Policy plan board Dondrite 2017-2018

Introduction

Dear member of Dondrite,

In front of you lies the document containing the goals of the board of Dondrite for the year 2017-2018. These goals are partially based on the Dondrite policy plan which conveys the main reasons for Dondrite’s existence. These are long term goals that will always be worked towards. Each individual board can come up with subgoals and prioritise them as they see fit at the time. In this document you can find the goals for 2017-2018. They are made with the help of the previous board as well. The goals are structured in such a way that first the main goal is mentioned, followed by the way the board plans on achieving this goal. For each goal, an explanation of why this goal has been chosen will be given. Should you have any suggestions on how to improve the study association further, don’t hesitate to let us know either personally or via email.

Best,

Emma, Rowan, Tineke, Tristan and Marlies

Visibility

Goal:

To increase visibility of Dondrite and its committees towards students of the Master Cognitive Neuroscience.

Justification:

Being visible to both the members and the outside world is key, especially for a young association like Dondrite, in order to keep a sufficient amount of members and to keep its members well informed.

How to achieve:

To achieve an increased visibility we would like to do the following things:

* Build and improve a website for the study association. This website will contain information about what a study association is and will contain information about activities and membership. After the website is finished it will, if necessary, further be improved based on comments of members.
* Order t-shirts for both committee and board members and provide them for free to the board and committee members. Regular members can also buy these t-shirts. Firstly, the committees will be clearly recognisable during the activities they organise so that people that attend the activity know who to get to when there is a problem. Second, it will make it easier for other members to see who are part of the committees and will make it easier for new members to ask if they can join in as well. Third, the board will become more recognisable and is easier to find and approach in case problems occur. And finally the whole society will become more known and visible because also regular members will wear these t-shirts.
* Offer a free trial membership of one month. During this month new students can try out whether they want to become a member of Dondrite or not. The trial membership will start with an introductory afternoon during the introduction of the Cognitive Neuroscience Master. During this introduction, mentor groups will be formed (more information about the mentor groups can be found under the goal ‘cohesion and integration). The first month of the academic year there will be several activities which are open to everybody, so you do not have to be a member in order to be able to attend these activities yet. Additionally, during these first activities several activities will be hosted for the mentor groups, so that you can get to know your mentor group better. After the first month new students can then decide whether they want to become a member of Dondrite or not.

Cohesion and Integration

Goal:

To increase the cohesion between the different members of Dondrite and to promote the integration of international members within the Dutch system and within Dondrite. Moreover, we want to keep the second years still involved in Dondrite even though they are busier with the internship that year.

Justification:

It has become clear that other countries sometimes work with different organizational systems than the Netherlands and that it can be the case that part of the new students are unfamiliar with the concept of an association. We want to make sure that everybody is well informed about what a study association does and how it works so that the association can function properly and in order for all members to feel welcome. We hope that providing more information will make new students see the perks of being a member. Furthermore, we hope that due to this more students will become members and will get to know each other better, which will hopefully improve the cohesion within Dondrite and within the Masters. Finally we hope that by providing enough information and being open, the number of international (active) members will increase.
Also we have noticed that for second years students it is harder to stay involved in Dondrite due to the obligatory research project. This projects takes a lot of time and therefore it might be harder for second years to attend activities. By organising events that can fit into the schedule of the second years, we hope to keep more second year students involved.

How to achieve:

* A welcome letter will be send to all new students before the introduction in both September as well as in February. This letter will also include a paragraph about how an association and its committees function and work and about what a study association does. This letter will be sent to all committees so that a diverse group of people can read the letter in advance in order to improve it and make it understandable to everybody.
* A page of the website will be dedicated to explaining what an association is and what it does. An explanation will be given here about what it means to be a member. This website will be included in the welcome letter and we hope that people will already read it before starting the masters.
* Organising a mentoring program during the introduction. During the next introduction, the new students will be separated in groups of +/- 10 people. We give each group at least one mentor, which are current students. It would be best if the mentors are from different tracks and different nationalities. These mentor groups are a platform for new students to ask questions. The groups will be stimulated to come to Dondrite events together. This way, the second and first years are mingled, the tracks are mingled and everyone has more reasons to come to Dondrite events. Furthermore, international mentors could help new international students with getting used to the Netherlands and with the system in the Netherlands.
* Organise smaller events and dinners in order to keep second years more involved. Repeated inquiry tells us that second year students still like Dondrite, but that they simply don’t have the time for many big activities. To tailor to their wishes, we want to organise smaller activities that you don’t have to sign up for, like a monthly lunch on campus. It would also be nice to regularly have dinner before or after an activity, so busy people can opt to only join the dinner.

Committees

Goal:
Improve contact with and functioning of committees and elaborate the offer of committees.

Justification:

This year, the board has written the monthly news-letter called the ‘Dondrite News’. Even though this was a lot of fun, it also took a lot of time. Furthermore, we wanted to provide Dondrite members with a lasting memory of their time in the CNS Master by starting making a yearbook. Since both of these activities are related to writing, we thought it was nice to start a new committee called the scribe committee (working title). This committee will be very different from the other committees we have got so far (travel committee, activity committee, synapsium committee and education committee) and we therefore think this will be a worthy addition to Dondrite.

Also it has become apparent during the discussion session and general meeting that current committee members would like to get to know each other better. We think that it would be nice if Dondrite can create activities where the committee members can get to know each other better, so that collaboration between the committees can be improved.

How to achieve:

* Start a new committee called the scribe committee. This committee will have two main objectives; The first is taking over the Dondrite News. This monthly newsletter is useful and widely appreciated, but it also takes the board quite a lot of time next to their other duties. We would therefore like a committee to take this on.
Secondly starting a yearbook. As a lasting reminder of our great time as Dondrites, it would be very nice to have a yearbook. This would feature photos and descriptions of the people graduating and other reports of what we’ve been doing. The scribe committee would be in charge of setting this up.
* Organise at least two activities to which only committee members are invited. These activities will hopefully form a platform for committees to share ideas and help each other. Also, due to these activities more committee members will know who are in other committees. This will make it easier to get in touch outside these organised activities when there are any problems. It would also be nice if committees would organise some activities together due to the fact that they know each other better. To stay up to date on each others activities, we will also hold an active members meeting twice per semester with all committees and the board.

Transparency and participation of members

Goal:

Increase transparency of the board towards members and increase participation of members regarding the association and the decisions made.

Justification:

At previous general meetings it has become apparent that members would like to see more of what the board does and would want more insight in decision processes. As a board we want to encourage the members of Dondrite to get more involved in the associations and in important decisions.

How to achieve:

* Make the meeting minutes of board meetings public. We will provide a google docs link to all members in the beginning of the year through which the meeting minutes can be accessed. These minutes will be censured when necessary to maintain anonymity of members. In this way the members can get a better insight in what the board is up to at the moment and members can help and contact the board when they have got ideas or remarks based on the minutes. We hope that the members will make use of this in order to be able to join in the decision making processes early on.
* Make a feedback form on the website. We will upload a form on the website where members can always send their suggestions, feedback, comments and tips. It can be found under the ‘contact’ section on the website.
* Have a contact moment with the board every month. The board will have a monthly open hour before or after a board meeting. Here important matters can be discussed between members and the board. If necessary members can also join on board meetings to discuss specific matters.