University of Amsterdam



Annual report 2024

Community and dialogue

Central Diversity Office

photography: Sezen Betaubun

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1. Preface

This is the fourth annual report of the Central Diversity Office. From 2019, with a break between the terms of the previous and current CDO, three annual reports have seen the light of day, titled: 'Diversity 2.0 - From why to how' (2019), 'Discrimination and decolonisation' (2020), and 'Embedding and expanding' (2022-2023).

You can think of these titles as journeys. One that begins with a justification of the university's specific interest and focus on diversity in its organisation and community. The next step was to identify a number of key issues, influenced in part by the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement. These issues remain vital to our current Central Diversity Office team. But the 2022-2023 annual report also described how this team was created. This followed earlier decisions to further embed diversity, equality and inclusion in policies and activities.

Embedding and expanding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) within our university is therefore the guiding principle for the current CDO team, which now comprises four staff members and a (temporary) student assistant. They bring experience from previous positions in academia, at various interest groups and NGOs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and many more. In addition, we can benefit from the expertise of two temporary colleagues who spent time with the CDO while reintegrating, respectively from another UvA department and from an external position.

One of the most important steps we took when the CDO team was complete, was the establishment of the UvA Diversity Sounding Board Group (UDSB). This new body met for the first time just before summer break 2024 and consists of around 25 students, lecturers and support staff from different departments and networks such as UvA Pride, UvA IDEAs, the Central Student Council and Central Works Council. Its purpose is broad: to bring together different voices, interests and perspectives on relevant DEI topics, to respond to questions and comment on proposals from the CDO and other bodies at the UvA, and to draw attention to issues that might escape attention or otherwise remain undiscussed.

One might wonder why this UDSB was created after the completion of the new CDO team: isn't such a group of DEI professionals capable of setting its own plans and implementing goals? While this might be the case, there are two reasons why this focus group is still an important part of the DEI landscape at the UvA. First, one of our main goals as the CDO is to contribute to the diversity, inclusion, equality and equity of our university's large and pluralistic community, which consists of some 50,000 students and staff with different identities, backgrounds and perspectives. Indeed, we are aware that as DEI professionals, we need to avoid the risk of groupthink or tunnel vision and thus listen to other voices.

A second reason is that we - like many others - have interpreted the unrest and tensions on our campus as a persistent call for more transparency and democracy. Such a call is not new, as it was also prominent during the protests and actions on our campus in 2015 that, among other things, inspired the eventual creation of a diversity team and policy at the UvA. Therefore, we decided - and are still convinced - that we must look for ways to integrate transparency and democracy into our own functioning.

But in order to form a transparent and democratic community together, mutual understanding and trust is fundamental. So when we saw how unrest and tensions were affecting our campus, we responded by organising several dialogue sessions - on our various campuses, at the request of specific departments and, on request, also at a number of other higher education institutions in Amsterdam and beyond. The aim has always been to contribute to restoring mutual personal trust and understanding within our struggling communities. In this way, we hope to have contributed to the preconditions under which subsequently difficult and challenging topics can be discussed.

We therefore see dialogue as an essential means not only to make space for different perspectives, but also to ensure that we do not lose sight of each other. The excessive violence in Gaza logically leads to many emotions, which we as CDO want to make space for. However, we realise that in our community, multiple perspectives on a situation like this are possible, for which space is needed. At the same time, as CDO, we also want to be there for the staff and students who “just want” to be able to take their exams, or who “just want” to be able to go to work. Moreover, much of our work takes place behind the scenes, where we influence the Executive Board and other relevant departments with solicited and unsolicited advice. This may involve commenting on proposed house rules or the assessment framework of partnerships, pointing out the importance of transparency on decision-making or the tone of reporting. While the effectiveness of such advice is not always immediately apparent, we do hear and see that this route can ultimately be helpful.

Besides the urgency of the day, as a team we also worked on our place within the university. There was often still some uncertainty, both in our team and in the UvA community, about what we are actually for. Therefore, we started working on a new strategic framework, from which we can further work on our mission to make the university more diverse, inclusive, equal and equitable.

That mission now looks as follows:

The Central Diversity Office (CDO) exists as a critical friend to increase diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at the UvA. We share our knowledge and experiences by giving solicited and unsolicited advice and by organising activities. In doing so, we seek connections and we support anyone who wants to get involved in DEI.

So what is a critical friend? As a CDO, we are part of the UvA community. We want to help our colleagues and students make education, research and the organisation more inclusive and equitable. We ask critical questions such as: Can this process be more inclusive? Who is being forgotten? And what blind spots do we have? We think proactively and we always look for connection and nuance, but do not shy away from discomfort. So that anyone who wants to improve the UvA can count on us as a critical friend.

Sometimes we put a warm arm around someone and offer support, sometimes we make painful or uncomfortable truths visible, and sometimes we encourage. But we always do this with the idea that in our large UvA community we can count on many people and groups who want to make the university better, just like us. That is why 'connection' plays such an important role in how we work. In 2025, we will continue on this footing, again not shying away from thorny issues, for example in our project on dealing with religion on our secular campus.

In that spirit, I would like to conclude by thanking all the students and colleagues who have worked hard over the past year - with or without the CDO - to make our beautiful university better. In particular, I would like to thank our Faculty Diversity Officers, the participants of the UDSB, the communities with whom we have organised so many great events, and colleagues who have sought our advice. Together, we will continue to work hard for an inclusive university.

Machiel Keestra
Central Diversity Officer

Machiel Keestra
photographer Suzanne Blanchard



2. Activities

Commemoration of the earthquake on 6 February 2023

On 3 February 2024, we organised the commemoration programme in memory of the victims of the earthquakes that hit Turkey and Syria in 2023. This programme was organised together with aid organisation Solidaritykitchen.co.uk.

The packed programme started with a minute's silence, followed by a screening of a documentary by award-winning maker Imre Azem. There was then a panel discussion on "Building hope for the future" with researchers from New York, Amsterdam and Utrecht talking about the future of the affected area. There was also a focus on the rights of children in the earthquake-affected area. Local volunteers, who were working tirelessly to rebuild, were present online to talk about the help needed at the time.

The earthquake that occurred on 6 February 2023 was the biggest European natural disaster in the last century, according to the WHO. The affected area is as large as the distance from Amsterdam to Paris and more than 50,000 people were killed. This natural disaster had a major impact on UvA staff and students, especially those with roots in the affected area. Therefore, we felt it was important to organise a moment to reflect on this grief..

Hanukkah

For the third time in a row, Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights, was celebrated at the UvA. During this event, we reflected on the importance of freedom to express cultural and religious identity. The initiative came from students and staff. We as a CDO team provided support and funds.

More than 100 students and staff gathered at The Bridge (Roeterseilandcampus) to light the candles of the 8-arm candelabra. Befitting an inclusive celebration, there were first welcoming words from rector Peter-Paul Verbeek and our CDO Machiel Keestra. This was followed by informative presentations by prof. Bart Wallet and archaeology PhD student Elon Heijmans.

Verbeek emphasised how important visible diversity is for the UvA. Keestra addressed the misconception that a secular institution should not offer ample room for religious diversity. Wallet and Heijmans talked about the history, meaning and different forms of the Hanukkah ritual. Finally, the rector and students from different faculties, accompanied by master's student and rabbi Yanki Jacobs, lit a candle each.



Week Against Racism: Theater group *DEGASTEN*
photographer Tengbeh Kamara

Week Against Racism

The Week Against Racism was all about awareness, dialogue and connection. The week started powerfully with an inspiring keynote by Dr Mieke Lopes Cardozo. She explained how we collectively form the DNA of the UvA, and how we can strengthen inclusion from within. Theatre group DEGASTEN brought topics such as racism, exoticism and othering to life with an interactive performance. During the programme, there was room for reflection and exchange, with a focus on how we can increase a sense of “belonging” of underrepresented groups within the university.

A special part of the week was the tour of The Black Archives in Amsterdam Zuidoost. Here, participants learned about the impact of racism on society and why Black archives are so important. There was a focus on both the visible history of exclusion and the invisible structures that perpetuate discrimination. Under the guidance of Mitchell Esajas (founder of The Black Archives) and Wouter Pocornie (urban planner and architect), participants learned about the history of Southeast and how past exclusion still permeates the daily life of the district.

We concluded the week with the annual Iftar, a moment of meeting and reflection. In collaboration with svMUSA, attendees engaged in conversation on topics such as religious diversity and the experience of Muslim students on campus. Breaking the fast together symbolised solidarity and mutual understanding.

The Week Against Racism brought together art, knowledge, awareness and personal stories. It was a call to discuss and combat the less visible forms of discrimination and exclusion as well.

Iftar

The 2024 Iftar was an inspiring evening full of connection and reflection. The theme of the evening was togetherness and awareness about (religious) diversity on the UvA campus. With 90 attendees, we celebrated the fasting month of Ramadan together. At the same time, as part of the Week Against Racism, we reflected on how students and staff experience exclusion, both within the UvA and beyond.

The evening began with stories from Abdullah Arabaci (former president of svMUSA) and Irem Duman (Muslim Students Association Netherlands). They shared their personal experiences and insights on the role of religion at university. Then emeritus professor Annelies Moors gave a lecture on secularism and religious practices. This led to lively conversations about inclusion and feeling at home somewhere.

After the adhaan (prayer call), we jointly broke the fast with dates and a delicious buffet. The evening, organised by CDO in collaboration with student association svMUSA, provided space for both deepening and meeting, with the aim of strengthening the connection between Muslims and non-Muslims on campus. CDO supported with funds, communication and programme development.

Iftar
photographer Sezen Betaubun





Keti Koti
photographer Bete van Meeuwen

Keti Koti

On 26 June, some 50 people gathered at the Science Park canteen for a dialogue table in collaboration with Keti Koti Table Foundation. Despite the glorious weather and an Orange World Cup match, diversely composed couples at hospitably set tables engaged in guided conversation.

The first question was, “Would you like to share with your partner a moment when you hesitated to actively respond to a situation involving exclusion or discrimination? How does this memory affect you?” The first partner’s story was followed by a minute’s silence for reflection. Then the interlocutor told what had touched them in the story. This approach immediately created emotional depth in the conversations.

Various dialogue insights were then shared in a joint round. Hearing all these stories together revealed patterns in experiences and their possible explanation. This was followed by the second question, specific to our university community: ‘To what extent was your decision to respond or not respond prompted by recent events on campus?’ Again, the calm, personal approach created openness and mutual understanding - unlike in a discussion or debate. In a short time, real connections emerged, and tears flowed here and there.

The final question was ‘What would help you overcome your hesitation in such a situation next time?’ We closed with catchy songs by the Fri Yeye choir, which struck an immediate chord. Attendees left the tables feeling heard, seen and supported. Many participants gave suggestions on how to build a safer and inclusive campus for all together.

Diversity Day

We held a special public talk on 1 October, Diversity Day, on the theme of resistance to diversity work.

Several guest speakers warned of rising racism and political resistance to DEI initiatives, among other things. One of the speakers was Rabin Baldewsingh, National Coordinator against Racism and Discrimination, whose office is in danger of disappearing under the new government. He called on students to make their voices heard and stressed that universities play a crucial role in protecting democratic values.

During a joint discussion between guest speakers and audience, discussion ensued on the tension between DIG and academic freedom. Minority students shared their experiences and told that they regularly encounter restrictions in their research. They also pointed out the lack of diversity in teaching materials, which they said affects the knowledge of all students.
At the same time, there were concerns about how free teachers feel. Some wondered whether teachers still dare to discuss certain topics, for fear of criticism. Others questioned whether inclusion policies are too protective and hinder students' resilience.

Guest speakers gave their views on these issues, with different perspectives. Dr Saskia Bonjour, political scientist, argued that DIG policies can strengthen academic freedom, as long as there remains room for open debate. Fayaaz Joemmanbaks (they/them), policy advisor,

Diversity Day
photographer Tengbeh Kamara



added that protection is needed to reduce power differences and counter transgressive behaviour. Tofik Dibi, former politician, further argued for connection based on shared values. Diversity policy should benefit everyone, not divide.

Finally, College President Edith Hooge addressed the audience. She thanked all speakers and participants and stressed that the university's DEI policy is made stronger by community insights.

Get Ready
photographer Bete van Meeuwen



3. Ongoing programmes

Dialogues on campus

The past year was a challenging period for the UvA community. Crises, both inside and outside the Netherlands, created tensions on our campus. What started with peaceful demonstrations unfortunately led to violence, intimidation and damaged property. This made it painfully clear that the university is struggling to accommodate different perspectives and address conflicts constructively.

As CDO, we watched with concern and frustration how divisions were being wrestled with within our community. The role of the university (read: the administration) could not be ignored in these tensions. While academic freedom is important, there were times when the UvA fell short in providing a safe environment for all students and staff.

To help restore trust, the CDO set up several initiatives. We organised open drop-in hours so people could share their concerns, and lunch sessions where we engaged in conversation. We also organised expert sessions (in collaboration with Standing Together) to explore systemic solutions to tensions. These actions were aimed at restoring trust, discussing differences of opinion and searching for shared values.

We understand that these efforts have not always contributed to the connection we hope to create. The pain and insecurity experienced by our students, staff and protesters cannot be taken away overnight. Nevertheless, we do want to emphasise with this that we at the UvA take responsibility to learn from this situation and invest more in an inclusive and safe campus culture. A place where everyone feels seen and heard, and where space is made for critical voices.

Diversity Document

In 2023, the UvA evaluated the Diversity, Inclusion and Equality (DEI) policy. This evaluation showed that the goals and principles of the Diversity Document 2019 are still current and relevant. At the same time, it highlighted the need to make implementation more concrete, with measurable results and constant attention to progress.

These insights form the basis for further including DEI in the UvA's strategy for the coming years. DEI is a long-term process aimed at promoting culture change. The policy supports initiatives that strengthen diversity, inclusion and equality in research, education and the working climate at the UvA. As CDO, we believe that everyone who is part of the UvA



International mentoring programme

community has a role to play in collectively striving for an environment where diversity is celebrated, and where everyone actively thinks and participates.

Although the CDO does not formally have a policy role, we did play an advisory role in updating the Diversity Note. In doing so, we brought in a strong intersectional perspective.

Mentoring Pathway

In 2024, we formally established the Mentoring Pathway. This programme supports students who are the first in their families to go to university. Often they do not have experiential experts in the family to whom they can turn for advice on university life and experience additional challenges while studying. This programme ensures that these students can make the most of themselves and their studies, and that they quickly feel at home in an academic setting.

The Mentoring Pathway consists of several components:

- Education for high school students during their study choices. This is provided by senior year students. This information mainly focuses on students of colour and students with a first-generation background. During the Bachelor Week and the Open Campus Day, they are informed about the wide range of support offered by the UvA (Get Ready, student advisors, student associations, financing, rooms, study enrichment, student dean, study sessions, etc.).
- Get Ready, a small-scale programme for a soft landing at the UvA. This year, during the fifth edition, over 70 students participated. They received workshops on planning and study success, a lecture by writer Haroon Ali, and tours of their faculties.

- A buddy system, pairing new students with senior students. This is a new initiative that we will roll out in 2025.
- Events during the student's first 100 days to learn as much as possible about the university. During these meetings, various DIG-related topics will be discussed in collaboration with the FDOs. This is another new component; it will be implemented in 2025.
- Meet your Mentor has been running at the UvA since 2020 and is a mentoring programme for Master's students of colour and first-generation students who want to explore suitable careers. Since 2024, Meet your Mentor has been expanded to include an international mentoring programme in English for international Master's students.

Religious observance

As CDO, we are committed to an inclusive university, where both religious and secular needs are respected. The religious observance project is therefore dedicated to providing advice on how the UvA can better deal with religious diversity. In this way, we want to contribute to better policies and available facilities for students and staff with diverse backgrounds.

Important goals of the project are raising awareness and sharing good examples. We did this, among other things, by organising meetings in which experts, students and staff exchanged ideas and worked together.

Get Ready
photographer Bete van Meeuwen



We also encouraged the UvA to continue developing guidelines that strike the right balance between religious freedom, inclusion and a secular university policy. We thought about accessible and flexible facilities that meet the needs of the community.

We take inspiration from other universities. We see that some universities provide separate (Islamic) prayer rooms and in some cases take into account religious holidays of students and staff. We also see room for improvement when it comes to the provision of silence and prayer rooms on campus.

We will start expert meetings in 2025 to determine concrete steps and develop advice that meets the needs of our diverse community.

University Diversity Sounding Board

As CDO, we value the pluralism of insights, experiences and visions in our UvA community. To allow this diversity to play a role in strengthening UvA policy and discuss developments on campus, the CDO established the University Diversity Sounding Board (UDSB) in 2024. The UDSB is a sounding board consisting of around 30 representatives from different communities, departments and faculties. Every six weeks, this group met to discuss current issues around diversity, inclusion and equality (DIG) at the UvA. We will continue these valuable meetings in 2025. As CDO, together with the members of the UDSB, we hope to bring about change within the university in a constructive way.

Religious observance
photographer Sezen Betaubun



In 2024, we talked about important topics, such as adapting the UvA house rules, dealing with religion and secularism on campus, and the importance of inclusive leadership and language use. These conversations provided space to reflect together on what was going on and to look for concrete changes.

An important principle of the UDSB is that all members actively participate and feel involved. This is why we always alternate the chairmanship. This way, everyone gets a chance to contribute themes from their own experience and working environment. Thanks to the diversity of perspectives and the open, constructive atmosphere, we strive to create room for dialogue, critical questions and advice. There are also working groups of involved staff and students who work on specific themes, such as Gaza.

Gender related issues

Within the CDO team, we are actively committed to making gender-related issues visible and addressed at UvA. With this project, we aim to raise awareness, improve policies and support students and staff of all gender identities. We do this in close cooperation with internal partners such as UvA Pride, the Central Student Council (CSR), the Central Works Council (COR), Women in the Faculty of Science (WiF), HR and Academic Affairs (AZ).

In 2024, we campaigned for more gender equality in various ways. For instance, we supported initiatives to raise awareness around gender-neutral toilets. We also gave attention to the influence of (transitional) hormones on work and study and made a case for gender-inclusive communication.

We look at such issues from an intersectional perspective. We strive for lasting change and find it important that there is room for lived experiences and that all communities involved can participate. Among other things, we wanted to highlight transition phenomena and other cycle-related themes. These also came up in conversations with the COR, for example. These are important but often undiscussed topics in the workplace and during studies. They can affect how someone feels, job satisfaction, study success and absenteeism. That is why we continue to draw attention to them.

Collaboration with communities (identity networks)

The UvA knows how important communities of students and staff are for the sense of belonging on campus. These communities are social networks that provide a safe space where students and staff from marginalised groups feel heard and seen. In this way, they ensure that the campus is increasingly inclusive and a place where everyone feels welcome.

In 2024, the CDO's community coordinator started bringing these communities together by organising monthly meetings. The aim was to get to know each other better, exchange experiences and explore common goals on diversity, inclusion and equality together. During

these meetings, we looked together at how to make these communities more effective, visible, intersectional and sustainable for the entire UvA community. We will continue to organise these meetings through 2025 so that we can build a more inclusive campus together.

SignLab

SignLab is a research centre working on applying new techniques for deaf people. It has a unique position in the Netherlands, as the only major research centre in this field.

Accessibility for deaf students and staff is still far from optimal. That is why we had a first introductory meeting with SignLab staff in 2024. In it, we decided to raise awareness of SignLab's work and see how we as CDO can contribute to their positioning within the UvA. This way, we include SignLab as a community in our communication. The collaboration will be further developed in 2025.

Grassroots Fund

Since the CDO's inception, the Grassroots Fund has existed. With this fund, we fund ideas and initiatives that come from the UvA community and not from the board or management. These initiatives are close to the needs of communities and marginalised groups and are important for the inclusiveness of the UvA.

In 2024, we had about €25,000 in our budget to make UvA more inclusive through a variety of projects and activities. Examples of initiatives we supported include:

- Recruiting sign language interpreters for research centre SignLab
- Organising an Asian Movie Night and panel discussion by Greenoffice
- Organising a successful and inclusive Talent Show at Boom Chicago where everyone could showcase their talent.
- Helping LGBTQIA+ students set up the new community Spotlight and join UvA Pride.

Campus Connections Support

The horrific events in Gaza and Israel affect many of us, students and staff, directly or indirectly. The feelings of fear, sadness, anger, grief and despair are recognisable to many members of the UvA community. Previous tragedies, such as the war between Ukraine and Russia and the earthquakes in Turkey, have also shown how important it is to support each other in times of crisis.

This is why, as CDO, we offer Campus Connections Support: (financial) support to develop and implement one-off initiatives. These initiatives explicitly aim to bring different groups together or otherwise contribute to mutual understanding within our diverse community.



photographer Bete van Meeuwen

Patricipatiewet (Participation Act)

Institutions like the UvA are required by law to be accessible to employees with a distance to the labour market, for example due to chronic disability. This may mean offering special support in the workplace.

We as the CDO team are not directly responsible for this, but we do think along. Thus, we have given advice in talks with, among others, the temporarily appointed quartermaster for this group. During these talks, it again became clear that the UvA, like other universities, often supports students with disabilities or chronic conditions better than employees.

It is also noticeable that people with a work-limiting disability are mainly given a place in support services, while the university should also offer space in teaching and research. A disability does not have to mean that someone cannot carry out academic teaching or research. At CDO, we want everyone to be able to apply their talents. We therefore remain committed to an inclusive working environment for all.

External networks

National

National Network of University Diversity Officers (LanDO)

Prior to 2024, Machiel Keestra was already a member of the steering committee of the National Network of University Diversity Officers (LanDO). In 2024, he also became chairman of this network, which consists of the Chief/Central Diversity Officers of the 14 Dutch universities, and some representatives of organisations such as the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, NWO and the KNAW. In this network, expertise and experiences are exchanged, the

CDOs coordinate work where possible and initiate joint projects.

In 2024, they organised an expert meeting on anti-racism in higher education in collaboration with the National Coordinator against Racism and Discrimination. From this came a number of key recommendations. There were also knowledge-sharing sessions and peer review meetings in which they discussed the tensions on campus due to the war in Israel/Palestine. They also worked towards a more formal collaboration with UNL.

International

LERU **(League of European Research Universities)**
Machiel Keestra also participates in the biannual meetings of LERU's EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) Policy Group, a group of 24 European universities. They discuss various topics such as policy advice on European education and/or research policies and they exchange best practices. In 2024, for example, the topics discussed included university tensions, ethical considerations in collaborations with foreign partners, and research evaluations.

EPICUR
EPICUR is a European university alliance that focuses, among other things, on strengthening mobility among European students, on and offline. In 2024, Keestra developed a course on "Diversity Across Boundaries" with the vice president for DIG at the University of Strasbourg. This course will enable students to work with international students (mostly) online. The proposed course has been approved by the EPICUR board and will be launched for the first time in autumn 2025.

University of Birmingham
In 2024 UvA once again organised the annual EDI Festival in collaboration with the University of Birmingham. This year, the theme of the festival was "Make Change Happen". It was both about social change to which universities can contribute and the changes that are also important within universities themselves. Our Central Diversity Officer conducted an online workshop with colleagues on the theme: "Embracing Diversity in Dialogue: Navigating Sensitive Topics in Academic Communities". During this session, he presented and demonstrated the Keti Koti Table dialogue method he co-developed to participants. A video report of the workshop can be found here.

Incoming enquiries
In 2024, people interested in working for equality and inclusion knew how to find CDO better and better. For example, we received interview enquiries, requests for participation in networking and events, and offers for help at our events. In addition, we were actively alerted to grassroots developments. We also received questions from individuals. For example, the mother of a trans student emailed, who was keen to know where the UvA stands on LGBTQIA+ policy. We sent her our previous annual report, after which UvA-Pride and

Spotlight took over the contact. Another example was a situation with a first-generation student who felt unfairly treated during her graduation ceremony. For this, we drafted a letter for the examination committee, explaining the extra challenges this group of students experiences, and asked if this could be taken into account. Although the CDO is not there specifically for individual cases, it always looks at whether a request for help should be seen as a signal that we as UvA can improve equality and inclusion.

Measuring and monitoring of DEI

In early 2024, the results of a joint analysis by six universities, based on CBS figures, were published. This looked at the intake and study success of undergraduate students with and without migration backgrounds.

The analysis showed that the increase in the number of students with Moroccan and Asian backgrounds, among others, is starting to decline. Their share remains below 30%, which is relatively low given the composition of urban populations. They also appear to transfer less into master's programmes than students without a migration background. These figures make it clear that specific attention is needed for the admission and guidance of these student groups.

Although the CDO operates partly behind the scenes, we also try to contribute to change with events and activities on campus. For this, our name recognition within the UvA is important. In 2024, a first measurement was made for this purpose through the UvA Panel. These results showed that more than 60% of employees know us, but among students it is only 20%. It also showed that three-quarters of respondents are positive about the CDO's

Diversity Day
photographer Tengbeh Kamara





Week Again Racism: Visit to *The Black Archives*
photographer Marjon Melissen

contribution to the UvA. Well-known CDO activities include the annual Keti Koti Table, the Meet Your Mentor programme and our involvement in policy development. However, several respondents did indicate that more attention should be paid to more diversity of opinions and viewpoints on campus. By continuing to measure and monitor in 2025, we will continue to learn so that we can build an inclusive university in a focused way.

4. Activities by the Faculty Diversity Officers

In addition to the Central Diversity Officer, there are Faculty Diversity Officers (FDOs). They contribute to policy making at their faculty and they organise activities that contribute to improving diversity, inclusion and equality.

Also in 2024, the CDO team organised monthly consultations with all FDOs in which we discussed a variety of topics together - both current and more structural issues. With these consultations, we try to set common goals and put them on the agenda. For example, we talk about dealing with religion on campus or how to revamp and decolonise the curriculum. It is important that all FDOs are well informed about the issues going on in their faculty, as this not only benefits their students and colleagues, but also helps the work of the CDO.

Each FDO has written its own short contribution of their activities in 2024. In 2025, two Diversity Officers also started working for the Joint Services. With this expansion, that group of staff is now also represented.

ACTA – Oriana van der Sande

Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives
In 2024, ACTA made meaningful progress in fostering a more inclusive and welcoming environment for its students, staff, and academic community.

- **Opening of a contemplation room**: we've opened a contemplation room on the 10th floor, accessible to all students, teachers, and coworkers. The space has been positively received and serves as a quiet and inclusive area for reflection and rest.
- **Gender-neutral facilities (ground floor)**: a gender-neutral facilities were introduced on the ground floor. These include toilets with a separate section for urinals, as well as a gender-neutral changing room designated for students. These improvements aim to ensure that all members of the ACTA community feel safe and respected in our shared spaces.
- **ECHO Awards**: ACTA participated in the 2024 ECHO Awards, which celebrate students from non-Western backgrounds who are contributing to solutions for pressing social issues through higher education. One student's impactful initiative was submitted on behalf of the faculty, reflecting ACTA's support for diverse voices and innovation.
- **Inclusion Calendar**: Throughout the year, the Inclusion Calendar was actively used to raise awareness among students and staff about significant cultural and social events, including Ramadan, Pride, and Keti Koti. This initiative supports a more informed and culturally sensitive community.

Discussions are ongoing regarding the installation of a visible symbol of inclusion—such as a rainbow artwork—within the faculty building. This would represent a permanent and public commitment to diversity.

It is important to note that ACTA experienced a temporary gap in diversity leadership in 2024, following the departure of the diversity officer. A new officer has been appointed in 2025 to continue and expand upon these initiatives.

EB – Siri Boe-Lillegraven

During 2024, our faculty has maintained its focus on diversity in relation to our recruitment and assessment practices. While priorly developed workshop materials and recruitment tools emphasize the relevance of a broad perspective on diversity and inclusion, a more targeted effort has been made regarding gender diversity. Concretely, a working group was formed based on a mandate from the dean. Its aim is to come up with concrete measures that can help the faculty to attract and retain women academics to the tenure track (assistant professor level) and beyond.

In summer 2024, the EB rules for supporting women academic staff who want to breastfeed and/or pump for their baby after returning from leave were clarified and made available in writing. This clarification had been requested by relevant staff members and was deemed necessary mainly to specify the consequences for research versus teaching time.

With regard to the student domain, the faculty decided to finance its third round of student-led diversity projects (prior rounds were in spring 2022 and fall 2023).These projects, scheduled from spring 2025, compensate 4 students to carry out a small project designed to inform the faculty on diversity-related issues from the perspective of students. The faculty has participated in the promotion and evaluation of onboarding and offboarding programs such as Get Ready and Meet Your Mentor.

FdG – Martin Verloop

From the TLC Expertise Group Social Safety - Diversity & Inclusion, several workshops were developed over the past year, focusing on ‘awareness among (medical) teachers and healthcare professionals’. These workshops were successfully held several times and are now structurally included in the professionalisation offer within the faculty. For more information or for cooperation and knowledge exchange with other TLCs on this offer, please contact tlc@amsterdamumc.nl.

FDO Jeanine Suurmond stepped down as FDO in 2024. In January 2025, Martin Verloop started as the new FDO. The FDO is part of the TLC Expertise Group Social Safety - Diversity & Inclusion at the faculty and has appointed two Student Diversity Officers.

FdR – Claudia Santana

The Amsterdam Law School has a continuous commitment to inclusion and equity in education and organisational practices. In 2024, the FdR Diversity Committee, in collaboration with the PPLE Diversity Board sub-committee, focused on driving these objectives through continuous collaboration with educational departments, units, and student bodies and diversity networks.

Some of the 2024 highlights include:

- Human Resources Initiatives: recommendations for inclusive recruitment practices and conducted exit interviews to promote equity in hiring and retention.
- Teacher Trainings for Inclusive Practices: 'Hot Moments' and accessibility trainings
- Student Trainings and Discussions: sessions on allyship, bystander intervention, and inclusive communication, complemented by a series of 'Women in Law panel discussions' to highlight representation).
- First-Generation Student Network: 'De Eerste Generatie' to support and connect first-generation students.

These efforts underscore the committee's dedication to fostering an inclusive and equitable academic community, aiming to deepen collaboration in the coming year.

Meet your Mentor
photographer Bete van Meeuwen



FGw – Kristine Johansson

The stated goal of the Faculty of Humanities Diversity Office (FGw DO) is to embed diversity and inclusion into the culture of the Faculty of Humanities.

In 2024, this work focussed on structural and policy developments alongside the FGw DO's efforts at making diversity and inclusion visible at the faculty. In addition to realising its first volunteer Sounding Board of 30+ staff and students, in 2024 we also created a new 'compensated core' of the Sounding Board: lecturers would receive hours and students financial compensation for their participation in the Sounding Board. Interested colleagues and students had to submit an application to be selected for one of 9 spots; CC members serve for a year. The idea for this 'hybrid' Sounding Board emerged from discussions withing the Sounding Board about how to be both flexible with membership while also being able to rely on a core team of people who want to work on diversity and inclusion. The Sounding Board as a whole was developed to advise the FGw DO team on policy, the FDO's Work Plan, and to propose key focus areas.

The FGw DO also invested in further developing new HR guidelines to embed diversity and inclusion into our recruitment and selection processes. This effort began with guidelines for the NWO PhDs in the Humanities selection process (2023) and preliminary guidelines for the UD selection process (spring 2024). The new guidelines should be in place by summer 2025.

Events
The FDO hosted several events, including:

- A Q& A lunch with Lidwien Poorthuis of LNVH for International Women's Day;
- A faculty Iftar during Ramadan;
- A screening of the series Girls, Girls, Girls, for International Day Against Racism;
- A Black Joy event for Keti Koti;
- Luistersessies for staff and for students to discuss the student protests with Executive Board members from the Faculty and the UvA.

FMG – Barbara Schouten

Within the context of contributing to implementing recommendation 2 of the Diversity Action Plan UvA 2019, i.e. accessibility and study success for all students, I have developed a pilot-program to enhance access to FMG Bachelor courses for undocumented persons, asylum-seekers and refugees. A kick-off meeting to inform relevant stakeholders inside and outside the university has been organized at the start of November 2024 and a working group with internal and external partners has been established that works on developing and implementing this pilot-project. A successful grant proposal has been written to the Amsterdam University Fund which is willing to fund this pilot project (start date Academic year 2025-2026).

In 2024, we've taken the following steps within this pilot programme:

- A kick-off meeting to inform relevant stakeholders inside and outside the university has been organized at the start of November 2024.
- We've established a working group with internal and external partners, that works on developing and implementing this pilot-project.
- We wrote a successful grant proposal to the Amsterdam University Fund which is willing to fund this pilot project (start date Academic year 2025-2026).

I have organized the Get Ready programme at FMG during the Intreeweek on August 26th together with Nishaan Kashai, FMG HR employee. The Get Ready FMG students received a tour on our campus and attended presentations by an Ombudsstudent, a study advisor and a student-assistant working at the Baanbrekers community.

FNWI – Boy Menist

One of our main focuses in 2024 at the FNWI Diversity Office was the topic of neurodiversity. While the university offers several resources for neurodivergent students, we wanted to build more of a community, particularly so we could talk to the neurodivergent students and staff, rather than about them, about what their needs. In this vein, we started the platform AMPA (Alternative Mental and Physical Architecture), specifically for individuals with neurodivergence, chronic illnesses, and disabilities. The kick-off event in October was a huge success, and we are now focused on keeping it alive, both as a community for people to find each other, and as a platform to voice the needs of its members. We also acted -- together with the CDO – as social partners for the project "Normality No More", an interdisciplinary course where students could explore neurodiversity through artistic expression.

Another big success was our contribution to the Pride stand at the end-of-year Flux festival, where we got a lot of participation, particularly because of our temporary Pride tattoos – something to repeat this year for sure!

It has been a pleasure to work in the FDO this past year, and we are looking forward to continuing our work!

5. Finances

The Central Diversity Office will have its finances allocated centrally. In 2024, the flexible budget consisted of about €100,000, which will not grow with increased costs and other changes. Most of this budget goes to staff costs.

To remain sustainable, we as a CDO team continued to look critically at our spending. Part of the budget was used for our own activities, but a large part was also spent on paying for UvA workshops, supporting UvA community initiatives and honouring Grassroots fund applications, among other things.

In recent years, long-term commitments made by the previous Central Diversity Officer have also taken up a large part of our budget. In 2024, we worked to revise some of these agreements so that we could stop some non-essential expenditure. This ensured that we could continue to perform the central and support functions of the CDO.

Following the reorganisation of the CSP in 2024, work will begin in 2025 to develop a more focused and transparent budget. This will help us better allocate our resources and ensure that we can continue to operate efficiently.

Iftar
photographer Sezen Betaubun



6. Communications

Strategic positioning CDO

In 2023, we noticed that the position of the CDO within the UvA was causing confusion among colleagues and students. So in 2024, we started working on our positioning as a team.

In January, we had the UvA panel conduct a survey to understand our brand awareness and support. This will be continued in the coming years. Based on the results and the many lessons of 2023, we have developed a new mission statement (see preface). This aligns with the institutional plan (2021-2026) and the communication programme (2023-2026). In 2025, we will communicate and propagate this statement more widely.

We have also updated our general communication materials. Think of materials for at fairs, open days and other events. We will continue to expand this in 2025 so that we become more and more recognisable within the university.

CDO communication

The CDO has put a lot of effort into communicating around our events in 2024. For example, we sent out a monthly newsletter that now goes to almost 600 people (a growth of about 33% compared to 2023). We also use UvA-wide narrowcasting and link up with other central and faculty communication tools such as newsletters and student and employee websites.

Cooperation Bureau Communicatie and other departments

Collaboration with Bureau Communicatie and other communication colleagues is essential for effective dissemination of our information. Therefore, we joined monthly UvA-wide communication meetings and worked together on a diversity communication plan for 2024-2025. This plan is regularly evaluated so that it remains well aligned with the needs of everyone at the university.

We also support communication around the Diversity Memorandum from the end of 2024, in connection with the departure of the communications colleague who held diversity in the portfolio. In this, we collaborate with colleagues from HR and Academic Affairs. On other themes, we also work closely with colleagues from the Teaching & Learning Centre, Learning & Development and the faculties.

Supporting communities and FDOs

We maintained monthly contact with communities and Faculty Diversity Officers (FDOs). This way, we made sure that we could also properly include their activities in our communications. For example, we made a flyer for the networks with information and contact details. They can use this at open days. They also regularly provided news and input for the CDO newsletter. We will continue this in 2025.

Advice

In 2024, we were readily available for advice on inclusive communication. For example, we conducted a number of workshops for new employees, supplemented information on various employee and student sites, and updated the CDO page. By actively joining various consultations, colleagues also increasingly know how to find us for support. This has led to some 20 advice sessions in formal or less formal settings, including a session during a heath day where all communication heads were present.

Inclusion Calendar

The Inclusion Calendar is a collaboration between the CDO and colleagues in HR. Accessibility is central to this project, which resulted in a physical version that can be printed, an Outlook version that anyone can add to their calendars and a text-to-speech version for staff and students with visual impairments. We received hugely positive feedback from within the organisation, with many enthusiastic emails and tips for improvement. These will all be implemented in the 2025 version.

7. Annual plan 2025

All these activities focus on the following themes (sometimes overlapping): gender, cultural and religious diversity, sexual orientation, disability/chronic conditions (including neurodivergence)/illness, first-generation students and tensions on campus.

We obviously have to consider time and budget when providing such support. We prioritise supporting initiatives that are connective, involve exchange and curiosity, are activist and have relevance. For us, these are core values, which we have developed in our guided sessions in such a way that we can test proposals on them and also help initiators as that critical friend again in increasing their impact.

The breakdown below is work-based. We try as much as possible to seek overlap between activities, programmes and networks so that they reinforce each other as much as possible.

1. **Programmes** – We will continue with programmes that provide long-term support to students and contribute to their sense of belonging within the UvA. Specific target groups are first-generation students and students from marginalised groups, and this may be joined by undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers ihkv Dreamers. In 2025, we work towards bringing these programmes even further into existing university departments, such as Student Services or Alumni Relations. We will continue to play an active role to ensure that the needs of the target groups remain central.
    a. Mentoring Pathway: (join 20 Jan in the afternoon)
        i. Get Ready during the first 100 days
        ii. Meet your Mentor and international mentoring programme
        iii. Buddy system
    b. Grassroots Fund & Campus Connections Support (overlap with the networks)

2. **Advice** – the CDO advises colleagues across the UvA on policy, communication and how the university can respond to community needs. We have a role to play in the following topics and processes, among others:
    a. Religious observance
    b. Gender-related issues
    c. Diversity note and HR policy
    d. Mentoring and counselling of students of colour and first-generation students
    e. Identity networks support
    f. Studying and working with a disability
    g. Educational vision
    h. Inclusive communication

3. **Events** – We organise the following events, whenever possible always in cooperation with relevant students, teachers and networks. In doing so, we also always examine whether an event can be hosted by other departments in the (medium-)long term.
    a. 8 March - International Women's Day
    b. 17-23 March - Week against Racism
    c. 1 July - Keti Koti
    d. 7 October - Diversity Day (deaf culture)
    e. 25 November - Orange the World
    f. 3 December - International Day for People with Disabilities
    g. 14 – 22 December - Hanukkah
    h. Campus connection dinners - monthly living room meetings in Vox-Pop

4. **Community support** – In 2025, we are going to present a strategic plan to further strengthen communities (identity networks) within the UvA that promote diversity and inclusion. The networks consist of identity networks of students and/or employees.
    a. Diversity Sounding Board Group
    b. Making the communities more professional
    c. Work on embedding the communities within the organisation, e.g. by taking them along in giving advice or by linking the networks to relevant colleagues in case of questions or concerns and organising network meetings.
    d. Encourage the communities to jointly set up DIG projects and organise activities around special theme days (ideally together according to intersectional values), such as:
        i. 6 February - Turkey and Syria earthquake commemoration
        ii. 20 March - Iftar
        iii. 15 May - Global Accessibility Awareness Day
        iv. 16 June - Neurodiversity Pride Day
        v. 1 August - Pride Month
        vi. 11 October - Coming Out Day
        vii. 12 December - Purple Friday
        viii. 21 December - Hanukkah

5. **Toolbox** – we offer a number of resources
    a. OBOV workshops
        i. 3 workshops per faculty
        ii. Housed at L&D or other department within the university?
    b. Inclusion calendar

6. **Expertise development and external collaborations** – We continue to develop as a department and seek collaborations with other organisations and universities.
    a. LanDO - National network of university Diversity Officers; UvA = chair
    b. LERU - League of European Research Universities

8. The team



Machiel Keestra
Central Diversity Officer since February 2022 and philosopher at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (FNWI) since 2005.
Works on, among other things: Policy advice | Education and Research | Campus Dialogues | Decolonisation projects | National and International (Diversity) Networks



Soumia Akachar
Policy Advisor on Diversity & Inclusion and Project Manager since October 2023.
Works on: Diversity Document| Religious observance | Contemplation Rooms | Week Against Racism | Diversity Day | Hormone-related Topics | Gender-neutral Toilets



Meltem Halaceli
Student Projects Project Manager and Community Coordinator since 2020.
Handles: UvA communities | Diversity Sounding Board Group | Get Ready | HomeWork Hub | Meet your Mentor| First Generation Fund | Commemoration of Turkey & Syria earthquake 6 February 2023



Marjon Melissen
Communications advisor since October 2023.
Works on: Inclusion Calendar | Annual report | CDO newsletter | Inclusive communication, including B1 language use | Advising UvA colleagues | SignLab | Supporting CDO team



Anna Zanger
Management assistant since February 2024.
Works on: Overall support CDO team



Ibrahim Kamara
Student assistant since July 2024.
Works on: Overall support CDO team

Colofon

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Questions or remarks?
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More information on www.uva.nl/diversiteit.

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