Is the university simply an institution where you come for an education in your chosen field? Is there more to the VU than the courses you follow as a student? What does it mean to be truly engaged with the VU? How can we facilitate and stimulate a broader sense of belonging at the VU? How do we inculcate a sense of VU pride?

These and other questions were elements of an inspiring discussion last Monday in the Griffioen. The Executive Board has the privilege to host and participate in an annual brainstorm meeting with members of the University and faculty student councils on a topic of mutual interest. This year’s edition focused on the topic of student engagement.

Students can be engaged with the VU on many different levels – in interactions with your teachers in individual courses, at the level of your bachelor’s or master’s degree programme, at the faculty level, or at the university level. Why is this important?

I firmly believe that student participation in a broader range of activities, transcending the confines of traditional coursework, contributes immensely towards creating a vibrant academic community at the university. There are a myriad of opportunities; think about involvement in study associations and student social organisations, participation in committees related to your field of study, participation in a faculty or university student council, volunteer work, being a buddy for an international or a refugee student, community service?

How do we inculcate a sense of VU pride?
While the opportunities may be there, the engagement and participation of students is not always assured. For example, last academic year there were no elections for the University student council because there weren’t enough candidates. How do we increase the visibility, and attractiveness, of these opportunities to our student community? We are working together with the University student council on their idea to launch a student job portal, that aims to collate and present a comprehensive list of opportunities for the student community. We hope that this will be a step towards creating a tightly-knit community that is proud to study at, work at, and give back to, the VU. There are other questions. How do we ensure that staff engagement with the VU serves as a role model for students? This requires adequate recognition of the efforts of our staff, in the context of academic service, and we’ll address this further in the coming months.

Source URL: http://www.advalvas.vu.nl/blog-item/engaged-students