



university of
 groningen

campus fryslân

Leeuwarden, Fryslân
05 September 2024

Dear students, staff, partners & friends of Campus Fryslân,

It is wonderful to see so many of you here today, as this moment marks the start of a new academic year. This is a time of excitement for both new and returning students, staff, and everyone in our inspiring community.

It has become a tradition for members of the Faculty Council to address the audience during the opening of the academic year. Today, Amaranta and I are here representing Campus Fryslân's Faculty Council in our roles as chair and vice-chair.

As elected members of the Faculty Council, we represent students and staff in the governance of our faculty. The Faculty Council plays an essential role in guiding and advising on key issues such as educational programmes, budgets, social safety, research, and policies that shape our faculty. We ensure that your voices—those of students & staff—are heard, fostering a faculty that is inclusive, transparent, and responsive to our shared needs. This is especially important because there is something truly unique about our Campus. Together, we share a vision - a vision where the world unites to work towards a sustainable, livable, and just society—one that effectively addresses the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Before we move forward with our speech, we'd like to take a moment to express our deep gratitude to last year's Faculty Council - student faction team. Luisa, Anna & Johan navigated challenges, fostered growth, and made lasting contributions to Campus Fryslân. Their hard work, commitment, and dedication laid the groundwork for many of the initiatives we will continue to build on this year. Please join us in a round of applause to thank them for their dedication. [Pause for applause.]

Now, it's our pleasure to introduce this year's Faculty Council. Amaranta, Arianna & Maeve will continue their work as the staff faction, and we have new members representing students: Efe, PhD staff; Charlotte, GRL student and myself; Leo, GRL student as well. As Faculty Council, we encourage everyone to get involved in the participation and governance of our faculty, whether through staff and student forums, committees, or direct conversations with us. It's through these engagements that we can ensure your voice is truly represented.

Thank you, Leo. Now, I would like to zoom in on our community, who we are and the challenges and opportunities we will face this academic year from the perspective of the Faculty Council.

Some of the great strengths of Campus Fryslân lie in its sense of community, societal impact, diversity, sustainability and innovation. I remember Halim, a former member of the Faculty Council, who compared our campus to a mosaic — a beautiful blend of unique individuals, each contributing their perspective, experience, energy and background. This diversity makes our campus vibrant, activist, dynamic and forward-thinking. It drives our passion for change, justice and innovation, but it also brings with it challenges that we must address together.

We cannot fully nurture and grow these strengths nor advance the development of our faculty without fostering understanding, transparency, justice, acceptance, and a shared sense of equity. By its very nature, diversity challenges us to work through differences and find common ground.

To navigate these challenges and ensure the continued growth and enrichment of our faculty, we must collaborate to find solutions that positively impact our staff and student communities. It is through collective effort that we can foster a campus environment that thrives on inclusion, innovation, and shared responsibility. As Faculty Council, we remain committed to leading and supporting this collective effort.

Another significant challenge we will face this academic year is the evolving landscape of Dutch academia. We begin this year amidst considerable uncertainty, with the future of higher education under threat with proposed budget cuts, penalisation fees, reductions in student funding, and the looming "Internationalisation in Balance" bill. These developments threaten our ability to conduct meaningful research, provide quality education, and protect the well-being of students and staff.

Now, more than ever, we need to mobilise as a community. We must stand together, board, staff and students, to advocate for the future of higher education, ensuring that the values and beliefs we uphold at Campus Fryslân are protected. In this challenging environment, our campus has a unique opportunity to showcase our multifaceted identity: our strong regional ties to Fryslân, our contributions at the national level, and our international outlook. It is this blend of local, national, and international perspectives that is important for fostering education, research & societal impact.

As we embark on this new academic year, we invite you to embrace every opportunity that comes your way. Engage with one another, share your ideas, remain critical and collaborate in ways that challenge and inspire you. Let's ensure that the values we hold dear in our community remain at the heart of everything we do.

On behalf of the Faculty Council, we wish you all an inspiring, productive, and enriching academic year.

Welcome to Campus Fryslân, and welcome to the academic year 2024-2025!