who merit a place at AUC, but need financial support. Therefore we have established the AUC Scholarship Programme, with the support of our public and corporate sponsors, and, we hope, also your support!

The motivation to study in the spirit of our motto cannot be better expressed than by the winner of the AUC Essay Award. He quoted the ancient Chinese wisdom: "Don't hunt for high offices, but for the knowledge it takes to occupy them". Reflecting on the global issues and challenges of our times, he continued: "I will not be ignorant. I will not only take the responsibility for the decisions I make, but I will also take the responsibility of educating myself to such a level that I can be sure that the decisions I make are right".

You can imagine why we are already proud of our students and feel privileged to be their educators for the coming three years.

Thank you very much.

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Liberal Arts and *the Sciences*

Prof. Dr. Robbert Dijkgraaf
President Royal Netherlands
Academy of Arts and Sciences

Dear Mr. Mayor,
dear Ms. Consul General,
dear ladies and gentlemen,
colleagues and students,

There are many ingredients that will give Amsterdam University College a special identity: the reflection of the city of Amsterdam with its own unique character, the complementarity and synergy of its two founding universities, its cultural diversity, its international outlook. But another crucial component will be the integration of the methods and thinking of the natural sciences in a traditional liberal arts teaching tradition. Fifty years ago C.P. Snow delivered his famous Sir Robert Rede Lecture on "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution", warning us that the ever-increasing gap between the humanities and the sciences was an obstacle to solving the world's great problems. Snow was a typical British mixture of a physicist, public intellectual, a science advocate, civil servant and successful novelist.

His 11-part series, "Strangers and Brothers", paints in great detail the world of politics and bureaucracy, and can be considered an English version of "Het bureau".

Snow famously argued that the second law of thermodynamics is just as important in our culture as the sonnets of Shakespeare.

The reactions to Snow's suggestion were very violent and ad hominem. The literary critic F.R. Leavis in his Richmond Lecture in Downing College in 1962 said: "Snow thinks of himself as a novelist, [...] his incapacity as a novelist is ... total [...] as a novelist he doesn't exist; he doesn't begin to exist. He can't be said to know what a novel is. [...] (Snow is) utterly without a glimmer of what creative literature is, or why it matters. [...] Not only is he not a genius, [...] he is intellectually as undistinguished as it is possible to be."

Yet, Snow was right. A complete education should be a multidimensional experience, since students, teachers, schools, and research are all multidimensional. It is a challenge for universities to offer such an environment and be a proper reflection of the talents of its inhabitants.

Science should be an integral part of a balanced diet. It is good for science, and it is good for the rest of the world. Obviously, learning science is necessary in order to

become a scientist and there is a growing need for scientists. But even more important: understanding science is necessary to appreciate science. Many of our students will later be in a position to make important decisions, whether in business, government, policy, or academia. The scientific way of thinking and approaching life could be valuable if not crucial for their success.

By presenting science in a too narrow way we do it a great disservice. Traditionally, we work with the hourglass model. A population of students with a wide range of interests is forced to go through the very narrow opening of a university study that seems to be defined up to the third decimal. The few that entered will be told how wonderful their choice of study is, since they can go in so many directions. We should not be surprised that only a few trickle down. Pushing harder will not work. Both students and science itself deserves a wider opening of the hourglass, a broader definition of their interests. There is a growing ring of disciplines that are embracing more of the methods and approach of science, such as psychology and other cognitive sciences, language studies, archaeology, etc. Connecting science with its neighbouring disciplines, showing its softer side, enriches it.

Modern life confronts with a paradox: our world is getting more and more complicated, yet we seem to want to know less and less about it. Science and technology are like the microchips in our computers and mobile phones: incredibly complex and useful, but invisible behind a shiny exterior, a world for technicians not to be entered. But we are increasingly dependent on and driven by science and technology, the silent forces of history. Ignorance of the workings and ideas of science is dangerous. Many people think, in the words of the writer Rudy Kousbroek, that it is the whistle of the train conductor that is the force that moves the train. But willpower is not enough. There are many great crises or challenges facing the world: food, energy, climate, pandemics, all driven by globalisation. Science and technology might have been part of the cause of these problems, they are also absolutely key to the solutions. We need fundamental new ideas; present technology is simply insufficient. But the true solutions can only be found together. Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research will increasingly hold the key to solutions. Not because it is fashionable, but because the problems themselves stretch over many disciplines. Only by working together do we have a chance to find solutions. As when you are completing a jigsaw puzzle,

it is easy to start at the edge where life is simple. Now we are getting to the difficult middle part. The sciences can also benefit from a perspective from the humanities. As we have witnessed again in the current economic crisis, technology left to itself, also financial technology, without the checks and balances of other disciplines, is a very dangerous thing. How much would economists have benefited from the perspective of a historian who would naturally look back more than twenty years. In shaping the curriculum AUC will have to balance depth and breadth. The rewarding experience of going deep underground in research versus the beautiful views of a bird's eye perspective. This is what the famous philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead (1925) has said in his book "Science and the Modern World": "Each profession makes progress, but it is progress in its own groove. But there is no groove adequate for the comprehension of human life. Of course no one is merely a mathematician or merely a lawyer. People have lives outside of their profession or their business. But the point is the restraint of serious thought within a groove. The remainder of life is treated superficially, with the imperfect categories of thought derived from one profession. Here the challenge of general education is to find a

way to deepen that knowledge, that knowledge that is inevitably and unavoidably outside of the domain of the disciplinary groove."

To quote another philosopher from the same period and an educational reformer, John Dewey (1929): "The test of success is whether the scholar's special knowledge, when referred back to ordinary life experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful, or does it terminate in the making of things of ordinary experience more opaque [...] That kind of movement, however one were to institutionalise it in an educational system, is the task of general education in a world of disciplines."

I hope that AUC will be seen as a modest step to building a bridge between the two cultures and making life a bit more transparent for its students.

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“Many of our students will later be in a position to make important decisions, whether in business, government, policy, or academia. The scientific way of thinking and approaching life could be valuable if not crucial for their success.”

Prof. Dr. Robbert Dijkgraaf, Grand Opening Amsterdam University College





Intermezzo

Beatriz Aguiar (vocals) and Marco Antonio Sanchez Ramirez (guitar and vocals)

Mi Canción

(composed by B. Aguiar/J. Lopretti)

Aprendiz de Mensajero

(composed by Orlando Miño)

“AUC can be an alternative voice of inspiration for its students and its staff, by encouraging reflection, not reaction; originality and not repetition... a safe space to cultivate and stimulate free minds”



Cultural Diversity the Greatest Challenge of our Time

*Prof. Dr. Halleh Ghorashi
Department of Culture, Organization and
Management, Faculty of Social Sciences,
VU University Amsterdam*

Dear Mr. Mayor,
dear Ms. Consul General,
dear ladies and gentlemen,
colleagues and students,

It is an honour to be one of the speakers at the opening of Amsterdam University College, which is the result of historic cooperation between the two universities in Amsterdam.

Some months ago I was watching a documentary on Dutch television about the MBA programme at Harvard Business School in the United States. One of the questions asked of one of the academic staff struck me: "What kind of leaders has your programme delivered to the world in the past decades; look at Bush for example?" The message that one of the most prestigious MBA programmes in the world had edu-

cated one of the most destructive leaders of the past few decades was quite sharp, yet not that original. Is an MBA programme to blame for the disaster of the Bush Administration?

There is no definite answer to this question, but this is the kind of reflection that universities and educational programmes need to engage in from time to time. This is also the central point of my lecture today: what kind of message are we giving our students about the world and their role in it? How are we going to provide enough inspiration for our students to be original and reflective about the challenges that surround them? I find these questions especially relevant in a time dominated by cynical and negative rhetoric concerning cultural diversity in Europe and especially in The Netherlands.

When it comes to the dominant pattern of discussions in Europe, it seems that critical thinking, which requires some doubt of one's own judgment, has been replaced by a reactive attitude of protecting one's own culture and identity rooted in the fear of loss and of change. Fearing change makes it impossible to remain curious about different points of views. A protective attitude towards one's own identity and

culture limits creativity, originality, and does not allow us to be open to change. Fearfulness of change brings us to a situation in which we prefer to keep the status quo and choose interaction with clones of ourselves in order to feel safe and secure. Yet, choosing this attitude means making a choice that goes against the flow of our time.

Many social scientists have described modern nations as cultural hybrids. Heterogeneity, cultural interchange, and diversity have been defined as the self-conscious identity of modern societies. Steven Vertovec (2006) defines the condition we are living in as the condition of "super-diversity", which is less ordered and less tangible than its late 20th century counterpart. The world is changing and a defensive attitude towards this change is counter-productive. It can be, as some would suggest, that the diversity of the new world offers us too much of a challenge, but it is a challenge that we must embrace. Otherwise we will stay behind our times and the pace of the globe.

In the course of the development of Amsterdam University College, one of the issues discussed was the notion of inclusiveness in order to give students enough room to reflect upon their own positioning

in time and space, while remaining aware of their own prejudices which are fed by the negative sentiments dominant in the societies we live in. It is this practice of the creation of a safe space for reflection which will show us how AUC can be an alternative voice of inspiration for its students and its staff, by encouraging reflection, not reaction; originality and not repetition. In other words, AUC can become a safe space to cultivate and stimulate free minds.

The major task of an academic education is to provide the students with valuable insights so that they will not take for granted the processes of which they are part. Instead they should keep raising critical and constructive questions, which is the foundation of academic thinking. By doing this, students learn to claim their subjectivity and their power of self-creation. This claim of subjectivity means that they create new meanings as opposed to being subjected to certain practices and becoming the object of the act.

One of the aspects of this self-creation or self-discovery is to take notice of any kind of rootedness we have. By this I mean, that we create our own meanings concerning any kind of bonding and

roots rather than being subjected to pre-defined notions. Through exploration and reflection, students are challenged to question the taken-for-granted notion of their rootedness in a culture or a nation. For that, one needs to find a balance between involvement in and distance from the discourses surrounding us. One needs to be involved so that one can influence the discourse, yet remain distanced enough to reflect.

Creative thinkers have always been the ones who have challenged themselves and others to think differently and to choose risky positions. They do this by finding a balance in relation to dominant discourses they have been part of. "Rather than being uprooted or homeless, the trick is to be at home in many homes, but to be in each inside and outside at the same time, to combine intimacy with the critical look of an outsider, involvement with detachment" (Bauman, 2000).

In other words, the trick is to be in a place but not of the place, as Bauman puts it. The challenge of AUC will then be to educate students to become engaged scholars who influence the world they are part of, while teaching them to keep the necessary

academic distance and reflection to remain critical of the patterns others take for granted. The present dominant negative and cynical rhetoric requires a counter from inspiring leaders who are able to think outside the box, and to see the present context of super-diversity as a breeding ground for innovation and creativity instead of fear and resentment. My wish is that AUC will become one of the creative and critical safe spaces to educate future leaders. I cannot think of any better city than Amsterdam to take up this challenge. Amsterdam is the city with the most nationalities in the world (177 to be specific). So in the end I would like to congratulate both universities for this successful initiative.

Thank you for your valuable time.

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General Arts and the City
Dr. J.C. Kennedy
Professor University of Amsterdam

Liberal Arts and the City

*Prof. Dr. James Kennedy
Department of Dutch History, Faculty of
Humanities, University of Amsterdam*

Mr. Mayor,
Ms. Consul General,
ladies and gentlemen,
colleagues and students,

Amsterdam University College is committed to the vision of an education of liberal arts and sciences, a vision that powerfully distinguishes it from the education available at most European universities. It pays special attention to small-scale academic community, on learning together, on bringing various insights from many disciplines into conversation with each other. It intends not only, as Stephen Fix (2005) says, to “develop [...] the skills [students] need to become useful contributors to society”. But it also encourages “the richly textured inner life” that will help make students open, as persons, to “imaginative possibilities”. That capacity for imagination is essential for students becoming critical and caring citizens in this world.

The education we offer here is about, as it is often said – but just as often forgotten – the education of the whole person. Liberal arts is by definition concerned with freeing people for study, in order to think deeply and broadly. Such an education requires in our day bringing the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities into discussion with each other, taking up vital issues that should concern all of us, all of humankind, as Robbert Dijkgraaf has just eloquently argued.

And because it wants to bring the various arts and sciences into conversation with each other, Amsterdam University College has chosen to establish itself in the city. It might seem strange to make the city so central. After all, cities are not necessarily good places to study at all. Statistics suggest that Amsterdam students in particular have a hard time finishing their studies; the temptations of Amsterdam, which I shall further leave unspecified, are apparently just too great. Moreover, with AUC emphasising tight-knit community it might seem that the city could only be a distraction. But nothing could be further from the truth – the city is an indispensable part of what Amsterdam University College aspires to become.

In the first place, cities like Amsterdam are places of intellectual exchange. We are used to thinking of Amsterdam as a trade centre. But Amsterdam is at the same time a place where new ideas and new practices are eagerly exchanged, as it had been in the Golden Age. The bases for this exchange are countless well-travelled Amsterdammers, the thousands of talented expats, the hundreds of internationally active corporations, some six hundred houses of worship, and 177 ethnic groups representing the various world religions, all making the city a place where ideas from all over the globe meet. If “a hunger for broader intellectual exchange” is (as Stephen Lewis (2005) has put it) a characteristic of an education in the liberal arts and sciences, then cities like Amsterdam offer multiple opportunities for such exchanges outside the classroom, exchanges that will necessarily find their way into classrooms of Amsterdam University College.

Second, cities like Amsterdam are a testimony to the human past, present, and future in unique ways. Students have not received a liberal arts education until they have developed a deep familiarity with the human record – what people have achieved, and what they have failed to achieve, what they might

achieve, and what they must not seek to achieve. Cities like Amsterdam are particularly powerful testimonies to this human record. Historically, they reveal the heights of human excellence, evident in Amsterdam's many fine museums and in its lovely architecture and well-ordered yet diverse society. And they testify to the darker side of human life – the elegant canal-side houses built on the servitude of millions in East Asia, and a city neighbourhood, just a few hundred meters away, that in the Second World War was forcibly emptied of its Jewish population. Moreover, it is a city whose religious and ethnic differences have recently attracted the attention of the world. This city also has been a centre of social experimentation, whether in its housing policies in the 1920s or its drugs policies in the 1970s. A city like Amsterdam serves as the wider laboratory of the college's scholars, who seek to make connections between what they do in their classrooms and the responsibilities they will one day face while serving others. Amsterdam as a city, you could say, provides a rich context for students spending three years learning of the human past and present – and about their future responsibilities in a world where most people live in urban environments.

Finally, Amsterdam offers students a wealth of experience that ideally enriches their curriculum. The breathtaking beauty and the squalid ugliness of a large city, its dynamism, its tensions, and, above all, the wealth of human contacts it offers are all bound to widen and deepen the experience of AUC students. By itself, of course, experience is not the same thing as an education. We live in a culture that thinks experience (beleving) is pretty much the highest form of knowledge that there is. But the liberal arts education offers more than experience – it offers reflection on experience, as Robert Gaudino argues (Lewis, 2005, note 1). It encourages – demands – that students think through their experiences, grounding them in disciplined ways of thinking, whether in the natural or social sciences or the humanities. It is in this reflection on experience that city and college meet each other.

For all of these reasons, Amsterdam University College seeks to wed its vision of liberal arts education with the city – for the sake of its students, but, it is hoped, for the sake of cities themselves. The world needs deeply-educated students who – no matter which profession they follow – understand the city through and through, know

what is needed to make it flourish, and care passionately enough to make that happen, May Amsterdam University College effectively serve that end.

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Gaudino credited for this view in Lewis

“The Importance of Institutional Culture,” 196n.

“Amsterdam University College is committed to the vision of an education of liberal arts and sciences, a vision that powerfully distinguishes it from the education available at most European universities”

Prof. Dr. James Kennedy, Grand Opening Amsterdam University College

“I know for sure
that with our
combined efforts,
AUC will help to
turn hope into belief,
dreams into vision
and ambition
into excellence”



Acceptance speech for AUC Essay Award

Randy van Duuren
AUC student

Dear Mr. Mayor,
dear Ms. Consul General,
dear ladies and gentlemen,
dear fellow students,

First of all, I would to thank you, Mr. Mayor, not only for your presence here today, but also for all of your efforts in establishing AUC.

Secondly, I need to thank the jury for granting me this award.

I'd like to share with you what made me decide to come to AUC. You see, I have certain dreams in life, certain goals I would like to achieve.

I dream of a world without famines, without civil wars and poverty.

Of a world in which we not only appreciate the beauty of nature, but also respect its power and acknowledge its vulnerability.

A world in which everyone, regardless of nationality, faith, and descent can look forward to a bright future.

I feel that AUC supports these causes more than traditional

academic institutions. It makes students aware of these issues and offers them the tools to come up with possible solutions.

And that leads me to another group of people I'd like to thank: you, my fellow students.

Thank you for making the same choice as I have made. Thank you for choosing to educate yourself to a level that will allow you to contribute to solving some of the problems our world faces today.

I am very well aware that these issues can seem too big and too difficult to solve for the 200 of us, even for the hundreds of students that will hopefully follow. But bear in mind that it is little strokes that fell great oaks.

I know for sure that with our combined efforts, the AUC will help to turn hope into belief, dreams into vision and ambition into excellence.

Thank you.





Randy van Duuren receives the AUC Essay Award from Dr. Job Cohen, Mayor of Amsterdam

“Developing Amsterdam University College has been an inspiring process for all participants involved. I am confident that the College will also become a source of inspiration for its future students.”



Closing

*Prof. Dr. Dymph van den Boom
Rector Magnificus, University of Amsterdam*

Dear Mr. Mayor,
dear Ms. Consul General,
dear ladies and gentlemen,
colleagues and students,

Karel van der Toorn, President of the University of Amsterdam, asked me to close this meeting. He apologises for not being present here today.

AUC is a good example of the close relationship between the two Amsterdam universities and the City Council. The mayor already referred to the importance of this relationship in his speech.

AUC is one of the initiatives within a wider framework of cooperation between the two universities in which Amsterdam is strongly positioned as a city of science. Since 1984 the two universities have joined forces in the Academic Center for Dentistry. There is increasing cooperation between the three science faculties in the Amsterdam Graduate School of Science. The Duisenberg School is a joint initiative of the financial sector and universities to establish a number of high-profile programmes in finance. And finally there is a joint scholarship programme in the making.

AUC has as its slogan “excellence and diversity in a global city”. Today’s speeches provided an insight view on how to interpret this slogan. AUC aims high at excellence; the students and staff have been selected on their quality, their ambition, and their international profile.

Excellence and diversity are also considered to be complementary. Excellence implies being able to apply knowledge in a culturally diverse world. In its curriculum, but also in its student body, AUC aims to reflect this diversity. This has been the reason for establishing the AUC Scholarship Fund. This Fund enables students, selected on both their merit and economic need, to pursue a Bachelor’s degree in Amsterdam.

The Fund is sponsored by both the VU University Amsterdam and the University of Amsterdam. We are also extremely grateful to the corporate sponsors: Shell, the Schiphol Group, and Rabobank. Also, I would like to invite this audience to support the AUC Scholarship Fund, donations would be highly appreciated. All information can be found on the flyer you received.

I would like to thank the audience for being present on behalf of both universities.

Developing Amsterdam University College has been an inspiring process for all participants involved.

I am confident that the College will also become a source of inspiration for its future students. I would like to express special thanks to:

- The Dean, Marijk van der Wende. Due to her countless efforts AUC developed its programme and teacher body in just one year.
- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, for their subsidy from the Sirius Programme for excellence in higher education; special thanks go to the Minister of Education, Mr. Plasterk.
- Thanks too to the City Council of Amsterdam, who provided a subsidy within the framework of the Amsterdam Academic Alliance, Amsterdam Topstad, with special thanks to Mayor Cohen and Alderman Asscher.

Finally, I wish the AUC students and staff a lot of success. The students who have started this year form the founding class of 2012, the year in which they will graduate. Together with the staff they are the first group and therefore responsible for setting up the college community. And it is this community, we hope, that will make a difference. As we stated as founding fathers: the leaders of the future will have to be successful in working together across the boundaries of nationalities, cultures and disciplines.

Thank you.





The official opening moment:
the Rectors of the University of Amsterdam
and VU University Amsterdam seal their
cooperation in AUC with a handshake

Amsterdam University
offers an international
and sciences Bachelor
that crosses the borders
of languages, cultures
and disciplines.

University College
International liberal arts
Bachelor programme
boundaries of
res and academic





Dr. Job Cohen, Mayor of Amsterdam, congratulates the Dean of AUC.

Left to right:

Dr. Lodewijk Asscher,
Alderman of Amsterdam City Council;
Dr. Job Cohen, Mayor of Amsterdam;
Prof. Dr. Marijk van der Wende, Dean, AUC;
Prof. Dr. Robbert Dijkgraaf,
Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and
Sciences ;
Prof. Dr. Halleh Ghorashi,
Professor VU University Amsterdam.









Informal reception after the ceremony in the hall of the Royal Tropical Institute





AUC students from all over the world

AUC Board

Left to right:

Prof. dr. Dymph van den Boom
Rector Magnificus
University of Amsterdam

Paul Doop, MA
Vice-President
University of Amsterdam

Randy van Duuren
AUC Student

Prof. dr. Marijk van der Wende
Dean AUC

Prof. dr. Lex Bouter
Chair AUC Board,
Rector Magnificus
VU University Amsterdam





AUC Scholarship Students 2009/2010
and two Rabobank representatives

AUC sponsors

Sirius

The Dutch Ministry of Education & Science has a strategic agenda focusing on excellence and talent and a broader differentiation in higher education. It is in this context that AUC has been awarded a major grant for excellence from the Ministry's Sirius programme, which supports initiatives in higher education that focus on talent and excellence; in other words, programmes that stimulate students to get the best out of themselves.



City of Amsterdam

Amsterdam has always been a cradle for the development of talent. Together with VU University Amsterdam and the University of Amsterdam, the City Council is investing in the development of new high-level degree programmes with international appeal that add to the strength of the city. Excellent education is an essential requirement for the development of the Amsterdam economy and of the city and region as a knowledge hub. Amsterdam University College distinguishes itself by focusing on excellence and diversity, and its interdisciplinary approach and international orientation. This is in keeping with the profile and ambition of Amsterdam as both a multicultural city and an international knowledge centre.

✕ Gemeente Amsterdam



Sponsors of the AUC Scholarship Fund

The AUC Scholarship Fund is sponsored by the University of Amsterdam and the VU University Amsterdam.



Corporate sponsors of the AUC Scholarship Fund are:

Rabobank Amsterdam

Rabobank Amsterdam is the local Amsterdam bank for people and businesses in the city. It is customer-driven and an innovative, broad financial services provider. The bank is at the heart of Amsterdam's multicultural society. It is inspired by diversity and values differences between people. The bank uses its position in society to stimulate the knowledge industry in the city.



Shell

Shell is investing in clean and efficient energy sources for the future. In all the business operations Shell aims to strike the right balance between economic, social and environmental aspects. In addition, through its Social Investment programme Shell pays attention to social developments in its own local communities, focusing on innovation, sustainable development, voluntary work and encouraging talent.



Schiphol Group

The homebase of the Schiphol Group, Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, is the economic motor of the Dutch Randstad and has strong ties with the City of Amsterdam. The diversity of the AUC curriculum and of the AUC student population matches the diversity of the airport. In Amsterdam University College the Schiphol Group has found a partner with a shared responsibility to inspire and invest in society.



COLOFON

Texts

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Prof. Dr. M.C. van der Wende,
Prof. Dr. R.H. Dijkgraaf,
Prof. Dr. H. Ghorashi,
Prof. Dr. J.C. Kennedy,
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