Diversity Activities at VU Amsterdam

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Goals

The goals of current VU-CS diversity related activities are to

1. Promote an open and inclusive environment **for students**
   a. Student-to-student interaction
   b. Student-to-staff interaction
   c. Engage them as a valuable member of the department

2. Build a habit of keeping diversity in the conversation
   a. Mailing list updates
   b. Updates to the department head
   c. Department-wide initiatives for policy-related issues

3. Coordinate IPN-EDI initiatives to the department-wide policies and student experience

What are we up to? - Part 1/3
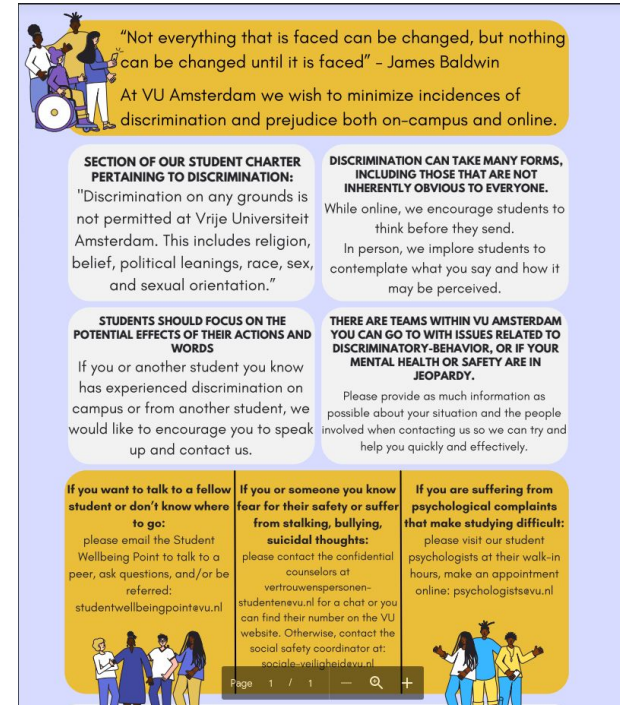
Putting diversity on the agenda

- Monthly VU-CS diversity meeting
  - 3rd Monday of the month, lunch meeting 12-1pm
  - Since September 2021
- Steminism student group
- Setting up a dedicated email address
  - diversity.beta.cs@vu.nl
  - Important for building an institutional memory
- Close interaction with student groups and associations
  - Faculty, study advisors, and students all welcome
  - Identify challenges, work plan and solve them

What are we up to? - Part 2/3

Generating and cataloging resources

- TA charter - proper training and expectation management
- Student charter for student-student interaction
- Information about social welfare
  - Invite counsellors to the meeting
- Diversity slides for _all_ classes (like *plagiarism*)
  - https://tinyurl.com/cs-diversity-slide
- Micro-aggregation help
  - *A big challenge*

Proper dissemination of information!

What are we up to? - Part 3/3

Outreach

- Hackathon, invited talks

- Department-wide surveys
  - Learn from other successful initiatives
  - Setup short, medium, and long term goals
  - Keeping us in the loop

- Mentoring program
  - Talk to the faculty or industry
  - Goal: Bsc students continue to a MSc, MSc to a PhD, and PhD to an academic career!
  - Encourage female students to take leadership roles like TA work

A large 'discovery' experiment: Gender Initiative for Excellence (Genie) at Chalmers University of Technology

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Sweden tops gender equality rankings, but Swedish academia is still lacking women in top positions. To address gender inequality in its faculty, Chalmers University of Technology has invested 300 million SEK (30 million Euros) over 10 years in Gender initiative for Excellence (Genie). Genie aims to increase the university's success and excellence via gender equality efforts. In this editorial, we want to share insights on explicit efforts during Genie's first 2.5 years with the goal to inspire and advise other universities and researchers.

Why?

Female researchers in academia still experience unconscious bias and sometimes even harassments that hamper their careers (Kamerlin and Wittung-Stafshede, 2020). Many scientific studies demonstrate bias against women in academia when it comes to for example funding (Wenneras & Wold, 1997; Johnson and Kirk, 2020), publications (Day et al., 2020) and hiring (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012) although it has also been shown that more diversity leads to greater scientific success (Nielsen et al., 2017; Hofstra et al., 2020) and a better working environment, for both men and women (Freeman and Huang, 2014; AlShebli et al., 2018). Sweden is one of the world's most gender equal countries, but the fraction female professors at Swedish universities remains low, like in most of the world. At Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden, 17% of the professors were female in 2018, which was (and still is) the lowest fraction among Swedish universities (in 2018 the average was 29% females among professors at Swedish universities; Statistics Sweden www.scb.se). Realising this as a hindrance to success in the future, in part actualised by the 2017 #MeToo movement, Chalmers decided in 2018 to increase the proportion of women among its faculty through an initiative named Gender Initiative for Excellence or Genie for short. Genie is funded by the Chalmers Foundation (https://www.chalmers.se/en/foundation) with 300 million SEK (30 million Euros) over 10 years and was launched on 1 January 2019. As far as we know, this is the largest individual investment in gender equality made by any university in the world and thus, everything we learn, may be of interest to others. Nonetheless, there are many other efforts out there to learn from and we want to specifically highlight the ADVANCE institutional transformational grants funded by NSF in the United States (https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5383) and the Athena SWAN accreditation programme in the UK (https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan-charter).

What?

Compared to other gender equality initiatives, Genie stands out in that it is well-funded, long term, spans the whole university, and is led by faculty. Pernilla Wittung-Stafshede leads this

Challenges *(my impression)*

- Support for diversity is still considered "good to have", not "must have"
  - Need dedicated resources - priority responses!
  - Must prioritize from general academic goals and processes

- Everyone is overworked, and asking for volunteering feels wrong
  - Coordination is hard, mostly volunteer work
  - Students are helping us out

- Needs push from the top (IPN) and bottom (students)
  - Define small, but achievable goals

Alice and Eve
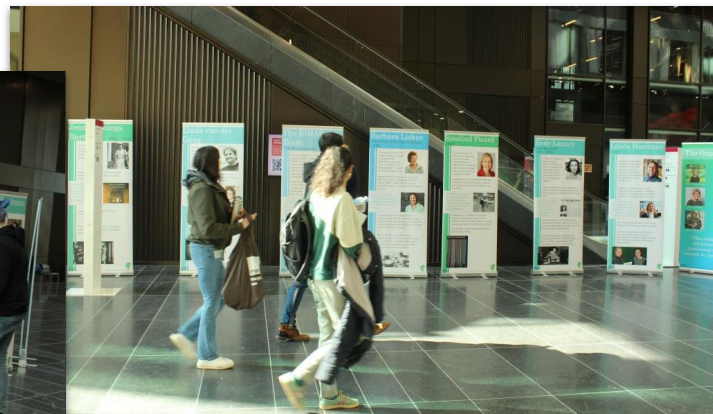
Alice and Eve
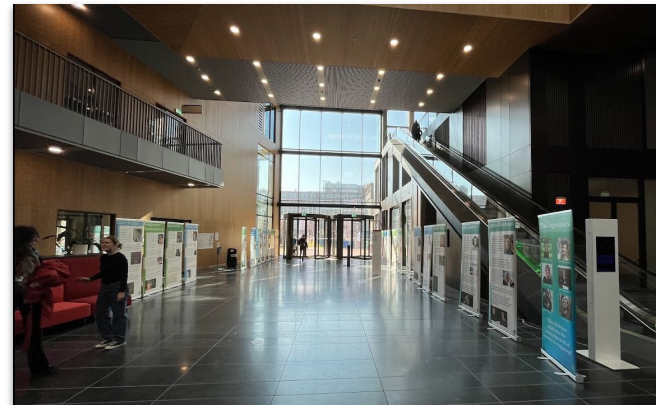
Dear students,

I just wanted to bring to your attention that there is an exhibition in the NU building this week about a number of famous female computer scientists and their contributions to the field. I visited the exhibition this morning and found it very interesting. Some of the women I knew and some of them I had not heard of before, some of them were/are also active in the field of bioinformatics. If you happen to be on campus this week (or are looking for a reason to visit the campus this week) I highly recommend visiting it. Some more information on the exhibition can be found below.

Kind regards,

Daniël