



## **University College Utrecht Liberal Arts Vision Statement A Holistic Approach to Undergraduate Education**

**PURPOSE OF WHAT WE DO.** The University College Utrecht approach to undergraduate education draws inspiration from the ancient liberal arts ideal characterized by the Aristotelian notion of learning as freeing us to apply ourselves to a greater purpose than ourselves. Liberal arts students ideally are freed through their open curriculum and close community to live out the awesome opportunity to discover the world and their role in it. Our college offers them a time and a place for this kind of exploration.

**WHO WE ARE.** At University College Utrecht we find a community of students and teachers who are lovers of learning and passionate in their curiosity. All are interested in many fields of knowledge. All enthusiastically share their discoveries with one another, raising important questions while attempting new solutions to old problems. We challenge students to make a commitment to their own learning, and to invest in developing their individual intellectual abilities and interests to the fullest. By reading texts carefully and by listening attentively to each other, students learn to express themselves thoughtfully, both verbally and in writing. Sharply developed thinking skills go hand-in-hand with critical self-reflection and an eagerness to understand the positions of others. In this way each student comes to discern for him or herself which intellectual and personal aims are truly worth pursuing.

**WHAT WE TEACH.** At University College Utrecht, students can follow their intellectual pursuits in whichever direction it may take them. Each student defines his or her own unique curriculum. The academic disciplines form the foundation: students learn about different approaches to knowledge by solid instruction in the methods and techniques of multiple disciplines offered in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The college in its programming also encourages students to deal with issues from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, especially in the third year.

**HOW WE DO IT.** Our beautiful campus fosters a tight-knit community. Students' residential life affords us to make the most of informal as well as formal modes of learning as extra-curricular activities (such as theatre, political debates, or community engagement projects) spill over into our classrooms, and vice versa. We are firmly committed to expanding socio-economic, ethnic and philosophical-religious diversity, amongst students as well as faculty, so that we remain optimally open to many viewpoints. We also strive to activate students' sense of responsibility through civic engagement.

This holistic approach to learning emphasizes personal as well as intellectual development, and our tutors (all of whom also teach) have the time to help students forge their own ideas about linking their passions with the needs of society. Tutors truly share in the joys and pains that mark these individual trajectories. Last but not least, gifted teachers who are dedicated to the small-

scale and interactive learning environment characterize the college. Relatively unconstrained by the narrower demands of research faculties, they can think about new ways of teaching that facilitate exploration and discovery both in and out of the classroom. In all of this, the pleasure experienced in learning together is never far away: it is this spirited joy that binds us together and that most visitors to our campus are quick to notice.

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE. Liberal learning at University College Utrecht is about preparing students for an open and fast-changing future rather than for a particular profession. The qualities fostered at the college not only enable personal growth and professional advancement, but also prepare our students to fulfill their role as citizens, enabling them to serve others in a range of different roles. We believe that life-long joy in learning, alongside a shared commitment to open-mindedness and the ability to access knowledge and use it wisely can be empowering in the face of ignorance and fear. We hope to cultivate alumni whose heads, hearts and hands are prepared to take a leading role for the good in a world that has great need of their talents and insights.