

Congress  
Comhdháil AMLÉ



Union of Students in Ireland  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

# CONGRESS 2014

31 MARCH - 3 APRIL

# COMHDHÁIL AMLÉ 2014

31 MARTA - 3 AIBREÁN

SHERATON HOTEL  
ATHLONE, CO. WESTMEATH

SHERATON ÓSTÁN, BAILE ÁTHA LUAIN, CO. IARMHÍ

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# WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT OF USI JOE O'CONNOR



A chairde,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 54th Annual USI Congress.

Every delegate attending Congress is representing over 1,000 of our 354,000 members across this island. This is an enormous honour for each and every one of you, and I would encourage you to utilise this opportunity to its fullest.

Get involved in debate, learn from the ideas and experiences of others, and be inspired to use this week as a vehicle to make a difference.

This is a time of great difficulty and challenge for Irish students and Ireland as a whole.

A perfect storm of increasing fees, dwindling student supports, a saturated part-time employment market and reduced parental supports due to the wider impact of the recession is upon us. This means many of our members are either forced to survive in poverty or drop out prior to completing their studies.

The Higher Education system is at breaking point, attempting to deal with increasing student numbers and scarcer resources, whilst trying to maintain quality and academic standards.

We are facing a crisis as to how we fund Higher Education in Ireland, and a crossroads as to whether we view it as a public good or a private commodity. The biggest policy decision in two decades is upon us, and an enormous battle which we must be on the right side of.

Equity of access to Higher Education can only be delivered through a system devoid of financial barriers and commercial influence. It is up to us to make the economic, societal and ideological arguments that engage public opinion and convince decision-makers.

Many young people leave college to find the dole queue, precarious and devaluing work brought about by a rampant internship culture, or in many cases forced emigration, as their only options.

Out LGBTQ brothers and sisters continue to be treated as second-class citizens, and we owe it to them to mobilise in full force at the ballot boxes to ensure everyone in Ireland has the right to marry the person they love.

This is our country, and it is up to us to play our part in bringing about an economic recovery based on sustainable and equitable prosperity. We must now demand the society which we wish to live in, one which cherishes fairness for all above excess for some.

USI has been to the fore since 1959 in driving social change. We believe in opportunities for all of our members, in gaining access to the education they deserve, in having a rewarding and fulfilling college experience, and in meeting their future ambitions in Ireland.

Our fight is to break down the barriers that exist in our society that deprive some of their right to these opportunities.

USI is about much more than the national representatives you will be electing this week. USI is each and every one of you, and the students you represent from 27 different colleges North and South of the border.

It is our job to implement the policies, run the campaigns and deliver the results that you want to see. It is your job to drive us, assist us, and challenge us along the way. That is how a vibrant student movement can work, and has always worked.

You must set the agenda over the next few days. With collective vision and shared responsibility, I have no doubt that we will succeed in bringing about the changes and in addressing the challenges that are important to our members. We cannot wait for anyone else to do it for us.

The future direction of the student movement is in your hands. Shape it.

On behalf of my USI Officer Board team, I am proud to bring you Congress 2014.

**“Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal”** - Vince Lombardi

Beir bua,

*Joe O'Connor*

President

# HOTEL MAP

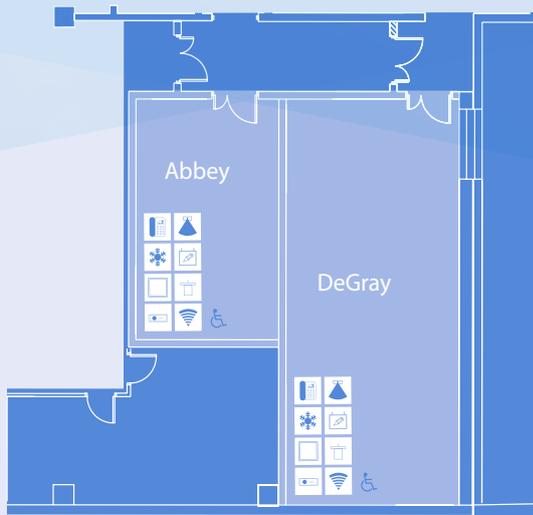
## Sheraton Athlone Hotel

Gleeson Street, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

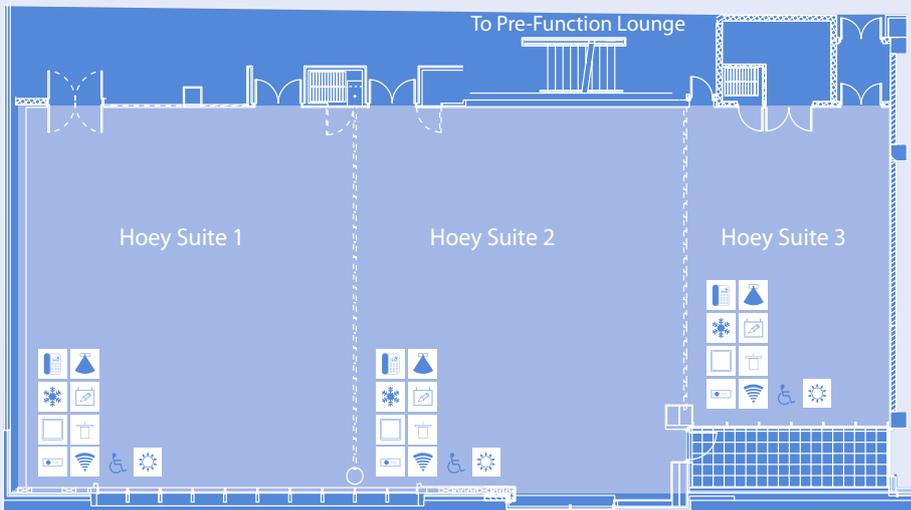
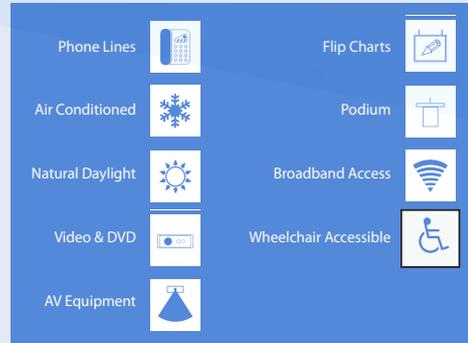
T. 090 6451000 F. 090 6451001

reservations@sheratonathlonehotel.com

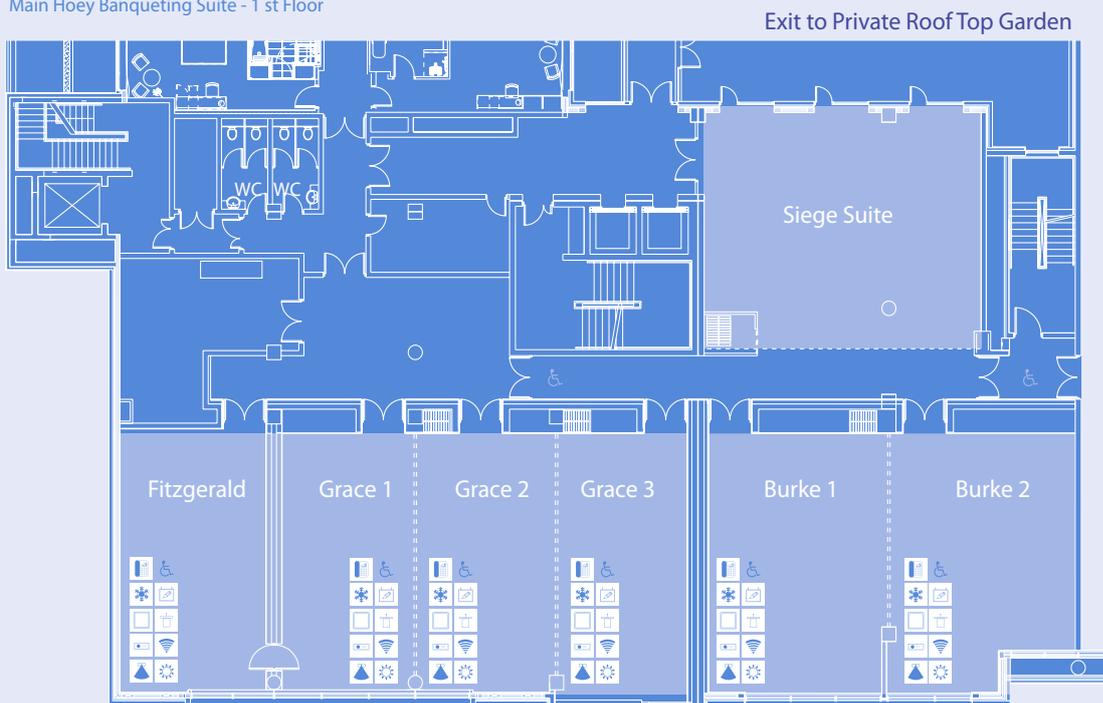
www.sheratonathlonehotel.com



Abbey & DeGray Suites - Lower Ground Floor



Main Hoey Banqueting Suite - 1st Floor



Main Conference Suites - 2nd Floor

# WELCOME FROM CONGRESS DIRECTOR



**On behalf of the staff of USI, allow me to be the ninth person to welcome you to Athlone's fabulous Sheraton Hotel and Congress 2014. I'm Ben Archibald, the General Manager of USI and USI Congress Director.**

My team of staff works for you - we work to guarantee your safety and security and the smooth logistical running of the Congress. We liaise on your behalf with the hotel and the committees of USI in order to ensure that the practical stuff like food and bedrooms are up to standard, that the technical parts of the Congress happen on time and everybody is comfortable.

Basically, our job is to make sure everything else gets out of the way for you, the Steering Committee and the Officer Board to get on with the much more important job of deciding the policy and future of the Student Movement.

I am your liaison with the hotel. If you have an issue, please come to me with it so we can resolve it quickly. We know from experience this works much more efficiently than direct discussion with the hotel. Please feel free to also inform your delegation leader or a member of USI Officer Board of any problems.

Finally, and most importantly, safety. Safety is our number one priority. I'll say a few words at the start of Congress about this most important matter, but between now and then, please find the Safety Statement for Delegates in the Clár and study it. We'll require everyone to follow these basic rules.

If you become aware of any situation which could make you or another delegate unsafe, please do not hesitate to contact me immediately to resolve it. The sooner you contact me, the sooner we'll get it fixed.

Have a great congress.

*Ben Archibald*

Congress Director

**Emergency Reporting Line:**

**083 146 2353**



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# STEERING COMMITTEE & ELECTIONS SUB-COMMITTEE



# WELCOME FROM CHAIR OF STEERING AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

A chairde,

**Ba mhaith liom ar son an Choiste Stiúrtha an deis seo a thapú le hi a rá libh agus cur síos beag a dhéanamh ar an ról atá againn ag Comhdháil AMLÉ. Beimid ag déanamh cathaoirleacht ar na seisiúin plé a bheidh ag dul ar aghaidh sa chéad chúpla lá eile. Ní mic léinn reatha muid ach tá muid tar éis a bheith mar bhaill den Aontas cheana féin agus bhí an chuid is mó againn mar oifigigh le hAMLÉ. Níl gach rud ar eolas ag aon bhall amháin den Choiste, ach eadrainn mar choiste, beimid in ann aon cheist a bhaineann leis an gComhdháil a fhreagairt.**

Táimid ag súil le díospóireacht bhreá i rith na Comhdhála agus ba mhaith linn iarraidh ar gach teachta meas a bheith agaibh ar a chéile. Molaimid gur chóir do gach teachta a bheith gníomhach sa phlé. Is cinnte go mbíonn sé deacair labhairt don chéad uair ach chomh luath is a bristear an leac oighir beidh sé deacair gan dul ar ais go dtí an póidiam arís is arís eile!

Beimid ag coinneáil súil ar na cainteoirí ar fad agus beidh cúpla gradam le bronnadh againn ar an oíche dheireanach le haitheantas a thabhairt do theachtaí áirithe a sheasann amach thar thréimhse na Comhdhála.

Ag súil le caint libh i rith na Comhdhála,

**On behalf of Steering Committee I would like to take this opportunity to say hi and to give you some info on the role we will play at USI Congress. We will be chairing the sessions that will be taking place over the next few days. We are not current students but we have been members of the Union in the past and the majority of us have also been USI Officers. No one member of the Committee knows everything, but as a committee, we will be able to answer any question with regard to the Congress.**

We are looking forward to good debating during the Congress and we would ask every delegate to respect all other delegates. We recommend to all delegates to take part in the debate. It's not the easiest thing in the world to speak for the first time on Congress floor but as soon as you break the ice you'll find it hard not to go back up to the podium again and again.

We will be keeping an eye on all speakers and we will present a number of awards on the last night to recognise some delegates who stand out for the duration of Congress.

Looking forward to talking to you during Congress,

*Julian de Spáinn,*

Cathaoirleach.

# WELCOME FROM ELECTIONS SUB-COMMITTEE



**Elections Sub-Committee is comprised of Colm Murphy, Layne Aston, Scott Ahearn and myself. Our function is to ensure that you can have confidence that both the polling and the counting of ballots are conducted in an independent, impartial and accurate manner. To that end Delegate Leaders have been advised on a number of occasions to ensure that each delegate has their Student Card upon their person during polling. Each delegate's identity is verified upon registration and during polling there will be random spot checks on Student Cards to verify identification and student status.**

Following the close of polling Elections Sub-Committee with the assistance of USI HQ will ensure that the ballot box is securely stored until the counting of the ballots. At the election count a representative from each candidate (or the candidate themselves) may be present but subject strictly to their covenant not to release any results prematurely. Your cooperation in these respects will ensure an efficient election process.

We hope that you have a productive and enjoyable Annual Congress.

*Richard Hammond*

USI Returning Officer and Chair of Elections Sub-Committee

# STEERING & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE



## Aodhán Ó Deá

Bhí Aodhán mar Uachtarán agus Oifigeach Gaeilge i gColáiste na hOllscoile Bhaile Átha Cliath. Chuir sé spéis san Aontas ar dtús chun an Gaeilge a chur chun cinn agus dimigh sé ar aghaidh le bheith mar Oifigeach Gaeilge le AMLÉ ar feadh dhá bhliain idir 2009-2011. Bhain sé céim amach sa Gnó agus Dlí ó COBÁC ach bhí a paisean sa Ghaeilge i gcónaí agus ina dhiadh dó críochnú san Ollscoil lean sé ar aghaidh ag obair leis an Ghaeilge. Bíonn Aodhán ar an mbóthar gach lá ag labhairt le daoine óga ó scoileanna agus coláistí tríú leibhéal faoin teanga. Is breá leis ag labhairt le daoine- bíodh comhrá agat leis! Aodhán was President and Irish Language Officer of UCD Students' Union. He originally got involved in the Union to help promote the Irish language and he eventually went on to be Irish Language Officer for USI for two years between 2009 -2011. He graduated with Business and Law from UCD but his passion was always for the language and after graduating he went on working to promote the language.

Aodhán works on the road everyday talking to young people in schools and colleges, promoting the Irish the language. He loves a good chat so pop over and say hello!



## Colm Murphy

Colm Murphy is a former USI Deputy President (11/12) and USI Education Officer (10/11). Prior to serving on the USI Officer board Colm was the Education Officer in Waterford Institute of Technology Students' Union. After leaving USI, Colm worked as a manager and then a recruiter for the Washington Ireland Program for Service and Leadership and is now the Student Services Officer for the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. Please feel free to ask Colm any questions.



## Chris Newell

Chris Newell is a former officer and staff member of USI. His first involvement in student politics was as Vice President in NUI Galway Students' Union. He proudly served two terms as USI Western Area Officer and returned to the national union as General Manager several years later. He is currently employed as General Manager in NUI Galway Students' Union. Chris is also a member of USI Finance Committee and Bord Stiúrtha Sheachtain na Gaeilge.



## Layne Aston

Layne Aston is a former IT Tallaght student who was involved in ITTSU from early in 1st year. She served as Welfare Officer and President in Tallaght and went on to become Welfare Officer in USI where she was instrumental in setting up SHAG week. Layne has served as a board member of the IFPA and as a member of USI Steering Committee for many years. Layne has worked for the ISPC and Rehab Group and is currently working for the Citizens Information Service. Please feel free to approach Layne with any queries.



## **Julian de Spáinn**

### **Cathaoirleach Coiste Stiúrtha agus Comhairle Náisiúnta AMLÉ**

Is iar-mhac léinn agus iar-oifigeach lánaimseartha é Julian le hOllscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh. Is céimí é chomh maith de ITGME agus OCBÁC (agus bhí se ina sheanadóir in IT Tamhlacht). D'fhreastail sé ar 4 Bord Oifigeach AMLÉ mar Oifigeach na Gaeilge, Leasuachtarán/Oifigeach na bhFeachtas agus Uachtarán.

Tá Julian mar Ard-Rúnaí le Conradh na Gaeilge ó 2005 agus baineann sé úsáid as a thaithí ó fheachtais AMLÉ le húsáid na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn, stocaireacht a dhéanamh uirthi agus le daoine a mhealladh len í a úsáid.

Ná bíodh drogall ort ceist a chur air maidir leis an gComhdháil as Gaeilge, as Béarla nó Gearmáinis!

Julian is a former NUI, Galway student and sabbatical. He also is a graduate of GMIT and DCU (and was also an IT Tallaght senator). He served on 4 USI Officer Boards as Oifigeach na Gaeilge, Deputy President/Campaigns Officer and President.

Julian is the General Secretary of Conradh na Gaeilge since 2005 and uses his campaign experience from student involvement to promote, lobby and encourage the use of the Irish language.

Feel free to ask him about the running of Congress in Irish, English or German!



## **Richard Hammond**

Richard Hammond was formerly President of the U.C.C. Societies' Guild, Southern Area Officer of USI, and President of USI. He is currently a solicitor in practice at Mallow, County Cork with Hammond Good Solicitors. Richard is member of the Associate Faculty at the Law School of the Law Society of Ireland and is a Council Member of both the Southern Law Association and the Law Society of Ireland. He is also qualified as an Arbitrator, a Trust & Estate Practitioner, a Mediator, and a European Trademark & Design Attorney. He is married to Joyce with whom he has one child.



## **Cathy Pembroke**

Cathy Pembroke is a graduate from Waterford Institute of Technology and served a total of three years in WIT Students' Union as a Deputy President for Education and then two years as President.

Following this, Cathy also proudly served one year as USI Southern Area Officer. Cathy now works in WIT Clubs and Societies Office where she coordinates and runs the Institute Sport Scholarship Programme and assists with the development of Clubs and Societies life on campus. Cathy is also the current Chairperson for WIT Students' Union Class Council. Please feel free to approach Cathy and ask her any questions or talk to her about sports, especially rugby!



## **Paul Lynam**

Paul Lynam is a former President of University College, Dublin Students' Union and a former Eastern Area Officer on USI's Officer Board. He is certainly no stranger to elections and the democratic process, having stood for Seanad Éireann in the National University of Ireland constituency.

This is Paul's second year on USI Steering Committee.



## **Scott Ahearne**

Scott was Welfare Officer and Deputy President of UCD Students Union from 2009-11 and served as USI Welfare Officer 2011/12. Over his three years in Students Union Scott was also the national coordinator for PleaseTalk.ie, the 3rd level national mental health campaign for the island of Ireland.

Currently he is working as Outreach and Partnership officer for See Change, sits on numerous boards and committee relating to mental health and studying Systemic Therapy.

# HOW DOES CONGRESS WORK?

USI Congress is the supreme decision making body of the Union of Students in Ireland. It has the power to review and amend the Constitution, to decide policy and to elect the following members of the Officerboard –

- **President**
- **Vice President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance**
- **Vice President for Welfare**
- **Vice President for Campaigns**
- **Vice President for Equality & Citizenship**
- **Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region**
- **Vice President for the Southern Region**
- **Vice President for the Irish Language**

## WHO ATTENDS CONGRESS?

Congress is composed of the current Officerboard and delegates from each Member Organisation (MO) whose affiliation fees have been paid. The amount of delegates from each MO varies according to the number of students registered in that Students' Union.

## WHO IS IN CHARGE AT CONGRESS?

Steering Committee are responsible for ensuring that things run smoothly and that motions are discussed fairly and properly. They do not vote and they are not members of any delegation. Steering Committee enforce the rules which Congress have adopted: they do not make the rules.

## WHAT DOES STEERING COMMITTEE DO?

These people were appointed to Steering Committee by National Council. All have experience in the operation of Congress. Their responsibility at Congress is to preside over the various sessions of debate and to ensure that speakers are not improperly interrupted. They also enforce time limits or other regulations and ensure that votes are carried out in a proper manner.

## WHO DO I GO TO IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about debate or the policy process, go to Steering Committee, who should be able to help answer any query you may have. While some members of Steering Committee chair sessions, there are also others situated at the back of Congress floor to answer any questions. Questions about the hotel and organisation of the event should be made to the Congress Director.

## HOW DO DEBATES WORK AND WHO PROPOSES THE MOTIONS?

The Officer or MO who put the motion forward initially, normally proposes the motions in each session i.e. the name, which appears after the motion in the agenda. The motions are, however, technically the property of Congress, and if the people who initially wrote the motion do not turn up, or do not want to speak, any delegate can start the debate by proposing the motion.

Once a motion is proposed, it is then open to the floor for discussion.

## HOW OFTEN CAN I SPEAK?

Unless you are the person who proposed the motion, you can only speak once on any motion. You can, however, speak on as many motions as you wish during Congress. If you proposed a motion, or if you have an amendment to a motion successfully passed, then you can also sum up before a vote is taken.

## HOW LONG CAN I SPEAK FOR?

The person who proposes a motion, can speak for five minutes on why the motion should be passed. Once she or he is finished, Steering Committee will invite delegates to speak for or against the motion. Each of these speakers will have three minutes to outline their reasons for supporting or opposing the motion. The order of speakers will be as follows:

- Proposer, speaker against, speaker for, speaker against, and so on until a vote is called for. Note that you must speak for or against the motion.
- Once a vote is called for, the Proposer has the right to sum up, unless an amendment to the motion has been passed, in which case, the proposer of the amendment has the right to summate.

## HOW DO AMENDMENTS WORK?

Amendments to motions will have previously been submitted to Steering Committee and are included in the Clár. Steering Committee will invite the proposer of the amendment to speak on why the amendment should be supported. A speaker will then be invited to speak against the amendment, then a speaker for the amendment, and so on until a vote is called for on the amendment. All of these speeches, plus the vote on the amendment, must take place before the debate or voting on the original motion can continue.

PROPOSER	5 MINUTES
SPEAKER FOR/AGAINST	3 MINUTES

## WHAT IF THE AMENDMENT FAILS?

If the amendment fails, then debate continues on the original motion as if the amendment had not been proposed.

## WHAT IF THE AMENDMENT SUCCEEDS?

If the amendment is passed, then the original motion, together with the amendments agreed on, becomes the substantive motion. The motion is debated as if it was originally put forward in the amended format by the proposer of the amendment.

The proposer of the amendment now 'owns' the revised motion and it is she or he who has the right to sum up when the vote is called.

## WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURAL MOTIONS?

Procedural motions are motions that can be proposed at any time, except during the act of voting, a speech or a point of order.

They refer to the conduct or procedure of the debate, and not to the content of the speeches. See Schedule E (Section 9) of the USI Constitution for details. Hence they are called 9a etc. They require a proposer and a seconder. The proposer can speak for one minute on why the motion should be carried, followed by a speaker for one minute on why it should not be carried.

The proposer of the substantive motion usually has priority in replying to a procedural motion. There is then a vote on the procedural motion.

1 MINUTE TO PROPOSE
1 MINUTE TO OPPOSE

## WHAT PROCEDURAL MOTIONS CAN BE PUT??

To help ensure that debates run smoothly and as quickly as possible procedural motions exist. The following are the procedural motions and their effect, if passed:

### **(A) THAT THE QUESTION NOW BE PUT**

If passed, there will be an opportunity for the Proposer of the motion to summarise and then an immediate vote will be taken.

### **(B) THAT THE QUESTION NOT BE PUT**

If passed, prevents a vote being taken on the matter under discussion.

### **(C) THAT THE QUESTION BE TAKEN IN PARTS**

If passed, divides the motion or amendment into specified sections to be voted on individually. Used if there are sections that you do not agree with. This must be put in writing and handed into Steering Committee.

### **(D) THAT THE MATTER BE REFERRED BACK**

If passed, refers the matter back to a specified time or a specified Officer, or a specified Committee, or to a National Council.

It is therefore not voted upon at Congress.

### **(E) A CHALLENGE TO THE CHAIRPERSON'S RULING**

If passed, the Chairperson must change his or her ruling on an issue in accordance with the motion.

### **(F) Motion of No-Confidence in the Chairperson**

If passed, the Chairperson will vacate the Chair for the remainder of the session and will be replaced by another member of Steering Committee.

## WHAT ARE POINTS OF ORDER?

Points of Order refer to the conduct of the debate, and arise if a delegate feels that something is happening that is not allowed for within the rules laid down for the conduct of debate. A Point of Order does not relate to the motion being discussed, or any arguments for or against the motion. If you want to raise a Point of Order, you simply state that you are doing so and specify what point you are making. A Point of Order takes precedence over all other business except the act of voting, unless it refers to the conduct of the vote.

## WHAT ARE POINTS OF INFORMATION?

If there is a factual piece of information you feel a speaker should be informed of, you may rise while she or he is speaking and state that you are raising a Point of Information. The speaker may decide whether or not he or she wishes to accept your Point of Information. If they do, you may speak for 15 seconds on this point. If they do not, you must accept this decision.

If a speaker accepts a Point of Information, the person requesting same has 15 seconds on this point.

## HOW IS THE VOTING ON MOTIONS CARRIED OUT?

Voting on motions and amendments is carried out by show of delegates' cards, which you must not lose because they cannot be replaced for any reason during Congress. Delegates are NOT allowed to leave/enter Congress Floor whilst a vote/count is in progress.

## WHO IS ENTITLED TO VOTE?

Only delegates are entitled to vote. If a delegate is temporarily absent, she or he may deputise a registered observer from the same Member Organisation. Accredited observers are entitled to speak at Congress. Invited guests are not allowed to speak in debates. Steering Committee will then recommend a course of action to Congress, who will either accept the ruling or object to it. If there is an objection, there will be a vote and Congress can only overrule the recommendation of Steering Committee by a two-thirds majority.

## CAN THESE RULES BE CHANGED DURING CONGRESS?

The method of raising items not on the agenda is to propose the suspension of Standing Orders. This is done by proposing a motion to that effect, stating why you want standing orders suspended and for how long you want them suspended.

Standing Orders may only be suspended in exceptional circumstances

The Chairperson will put the matter to an immediate vote and to be carried, it must receive the backing of two-thirds of those present and voting. Only that business for which Standing Orders are suspended can be discussed during the suspension.

# CONGRESS TRAINING MOCK MOTIONS

## **Congress Notes**

Being a student movement for 354,000 members is an enormous undertaking and USI must not fall short of its duties to represent all of them. It must be borne in mind that this is an awful responsibility.

## **Congress further notes**

USI President Joe O'Connor is on the record saying that "It is quite a tall order to provide benefits and services to so many students."

## **Congress mandates**

USI President Joe O'Connor to select, in short order, people to develop policies to lift up student representation to a new level, so they may see a way over and beyond the obstacles in their way.

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Union of Students in Ireland  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

# OFFICER REPORTS

# PRESIDENT JOE O'CONNOR



## Links, Alliances, Collaboration & Solidarity

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A key priority of my term has been to reach out, build partnerships and open doors for USI that may previously have been allowed to remain ajar. I believe this has been resoundingly achieved through several collaborations, building links and developing alliances, and a strong commitment to a solidarity-driven approach.

This includes:

- The signing of an Agreement with SIPTU which provides for campaigning and collaboration on shared issues, and several membership benefits for students, particularly those in part-time employment. As part of this, a joint Standing Committee has now been established.
- Working with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Irish Second-Level Students' Union on the collaborative policy paper 'Locked Out- Investing In A Future For Youth'. We presented the key aspects of this paper collaboratively at the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Education and Social Protection.
- We are an affiliate organisation of the 'We're Not Leaving' campaign group, which brings together students, young workers and the young unemployed. We have organised with them on a number of issues, including the 'Young People's Assembly' held in Liberty Hall which USI was a full supporter and participant in. We assisted with the organisation and promotion of this event, as well as its delivery on the day.

- A post-Budget campaign in opposition to the cuts to social welfare payments in Budget 2014 was launched alongside We're Not Leaving, SpunOut, and the National Youth Council of Ireland. This included several photo stunts, media pressure and a targeted lobby of Senators ahead of the Social Welfare Bill.
- We worked with other groups to oppose wider austerity measures in society and build alliances against austerity. This included our support of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions' Anti-Austerity March, and the Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament's protest against cuts impacting on older people.
- We came together with ICTU Youth, Mandate Youth, the CWU, Scambridge and We're Not Leaving to call for the 'Jobbridge' internship scheme to be phased out, following an escalation in exploitation and abuse by employers.
- Collaboration with the apprentices' Union, the TEEU, on the 'Axe The Training Tax' campaign in opposition to fees imposed on student apprentices in the small print of Budget 2014.
- Working with the INMO on the 'Everyone Loves Nurses' campaign, which was instigated and led by USI, and received massive levels of public engagement and support.

## High-Level Engagement

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Outside of the National Campaign, USI have engaged in high-level political engagement in a number of key areas under my leadership this year:

- Several other positive outcomes have been secured through engagement with the Department and Minister Quinn this year, such as changes to the fee arrangements for migrant students and returning emigrants.
- Minister Kathleen Lynch meeting regarding funding for community mental health services, lottery funding for the USI More Talk, More Action campaign, and the National Suicide Prevention Strategy.
- Minister Alex White meeting in relation to USI breaking ties with Drinkaware. ie, a new alcohol awareness campaign in conjunction with the HSE, the USI Alcohol policy and alcohol sponsorship in sport.
- Attendance and contributions at a Stakeholder Consultation Forum on the European Youth Guarantee, and meetings with officials and advisers in the Department of Social Protection.
- Meeting with officials in the Department of Housing on the student accommodation crisis in Dublin and Maynooth, rent controls, and social housing provision.

## Strengthening Union Membership/ Non Affiliate Engagement

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With the immense challenges we face on a national level in the coming years, one of my major priorities was to leave behind a student movement more united than where I found it.

Since the last Congress and before I took up office, I was part of the campaign which saw CIT Students' Union affiliate with USI after a 14-year absence. This left every Institute of Technology student in the country as a member of USI.

The only referendum in semester 1 took place in my old alma mater GMIT, where a resounding 96% of GMIT students voted to remain a part of the national Students' Union.

Throughout the year, I had engaged with DCU Students' Union on an ongoing basis ahead of a re-run of last year's 'null and void' referendum which was held.

A considerable amount of effort and preparation went in to ensuring that this referendum was held and passed.

In the end, by the slimmest of majorities, DCU students voted to re-join USI 13 years

after their disaffiliation. I am delighted that delegations from CIT and DCU will be a part of this year's Congress after more than a decade apart.

A significant improvement in the level of engagement with UL Students' Union has been reported this year, culminating in a presentation to the ULSU Class Council on the benefits of USI affiliation and membership. A motion is to be brought to their AGM for information to be provided on a potential referendum on USI membership,

A meeting was also held with UCD Students' Union to outline progress and delivery on key reforms which were raised and requested by UCDSU during last year's referendum which saw UCD students vote to leave the I am satisfied that all of these reforms have either been delivered upon or have been brought to this year's Congress for approval.

Given the financial position of UCDSU, it was suggested that a referendum in the near future on the basis of a student levy may be preferable.

Finally, we have made strides in opening dialogue with a number of Student Councils and Unions in FE colleges, and arrangements are being put in place to create the environment which would allow greater engagement by USI with the Further Education sector.

## Income Diversification & Commercial Development

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Another major priority was to develop an income diversification strategy for USI, and identify suitable commercial projects to pursue. This was as part of a wider effort to secure the organisation's financial future.

An outside consultant, Joe McKenna of Venture Advancement, who had experience of developing such strategies in the non-profit sector, was engaged to carry out this work. A project group was constructed to oversee this process alongside USI Member Services Limited, and a final report with initial recommendations was completed. This is now before USI Congress.

The two key initial projects, which are being launched at this year's Congress, are StudentShop.ie, a low-cost computer store as part of a joint venture with Green IT, and the porting to the Irish market of the largest student discount scheme in the world, the NUS Extra Card.

USI are also a partner organisation in the 'Deal Effect' charity deals site, which was launched this year. This offers a revenue split for local Students' Unions, as well as heavily discounted once-off deals for students.

This year, the USI also successfully managed to deliver 25,000 Freshers Packs in-house, for which product and materials were sought and distributed across the country to our member colleges. This was an excellent branding venture which delivered real value, and one which I hope will not only continue but improve in quality in years to come. It also enhanced USI's commercial reputation and contacts from a standing start.

A Five-Year Financial Plan for USI has been put in place in consultation with Finance Committee following a mandate from last year's Congress, and is before you for your approval this year. It includes projections for the income diversification strategy, changes in our system of budgeting, and also a commitment to the creation of a reserves policy/ sinking fund.

## Postgraduate Loans

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Following a previous Congress mandate on affordable postgraduate loans, and efforts by USI in this regard following the near-removal of all postgraduate grants and maintenance in Budget 2014, it was identified that this was a very important area of work for USI this year.

I set about reviewing previous documentation on this matter, and consulting with key stakeholders such as the Department of Education & Skills and the Higher Education Authority. It was agreed by all parties that the current situation was unsustainable, and for USI to head up negotiations with potential partners with DES and HEA support.

Our unique selling point from a commercial standpoint was an ability to promote and endorse a product should it meet the criteria that we had set out.

I then put together a briefing document which outlined the requirements that such a loan product would need to have for USI to get behind it, which included the interest rate, lending amount available, flexibility and accessibility of the loan.

Initial contact was made and meetings held with all major commercial credit Institutions including Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Bank. Options at a European level were assessed by the Department.

- Officials from the Department and the HEA joined me at the final negotiating meetings, with 3 meetings taking place overall with BOI and AIB and ongoing engagement over a number of months.

What we believe to be a satisfactory conclusion to this process which significantly improves the lending terms and affordability available to postgraduate students is before you at this year's Congress.

## Higher Education Authority

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A substantial amount of work was carried out this year in my role as a board member (non-Executive Director) of the Higher Education Authority, beyond the ongoing sustainability work covered elsewhere.

- In response to ongoing demand pressures on the Student Assistance Fund causing significant student hardship, I made representations for additional funds to be made available at a HEA level. I was successful in securing a limited amount of additional funding through accrued interest in the HEA Budget, and leftover monies in the Strategic Investment Development Fund (SIDF).
- Pat Harvey, an external consultant central to overseeing the change management programme in the HEA, attended a USI National Council meeting in Letterkenny in January on my request. Arising from this a 'strategic dialogue' meeting was organised and held with a USI Team made up of National Council members. This recent meeting has had significant positive outcomes around SU and student engagement.
- I am currently working on bringing proposals on a code of practice for HEI's in dealing with Students' Unions. This will also form part of my suggested inputs to the HEI Governance legislation currently being worked on by the Department.
- I raised issues around cuts to the funding of student services throughout my time on the HEA Board, prompting a review of the Framework for the Student Contribution.
- Student engagement in the Reform Programme currently underway in Higher Education has been another area of core concern, and I have tried to ensure as much involvement and

consultation in the new Landscape process as possible.

- The new Technological University legislation has been discussed and inputted into at HEA level this year. The role of Students' Unions and student representation in this has been to the fore in my contributions.
- I have also been involved in the HEA's response to the new Performance Framework for Higher Education Institutions as set out by the Department.
- USI were an active participant in the HEA 'How Equal?' conference on Equity of Access. I chaired a session on disability supports at this conference.

## Media Engagement

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As the chief media spokesperson for USI, a large amount of my time was dedicated to engaging with the media. A full media report will be available at Congress, and a large amount of coverage is directly attributable to the National Campaign and other areas already touched on in this report.

Some other key themes and flash points that emerged throughout the year included:

- Wrote USI's 'Vision for Post-Bailout Ireland' which was released to the media in the New Year.
- USI's decision to break ties with Drinkaware.ie and the 'Neknominations' saw a very large focus on Ireland's alcohol culture and student drinking habits.
- Significant coverage on the crisis facing young people including Ireland's internship culture, and USI condemning Jobbridge exploitation and calling for the scheme to be phased out.
- Numerous reports on the graduate employment crisis.
- Withdrawing USI condemnation of student protestors following Garda Ombudsman report into 2010 National March.
- Mass public support and coverage for the Everyone Loves Nurses campaign.
- Condemning College Times 'One Night Stands' article.
- Multiple live national TV and radio

appearances such as Prime Time, Morning Edition, Tonight With Vincent Browne, Morning Ireland, Drivetime, The Last Word, The Right Hook, The Pat Kenny Show, The Marc Coleman Show, Newstalk Breakfast, as well as an enormous amount of news and regional radio coverage.

## Employability & Entrepreneurship

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This year the USI organised the first ever national 'Future Focus' campaign on employability and entrepreneurship, in partnership with HAYS Recruitment and Enterprise Ireland. This consisted of:

- An employability roadshow which involved stalls and workshops on CV tips, interview techniques and social media, which was rolled out on campuses across the country.
- A graduate jobs microsite in conjunction with HAYS, which offers employability tips to students, advice on workers' rights, and a graduate jobs platform.
- The first-ever Student Summit on Enterprise and Innovation, which is to take place in the Print Works Conference Centre on April 8th.

We are also working with Carr Communications on a Job-Ready Graduate Programme, which we hope to pitch for funding from the Department in the coming months.

## Team Leadership & Organisational Development

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Investing in our USI Officer Board team and the relationships that would drive our work together throughout the year was of fundamental importance to me.

I organised a two-day team-building programme in Causey Farm, Co. Meath at the beginning of our term, and also specialised training in public speaking, communication skills and time management by Carr Communications. A briefing session on high-level political lobbying and public affairs engagement was held for the Officer Board team. Several of our officers were also fully media trained as part of the Red Flag contract.

The Officer Board team also worked extensively on our overall and individual Workplans, which focused on Key Performance Indicators and an outcome-driven approach. A performance review mechanism was put in place to actively monitor Officer's performance against these objectives on an ongoing basis.

A mid-term team review was carried out in December with the assistance of Coly McGivern, and Pat Brady of Workplace Solutions was employed to carry out a very beneficial planning a re-focusing exercise with the team in January, which took place in County Kilkenny.

In consultation with USI staff, a new online communications and management tool (Basecamp) was employed to improve Institutional Memory, task allocation, and communication with Officers in remote locations.

A recruitment and selection process was carried out for a new Communications and Research Executive for USI, leading to the appointment of Grainne O'Reilly to that post.

I'd like to take this opportunity to commend my team members on some of their achievements this past year. Cat on the remarkable improvements made in the SUSI scheme which she has done a huge amount of work on, and the new Teaching Hero Awards. Denise on our new Mental Health campaign- More Talk, More Action. Laura on the biggest and best ever USI Pink Training. Paddy on the incredible response to the Nurses Campaign. Kevin on his Region's fantastic engagement with the Pre-Budget Campaign and SERD voter registration drives. Ciara on getting USI involved in the Ploughing Championships for the first time, her work on SU mergers, and her unwavering team ethic. And last but not least, Feidhlim on his robust response to the resignation of the Irish Language Commissioner, alongside the rest of the Irish Language community, with the largest protest in our generation. They have been a pleasure to lead, manage and work alongside.

## Officer Training & Development

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As a former two-term President and three-term sabbatical officer in GMIT Students' Union, I felt well placed to support local Officers throughout the year with issues they faced in their own Union.

- Our largest-ever Students' Union Training event was held in Co.

Waterford in July. A very substantial amount of preparation was put in to putting on the most comprehensive programme of training, workshops and speakers possible to fully equip Officers for the year ahead. Overall I believe the week was a great success.

- Chairing Presidents' Working Group this year was an enjoyable experience. The group was effective and constructive in my view, with a clear theme of Students' Union autonomy, parity of esteem and levels of representation/consultation as an issue emerging throughout the year. This was something I have raised extensively at HEA and Ministerial level. We also carried out a group project on the Funding of Students' Unions, something I think will prove useful if followed through on by future OB and sabbatical teams.
- The first-ever USI Campus Crossover Tour was offered to member Unions and ran across the country. I offered direct assistance and training to several SU Presidents as part of this.
- I presented on USI and the National Campaign at a large number of Class Rep Training events held across the country.
- I provided ongoing support and access to key influencers to SU's experiencing difficulties and facing issues throughout the year, and I hope many Unions to would testify my willingness to engage and offer assistance on their local issues.
- The level of engagement with NUS-USI has been greatly improved over the course of the year, with the first Officer Board meeting in a number of years held at NUS-USI HQ, a networking event held with Northern sabbatical officers in Belfast, and very constructive and progressive collaboration evident at our Trilateral meetings with NUS-USI and NUS. I also presented to both the Lough-In and FEestival training events held by NUS-USI.

## Community Engagement & Fundraising

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Significant efforts were made by USI to increase our engagement with community and charitable projects over the course of the year.

- Community Engagement events were held as part of the National Campaign in 3 regions: Castlebar, Carlow and Tallaght.
- Christmas Community events were held with a Children's Christmas Party theme in 3 regions: Athlone, Tralee and Trinity College Dublin
- We were a partner in the 2FM/St Vincent de Paul Toy Appeal campaign, supported by Students' Unions across the country.
- An office and local community bake sale in Ringsend on behalf of the victims of Typhoon Haiwan. The proceeds were donated to the aid efforts of Médecines San Frontières.
- Ongoing fundraising on behalf of our National Charity, Headstrong.

## Political Reform/ Seanad Campaign

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USI National Council determined for USI to take a 'No' stance on the Seanad Referendum, and to call for a wider political reform of both Chambers and our overall Parliamentary system.

Throughout the campaign, we were a major player on the 'No' side, and were eventually successful in defeating the proposition to abolish Seanad Eireann by a small margin.

With the assistance of the Taskforce for Volunteering and Citizenship, we put together our own proposals for political reform, in a policy document entitled 'Free Our Voice- Politics for the People'. This was launched at a press event held at Ringsend Community Centre.

I spoke at the final press event held by the 'Democracy Matters' campaign group, and also at TD Stephen Donnelly and Senator John Crown's 'No' campaign launch.

We were heavily engaged in the media discussion on this referendum throughout the campaign, including on a live debate on The Pat Kenny Show on Newstalk, and as a contributor to the special Prime Time debate on the Seanad referendum.

On polling day, we utilised our SERD database and communications tool for the first time, encouraging thousands of students to get out and vote and informing them of USI's position.

## International Affairs

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In November, I became the first USI President in several years to attend a Board Meeting of the European Students' Union. We engaged fully with the debates and proceedings, and developed many strong networks and contacts with our European contacts.

I also wrote resolutions on the right to A Living Wage across Europe, LGBTQ Rights in Ireland, and an amendment to the ESU Work Plan to include work on the European Youth Guarantee. These were all resoundingly supported and passed.

## Student Achievement Awards Ireland

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The fantastic St George's Hall in Dublin Castle has been secured for the second annual Student Achievement Awards on April 17th. We hope to see some Congress delegates at this event, which will be attended by the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins. He will deliver a keynote address, and present the Student Award for the President's Ethics Initiative, which USI have assisted with.

## Congress 2014

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I have spent some time in the past number of weeks preparing for Congress 2014, by organising the various launches taking place at Congress, guest speakers and contributors, and partner organisations in attendance. I have also assisted in arranging Congress entertainments.

Congress 2014 also comes to you at a cost saving of 11.5%!

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

## 'Fight For Your Future Now' Pre-Budget Campaign

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Our new Officer Board team, after taking up office on July 1st, and new team of student officers met for the first time at Students' Union Training in Waterford in July facing an early October Budget, and a massive challenge in delivering long-awaited positive Budgetary outcomes for our membership.

We set about agreeing a pragmatic and achievable set of objectives, which would give us a chance to protect the most financially vulnerable students, and turn the corner for our national campaign. Our Pre-Budget Submission was crafted around these key goals.

In the context of our economic and political circumstances, with another €3.1 billion austerity adjustment and further Education cutbacks required, the results achieved for students were hugely significant. The core student support payments- the student maintenance grant and the Back to Education Allowance, were protected in full after several years of contraction.

With the assistance of strategic communications and public affairs consultants Red Flag, USI engaged in the most comprehensive political lobbying campaign ever conducted by this organisation.

In the run up to the Budget, this included 2 meetings with the Minister for Education & Skills, meetings with Ministers of State in Finance and Education & Skills, numerous meetings with key advisers and officials in the Department of Education & Skills, Public Expenditure and Reform and the Office of the Tánaiste, several key Government backbench TDs, all chief opposition spokespersons on Education, Parliamentary Party Briefings, party

strategists, and the Oireachtas Committee for Education and Social Protection.

On the 9th of October, a final Pre-Budget Briefing was organised in Buswells' Hotel. We set out and reiterated the core points of our Pre-Budget Submission and campaign objectives, and several student shared their personal stories. This was attended by over 50 members of the Oireachtas, which was an excellent turnout. Intelligence from the Department suggests they received representations from 10 TDs on the student grant that afternoon alone. I believe this was a highly effective campaign event and provided the final push required for the campaign to succeed.

Not only was this political lobbying eventually successful in delivering the results we craved, it has also left USI in a stronger position in terms of political relationships, credibility, access and engagement than it has been in recent memory. I am immensely proud of the short-term and long-term benefits I believe this brings to USI.

A National Day of Action was held on October 1st in three regional locations- Sligo, Cork and Dublin. Students gathered behind a united message, and the media coverage of the event was strong, positive and on message. I delivered the closing speech at the 'Dublin Demo' on the day. Ahead of my second pre-Budget meeting with the Minister the following day in Leinster House, whilst the overall turnout may not have been as we would have hoped, the Day of Action succeeded in bringing us closer to realising our goals.

One key aspect of the campaign was the creation of the first-ever national student voter registration database, SERD (Student Elector Registration Database). This set out to dispel the notion that students do not vote, and to provide a sophisticated communications tool capable of mobilising a united student voter bloc, with the power to influence

political decision-making and elections/referendums.

Voter registration drives were held across the country as part of the campaign, and this campaign will be re-branded, re-launched and upscaled in the run up to the local & European elections.

I worked with Strategem, Starlight Solutions and USI staff to produce the creative designs and digital and online marketing material, that would be fundamental to the student engagement aspect of the campaign. This included a social media strategy, online sponsored posts, an infographic, the SERD database, a Thunderclap, DearDeputy TD communications microsite, flyers for students, parents and businesses, badges, poster designs and a full online toolkit.

Along the way, the campaign was aided by a very strong and strategic media message and presence. In the week before the Budget alone, I wrote opinion pieces which were covered in the country's two leading broadsheet newspaper, the Irish Times and the Irish Independent.

## Third-Level Funding & Sustainability

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Of course, in the medium-term, a much wider battle faces USI and the Higher Education sector as a whole. We face a funding crisis, a crossroads as to whether Higher Education is treated as a public good or a private commodity, and in line with that the biggest policy juncture facing the system since Niamh Breathnach's introduction of the 'Free Fees' scheme in the mid-90's. This will shape Higher Education in Ireland for years and perhaps decades to come.

A core criticism of USI over the years has been our lack of well-researched, credible economic arguments to supplant our ideological drive for free education.

As part of our Agreement with SIPTU being presented to this Congress, the Nevin Economic Research Institute have been tasked with carrying out policy research to set out the inherent benefits to our economy and society of investment in Higher Education, and to make the case for education as a public good.

I have worked with Tom Healy, the Director of NERI, extensively on this project. It will set out a roadmap in line with economic recovery and increased investment in Higher Education towards a fully free, publicly-funded model. This paper will be presented for approval to

this Congress, and will be launched upon its adoption as USI policy.

Media reports around third-level fees and funding have emerged frequently throughout the year, predominantly sparked by University Presidents, the IUA, and backbench TDs in Fine Gael. I have been consistently responsive in the media to these reports, and I feel USI are now positioned as a key player in this ongoing debate.

Throughout the year, I have worked extensively at Higher Education Authority level on the ongoing work around Higher Education Sustainability. I have continually advocated the benefits of fully Exchequer-funded Education, at times on an island, and the negatives associated with other funding mechanisms, mainly deferred payments schemes. I will be presenting to a special meeting of the HEA on this topic before the end of my year, and ahead of the publication on the HEA's Sustainability Report.

With the groupthink consensus present with many in officialdom around student loans, I have actively sought collaborative partners who believe in Education as a Public Good. This includes SIPTU, IMPACT, IFUT, the TUI, We're not Leaving and the Defend the University campaign. Dialogue has also been re-opened with the IUA and the IOTI on this issue.

I presented to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis on this topic and the upcoming challenges that we face. Briefings of all major Parliamentary Parties are in the process of being arranged, ahead of the publication of our funding policy.

A strategy for our National Campaign right up to the end of this calendar year has been devised and approved by National Council. A guide to National Issues for local SU Elections has been circulated, ahead of a nationwide student engagement and information campaign we will be running on this issue prior to the end of the academic year.

# DEPUTY PRESIDENT/VP WELFARE DENISE MCCARTHY



After being elected Vice President for Welfare I was appointed the USI Deputy President. The following is a highlight of the keys areas I have worked on and completed during my term. My officer reports for the year are readily available also. I have really enjoyed working with a wide variety of organisations, covering a large range of topics and areas as well as working with all the Welfare Officers across the country.

## Students' Union Training

I assisted the President and members of Officer Board with the preparation for Students' Union Training in July. Some of the tasks that I undertook included: securing all the speakers for Welfare modules for SUT, assisting speakers, assisting Member Organisations with queries as well as overseeing the logistics of the week.

## Crossover Campus Tour

I organised the USI Campus Crossover Tour and liaised with Member Organisations who were interested in having Officer Board on campus. We visited IADT, LIT, ST Angelas, NUI Maynooth and CIT. I also assisted the NUS-USI President and UU President in organising site visits in the North and a networking event with officers in the North and USI Officer Board.

## Freshers Week Competition with Think Contraception

I secured 20,000 condoms and liaised with Think Contraception to create an opportunity for SUs to receive thousands of condoms. Students' Unions were asked to run a sexual health event on campus, send a brief description of the event to USI. The best 5 colleges won 4,000 condoms to use for their next sexual health event/activity/campaign on campus.

## Guide to Student Life

This year I developed and launched the 'Guide to Student Life' which replaced the Rent Book and the Finance Guide and included information and advice around accommodation, student finance, settling into college, anti-social behaviour and personal safety. I secured sponsorship €2,500 from the PRTB for the guide. The guide will be launched after the CAO offers come out and there was 30,000 copies printed for the Freshers' Pack. On August 20th, USI Guide to Student Life was launched in DIT, NUIG & IT Carlow.

## Freshers Pack

I liaised with various organisations to seek products for the USI Freshers Packs. I secured 30,000 badges from PleaseTalk, 30,000 condoms from Durex and 30,000 pieces of merchandise from the Road Safety Authority (RSA) including high vis armbands and keyrings.

## Campaign Support

I updated the Welfare Campaign Directory to assist Welfare Officers with their campaigns. The directory included information and tips on planning, implementing and promoting a campaign, getting volunteers, various ideas and samples of previous campaigns from across the country. I also delivered on a short presentation for Welfare Working Group on welfare campaigns and welfare crews/volunteers. I also developed 'How To' guides for welfare officers on various topics: road safety, mental health, sexual health, exam prep etc.

## Training

Following a mandate from Congress 2013, the VP for AAQA delivered Student Finance Training at the August National Council. I also organised training on Health Promotion that provided Welfare

Officers with a practical introduction to health promotion theory and practice.

In December I organised ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) for Students' Union officers.

I delivered training to UU Campus Officers on Welfare and Equality issues and help them plan the rest of their year.

## Data Protection Policy

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Following a mandate from USI Congress 2013, I was delegated with the task of developing the USI Data Protection Policy and it was passed at the National Council in September. I researched the Data Protection Act and relevant policies and engaged with the Data Protection Office regarding the data protection principles.

## Gonorrhoea Working Group & OMGSTI campaign

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I was co-opted onto a Working Group with Dublin Aids Alliance, Think Contraception, SpunOut, HSE Health Promotion Unit and the Chair from the Gonorrhoea Control Group to collaborate on an STI prevention campaign as a result in recent noted increases of Gonorrhoea. In December, we launched #OMGSTI and we produced an OMG Gonorrhoea booklet, website and developed a social media plan. I made a recommendation to the HSE that this working group continues next year and works on STIs as a whole.

## Class Rep Training

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The President and I put together a schedule for Officer Board to present at Class Rep Training events. I prepared the presentation that was used by USI Officers and I attended and presented class rep training events in IT Tralee, WIT, UCC & CIT.

## Pre Budget Campaign - Your Future

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I assisted with the planning and execution of the pre-budget campaign.

I assisted the VP Campaigns with the final preparations for the Dublin Demo for the National Day of Action and attended with the VP Campaigns & USI President. I assisted with stage set up and when students began to gather we handed out signs and fight for your future badges. During the Demo I liaised with VP Campaigns and the speakers.

I assisted with the planning of and spoke at the pre budget briefing, I then met with many TDs to discuss our objectives and issues we were campaigning for.

On Budget Day, I reviewed changes in Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Justice and Equality, Department of Health and Department of Social Protection. Along with other members of Officer Board we gathered information on the changes in the budget that would affect student and developed the Student Guide to Budget 2014.

## Student Sport Ireland Committee

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This year engaged more with Student Sport Ireland (SSI) to build our relationship with them and to review how we can best work together. I secured a seat for USI on the Health, Wellbeing and Physical Activity committee.

## Mental Health Strategy

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Following a mandate at USI Congress 2013, I have updated the USI Mental Health Strategy. I engaged with a number of organisations to assist with various aspects of the strategy and asked Welfare Working Group to give their input. We have submitted a motion to Congress to adopt the new strategy.

## More Talk More Action & Chats for Change

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I began working on this campaign during the summer and engaged with welfare officers, officer board and various mental health organisations on it. From feedback from last year's Students' Union and in particular Welfare Officers, it was agreed that this year's campaign would be general and that was SU could take what they want from it.

The main aim was create an identity for our mental health campaign, similar to SHAG campaign. We created 'Chats for Change' in association with See Change and St Patrick's Mental Health Services. I secured funding from See Change to go ahead with this project and we distributed 20,000 of the packs across the country. The packs included a banner pen with tips on how to start the conversation and useful links, 2 tea bags and a card to explain the campaign. I secured sponsorship from Lyons who have sponsored the 40,000 tea bags for the packs.

I also organised a campus tour which visited NCI, Cork IT, NUI Maynooth and Athlone IT. Headstrong, Headsup, ReachOut, PleaseTalk, Mental Health Ireland, Turn2me, See Change, ST Patrick's Mental Health Services, Grow and Mental Health Reform supported the campus tour.

## Eating Disorders

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This year I wanted to strengthen USI's relationship with Bodywhys and support the work they do. Bodywhys wanted to survey young adults' knowledge of eating disorders and their impressions of individuals with eating disorders so I liaised with them in promoting their survey. Each SU will get a breakdown of results once each survey gets a certain amount of entries. I also assisted in promoting Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I have also been supporting the Student Counselling Service in TCD in promoting Pro Youth and its service before its closing date for March 31st.

## Alcohol

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### Drinkaware

After many years of discussions about Drinkaware, I brought a motion to National Council to cease workings with Drinkaware which passed. The President and I wrote a letter to the CEO of MEAS and we now have no dealing with Drinkaware/MEAS. USI was highly commended for this move.

### Meeting with Minister White

The President and I also met with Minister Alex White to discuss the following: Independent alcohol awareness campaign, a student survey, National Substance Misuse Strategy and USI's alcohol policy. The meeting went very well and the Minister commended USI on our move away from Drinkaware.ie.

### Neknominations

As the online trend of Neknominations expanded on social media, I felt it was necessary to attempt to put a stop to it. I came up with the idea of #BreakTheChain as it had been described as the modern day chain letter. It was important to have the message online where the trend started so I liaised with the communications exec with a plan to reach as many people as possible. It trended on social media within an hour and was widely shared.

## Sexual Health

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### SHAG Packs:

I have secured 45,000 condoms and a sachets of 'play feel' lube for the SHAG packs. I successfully secured €3,500 from Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) as sponsorship for the SHAG Packs and 'talkoptions' booklet to be included. Each SHAG Pack contained a condom, sachet of lubricant and information about STI, contraception choices and general sexual health information and were sent to member SUs a week earlier than last year.

### SHAG Roadshow:

I expanded the Sexual Health Education Roadshow during SHAG week 2014. This year the roadshow visited 4 campuses in 4 days. The roadshow was supported by Think Contraception, IFPA, Dublin Aids Alliance, HSE's Crisis Pregnancy Programme, Cura, Here2help, AidsWest, Cope Galway, and the Rape Crisis Network Ireland.

## USI Affiliation Referendums

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I participated in the planning USI referendums held in GMIT, DCU and will participate in the one in IT Tralee. I spoke to class reps, attended public meeting, delivered class addresses and spoke to many students one to one informing them of the referendum on their campus and highlighted the benefits of USI.

## Men's Health

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This year I met with Men's Health Forum Ireland in the hope of developing a relationship between USI and MHFI. We discussed International Men's Health Week which takes place in June and how USI could support it. We also discussed developing a support booklet for SUs to promote men's health.

## Upcoming Projects:

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**Student Achievement Awards** - I have been organising the awards that will take place April 17th in George's Hall, Dublin Castle and will celebrate the work being done by third-level students for the benefit of their college, community and country.

**Spring Break** - A new campaign encouraging people to take a break from alcohol for the month of April.

**Mental health campaign** with Mental Health Reform in advance of local elections.

## Conclusion

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Thank you for taking the time to read my annual report.

It has been an honour and a privilege to represent students and their wellbeing over the last two years as a national student representative. There have been ups and downs, challenges and opportunities and I have loved every second of it. Our term is not over yet and there is still a lot of work that needs to be done before the new team takes over. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have voted for me in the past, the students I have met along the way, the amazing Students' Union officers I have worked with the teams I have worked beside.

# CONGRESS REPORT OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT FOR EQUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP LAURA HARMON



## **'Say Something' Study Launch**

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The first student study on the experience of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault was launched on 10th of September at TCD by Senator Ivana Bacik. The launch was featured extensively in national media. We secured €4,500 from COSC (Centre for the Prevention of Sexual, Domestic and Gender-Based Violence) to run a follow-up campaign and we have plans to run a campaign to coincide with freshers' and orientation weeks in 2014.

## **LGBTQ Rights in Russia and Protest at Russian Embassy**

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On the 7th of August, we delivered a joint letter with BeLonGTo, the International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation and the National Youth Council of Ireland to the Russian Ambassador in Ireland outlining grave concerns on anti-LGBT developments in Russia. I facilitated the coordination of a protest outside the Russian Embassy on the 5th of February to mark the beginning of the Winter Olympics. We had a range of speakers including a Russian national. We received national media coverage.

## **Pink Training 21st Anniversary**

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It was a privilege to be able to organise USI Pink Training on its 21st anniversary and Queen's University Belfast was an ideal location. The event took place from the 22nd-24th of November with Jeff Dudgeon as our keynote speaker. This is the largest event that USI runs. The event was a great success and included a 21st anniversary dinner and a rally for our rights.

## **First National Student Gender Conference**

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USI teamed up with the National Women's Council's Y-Factor project to bring about GenCon14. The conference was hosted by NUIG students' union from February 28th-March 1st. It was open to all genders and had modules on heteronormativity, health campaigning, reproductive rights, Trans rights and running for election. It was a success and I hope it will become an annual event for USI in the future.

## **Students with Disabilities**

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I worked closely with the Association of Higher Education Access and Disability throughout the year and I am on their Board of Directors. We are currently working on a guide for student clubs and societies on how to be accessible for students with disabilities. I represented USI at the NUS-USI Disability Conference on the 19th of February. I have been working with the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability on their GET AHEAD programme. This constitutes a network of and for graduates with disabilities and I am a member of the steering committee.

## **Mature Students**

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Protecting the Back to Education Allowance was a core goal for USI this year and I lobbied TDs extensively on this issue in the run-up to budget 2014. I presented on this issue to the Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection on the 25th of September with the USI President. I also attended MSI (Mature Students Ireland) meetings this year and raised mature students' issues at the HEA's Equity of Access to Education group. The Equality and Citizenship Working Group also conducted an exercise which compared resources for mature students in colleges across the country.

## International Students

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I co-organised a focus group for international students in TCD on the 22nd of October with the Irish Council for International Students. We received feedback on their experiences in Ireland and how things could be improved. The feedback was presented to the Government as part of the review of Ireland's International Education Strategy. On the 29th of November, I met with the Department of Education along with ICOS. The focus group report was commended by the Department. I also raised the point about USI attaining a seat on the High Level Group (this group directly advises Government on the implementation of Ireland's International Education Strategy) and it was agreed.

## Equity of Access to Education

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I sit on the HEA's Equity of Access Group. I advocated for a Traveller representative to be invited to join the group and a representative from Pavee Point has been added to the group. I am working with Pavee Point on organising a forum for Traveller students so that their views can be given to the HEA for the new equity of access plan. I assisted with planning for the HEA Equity of Access to Education conference on November 7th and chaired a session on the day.

## Task Force on Volunteering and Citizenship

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I chaired the USI Task Force on Volunteering and Citizenship this year. Three tangible results came out of the Task Force:

### 1) Voter Registration

I met with Dublin City Council, SpunOut and the National Youth Council in the summer to discuss USI's voter registration plans. I wrote the USI Voter Registration strategy with input from the Task Force on Volunteering and Citizenship. The Task Force has been working on the Student Elector Registration Database throughout the year and on the campaign for the local and European elections. On the 10th of March, I met with a wide range of youth organisations in SpunOut's HQ along with the USI President to plan for how we can work together to get the vote out for the European and local elections.

### 2) Seanad Referendum

I submitted a motion to USI National Council on Seanad retention and reform and it passed. The Task Force on Volunteering and Citizenship compiled key areas that USI could look at in terms

of Seanad reform. I spoke at the launch of Future Matters, a Seanad reform youth group, on the 9th of July. USI utilised the Student Elector Registration Database for the first time to contact students about the Seanad referendum. The referendum to abolish the Seanad was rejected.

### 3) Political Reform

USI launched the 'Free Our Voice - Politics for the People' political reform proposals on the 11th of September. I compiled the content of the document with the USI President following the approval of the Task Force on Volunteering and Citizenship's recommendations.

## LGBTQ Campaigns and Marriage Equality

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I organised the USI delegation at the March for Marriage on the 18th of August. USI sent Valentine's e-cards to all TDs calling for them to support marriage equality. I compiled the USI Marriage Equality campaign strategy document that is before USI Congress 2014. USI distributed over 5,000 LGBT Ally bands to campuses who requested them this year. I attended Transgender Equality Network Ireland's community forum on September 19th to discuss the draft heads of bill for new legislation. I have worked closely with TENI all year.

## USI/Google Event for LGBTQ students

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On the 18th of December, I met with Google. We organising a

USI/Google half day event for USI member LGBTQ students on innovation, employability and CV development on May 9th. The event will be in Google HQ.

## The Pre-Budget Campaign

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I lobbied TDs on our interim pre-budget submission in July. I presented to the Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection on the 25th of September. I lobbied TDs and Senators at the USI pre-budget briefing on the 9th of October. I assisted with the Cork regional protest and I was a steward. I participated in a planning session on the potential opportunities for USI's pre-budget campaign in USI HQ on the 12th of December.

## **International Lesbian and Gay Youth Organisation (IGLYO) General Assembly**

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I represented USI at the General Assembly from the 17th-20th of October in Copenhagen. I participated in workshops on LGBT inclusion and intersectionality. I voted on policy position papers and in the IGLYO Board elections.

## **Migrant Rights**

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I met with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland in June to discuss working together on the Migrant Education Access campaign. USI raised this issue with the Minister for Education. We called for citizenship applications to be fast tracked and for colleges to introduce a mechanism for fee status reversal if a student acquires citizenship during the course of their studies. USI welcomed the Department of Education's announcement to give provision for fee status reversal for migrant students on the 25th of July.

## **Pride Marches**

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In 2013, I marched with students in Waterford Pride, Cork Pride and Dublin Pride on behalf of USI.

## **Reproductive Rights**

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In July, I attended the prochoice sleep out outside the Dáil and I drafted a press release on USI's response to the 'Protection of Life during Pregnancy Bill 2013.' I attended the prochoice rally outside the Dáil on the 10th of July. I participated in a press conference on the 7th of October to add USI's support to the repeal the 8th amendment campaign on the 30th anniversary of its enactment.

## **Welfare Cuts for Under 26s in Budget 2014**

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I spoke on behalf of USI at the protest against youth welfare cuts outside the Dáil on the 16th October. I attended the demonstration outside the Dáil on the 23rd of October. I assisted with planning for the We're Not Leaving photo stunt against welfare cuts outside the Dáil on the 1st of November and I participated in the stunt itself.

## **Unpaid Internships**

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I participated in a panel discussion in NewsTalk's studios on the Pat Kenny Show on the 2nd of December on the issue of unpaid internships. I did an interview with Morning Ireland on December 3rd. I wrote a piece for the University Times and DIT's Edition on the youth crisis in Ireland.

## **Affiliation Referenda**

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I campaigned in the GMIT and DCU affiliation referenda with the rest of Officer Board.

## **NUS-USI Lough Inn Training**

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I attended this two day training event in Newcastle, Co: Down on the 18th and 19th of August and I helped to facilitate an equality workshop.

## **Training and Planning with MOs**

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I presented at DIT and IADT Class Rep Trainings. I delivered workshops at part-time officer training in UCC and IT Tallaght. I attended planning meetings with MSU VP for Welfare and Equality, IADT SU, IT Tallaght SU Welfare Officer and STACS SU. I spoke at DIT, GMIT and UCC Rainbow Weeks/Days. I helped organise an Ally Day in IT Carlow's Wexford campus. I spoke at TCD's Speak Your Mind event in November. I spoke in NUIG for events with their Choice, Literary and Debating and LGBT societies. I spoke at Amnesty International Ireland's annual student conference. I organised all of the equality modules for Students' Union Training 2013.

# VP ACADEMIC AFFAIRS & QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICER REPORT 2014 CAT O'DRISCOLL



It has been an incredible year to be part of the student movement. As the Irish Higher Education system begins a significant transformation it is vital the student voice is a part of discussions at all levels. This year the ground work has been laid down and future teams have a platform to ensure that students are at the centre of our Higher Education system. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with such hardworking and passionate individuals throughout the year on officer board, within member Students' Unions and our partner organisations. Below is an overview of my work to date. I look forward to making the most of the final three months of my mandate.

## Training

### Students' Union Training

From mid-May I assisted with the SUT planning and preparations. I set out the education modules and secured speakers for each one. I assisted the Deputy President/VP Welfare with completing the SUT Booklet, helped MO officers with any queries, supported speakers and designed the Education Forum module. With the Deputy President/ VP Welfare I prepared, circulated and collected feedback sheets.

### Top Up Training

As some important topics could not be included in SUT due to time constraints I coordinated modules for Education Officers at Top-Up training in August. Policy development and student finances are the two key areas I concentrated on with former USI Education Officer, Hugh Sullivan, delivering Academic Policy Bootcamp and the Deputy President/ VP Welfare delivering Student Finance training with me.

### Part Time Officer Training

Based on feedback from last year we changed the format of Part Time Officer training to regional events. These were hosted in IT Tallaght and UCC in

September and GMT in January covering topics including public speaking, time management, planning events and equality campaigning. I arranged speakers, liaised with the host colleges and created the materials for the training.

### Class Rep Training

To assist SU Officer with planning their Class Rep Training events I created a resource pack including a contact sheet of available speakers and facilitators, checklists for preparing and running the event and information on recruiting class reps.

## Student Finance

### Student Finance Survey

I worked with Amarach Research to update the Student Finance Survey and launch it on social media over the Christmas period with support from the USI Media Exec. We received over 1,100 responses nationally and completed the analysis in early March. The final report and recommendations are to be adopted by Congress.

### Student Universal Support Ireland

After last year's crisis it was important we stayed on top of SUSI again this year. As the SUSI training module at SUT did not cover the learning outcomes I composed and circulated a fact sheet to explain the basics and contacted the officer in each MO responsible for grants to discuss any issues. In late July I met with John Conroy to agree on the new poster design, arrange for regional contacts for SU Officers, discuss the campus clinics and how the SUSI Forum can be useful again this year. Both the President and I attended the SUSI Advisory Panel meetings throughout the year, contributing to the enhancement of the system. This was useful in resolving issues with certain cohorts such as the Dental Hygiene and Nursing students who were informed they would no longer receive grants in January.

### **Grant reform**

USI has been calling for Grant reform for a number of years. This year I have consolidated our mandates into a new up to date policy for adoption at Congress. This also includes the outcomes of a number of meetings with specific students who are unfairly treated by the current scheme and through productive dialogue with the HEA, Dept. Education and SUSI.

## **International Affairs**

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### **European Students' Union**

USI is a member of ESU and has two votes at the biannual Board meetings (BM). The last BM took place from November 29th to December 1st. I attended along with the President. The lengthy agenda included a policy paper on Higher Education Governance, a Manifesto for the EU Elections and motions submitted by member unions. USI attended every session and submitted a number of motions and resolutions. We also met with NUSes from all over Europe to share initiatives and ideas. The next BM is in May and will include the election of the ESU Executive Committee.

### **European Students' Conventions**

These events take place twice a year in the country holding the EU Presidency. The 26th ESC took place in Kaunas, Lithuania under the theme of Internationalisation and I led the USI delegation which included officers from IT Sligo SU, Letterkenny IT SU and UCCSU. The 27th ESC took place in Brussels, Belgium and the agenda included Graduate Employability and the voice of students in EU decision making. I led a delegation including officers from IADTSU, CITSU and DITSU.

### **Taskforce on Commodification**

I was selected for the ESU Taskforce in September. Our work plan includes completing a study on commodification practices, compiling a handbook for Unions on this topic and facilitating training. We meet regularly over Skype and share the workload.

## **Quality Assurance**

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### **Irish Survey of Student Engagement**

The pilot report of the ISSE was launched in December and I chaired the Communications Group who completed most of the work. As the USI representative on all of the ISSE groups and committees I have worked with our partners: HEA, IUA and IOTI

to ensure the project ran successfully this year. We rebranded the survey and materials, secured a company to manage the technical side, examined the use of incentives and set out a map to improve student feedback and the college responses to students.

### **Quality & Qualifications Ireland**

As a Board Member of the QQI I have been involved with many different projects including the policy revision. There has been a lack of student engagement in Quality Assurance for some time and I hope to address this under the Learners and QA project we are working on with Education Policy Services and hope to receive financial support from the QQI.

## **Teaching and Learning**

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### **National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning**

A Board Member I have engaged on many different projects and initiatives by the forum including sectorial dialogues, finalizing a plan of work, reviewing professional development and establishing the Teaching Hero Awards. Mary McAleese has been announced as the Forums Patron and we also have an International Panel of Experts. The student led Teaching Heroes Project was Launch in January to recognize the college staff who have a significant impact on their students.

Of course it is difficult to cover all of my work in such a short space. I have also worked on the National Campaign, USI Referendums, Exam Prep Campaign, Value of Education Campaign, Apprentices Campaign, Technological Universities, Equity of Access and Entry Mechanisms. If you have any questions on any of my work please don't hesitate to approach me with questions. I hope you all have a great Congress and that the student movement continues to go from strength to strength.

# REPORT OF THE VP CAMPAIGNS PADDY GUINEY



## Promotional Bags

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Since the beginning of year as outlined I have worked on multiple commercial projects with the President and General Manager. One of the projects undertaken successfully was the “USI Your Future” Promotional Bags. 30,000 bags were distributed to all member colleges. I coordinated project to secure product for 30,000 The Union of Students’ in Ireland promotional bags which went out to 25 colleges nationwide for incoming students. My role involved securing product placement of 30,000 stock of 10 different products that wanted to enter the student market. Other aspects of project included design of Freshers Bag Co-ordinating with different team member and securing the following products 30,000 Boost Energy Drinks, 30,000 Kellogg’s cereal bars and 30,000 Goodfella’s vouchers

## LOBBY OF THE OIREACHTAS

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With the President and other members of Officer Board I worked on the Lobby of the Oireachtas Document and I worked on organising and I attended the Lobby of the Oireachtas day itself in Buswells Hotel on October 9th in Dublin.

## NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

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I created content or assisted in creating content for a range of posters, flyers, information for [www.usi.ie/yourfuture/](http://www.usi.ie/yourfuture/), assisted with the design work for [www.deardeputy.ie](http://www.deardeputy.ie), arranged for delivery of materials, worked with designers on the Campaign Logo, organised and chaired numerous meetings of the Campaigns Sub-Group, drafted photo calls, wrote draft letters to Chairpersons of County Councils etc. I worked with other officers on the design of the Advertisement in the national newspapers, responded to media

requests about it. MOs were divided amongst Officer Board and Therefore I travelled to TCD, ITT, NCI, ITB, IADT and DIT, to assist MOs in setting up stands, lecture addressing, forming plans and organising to get the maximum level of turnout. I sold tickets, t-shirts, spoke with individual students, and assisted MOs in whatever way possible. I worked with the president to layout a plan for the Dublin Demonstration for MOs to be able to get their students back on the road home as soon as possible. On the day of the Demonstration itself, I spoke with stewards, and assisted in the set up and layout of operations for the day, I worked with stewards in Molesworth Street to ensure that students were safe and that the Demonstration was ready to proceed in an orderly way. When the demonstration took place I worked with the stewards managing the crowd and the speed of the demonstration. After the march and speeches were concluded I assisted with clean up, brought equipment back to our staging point, had a de-brief session with volunteers, I did several media interviews with college and local media.

Following the budget announcement in October I have worked with the President, MO’s and members of office board to prepare for budget 2015.

## 1. NON-AFFILIATES

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At the start of the year together with the Regional Officers I have met with a number of non-affiliated colleges in relation to getting them re-engaged with USI.

## 2. SU SUPPORT RE. FINANCE & BUDGETS

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As Dublin Liaison Officer I have been working with a small number of MOs

on budgeting, staff structures and on campus engagement to ensure adequate USI support on campus

### 3. USI PUBLICATIONS & PROMOTION

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#### 1. Nurses Video

I worked with an external company to prepare a USI documentary video that shows who student nurse are, where they came from, what we do etc. The video has had over 15,000 views as well as posted on multiple online channels and can be used for re-affiliation campaigns etc. I sought quotations from a number of professional corporate video production companies and the contract has been agreed. The video itself is a mix of animation, interviews with the current NUIG SU President, and a number of Student student nurses and midwives.

#### 2. Class Rep Training Presentation.

I wrote a new presentation for the USI sponsorship for USI Officer.

#### Christmas Event

With the help of other members of Officer Board and TCDSU I organised the first ever Dublin Christmas Event which took in Trinity College Dublin.

### 4. CLASS REP TRAINING EVENTS

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I attended Class Rep Training Events including TCDSU, ITTSU, NCISU, , IADTSU, DITSU and delivered the USI Module with other members of Officer Board.

### 5. Nurses Campaign

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I met with the INMO on a number of occasions in relation to the situation regarding payments and working conditions for student nurses. We agreed to work together during the campaign.

Following this we held an opening meeting with nurses from across the country and commenced work with NUIGSU on planning the steps of the campaign. My role involved designing and planning distribution of materials, carrying out hospital visits and campus visits on the promotion of the campaign. Following this I will be preparing for the Labour Relations court with the Irish Nurses & Midwives organization on April 2nd. Over 8,000 people supported the petition online, 5,000 badges were distributed across the country and 700 people attended the demonstrated outside Dr Steevens Hospital.

### 6. Affiliation Referenda

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On the 19th of February a USI Affiliation referendum occurred in DCU. I went to DCU previously to address officers at a lunchtime and prior to the referendum I helped prepare materials, t shirts etc for canvassing. Together with officer board, I spent a four days in DCU canvassing and informing students about USI. I also attended the open meeting on the USI affiliation I worked with other members of Officer Board to prepare and print USI literature, T-shirts etc. I travelled to DCU and canvassed during the election.

#### Student Summit

The Student Summit has never happened before. From attending networking events on PR and entrepreneurship. I always found I was the most inexperienced and youngest there. Secondly colleges are full of young entrepreneurs and people who want to start their own business. So myself and VP DITSU Entertainments came me up with this idea to hold a young entrepreneurship and marketing symposium for students all across the country in Dublin Castle for 600 students

#### What's the key message of the Summit?

The main message of this event is to create a sense of community among young student entrepreneurs in Ireland where they can come and learn about how to start their trade and listen to people who have been successful in their field and can provide advice on how to achieve their idea.

All details of event so far below.

#### Opening Address

TBC

#### Confirmed Speakers:

Niall Harbison (Founder of Simply Zesty)

Richie Whelan (Founder Pop Deem)

Sophie Morris (Founder of Kooky Dough)

Ian Power (Founder of Spun Out)

Caroline Downey (Managing Director of Olympia & Ambassador)

Jane McDaid (Managing Director of Thinkhouse)

Sharon McCooey (Director of LinkedIn Ireland)

Stephen McIntyre (Director of Twitter Ireland)

Prof Brian MacCraith (Dublin City University president)

**Companies Involved:**

Hays Recruitment

Enterprise Ireland

Metro Ireland

IBM

Google

LinkedIn

## 7. Miscellaneous Work

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During my term I have also taken part/assisted in:

- (a) Preparation for USI's Mental Health Campaign
- (b) Crossover training for MO officers
- (c) Assisting MO's with recruitment of staff.
- (d) Assisting a number of MOs in relation to constitutional and structural reviews of their Unions.
- (e) Preparing motions for USI Congress.
- (f) Various media work.
- (g) Writing Blogs and articles for a number of publications/websites.

# VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE SOUTHERN REGION CIARA GUNAN



**When I took my role as VP for the Southern Region in the summer of 2013, I could not have told you the adventure I was about to embark on. Over the past year I have been privileged to work on many projects and also to work with amazing individuals both on my team and sabbatical officers from across the region and the country. The following is a brief insight to the work I have undertaken over the past months.**

## Officer Board planning

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At the beginning of our term as national officers, we all sat down together as a team to focus on the year ahead. Over the course of a number of days we participated in a number of bonding and focusing exercises. From there we set out to identify our main goals as individuals and also as a team. Below are the main objectives I set out for myself over the course of the year.

- Win all Referenda Regarding USI affiliation
- Lobbying Public Representatives in the Southern Region to ensure student issues are at forefront of debate
- Effectively guide, support and communicate to the Southern Region MO's
- Successfully deliver national and local campaigns in Southern Region MO's
- Increase USI Awareness and promote the organisation to the very best of my ability.
- Strive to increase the number of USI affiliated SU's.
- Assist Students Unions who are working towards Technological University status.

## Southern Region Bonding

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On a beautiful sunny day in early July, MO's from across the region gathered

on the Wexford coast to take part in a day of sea kayaking and archery. The glorious weather and calm sea made for a picturesque start to the day. From the get go the conversation flowed and the banter was quality. Within minutes of our voyage friendships were already beginning to be forged and I knew that the Southern Region was going to be vibrant group of representatives.

Following the day of activities we travelled to Waterford where we would be setting up camp for the week of SUT. As a group we went for dinner and some dancing on the town of Waterford.

## Student Union Training- SUT

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Straight out of the kayak and onto SUT, which was hosted in a very sunny WIT. The week seen sabbatical officers from all corners of the country, come together and partook in a jam packed week of training modules and activities. During the week I assisted Officer Board with the running of all events and also ensured that MO's in the Southern Region were aware of all events and activities scheduled.

## USI at the National Ploughing Championship

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During our Officer Board planning I suggested that it would be beneficial for the organisation to have an information stand at the National Ploughing Championships. This was mainly due to the high footfall at the event and also the large number of students who frequent the event. Joe and I met with Macra na Feirme before the event and they kindly offered us a space to host an information stand in their tent at the event. All in the all the information stand was a great success and we were lucky to engage with hundreds of young people and parents from all across the country during the duration of the three day event.

## Class representative training

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In early September I presented to a number of class representative groups with different members from Officer Board. I was delighted to be given the opportunity to meet with class representatives from across the country and discuss with them the issues they are facing as third level students. As the national campaign was gearing up and gathering traction steadily, it was a fantastic opportunity to mobilise class representatives and empower them to begin lobbying their local representatives and ensure that the student voice was being listened to in the run up to the budget.

## Part-Time Officer Training

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Part-time officer training for the southern region was kindly hosted in UCC this year. Part-time Officers from across the region partook in a number of training events and were briefed in full on the national campaign.

## Voter Registration & SERD

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Voter registration and the Student Electoral Registration Database was a huge tool in our pre-budget campaign this year. Over the course of fresher's weeks a huge push was put in place on registering as many students to vote as possible. This has since continued throughout the year and has seen thousands of students across the region registered to vote.

## 'Fight for Your Future Now' National Campaign

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The pre-budget campaign this year was an accumulation of hard work from Students', MO's and Officer Board. Work began during the summer months to ensure we were best prepared for the early October budget. As a group we strategized tirelessly to ensure that our efforts were duly noted and results were delivered. The southern region tirelessly lobbied TD's across the region. My specific role in the campaign was to organise and implement a number of actions across the south such as:

- Continuous support to local Students' Unions in their lobbying efforts; I ensured that MO's were supported during their lobbying efforts. This was delivered through a number of means including the guide to effective lobbying, attending meetings with TD's and lobbying and campaigning checklists.

- Community Engagement Event; In the approach to the budget we ran a series of community engagement events across the country. The Southern Region community engagement took place in Carlow town and was hosted by Carlow College and IT Carlow. The event saw students' engage with the local community and highlight the issues students' were experiencing in advance of the budget
- Organisation of a protest in Cork City; I assisted with the organisation and implementation of numerous local protests in the southern region. A number of provisions needed to be carried out before the protests such as route planning, acquiring permits, production of materials and raising awareness on campus to name a few. A huge thank you has to be said to UCCSU and CITSU for their support and advice during the organisation of the protest, their insight to the city was invaluable.

## National and Local regional campaign launches

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Over the course of the year I was given the opportunity to help organise regional launches and hosting of USI campaigns. The first launch was the 'Guide to Student Life' which was hosted kindly by IT Carlow Students Union. The next stop on the campaign trail was CITSU where we rolled out the 'More Talk, More Action' campaign. Finally we were back in IT Carlow with the 'Sexual Health Advice and Guidance' roadshow.

I was also given the opportunity to help local colleges run their own campaigns and was delighted to help out on campuses all across the region with campaigns ranging from Sexual health to Mental Health.

## Technological Universities Seminar

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With TU's being this year's hot topic and one which affects many institutions within the Southern Region, it was decided imperative that we begin assisting and supporting MO's effected by this. With the help of the VP for QQAA we began work assembling a seminar which would benefit MO's. The first seminar was held in It Tralee in advance of National council. The event was attended by my MO's from across the country. The discussion was solid over the course of the seminar and work has already begun on the next one.

## Referenda

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I worked on the various referenda that arose throughout the year. I lobbied students; lecture addressed and promoted the many benefits of USI membership in ITTSU and DCU. It was a fantastic opportunity for Officer Board to be on the ground with USI's grass-root members.

## MO Local Election Hustings

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I have assisted many of the southern MO's with the election process of their incoming Students' Union teams. I was present for a number of Hustings and acted as returning officer when called upon.

## Conclusion

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Being a national representative for students across Ireland has been a privileged and I will always be humbled and honoured to have served as the VP for the southern Region. This year has been one of the most enjoyable adventures I think I will ever experience. However this could not have been made possible without the hard work and enthusiasm expressed by each and every single Students' Union in the Southern Region. I have also been blessed to have served on an Officer Board with some of the most dedicated and hardworking individuals which I have ever encountered. You have all been a pleasure to work with and I am sure you will continue to make the world an awesome place. I look forward to the months ahead of us all and what we can achieve as a team and a region.

Le meas,

Ciara

# VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE BORDER, MIDLANDS AND WEST **KEVIN DONOGHUE**



## Crossover

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I had a number of crossover sessions with Breffni Gorman. We covered the colleges in the region and the day to day workings of the BMW officer. Breffni also made several suggestions on how to improve the position. We also covered logistics such as travel, overnighing and the difficulties facing the regional officers.

## Training

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I spent the first week of my officership in Dublin engaged in team bonding, planning and training. I received presentation, time management and writing skills training from Carr Communications. We also began planning for the year ahead and Joe organised a number of team building exercises for the group.

## Year Work Plan

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I compiled my work plan for the year. I drew on the introductory meetings I have had thus far and also used the work plans of last year's regional officers as a starting point. I also drew from my own manifesto and on the advice of my colleagues. The plan focuses heavily on communication and engagement with MOs and grass roots members.

## Voter Registration

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There were a large number of voter registration drives held across the BMW region since the beginning of the academic term. Thousands of students have been registered across all campuses and collectively more students have been registered to vote with SERD in the BMW Region than all other regions combined. I used a few different methods to register students in the various colleges.

## Area Bonding

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Area bonding was held on Inis Mór of the 26th & 27th. We also held a regional council where we discussed the possibility of action other than protest and reflected on SUT. The event was attended by most of region and was great craic. Big thank you to Kathryn Nea for providing entertainment on the night.

## Town Takeover

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The Town Takeover in Castlebar was a huge success. GMIT Mayo Campus SU deserve particular congratulations for organising the event and I would like to thank Declan Higgins from NUIGSU and Sam O'Neil and Mike Kerrigan from GMIT Galway for helping out on the day.

In terms of deliverables beyond the community engagement a Labour councillor has agreed to put forward a motion of support for the fight for your future now campaign.

## Photo Stunt

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The photo stunt was organised by NUIGSU and was held in Knock to highlight the problem of forced migration amongst the youth of the country. In terms of deliverables we recieved extensive local news coverage in the print media and I participated in a radio interview with Ocean FM in Sligo.

## Council Motions

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In the run up to the national campaign I submitted a number of motion to town and county councils that supported the aims and objectives of the campaign

## National Day of Action 2013

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Marched in Sligo with LYIT, ITS, STACS, GMIT, NUIG and AIT. Over two thousand people attended the march and there was

extensive media coverage of the event from a regional perspective. The event was largely successful, A clean up team made sure the area was as we found it after the march. The March received wide support from the public and extensive media coverage.

## Class Rep Training

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I attended a number of class rep training events on behalf of USI. The trainings I attended were in STACS, IT Sligo, AIT, GMIT Mayo campus, MSU and NUIG. The class rep trainings were well attended and managed in each institution and I commend the MO's for their work in this regard.

## Campaigns

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Throughout the year I helped member organisations in the BMW region with a number of campaigns including the Fit In Body Fit In Mind campaign in GMIT, ITS and LYIT. The Were not leaving campaign and a constitutional review for MSU.

## Political Lobbying

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Met with An Taoiseach and Min Cannon regarding education cuts to third level. Attended a pre-budget briefing on 9th October. In addition I lobbied T.D.s from across the BMW region throughout the national campaign and discussed the budget with many of them afterwards,

## GMIT & DCU referendums

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GMIT held a referendum on membership of USI this year and the motion passed with 95% of students voting in favour of affiliation. This is one of the highest yes votes ever returned in a USI affiliation referendum. I was also engaged with the campaign in DCU which saw us win the affiliation referendum by a single vote.

## Events at National Council

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Throughout the year I organised events for national council with a view to making the concept more attractive as attendance varied throughout the year. I organised a 5K fun Run for Athlone and paint-balling for LYIT national councils.

## Value of Education

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The value of education working group was held just before christmas in USI HQ and was a very beneficial event. We made a number of recommendations that we hope to bring to campaigns working group and national council for the Letterkenny NC.

## Toy Appeal

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I attended a toy appeal for IT Sligo SU in the run up to christmas. The event was held in the major shopping centre for the town. It also provided us an opportunity to engage with the community. The event was a huge success and we collected dozens of toys for families in need in Sligo.

## Semester two planning

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Prior to Christmas I attended a review session in Dublin to look back at the first semester in USI and forward to semester two. The meeting was beneficial in that we were able to engage in a candid review of our work in the past six months and how we could better ourselves for the rest of the year.

## Part Time Officer Training

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Part Time officer training was held in GMIT on the 21st of January along with the VP AAQA. Part time officers from NUIG, GMIT and AIT were in attendance. I delivered modules on public speaking and campaigns 101. I spoke to many of the part time officers in the weeks following and, while many were pleased with the modules etc some thought that we could have provided more training. We had previously organised a part time officer training for october last year but it was cancelled and this led to a reduction in modules provided due to a lack of availability from a speakers perspective.

## Nursing Campaign

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I have participated in the nursing campaign since it was launched in February and took part in the protest held in Dublin on March 6th bringing a delegation from NUIG to Dublin on the day.

# LU GAEILGE FEIDLIM SEOIGHE



**First of all, I would like to thank Aodhán O Deá and Julian de Spáinn for the support and advice that I received from them during my tenure. It proved to be invaluable during the year, and that most of the campaigns would not have achieved reality without their support.**

## Seachtain na bhFreisir/ Freshers' Weeks

During the summer months, I liaised with Fóras na Gaeilge and Conradh na Gaeilge, to secure 50,000 individual, free of charge, Irish Language promotional materials for the Irish Language Societies across the country.

The items included wallets, pens, stickers, t-shirts, bunting, board games, bags, rulers, stationary, playing cards and many other materials.

During the first fortnight of the first term, I travelled to numerous colleges throughout the country, to develop the strategy of the Societies in promoting the language, to be on hand to give advice on promoting and organising Irish Language events, to increase numbers and membership of the societies, and to distribute the Irish Language materials.

## Ábhar Ghaeilge AMLÉ/USI Irish Language Materials

One of the first projects I undertook at the beginning of the year was to renew the "Tá Gaeilge Agam" campaign. 13,000 redesigned Irish Language bands were ordered, and this supply is due to last until 2015. The increase of the order from previous years was due to the high demand of the bands from previous campaigns. They were sourced at a lower overall price, to ensure maximum value for our members.

These bands were then subsequently distributed throughout Member Organisations, during Freshers' Weeks, and

at any events I attended that had been organised by a Cumann Gaelach.

## Oifigigh na Gaeilge nua/New Irish Language Officers

One of my priorities at the beginning of the year was to increase the amount of Oifigigh na Gaeilge in MO's around the country.

Progress has been made as regard to a position being developed in certain Institutes throughout the country, although, this is something that next years LU Gaeilge will need to work upon and develop.

The main reason for the development of an Oifigeach na Gaeilge on a Student Union executive is threefold: that there would be a constancy as regard to the development of the Language within the MO, as a point of Contact for Gaeilgeoirí on campus, and that the development of a Cumann Gaelach would have support of the Students' Union.

## Traenáil na gCumann/Irish Language Training

The Annual Training event for Irish Language officers, and Irish Language Societies took place on the weekend of the 11, 12 and 13th of October 2013.

This was the 7th successive annual Irish Language training held, and it took place in DIT and Conradh na Gaeilge. I would like to specifically thank both Conradh na Gaeilge, and Club Conradh na Gaeilge for allowing USI to use their facilities for the event.

I gave a workshop on "What is USI?" and "How to be an effective Irish Language Officer". Other workshops given during the weekend included how to organise Irish Language events, Your Language Rights, and the ex-Coimisinéir Teanga, Sean O Curraoin, gave a talk on the role

that his office has in uploading Irish Language rights.

Networking plays a significant role in the weekend, as over 200 students from across the country take part in the event.

## Oireachtas na Gaeilge

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Oireachtas an Gaeilge is an annually held arts festival the Irish Language and Culture, usually held in early November. For the past number of years, there has been significant student involvement in the festival. USI is central in organising students to attend the festival, ensuring the availability of USI Tickets for the event, which are heavily discounted (as much as 80%), assisting Cumann Gaelacha in finding accommodation for the Festival, organising the students night, and also the USI/Gael Linn/Irish Times debating competition. This year saw the very first round of debates taking place around the country, being organised within MO's themselves, highlighting the demand and esteem by which this competition is seen.

This year, over 550 students from across the country descended on Killarney, the venue for this year Oireachtas. The Oíche na Mac Léinn (Students' Night) at the Oireachtas has proven to be the largest annual social gathering of Students, which USI organises, throughout the year.

## Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga & Irish Language Rights Campaign

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In November the Irish language commissioner decided to stand down from his position due to the inaction of the Government to implement its own Irish Language Strategy, and for not providing sufficient services through the medium of Irish.

USI and Conradh na Gaeilge were the first group to publicise the damage being done. The first step in the campaign was a photo-shoot outside Leinster House, which gained widespread media attention, and also was the pre-cursor to 10,000 people marching on Dáil Éireann last month.

In April, a march in support of Irish Language legislation being drafted in Northern Ireland will take place. Students from across MOs will take part, from both Southern and Northern Colleges.

## Conradh na Gaeilge

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This year, the long lasting relationship between Conradh na Gaeilge, and USI was formalised by means of a memorandum

of understanding. Essentially what this means that both USI and an Chonradh will provide support and advice on campaigns regarding Irish Language rights, and it will give USI a stronger voice when lobbying members of Seanad and Dáil Éireann, on Irish Language legislation and the implementation of the 20 year Strategy for the Irish Language.

## Seachtain na Gaeilge 2014

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As highlighted in my manifesto, this year saw the re-launching of Seachtain na Gaeilge USI. Although not as many events, as had been hoped, had been organised due to the timing of the "Lá Mór na Gaeilge" protest, which took up most of my time at the start of the semester

Although the week was not without its merits, culminating in a Mystery tour by An Chuallacht (Cumann Gaelach) in Maynooth, and TCD, and newly affiliated DCU.

I believe that this year's Seachtain na Gaeilge was to be used a gauge on whether it would be feasible to hold the event annually, and it is quiet clear to me that due to the nature, and demand of such an event, that it is crucial that this is something which needs to be worked upon and developed in the coming year.

## Árd Fheis Conradh na Gaeilge

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I attended the Ard Fheis of Conradh na Gaeilge in February last, and put forward a number of motions regarding the association's work with young people, and in particular the teaching of the Language. Student participation of the event was low, as the timing of the event was not suited to most MO's, and therefore this is something that must be addressed for next year's event.

The Ard Fheis is a vessel for discussion and debate about how best to continue to build our language and as such it is important the strong participation of young people seen in recent years continues, and the views of Ireland's youth in this forum are heard.

## Meán Cumarsáide/Media

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During the year, I have been heavily involved in the media interaction, and have worked very closely with An Uachtarán, and the USI Media executive, in delivering an effective media presence to the Irish Language Media.

I have developed a relationship with TG4, RTÉ, Raidio na Gaeltachta, Raidio na Life, Gaelport.ie, and Raidió na Life which I believe to be a venue to which USI may

develop as a stronger force within Irish Public life, and add to the credibility of USI as a representative body, not only for students, but young people across the country.

## **Focail Dheireadh/Conclusion**

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There are several months left in my term, and much of the work I have carried out during the year has been on the ground, among the student body, in helping to organise events, helping the promotion of the work of individual Unions and Cumann Gaelacha, and in providing essential training and advice to those students on the ground.

During the Summer months, my work will encompass funding opportunities for the Irish Language Societies, developing stronger connections between Irish Language sector organisations and USI, and in developing a comprehensive policy regard the implementation of new Irish Language Officers throughout the country, and the Value of the Fluency to Students.

It is to be noted that, year on year, the work of the Irish Language Vice President has significantly increased, both as a result of Irish Societies increasing in size and activity, and also the work done in Gaeltacht colleges and in the Second level education system.

# SAFETY AT USI

## Safety at USI Events

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### Guidance for Delegates

USI wants all participants at events to have an enjoyable, productive and safe time. USI has developed procedures to ensure that everything that can be done is done to protect our members. More guidance has been given to Delegation Leaders.

## Key people for safety

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### USI Safety Champion

All USI events have a Safety Champion, who will be introduced at the start of the event. In your pack and on your ID lanyard you will have the telephone number for the Safety Champion, which you can ring at any time of the day or night to report anything you think could be dangerous.

### SU Delegation Leader

Your SU has a delegation leader – this is usually the Students' Union President, but it may be someone else on the delegation. This person is responsible for supporting and leading the delegation of representatives from your SU.

### Congress Director

The Congress Director is appointed by the National Council to manage Congress.

## Principles

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### Responsibility to others

The ethos of our union means that we each have a responsibility to take care of ourselves and to respect the space, integrity and needs of others. At USI events, we all need to respect this all the time.

Every delegate, facilitator, trainer, committee member and member of staff of USI and its partners is entitled to a safe and trouble-free event. Everybody at a USI event has a responsibility not to cause difficulties for or endanger someone else at our events. We will not accept or tolerate any action which causes another person at a USI event to either

be in danger or to believe that they are in danger.

### Respect for others

USI believes in the right to freedom of expression for our delegates. Debate about competing ideas is healthy and the basis of our policy process. We don't shout down others when they're speaking. We don't use personally insulting, threatening or offensive language and we don't stop others from expressing themselves within our rules.

### Responsibility to report

Every delegate at a USI event has a responsibility to report anything they feel could endanger themselves or another delegate. Every delegate has a right to have their concerns listened to and respected.

## Protocols

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### Abusive or violent behaviour

USI will not tolerate abusive or violent behaviour at any USI event. Anybody engaged in abusive or violent behaviour at a USI event can expect to be sent home. Any person engaged in activity which endangers another person at a USI event can expect to be excluded from the event (or any part of it) and not allowed to participate in future USI events.

### Conduct

USI events are focused on the work of the student movement over all. Every event we hold is geared toward supporting students and their representatives to best serve the needs of students – so the behaviour of people at our events is paramount.

Alcohol and drugs can impair a user's judgment and lead to risky behaviour, including sexually risky behaviour. It's not acceptable to have illegal drugs at a USI event. Anti-social behaviour, particularly that caused by the influence of drugs or alcohol is also not acceptable – and not compatible with remaining at a USI event. The USI Alcohol Policy contains more information on this.

## **Sexual conduct**

USI has a zero tolerance approach to sexual misconduct or harassment. Personal space, privacy and the right to control over one's own body are vital to USI.

USI will not accept:

- Unwanted sexual comments, including about someone's body or private life
- Repeated unwanted sexual invitations or requests
- Unwanted touching or sexually motivated activity

## **Investigation**

All allegations of misconduct at USI events will be treated seriously – but USI is not capable of conducting investigations into specific allegations and will not undertake to do so. We will provide support and information about other agencies which may be able to help. Where an allegation relates to something which endangers our members, USI will always support the relevant authorities in whatever way it can.

## **Accommodation and sleep**

USI provides accommodation at many events. Often this is to be shared between two or more delegates. Everyone at our events has a right to peace and a good night's sleep in the room and the bed they've been allocated, with no exceptions – we need this right to be respected by everyone all the time.

The people who have been allocated a room are in charge of the room and responsible for loss or damages there.

## **USI Staff**

USI staff have no right to participate in the democratic bodies of USI, and no right to reply to public comments about their work. It follows, therefore, that USI staff should not be mentioned or discussed during debates at a democratic event. Concerns about staff should be brought to the President.

Staff can be approached about anything you like – but if it relates to the policies or the procedures of the organisation, you can expect them to say nothing. Staff have no role nor any 'official' view on policy or politics.

Any violent or abusive conduct towards staff will be treated seriously and if unresolved could lead to the withdrawal of USI staff from the event.

The same applies to staff USI has hired temporarily or employees of organisations with which USI works and hotel staff.

## **Authority to eject**

The authority to require a person at a USI event to leave the event (temporarily or permanently) lies with any of the SU delegation leader, the lead USI officer for all events other than USI Congress, and with the Congress Director at USI Congress. The lead officer or Congress Director can take whatever advice and make whatever consultations they feel are appropriate – their decision is final for the event and no refunds may be made in respect of fees paid for attendance for an ejected person.

## **Why would we eject?**

A decision to eject a person will be taken if we feel that the safety or security of people at the event, or the perception of safety or security would be reduced by the person's continuing presence at the event.

We might also eject a person if otherwise the order of a democratic or training event would be impeded, where they have engaged in misconduct or have threatened to do so.

Congress  
Comhdháil AMLÉ



Union of Students in Ireland  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

# OFFICER BOARD ELECTIONS

# KEVIN DONOGHUE FOR USI PRESIDENT



**Hi folks, my name is Kevin Donoghue and I am a candidate for president. I am standing for this position because I feel I am the person best placed to lead USI in the coming year.**

It is highly unlikely that next years funding debate will be about stopping the introduction of a graduate tax or loan scheme. Next years national campaign will be about re-establishing the credibility of USI as a legitimate lobbying organisation. The fight for your future now campaign went a long way and has given us the opportunity to repair the damage done by the successive failed campaigns of previous years.

If we are to have any realistic opportunity of stopping the introduction of graduate taxes or student loans, which will be what the national campaign is about in budget 2016 then we need to ensure that USI as an organisation and representative body is taken seriously.

The coming year provides us with a perfect opportunity to do just that. The national funding campaign, marriage equality and income diversification are the three areas in which we need to deliver to improve our credibility as an organisation.

Building on last years campaign we can expand on our demands and use what works to protect our members. Protest marches have been attempted in many different forms in the last few years with little or no impact on the overall result. A targeted, tailored campaign that involves continued escalation will allow us to protect our members against cuts to grants and BTEA but also to reduce or even stop the planned increase in the student levy, something that we have not been able to do for a long time.

A properly led marriage equality campaign could prove to be the first step towards establishing USI as the first and the last word on social justice issues. For USI, and for others, the marriage equality campaign is not about a single issue. Is about the precedent a USI led campaign can and will set, even beyond equality issues.

Increasing our commercial activity is if vital importance for the survival of the organisation. With some Students' Unions struggling to pay affiliation fees it is high time for USI to diversify revenue streams so that we are not wholly reliant on membership fees to operate.

Success in these areas will contribute to the improving the credibility of USI externally amongst stakeholders and internally amongst its membership.

We are about to enter one of, if not, the most significant years for USI since it was founded. Failure to deliver on anyone of the issues I have outlined will have serious and far reaching consequences.

The race for presidency is not about the issues we face next year, they have been outlined for us. It is about choosing the right leader to tackle those issues. My experience and achievements during my time as BMW officer speak for themselves.

I am the only candidate in this race with the ability to deliver for USI and its membership next year.

## PLEASE VOTE KEVIN DONOGHUE #1 FOR PRESIDENT.

# STEPHEN FLEMING FOR USI PRESIDENT

Steven Fleming is a candidate for USI President. He is a student at NUI, Maynooth.

# LAURA HARMON FOR USI PRESIDENT



**Vision with action is the slogan for my campaign because effective leadership requires both. My diverse experience and track record sets me apart. USI needs a strong, progressive leader now and I am that strong, progressive leader.**

It's make or break time for our higher education funding campaign. I will fight against the commodification of education and against any form of deferred payment scheme. USI must call for an education system that works for students and that works for society. It's not enough to run campaigns that only scratch the surface of the issues. Under my leadership, USI will run intelligent, engaging campaigns that get to heart of the matter. I have the vision and knowledge to steer the narrative around education in our favour and to bring other civil society groups with us - because we are all fighting for the same thing. An accessible, quality education system is a keystone in building a more equitable society.

Our graduates are being devalued everyday by the culture of unpaid internships that has been allowed to permeate. I will ensure USI defends the rights of workers and their right to a living wage. I will call for proper investment in our young people and in the youth guarantee.

I have the most public speaking, lobbying and campaigning experience in this race - from addressing Oireachtas committees and the constitutional convention, lobbying Ministers and TDS, speaking at rallies and protests, organising rallies and protests. If you give me the opportunity, I will hit the ground running as President of USI.

I am committed to fulfilling USI's trilateral agreement next year and ensuring that the students we represent in the Northern Region are listened to, represented and included throughout the year.

I know that our 354,000 members are our biggest asset. I will bring back USI Activist Academy so that students are trained to campaign on the issues they care about. I will make Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training available to all officers. Having twice organised USI's largest and most effective event, Pink Training, I am best placed to organise a more effective and inclusive Students' Union Training.

I am committed to delivering tangible results and value for our students. I will extensively market the USI discount card and ensure that we follow through on USI's income diversification strategy.

We need a leader next year who understands the social inequality that students face. Under my leadership, we will assert ourselves at the forefront of social change. We will win marriage equality because losing is not an option, because our civil rights are too important and because we want a better future for those who come after us.

I have the critical skill set to lead the student movement. I have the experience and the passion. Time and time again, I have delivered for students.

We have the power to effect change. We've done it before and we'll do it again if you give me the opportunity to lead the way.

FOR VISION WITH ACTION;  
FOR A FORWARD-  
THINKING PRESIDENT,  
**PLEASE VOTE  
LAURA HARMON  
#1. #HARMON4USI**

**[www.harmonforpresident.com](http://www.harmonforpresident.com)**

# DENISE MCCARTHY FOR USI PRESIDENT



**I'm a 25 year old Social Care Graduate of Waterford IT and I'm currently the USI Deputy President and Vice President for Welfare. I have represented students locally and nationally, I have been an advocate for students and various issues and have campaigned and lobbied on their behalf. I am the most experienced candidate for the position of USI President, I have a proven track record of working hard, thinking outside the box and achieving on what I set out to do.**

I am committed to and passionate about the student movement. I want to ensure that USI continues to reflect on our 55 year history while rising from our successes and learning from our failures. I believe in the power and potential of the student movement and the importance of us coming together to stand up and speak out.

I have been representing students since 2006. I was elected Class Representative for four years and put myself forward for a full time position in WIT in 2010. I was elected Deputy President for Welfare where I was welfare and equality officer for WIT Students' Union. During this year I was also acting Education Officer where I sat on all relevant committees and boards; SAF Finance Committee, Academic Council and Governing Authority. I was re-elected to the position in 2011 and in 2012 I stood for USI VP Welfare. When I was re-elected VP Welfare (2013), the current President appointed me as the Deputy President which passed unanimously at USI National Council in July. I am second in command to the USI President representing over 350,000 students where I have been acting President on a number of occasions

and represented the students of Ireland on major media outlets, where I reached out to the families and communities of Ireland on student issues.

With my passion and determination mixed with my knowledge and vision, I am certain that 2014/2015 will be a rewarding year for students.

My two years of national experience has allowed me to see the main issues that need to be tackled - I will lead a team that will serve for students and ensure a better quality of student life in all four corners of Ireland.

From Belfast to Tralee, first year to final year, level five to level ten, Biomedical Science to Ancient History - we are united. As leader, I will ensure that the student voice is put at the forefront, is listened to and above all, is respected.

I am prepared once again to put my head down to get the hard work done, stick my neck out for the students I represent and be the strong voice of students at the national level.

Please have a read of my manifesto. I look forward to meeting you all throughout USI Congress and please feel free to meet me and ask me questions on why I believe I am the best candidate for USI President.

## VOTE DENISE MCCARTHY #1 FOR USI PRESIDENT

# GLENN FITZPATRICK

## FOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR CAMPAIGNS



Fellow students,

**Take a good look at the people you interact with as a student activist. We're the only entity that can give students and young people a fighting chance in this country. If we're waiting for the people who put us in this mess to be our saving grace, we're going to be waiting for a very long time.**

I'm Glenn Fitzpatrick and I want to be your next Vice President for Campaigns. I have been involved in my local Students' Union from day one, becoming a DITSU class rep within my first few weeks in college back in 2008. I care deeply for our student movement and I believe that I can empathize and work with everyone involved to put the fundamental building blocks into place that can propel us to the next level. There are many challenges and opportunities that lay ahead and we need to be fearless, to think outside the box and above all, change the dynamic for students and young people in this country.

Most of us are worried about the future, both for ourselves and for society. The Irish student movement which we are part of has always stood for positive societal change and must continue to do so. At this moment in time, we've got to work even harder. We're all going to have to up our game. We need to get real and very, very quickly. USI needs to become more relevant to every student. We need to strengthen our foundations, ensuring that each local Students' Union is as resourced, influential and democratic as it can be. Only by championing strong Students' Unions will our movement be able to grow organically.

I will work tirelessly to make sure that every message USI sends out is effectively geared towards achieving our objectives. Our campaigns need to gain clout in the public sphere and be meaningful to an ever-diversifying body of students nationwide. Whether that's by continuing the conversation on mental health issues that continue to plague many young people, or whether it's ensuring that students are once again to the fore of social progression by ensuring a YES vote in the upcoming referendum on Marriage Equality, campaigning is all about effective communications. Coming from a college that has more campuses than it knows what to with, I am well used to coordinating campaigns on a large scale, tailoring messages to reach different types of students and being extremely nomadic!

USI's core business is the fight to break down all barriers to education. For too long, USI have been good at everything else but fallen short on this front. Our National Campaign is broken but this will not be the case under my watch. We need a serious campaign against fee hikes and grant cuts and it would mean the absolute world to me to work with and for you, to protect what means the world to you.

## #GOWITHGLENN

# GAVIN LYNCH- FRAHILL FOR VP ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE



**I am seeking election to the Union of Students in Ireland position of Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance. 'Education is a right not a privilege' is a statement that USI has made in it's previous campaigns. I feel this statement is flawed. I believe it should read 'Good Education is a right not a privilege'.**

This is the main reason I want to represent the 300,000 plus members of USI on educational issues next year. I want to ensure that all students regardless of what they are studying and in what college get the best out of their academic experience. The threats to this are real. Currently the higher education sector is going through a massive overhaul led by the Higher Education Authority. Buzzwords that are heard throughout by the members of USI are 'Mergers, Regional Clusters, Technological Universities and Performance Based Funding.' In each of these areas there are threats to teaching hours, funding for services and relocation of courses.

I break my manifesto into three key areas: Solutions, Employability and Transparency. I have a proven track record in my own union for finding alternative ways around budget cuts by creating new cost effective plans to replace tutorials and placement modules that were cut. I want to share this skill with unions across the country next year. Employability should be at the top of our agenda in education in USI. It should be our goal to seek for 100% graduate employment as the market recovers and push for the varied courses that will create innovative and adaptable graduates that will make them the best to hire. Finally I believe the education

section of USI needs to be more transparent. I will disseminate information of upcoming meetings to SU officers before I attend them rather than the current practice of reporting to SU's after the meeting. This will maximise MO engagement in USI and ensure value for money.

The massive expansion of e-learning has created a new challenge for Higher Educational Institutions. The access of courses for people living thousands of miles away has bother given a greater opportunity for engagement but also a threat to the existing methods of education. I will work on the development of a USI strategy on e-learning to be approved by National Council in the first 100 days of my term.

I believe I am the best person to protect students in these changes. My year as Vice-President for Education In University College Cork has given me experience where I have fought and negotiated with the Minister for Education on numerous occasions, Tom Boland head of the HEA and numerous members of the Dáil. I want to fight for all students next year. Allow me to offer you the members of USI solutions to these problems, increased employability from your qualifications and a level of transparency to the role that has never been done before.

## IS MISE LE MEAS

# SAOIRSE NIC A'BHAIRD FOR VP WELFARE



**My name is Saoirse Nic A'Bhaird. I am a 22-year-old student, currently studying in NUI Galway for my Masters in Biomedical Science. I received my Undergraduate Degree in Science last October.**

I have been very involved with the Student Movement, and the Students' Union in NUI Galway for the past five years. I have been a Class Rep, represented students across the campus on the University's Academic Council, elected the Chairperson of the Students' Union, and the Convener of the School of Science, the later two being elected positions on the NUI Galway SU Exec.

I am a very understanding and approachable person, I have proven leadership skills from my time in the NUI Galway Students Union, and I have a deep understanding of the issues that students face on a daily basis.

I have been a crucial part of numerous welfare campaigns in NUI Galway. This has given me an insight into the problems that many welfare campaigns frequently have, and also an insight into some issues that Student Union campaigns scarcely highlight.

If elected to USI, I will not only provide your college with the resources to host successful SHAG, Healthy Living, Mental Health, Student Life, and Alcohol Awareness campaigns, but also campaigns surrounding Learning Difficulties, Working Students Rights, Depression in Young Males, Negative Body Image and other issue that affect students.

I will provide a peer based support network to ensure that your Welfare Officer is equipped and ready to deal with the issues that student's in your college will experience.

The USI Welfare campaign has gone from strength to strength, and I am the person who will be able to take it that step further. I am the best candidate for the position, and I am the only candidate that will not only highlight these prevalent issues, but will also address what has to be done to develop an understanding of the solutions to these problems.

My manifesto has been distributed throughout the Congress floor, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to come over and have a chat.

# GREG O'DONOGHUE FOR VP WELFARE



**My name is Greg O'Donoghue and I'm running for USI Vice President Welfare. I'm the current Vice President for Welfare and Equality at NCISU. So far this year, I have coordinated several welfare campaigns and assisted many students through individual casework. I have also launched two national campaigns with USI, ensuring they were effectively rolled out on campus.**

With this experience, I will be able to assist and guide Student Unions' across the country with their welfare campaigns, coordinate national campaigns and develop national welfare policies and strategies. I will ensure every Students' Union and Welfare Officer is fully prepared and trained in all aspects of student welfare while using my extensive experience to be a support to them. I will continue the work that has been done by USI on student wellbeing and bring it to a new level using my knowledge, experience and dedication.

Mental Health is an area I'm extremely passionate about. If elected, I will support local Welfare Officers in organising SafeTALK & ASIST to raise awareness of suicide prevention and intervention with students and college staff. The rise in the student contribution charge and grant cuts in recent years has affected the mental health of many students. We need to keep constant pressure on the Government so that we don't see any more cuts to Higher Education funding, as well as lobbying for better investment in mental health supports.

With USI recently stepping away from Drinkaware, there is an urgent need for us to establish a national campaign for students to understand the effects of binge and harmful drinking. The coverage of young people and alcohol has always been portrayed negatively in the media. We need to turn this around and promote healthy living for students.

Accommodation has been a huge issue for many over the last 12 months. Students are being exploited because of the increased demand for a place to live. We need to ensure that students are aware of their rights as tenants and lobby the Government for long term solutions to this crisis.

Every student has the right to practical and effective sexual health education. Many students haven't gotten this upon leaving secondary school. I will ensure USI coordinates a national sexual health campaign in the first semester. Students need to be aware on how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections. It is also important that they're comfortable talking about safe sex, consent and getting regular checks.

Exercise can improve your physical health and mental health as well as reducing anxiety and stress. As a National Union, we need to set a good example to young people and promote physical activity. It's great for meeting new people, building networks of friends and getting involved in new activities. If elected, I will continue to work with Student Support Ireland and pilot a physical health programme in a number of MOs to promote the benefits of physical activity.

I look forward to discussing my plans with you; please contact me on [vicepresident@ncisu.ie](mailto:vicepresident@ncisu.ie) if you have any questions or comments.

## #INGODWETRUST

# ANNIE HOEY FOR VICE PRESIDENT EQUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP



**Every person deserves to live a life of respect and dignity. We as a student movement need to stand together in solidarity with those who are marginalised and discriminated against by society. Together we are facing an exciting new era of progressive social change and justice. It is our time to come together and make sure the voices of those who are pushed aside are finally heard loud and clear. We need to take our voices to the polling stations and the ballot boxes to ensure we have a future we want and deserve.**

My name is Annie Hoey and I want to be your next VP for Equality and Citizenship. I have been vocal around many areas of equality, from initiating the now USI-led LGBT Ally Campaign, to founding and running UCC's first ever Feminist Society. I have proven myself to be a passionate and capable leader, able to deliver tangible results, and to dedicate myself 100% to fighting for the rights that everyone deserves. I am willing and ready to put every ounce of energy and conviction I have into fighting for equality, equity of access, students' voices at a local and national level, and to be sure that USI continues to defend those who are marginalised and undermined by society.

While there are clear campaigns for the Equality and Citizenship brief ahead- the Marriage Equality Referendum and equity of access around the country- there are other areas within the role that need to be bolstered further, such as the representation of International students at a national level, and to ensuring the voices of mature students, postgraduate students, members

of the traveller community, and students with disabilities, are heard. Great strides have been made within the areas of equality so far and I hope that you would be willing to put your trust in me to take the reins of this position, and to continue the good work that has already been done.

By building on the phenomenal work already done within the Equality and Citizenship brief, I will ensure that we do not drop the ball on any areas within the remit. The workload is vast but with dedication and perseverance, I believe we can take the equality agenda to the next level. With me as your VP for Equality and Citizenship, I believe we can make USI the strongest it has ever been as a voice for social justice.

We are faced with referenda, general elections, equity of access concerns, migrant rights, gender inequality, and a whole other plethora of issues. If elected, I will make sure we take a realistic and proactive approach to dealing with these. I do not believe in doing things just to mark off a list- I believe in committing myself fully to achieving visible and positive results. With me as your VP for Equality and Citizenship, I will ensure that every student has their say in the equality of this nation.

I look forward to this opportunity, and hope you will support me along the way!

## #ANNIE4USI

# JOSEPH LOUGHNANE

## FOR VP BORDER, MIDLANDS AND WEST



**We go into these elections amidst a youth crisis in Ireland. 1000s are leaving our shores, the cost of third level education is rising and many of us are only finding work on exploitative labour schemes. In the past year, the USI has highlighted those push factors that are leading to a rise in forced emigration. We know what challenges lie ahead and we prepare ourselves now to continue to build an organisation that speaks out for all those being forgotten by this Government. Each region and each individual county has its own crises, with every constituent Students Union being in the best position to inform us on how to respond. I put myself forward today to be the voice for those who feel they are never heard, for those who feel there's no hope, for those preparing to organise to win.**

My name is Joseph Loughnane and I am a candidate for Vice President for the Border, Midlands & Western Region. I ask for your vote as a regional campaigner, as a campus coordinator and as a grassroots activist.

I see the BMW Officer role as a two-way process - communicating the issues and concerns of the constituent Student Unions in the regions back to the USI and initiating national campaigns at a regional level. I am currently the Galway organiser for the national We're Not Leaving campaign and am a Class Rep for my Diploma in Community, Development & Practice. I have been active on student and youth issues for almost 8

years - working within and alongside the USI on various campaigns at a local, regional and national level. The USI has taken a massive step forward this year under the current executive and it is this progression into a fully representative body that convinced me to run for this role.

For the first half of 2013 I immersed myself in Student Union campaigns in London with a view to gathering skills and knowledge that would be useful for when I returned to Ireland. Bringing the USI-backed We're Not Leaving campaign to Galway has seen me active on all the push factors that lead to forced emigration - mental health, housing, youth unemployment, unpaid internships, fee hikes and grant cuts and precarious work. To this role I intend to bring solid campaigning experience and a wealth of community connections I have made over the past few years.

The USI is making great strides on issues that affect us on a daily basis and I believe I can continue the work of the current BMW Officer with a view to increasing the USI presence on all campuses across the region. Together we are stronger, and with a emphasis on solidarity and by reaching out to young workers and the unemployed youth - we can create a voting bloc that the Government can't ignore.

# CONOR STITT

## FOR VP BORDER, MIDLANDS AND WEST



**A chairde, Welcome to Athlone!**

**My name is Conor Stitt and I am running for the position of Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region in USI. I'm sure I'll get talking to you during the week but if we have not met already, I can tell you why I hope you can vote for me to be your next regional officer.**

Last year, I served as the Vice President/ Education Officer of NUI Galway Students' Union. During this time, to say I was involved in USI would be an understatement. The two main areas in which I've made the most progress would be fighting fees and grant cuts and grant reform.

During the SUSI grant crisis, I gave numerous recommendations to grant reform, many of which are in practice today. During the national campaign, I've led to largest student march of the last two years.

I was also elected onto USI's campaigns sub-committee, the only education officer shortlisted for the 'sabbatical officer of the year' award and I've served on advisory roles this year to the current USI President and to numerous SU's within the region.

I believe experience and knowledge of USI are absolutely key in this role. I believe I can say my experience and knowledge are second to none for this role. I am candidate who you can trust and I hope we can return to congress next year with me as your regional officer but you, as a delegate, knowing that USI have gone from strength to strength this year and some of that can be attributed to my involvement.

I hope to be a regional officer that looks out for the interests of the individual students' unions first and foremost and I won't be an officer who just serves excuses for USI's shortcomings when you're unhappy with them. I am looking to be a regional officer that is above all approachable and can give advice to any student or SU officer who asks and through that, I will be accountable to you all.

I hope to start a number of campaigns within the region regarding fee and grants, mental health, marriage equality and voter registration. I am the type of campaigner who starts campaigns with the objectives in mind, as good intentions or giving up is not good enough for the students we are fighting for. I am a candidate who has time and time delivered and achieved for students and I hope to do so again.

This week you will define what route USI takes for the next 12 months and I'm sure as you will find out, the next 12 months is 'make or break' time for the student movement in a lot of respects, we need to be making the right decisions and the best decisions for the future of students in Ireland. I hope one of these decisions is voting Conor Stitt no.1 for Vice President for the BMW Region.

Enjoy Congress!

# FEIDLHIM SEOIGHE

## LEAS UACHTARÁN GAEILGE/VP IRISH LANGUAGE



### **Feidhlim Seoighe is ainm dom, agus is mé Leas Uachtarán Gaeilge de chuid AMLÉ.**

My name is Feidhlim Seoighe, and I am the Current Vice President of the Irish Language in USI. I studied Law in NUI Galway, and graduated last year. I was also the Oifigeach na Gaeilge on the NUI Galway Students' Union Executive.

This year, great strides being achieved in terms of the Irish Language campaign of the Union of Student in Ireland.

The Government has, more or less, turned its back on the first Language of the State. It is becoming increasingly difficult to communicate with any public Department in Irish, and one of the major issues I will fight for, if re-elected, will be to lobby and work with other Irish organisations, to ensure this issue is resolved.

The work of the VP Gaeilge is very diverse, from being on the ground helping Cumainn Gaelacha entice members, to working with brand new Cumainn Gaelacha start up, organising national events for students across the country, organising the annual Irish Language training weekend (which upwards of 200 students attend), being a point of contact and advice for the Oifigí na Gaeilge throughout the country and while doing that, also working with other Irish language organisations in promoting and developing the use of an Ghaeilge through all streams of society.

If re-elected it will be a priority of mine to continue, and develop on this work.

The Irish Language Commissioner made the decision to stand down from his position early in November. The Union of Students in Ireland was one of the first organisations to make a stand, and make our voices heard. It is of the utmost importance that this organisation works in developing and strengthening on all that has been achieved this year. The Government needs to see that Gaeilge is living Language, a part of our heritage, and it is not something that can be left to one side, or ignored, which seems to be the current stance of the Public Service. It is students, and young people across the country, that need to prove the worth of an Ghaeilge.

I am the right person to lead the next step of the USI's Irish Language campaign. I understand the importance of this issue, and have the experience to work with students on the ground to develop an even stronger campaign next year.

Is Cearta Daoine iad Cearta Teanga.  
Language Rights are Human Rights.

Congress  
Comhdháil AMLÉ



Union of Students in Ireland  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

# MOTIONS & POLICIES











**Congress therefore mandates**

The President to conduct a survey to determine to which of its officers member organisations assign common students' union sabbatical officer responsibilities. The findings shall be presented to the last national council of this academic year and updated on an annual basis.

**Congress also mandates**

The President to facilitate the holding of ad hoc working groups at any ordinary meeting of National Council. Proposals may be submitted by member organisations no less than two weeks in advance of any meeting, must have the support of at least two additional MOs, and shall detail the proposed chairperson and agenda.

**UO 2**  
**STUDENT UNION TRAINING**  
**Proposed by: CITSU**

**Congress observes**

Student Union Training has a huge impact on the performance of member organisations.

**Congress applauds**

That the current structures of Student Union Training allows for satisfactory training.

**Congress recognises**

The value in information/experiential sharing among the sabbatical cohort.

**Congress believes**

That improvements can be made in Student Union Training by having speaker driven workshops.

**Congress mandates**

That no speaker at Student Union Training should speak for more than 60% of the session time.

**UO 3**  
**CENTRALISATION OF NATIONAL COUNCIL**  
**Proposed by: BMW Region**

Congress notes the importance of National Council throughout the year. It allows for the discussion of important issues such both in national council and working groups. Congress further notes the difficulty faced by many member organisations, especially outside of Dublin, in travelling to and attending some national councils.

Congress is concerned that this has led to a certain level of absenteeism at national council and it puts extra pressure both on the officers as individuals and the finances of the Unions to travel to these locations.

Congress observes that many officers may be too tired to contribute in a meaningful way to working groups and that officers are away from their MO's for full days due to traveling to congress.

Congress appreciates that some national councils are special e.g. SUT & Congress National councils and will require travel.

Congress therefore mandates the USI to centralise ordinary national councils to be held in the same location each time. Preferably a neutral (non-college) location so as not to put excessive strain on any MO in terms of commitment to national council. This is to be completed by the end of august 2014.

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**Congress further notes**

That local student unions have more access to storage facilities than USI and potentially can store such materials for later use themselves.

**Congress therefore mandates**

Officer board to have said materials prepared and ready for distribution by September so that all member organisations can benefit from their use in local campaigns.

**UO 21**  
**USI/ICTU/ISSU ‘LOCKED OUT? - INVESTING IN A FUTURE FOR YOUTH’ POLICY PAPER**  
**Proposed by IT Sligo SU**

**Congress Notes**

The approval of National Council for this policy paper and the work done by the three organisations on this area to date.

**Congress Welcomes**

The collaboration between USI, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Irish Second-Level Union on this area which impacts the memberships of all three unions. This is based on the realisation that the youth jobs crisis can only be resolved by joined-up thinking across second-level, third-level and the labour market.

**Congress Adopts**

The ‘Locked Out? - Investing In A Future For Youth’ Policy Paper.

**Congress Mandates**

USI Officer Board to lobby and campaign with ICTU and ISSU for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the policy paper.

**UO 22**  
**USI PROMOTIONAL PACKS**  
**Proposed by USI VP Campaigns**

Congress notes that USI “Freshers Bags 2013” were a success in its first year and were widely used by member organisations and furthering the brand and awareness of the USI with incoming students. Congress notes that this scheme needs to be continued for September 2014. Congress accepts that the timescale for sourcing, designing and delivering packs was short and this needs to be rectified for future endeavours. Congress Mandates that the USI President, utilising any other relevant resources to actively pursue the completion of promotional bags for September 2014. Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance

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**Congress Affirms:**

That it is best practice to provide evidence-based and approved methods of smoking cessation.

**Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to work with all relevant bodies in the promotion of smoking cessation to students across both Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Vice President should present plans of this campaign by November 2014.

**WEL 3**  
**CASEWORK TRAINING**  
**Proposed by USI VP Welfare and Deputy President**

**Congress Notes:**

The high levels of casework Students' Union officers deal with on a yearly basis.

**Congress Further Notes:**

The need for training and support throughout the year when handling large number of individual cases.

**Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare, in consultation with other members of Officer Board, to organise intensive casework training for Students' Union officers each year. This training must include; referral, role plays, data protection and managing casework records. This training must be completed before September each year.

**WEL 4**  
**APPLIED SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING (ASIST) FOR STUDENTS' UNION OFFICERS**  
**Proposed by Welfare WG**

**Congress Notes:**

According to the CSO figures, there were 507 suicides registered in 2012 or 11 per 100,000 of the population.

**Congress Believes:**

Everyone has a role to play in suicide prevention and that Students' Unions need to be equipped with the skills to intervene in a possible suicide if it arises. The more people who feel confident and willing to explore possible signs of suicide risk and provide support and help, the more lives could be saved.

**Congress Acknowledges:**

ASIST, the two-day interactive workshop in suicide first-aid that is highly beneficial. It encourages honest, open and direct talk about suicide as part of preparing people to provide suicide first aid.

**Congress Acknowledges:**

That specific ASIST for Students' Union officers was delivered for the first time in December 2013.

**Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to organise Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) each year for Students' Union Officers. This must be completed by September each year.

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**Congress Notes with Concern:**

How quickly the SAF has run out in many Higher Education Institutions around the country showing the increased strain on students' financial situation.

**Congress Affirms:**

That with the current plight of student finances across the country, the current allocation of funds to student hardship is not fit for purpose.

**Congress Mandates:**

That the President and the Vice President Welfare to campaign for increased funding for the SAF scheme, and to update National Council in August 2014.

**Proposed by: DIT Students' Union**

**WEL 8  
USI MOTION: BEREAVEMENT  
SUPPORT POLICY**

**Proposed by IT Tralee**

**Congress Notes**

As a result of the autonomous nature of policy making each HEI will have a different approach with how to deal with bereavement.

**Congress therefore Observes**

The creation of bereavement policies within each HEI.

**Congress Welcomes**

The structure that they provide on how each institute handles the death of a student or the death of a student's guardian/friend.

**Congress Notes**

That the Students' Union is often a source of comfort, familiarity and support to students who have suffered a bereavement.

**Congress Believes**

It would be beneficial for all MOs to have a uniformed bereavement policy to assist the Students' Union with a bereavement of a student or a student's next-of-kin.

**Congress therefore Mandates**

The VP for Welfare to find out the best practice of MOs regarding their individual bereavement policies and come up with a uniformed policy for MOs to use in the case of a bereavement. This mandate should be fulfilled by September 2014.

**WEL 9  
STUDENTS IN REMOTE AREAS  
Proposed by: CITSU**

**Congress observes**

That many colleges have courses in which students can be based in remote areas for much of the duration of their course.

**Congress believes**

That students in rural areas can feel a sense of isolation and issues such as mental health, alcohol abuse and road safety can be prevalent among students in these areas.

**Congress further believes**

That it can be difficult for MO's to reach these campuses to be of support to these students and many of the campuses where these students may

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**Congress Recognises:**

The cost of public transport for students in Ireland is significantly higher than in other European countries.

**Congress Mandates:**

The President and the Vice President for Welfare to lobby the relevant bodies including the Minister for Transport to provide improved student discounts on all forms of public transport, and to lobby for increased Nitelink bus services mid-week and to report to Council on both issues by September 2014.

**NA 5**  
**OPT-OUT ORGAN DONATION**  
**Proposed by NUIGSU**

**NOTE: This motion would require a supermajority of 2/3 in favour to pass.**

Congress notes the importance of organ donation within this country in saving lives.  
Congress applauds the usage of organ donation cards and the promotion of organ donation within the "Irish Donor Network".  
Congress further applauds the implementation of an "opt out scheme" for organ donation in neighboring European countries.  
Congress believes that further actions should be taken to lobby for an opt out scheme to be introduced in Ireland.  
Congress therefore mandates USI President and VP for Welfare to lobby relevant parties for the promotion of an opt-out scheme in relation to organ donation.

**NA 6**  
**ACCOMMODATION STANDARDS & AVAILABILITY**  
**Proposed by Proposed by: Dublin Regional Council**

**NOTE: This motion would require a simple majority (50% + 1) to pass.**

**Congress Notes**

That accommodation is a right not a privilege. The shortage of reasonably priced rental accommodation in Dublin, as well as in Ireland in general.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The President to lobby the appropriate national bodies for large-scale investment in student accommodation.

**Congress also mandates**

The President, VP Welfare and VP Equality & Citizenship to run a campaign promoting to landlords the benefits of having students as tenants.

**NA 7**  
**STUDY ON THE LEGALISATION OF CANNABIS IN IRELAND**  
**Proposed by USI VP Welfare and Deputy President**

**NOTE: This motion would require a simple majority (50% + 1) to pass.**

**Congress Notes:**

The growing support for the legalisation of cannabis both for recreational and medical use in Ireland.

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**Congress Further Notes:**

That many other countries and states have legalised the use of cannabis and this has furthered research and evidence regarding the effects of legalisation upon many aspects of society.

**Congress Affirms**

Where possible it is best to use existing evidence and research to inform decisions and stances upon issues.

**Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to conduct a non-biased study on the potential positive and negative effects on society including a focus on the student body in Ireland if cannabis is legalised. This study must be completed before USI considers taking a stance on the legalisation of cannabis.

**NA 8**  
**PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING**  
**Proposed by E&C Working Group**

**NOTE: This motion would require a supermajority of 2/3 in favour to pass.**

Congress notes recent criticisms of RTÉ have called into question the role of public service broadcasting as a whole.  
Congress also notes that public service broadcasting is a real success story in Britain and Germany in particular.  
Congress affirms that we ought to be clear as a society that we don't need to do away with Public Service Broadcasting. Rather, we just need to do it better.  
Congress believes in a model of Public Service Broadcasting that reflects the current issues and views of our communities and which provides a platform for democracy, citizenship and the arts.  
Congress also believes that RTÉ has failed to really offer this to Irish society.  
Congress mandates the President and VP Equality & Citizenship to lobby the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources for a root and branch review of RTÉ, with a view to achieving a better public broadcasting service for Irish civil society.  
Congress further mandates the President to investigate the feasibility of a campaign aimed at lobbying for a better public broadcasting service in collaboration with interested parties and to report back to National Council by the 1st of October 2014.

**NA 9**  
**TENANTS' RIGHTS**  
**Proposed by MSU**

**NOTE: This motion would require a simple majority (50% +1) to pass.**

**Congress Notes:**

The ongoing difficulties within some parts of the Irish property market with both the quality and quantity of private rented accommodation.

**Congress Further Notes:**

The difficulties that student unions face in attempting to increase the minimum standard of housing through their own in-house efforts or via their college residence office.

**Congress Affirms:**

Where possible it is best for student unions to share best practice on how to enforce tenants' rights and improve the vetting of advertised rented accommodation.

**Congress Mandates:**

That the Vice-President for Welfare compiles a report on the various mechanisms for vetting rented accommodation in an effort to share best practice.

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Congress  
Comhdháil AMLÉ



Union of Students in Ireland  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

# POLICY DUE TO EXPIRE

# Prioritised Policy due to Expire

## 09/ED 18

### POST GRADUATE WORKING GROUP

#### **Congress notes**

That postgraduate students are often very limited in the amount of time they can dedicate towards ancillary roles in local unions and USI itself.

#### **Congress further notes**

That the issues that postgraduates face are often hindered by a lack of continuity from officer to officer, and that issues that occur nationwide could be solved by an effective communication network between postgraduate officers.

#### **Congress therefore mandates**

The education officer to create a database of postgraduate issues that arose, and how they were addressed at local and national levels. This database should be made available to all postgraduate and education officers nationwide.

#### **Congress also mandates**

The education officer to ensure that contact details of all postgraduate officers are available in the database.

#### **Congress further mandates**

The education officer to organize meetings with the postgraduate officers, if necessary, to address their issues.

## 09/ED 28

### POSTGRADUATE CAMPAIGN

#### **Congress notes**

The growing population of postgraduate students within USI

#### **Congress regrets**

That many postgraduate students feel disconnected from USI

#### **Congress therefore mandates**

The education officer to organise a promotion campaign within the first semester of each year, to highlight the success and the services of USI to postgraduate students specifically

## 10/ED 7

### STUDENT FUNDING

#### **Congress notes**

That with the economy struggling, students need all the help they can get in securing funding in the form of grants, scholarships and other non-traditional forms of supports for college degrees.

#### **Congress believes**

That USI needs to lobby the Department of Education to compile a list of all forms of funding for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees that is available to students in every third-level institute in the country.

#### **Congress notes**

That the studentfinance.ie website is a great resource for students and prospective students, and that it should be utilised more to help people looking for financial information before going to college.

#### **Congress mandates**

The Education Officer to lobby the Department of Education to publicise the aforementioned list of funding available on the studentfinance.ie website.

## 10/ED 9

### MEETING FEEDBACK

#### **Congress Notes**

That USI, as the National Union representing most students studying at third-level colleges in Ireland, holds seats on all the bodies charged with policy, funding quality assurance and regulation of the third level sector, such as the HEA and NQAI and others.

#### **Congress Notes with Concern**

The lack of institutional memory in USI with regard to issues discussed at these meeting.

#### **Congress Further Notes**

The importance of this high-level involvement for the constituent members of USI who pay an annual affiliation fee to USI.

#### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The President and Education Officer to create effective briefing and reporting communication channels, pre and post these meetings which USI attends (Pre meeting to consist of a notification of agenda items, and what stance USI plans to take on each, and an aide memoir post meeting of the discussion of each topic, what USI represented to the meeting and what the outcomes was.) on behalf of CO's, and where matters relevant to the COs are decided upon.

## 10/WEL 2

### STUDENT PREGNANCY

#### **Congress notes**

The lack of policy and support in the area of student parenting, both for student mothers and students Fathers.

#### **Congress further notes**

That while staff who fall pregnant are recognised under equality law, students exist within a grey area of legislation in this sector and subject to discrimination as the college chooses in terms of concessions and special accommodations.

#### **Congress applauds**

The efforts of institutions such as Mary Immaculate College in the formation of a student parent liaison officer.

#### **Congress mandates**

The Welfare and Equality Officers to research best practice policies on student parents both within Ireland, the UK and beyond with a view to formulate a template for local COs to negotiate with their institutions.

The Welfare and Equality Officers to meet and work with relevant organisations with a view to formulating a policy document for Welfare officers and other relevant CO officers as to how best to support student parents and what supports are needed. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 14 - - 14 -

The Welfare and Equality Officers to HEI authorities for better provisions and rights for student parents.

## 09/WEL 2

### ABORTION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

#### **Congress notes**

That USI is mandated to lobby the government and other relevant bodies to develop greater access to abortion services for all women within the state (06/WEL 6 Abortion).

#### **Congress further notes**

That USI's involvement in this debate in the past (SPUC vs. Grogan) led to the changing of legislation so that information about abortion could be distributed freely in the state.

#### **Congress recognises**

That in many student unions abroad and indeed in many organisations worldwide the issue of abortion is viewed as an issue of equality and women's rights.

#### **Congress further recognises**

That the issue is one of concern for Welfare Officers around the country.

### **Congress acknowledges**

The establishment of the Safe and Legal (in Ireland) Abortion Rights Campaign which aims to end the hypocrisy of exiling women in crisis pregnancy that choose to have an abortion. The campaign includes various strands, including a litigation strand, a public awareness strand and a national and international advocacy strand.

### **Congress mandates**

The Welfare and Equality Officer to work with the Safe and Legal (in Ireland) Abortion Rights Campaign to once again make this issue a priority for Irish Women.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Welfare and Equality Officer to raise awareness of the Safe and Legal (in Ireland) Abortion Rights Campaign to USI members and to support the campaign in any of its actions.

## **10/WEL 6 CERVICAL CANCER**

### **Congress Notes:**

The expense of this vaccine amounts to approximately €550, including VAT and GP fees for non-medical card holders.

### **Congress Mandates the Welfare Officer:**

To lobby the HSE to provide this vaccine in all college and university health centres at an affordable price.

## **10/WEL 8 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

### **Congress recognises**

The fact that a minority of students are causing problems, for local residents and for other students as well. These problems need to be tackled seriously.

That students' unions have a key role in educating future generations of tenants – both in the rules they should abide by, and the rights they have too.

Solving issues brought about by some students in local communities is about forming solid, long-lasting partnerships with other stakeholders, such as the local council, the Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 16 - - 16 - third level institutions, local residents' groups etc. in which the students' union is seen as a valued and respected player.

Social pressure between students can alleviate a lot of problems, rather than discipline. It is about social regulation of students by students.

### **Congress mandates**

The deputy president/campaigns officer, the welfare officer and the area officers to assist local students' unions to tackle issues that arise from anti-social behaviour.

Congress also mandates

The forementioned officers run a national information campaign to promote the idea of positive community involvement to the student body.

## **10/ EQ 1 CIVIL PARTNERSHIP BILL**

### **Congress Notes**

That the proposed Civil Partnership Bill falls short of offering members of the LGBT community many of the same rights and responsibilities offered by Civil Marriage to the heterosexual community.

### **Congress Further Notes**

That as it currently stands the Bill is unacceptable to the LGBT community.

### **Congress Recognises**

That the LGBT campaign is an integral part of USI and many LGBT students would like to see a national campaign on this issue.

### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The Deputy President, the Equality Officer and the LGBT Rights Officer to work together to roll out a national campaign highlighting the issue and to lobby the government on this issue.

## **Congress Further Mandates**

That the Deputy President, Equality Officer and LGBT RO work with other LGBT interest groups on the Civil Marriage campaign, for example LGBT NOISE and Marriage Equality.

# **09/EQ 2**

## **AHEAD**

### **Congress notes**

Previous policy (08/EQ6) which mandates the President and Welfare Officer to open discussions with AHEAD with a view to working together on common areas of interests.

### **Congress further notes**

That the Equality Officer, who has the responsibility to support the autonomous disability campaign, and the Disability Rights Officer are best placed to build links with AHEAD.

### **Congress acknowledges**

The work of the Equality Officer and Disability Rights Officer this year in achieving the above aim.

### **Congress further acknowledges**

The current work being done by USI and AHEAD in relation to compiling a guide for student union officers on how best to develop policy and services for students with disabilities.

### **Congress recognises**

That in the past number of months, support services for students with disabilities as well as the 'Fund for Students with Disabilities' have experienced cuts due to the current economic climate.

### **Congress mandates**

The Equality and Disability Rights Officers to:

- Continue to build links with AHEAD;
- Work with AHEAD to develop initiatives which can counteract the current cuts to support funds for students with disabilities;
- Oppose any further cuts to support services for students with disabilities;
- Promote and assist the development of student societies for students with disabilities;
- Work with AHEAD to organise an annual one day event for students with disabilities;

# **09/EQ 4**

## **USI RAINBOW WEEK**

### **Conference Notes**

That "Rainbow Week" is not thoroughly recognised within all affiliated colleges.

### **Conference Also Mandates**

The LGBT RO to communicate with the Students Unions and the LGBT societies and assist in the organisation of the Rainbow Weeks to those colleges that need assistance.

(Note that the work assigned to the LGBT RO here will be given to the VP E&C)

# **10/EQ 9**

## **NUS-USI Collaboration**

### **Conference notes**

That NUSUSI coordinates an equality campaign for the Northern Area

### **Conference notes**

That the structure of the NUSUSI campaign is similar to the structure of the USI Equality Campaign

### **Conference believes**

That it would be beneficial to both NUSUSI and USI if officers involved in both campaigns communicated regularly and shared ideas and experiences

### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to organise one meeting per semester between the two campaigns to discuss possible collaborations and to provide support, if requested, to the NUSUSI Equality Campaign.

### **Conference further mandates**

All members of Equality Working Group to keep in regular contact with counterparts working in the NUSUSI Equality Campaign.

## **10/GE 1**

### **Reclaim the Night**

#### **Conference notes**

The success of the 'Reclaim the Night Marches' organised in the UK between the London Feminist Network and the National Union of Students in the UK (NUSUK) to highlight the issue of sexual violence against women

#### **Conference is disappointed**

By recent research from the Rape Crisis Network Ireland (December 2009) which outlined a poor conviction rate for crimes of rape and sexual violence in Ireland, inaccurate stereotypes of rape as well poor treatment of victims by members of An Garda Síochána

#### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and the Gender Equality Officer to organise an annual 'reclaim the night march' for students to raise awareness of sexual violence against women in Ireland

#### **Conference further mandates**

The Equality Officer and the Gender Equality Officer to contact the Rape Crisis Network Ireland to explore possible collaborations on the issue of sexual violence against women.

## **10/GE 3**

### **Childcare Facilities**

#### **Conference notes**

That access to affordable childcare is difficult in Ireland

#### **Conference also notes**

That access to flexible and affordable childcare is difficult for students

#### **Conference is aware**

That some third level institutions have crèches on or close to campus and that a number of places in said crèches are reserved for students

#### **Conference is also aware**

That childcare/crèche subsidy schemes exist in different colleges

#### **Conference believes**

That all third level institutions should provide a childcare facility for students

#### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer, Gender Equality Office and Mature Student Officer to lobby all relevant authorities to establish childcare facilities on all third level campuses. Such childcare facilities should include both crèche and after school care facilities and should be affordable for students. Furthermore a majority of places in these facilities should be reserved for registered students of the institution.

## **10/IS 4**

### **Finance for International Students**

#### **Conference notes**

That International Students face hefty fees for studying in Ireland

#### **Conference also notes**

That there is a lack of transparency surrounding these fees and how they are costed

#### **Conference believes**

That financial stress, caused by such large fees and the expense of living in Ireland, has a negative impact on the student experience for international students

#### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer & International Students Officer to always lobby for transparent costings of all fees

charged to international students and that these fees are advertised well in advance of a student arriving in Ireland. Where possible, officers should lobby for a decrease in the amount charged to international students.

## 09/NA 4 ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN

### **Congress applauds**

The current USI policy on increasing the student vote

### **Congress notes**

That a general election in the near future is very likely

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The President to immediately begin lobbying all political parties with regard to student issues, specifically funding of third level education

### **Congress further mandates**

Officer Board to prepare information regarding each party's policies which relate to students so as to inform USI's members

### **Congress also mandates**

The President and Officer Board to immediately begin a campaign to improve student access to voting – through lobbying for weekend voting, on campus polling stations and re-instating the right to be registered at home and at college.

## 10/UO 19 MANIFESTO UPDATES

### **Congress notes**

Important issues highlighted in the manifestos of elected members of officer board can be neglected as the year progresses.

### **Congress also notes**

The importance USI members place on the strength of the leadership of USI officer board and much of their confidence in an individual stems from the issues they pledge to attack/defend/promote in their manifestos.

### **Congress Mandates**

Each member of officer board to outline the progress they have made on their manifesto issues at national council twice annually.

## 10/UO 21 CAMPAIGN HISTORY

### **Congress notes**

USI has a long and proud tradition when it comes to running effective campaigns which gather media attention and brings our issues to national attention.

### **Congress also notes**

We rely on anecdotal memory of what photo stunts/campaign strategies have been used in the past. Often the issues are the same for example, fees, equal rights etc.

### **Congress mandates**

The Deputy President to compile a database of previous campaigns under relevant headings. By doing this, we are building on our knowledge of what USI has achieved to date. Also, we can learn from what media campaigns have worked in the past and why.

## 10/UO 26 UNION ORGANISATION

### **Congress notes**

That it is essential that each constituent organisation of USI can hold USI Officer Board to account.

### **Congress further notes**

That the current system of accountability is not adequate in ensuring that each member of Officer Board is meeting their mandates.

### **Congress believes**

That in the same way that Higher Education Institutes should offer a quality assurance scheme to its students; USI should provide its own quality assurance scheme as part of this effort for greater accountability.

### **Congress mandates**

Officer Board to establish a system of accountability, as detailed below, as part of an effort to improve accountability and quality assurance across the organisation.

Once elected, each member of Officer Board should present the first sitting of National Council with a plan of work for the year ahead, complete with key milestones and targets and displayed on a Gantt Chart, as is the industry standard for project management. This plan of work should reflect the policies laid down in the USI Policy Manual together with the tasks implied in the officer's job description and these should be prioritised accordingly.

The National Council have the option to accept the proposed plan of work, or reject it in which case the officer must return to the next National Council with a new proposal.

Progress on each item against the original plan of work must then be made known to all Constituent Organisations by means of a newsletter from each member of Officer Board on a fortnightly basis.

Failure to meet these targets, within 20 percent of the overall time allocation of each item, should then result in the Officer being held to account at the next sitting of National Council, The Officer will be fully entitled to due process in line with Article 5.8 of the USI Constitution and the law of the land.

### **Article 5.8 USI Constitution**

The right of the students, through their Constituent Organisation, to call to account and instruct those charge with office, within the Union, to discipline and ultimately dismiss those who fail to carry out their responsibilities.

## **09/UO 11**

### **PART TIME OFFICER NETWORKS**

#### **Congress Notes**

That issues which come under the remit of the part-time officers are highly important in the operation and relevance of the Union.

#### **Congress acknowledges**

That any campaign is at its strongest when coherent and presenting a unified message, and that the sharing of ideas and methods between CO's leads to a mutual improvement of campaigns throughout the country.

#### **Congress thus mandates**

The Part Time Officers to compile a list of their respectively similar Officers in CO's throughout the country, as well as national and international institutions and agencies who operate in their respective areas of interest, and to establish forums for Officers in all CO's to network and share their opinions and experiences for their mutual betterment.

## **10/UO 10**

### **AREA OFFICER ROLE**

#### **Congress Recognises**

The difficulty for both COs and Area Officers in defining the role of the Area Officer and utilizing it to its full potential.

#### **Congress believes**

That in order for the role to be successful, the onus should be on both the Officer themselves and on COs. However, this is difficult as there are no definite guidelines as to what an Area Officer's role is.

The following should be the minimum expected from an Area Officer:

- A minimum of one visit to each CO in between National Councils.
- A minimum of one week's notice to COs about this visit (unless CO requests Area Officer in a shorter period of time).
- Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 30 - - 30 -
- To organise a number of bonding events throughout the year. This should be approved by all COs and ensure that all are available to attend. And if all COs cannot attend, that those not available are happy the event takes place without them.

- To assist COs whenever requested in the run up to or during campaigns.
- To organise a number of regional councils during the year - the calendar of these should be agreed on at the first Regional Council of the year.
- That when requested, the Area Officer will attend Class Councils to update class reps on what USI has been doing and what the future plans of the USI are. COs are asked to invite the Area Officers to at least two Class Councils in the year.
- To speak to the media on behalf of the region and act as the main spokesperson on issues effecting students of their relevant area.
- To provide a detailed weekly report on their activities, both to COs and the President and Deputy President.
- To assist the Deputy President in organizing any protests or rallies, which COs have requested.
- To keep Officers based in HQ informed of the issues and activities happening in their area.
- To give an adequate cross over consisting of any further advice gained from holding office to their successor outlining issues which may be ongoing in certain COs, the main issues they face as an officer that year and how best to interact with their COs.

## **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The Area Officer to outline their role to their COs at the first regional council of the year.

# Unprioritised Policy Due to Expire

## Education 2010

### 10/ED 1 FUNDING OF THIRD LEVEL COLLEGES

#### **Congress notes**

That the current policy manual contains many motions concerning the funding of third level institutions, the registration fee, fees, graduate taxes, loans and other means of student contribution. Many of these motions are repetitive and some contradictory.

#### **Congress Further Notes**

The document entitled "USI: DEMAND A BETTER FUTURE" as published in February 2010. This document contains all previous relevant USI policies in relation to the funding of third level institutions and an explanation for them as well as up-to-date policies in relation to recent developments in this area.

#### **Congress Mandates**

That the Officers of USI adopt the document 'USI: DEMAND A BETTER FUTURE' and the policies in relation to the funding of third level education contained therein as USI policy.

#### **Congress Also Mandates**

That the Officers of USI update this policy document if necessary and resubmit it to congress.

#### **Congress Repeals**

09/ED 1; 09/ED 2; 09/ED 7; 09/ED 9; 09/ED 10; 09/ED 17; 09/ED 22; 08/ED 7; 08/ED 8; 08/ED 12; 08/ED 17; 08/ED 20; 08/ED 21; 07/ED 7; 07/ED 10; 07/ED 11; 06/ED 7; 06/ED 9; 06/ED 12; 06/ED 17; 05/ED 3; 05/ED 12; 05/ED 19; 05/ED 23

### 10/ED 2 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROPOSED

#### **Congress Notes**

That the current policy manual contains many motions concerning Quality Assurance, and that many of these motions are repetitive and some contradictory.

#### **Congress Further Notes**

The document entitled "USI: DEMAND BETTER QUALITY" as published in February 2010. This document contains all previous relevant USI policies in relation to Quality Assurance and an explanation for them as well as up-to-date policies in relation to recent developments in this area.

#### **Congress Mandates**

That the Officers of USI adopt the document "USI: DEMAND BETTER QUALITY" and the policies in relation to the Irish quality assurance system contained therein as UI policy.

#### **Congress Also Mandates**

That the Officers of USI update this policy document if necessary and resubmit it to congress.

### **Congress Repeals**

09/ED 8; 09/ED 15; 08/ED 2; 08/ED 11; 07/ED 8; 07/ED 9; 07/ED 17; 06/ED 3; 06/ED11; 06/ED 19; 05/ED 6; 05/ED 16; 05/ED 17; 05/ED 20. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 20 - - 20 -

## **10/ED 3 MAINTENANCE GRANT**

### **Congress Notes**

That the current policy manual contains many motions concerning the maintenance grant, student support bill and subsidiary relief, and that many of these motions are repetitive and some contradictory.

### **Congress Further Notes**

The Document entitled "USI: DEMAND A BETTER GRANT" as published in February 2010. This document contains all previous relevant USI policies in relation to the Maintenance Grant, Student Support Bill and subsidiary relief and an explanation for them as well as up-to-date policies in relation to recent developments in these areas.

### **Congress Mandates**

That the Officers of USI adopt the policy document entitled 'USI: DEMAND A BETTER GRANT' and the policies in relation to the grant, student support bill and other student finance options contained therein as USI policy.

### **Congress Also Mandates**

That the Officers of USI update this policy document if necessary and resubmit it to congress.

### **Congress Therefore Repeals**

09/ED 3; 09/ED 6; 09/ED 16; 09/ED 20; 09/ED 21; 08/ED 1; 08/ED 13; 08/ED 15; 08/ED 16; 07/ED 5; 07/ED 6; 06/ED 1; 06/ED 4; 06/ED 10; 06/ED 20; 05/ED 4; 08/UO 8.

## **10/ED 4 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

### **Congress notes**

That every year a substantial number of International Students travel to Ireland to study within our higher education system.

### **Congress recognizes**

That these International students can pay large sums of money, on average €12,000 per year to study in our 3rd level institutions.

### **Congress further recognizes**

That there have been a number of issues with regards to these students arriving in Ireland with regards to Irish Customs.

### **Congress mandates**

The President to work on behalf of the International students to put in place an International Student Charter detailing student rights and responsibilities in the third level CO's where they are studying. By the development of the framework each IoT and University would become responsible for the treatment of International Students when travelling to Ireland.

## **10/ED 5 LEGAL PROFESSION**

### **Congress notes**

That to enter the legal profession in Ireland, one must overcome many financial and social obstacles.

### **Congress further notes**

That these obstacles mean that the majority undertaking a career in law are those who can afford it and who have pre-existing ties to the legal profession

### **Congress notes with concern**

That such obstacles include

- Exceptionally high costs for postgraduate study in the King's Inns, with a one year degree course costing €12,000. This course is also run during the day (as opposed to the evening diploma course) so people cannot work full time simultaneously.
- Barristers in their first year of practice must be able to afford to work for free during their year's apprenticeship, also known as 'devilling'. The apprenticeship must also take place in Dublin, thus increasing costs for candidates even further if forced to live away from home.

### **Congress believes**

That while the abolition of third level fees has delivered good progress in increasing access to education for people of all social backgrounds, more must be done to ensure that these artificial barriers to real educational equality of opportunity in certain professions are removed.

**Congress affirms its belief that**

No profession should be the sole preserve of the wealthy and socially connected.

**Congress mandates**

The President and the Education officer to give a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas committee on Education and Science on access to the legal system

The President and Deputy to campaign and lobby for the extension of the higher education grants scheme to those taking barrister and solicitor courses.

## 10/ED 6 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

**Congress notes**

That Ireland currently has over 100,000 young people who cannot find work and are not in full-time education. Within this, the rate is a shocking 36.4% of people aged 15-19, and 23% of those aged 20-24, who are in neither full-time education or employment (CSO Quarterly Household Survey of July 2009).

**Congress notes**

That these figures are likely to worsen when more graduates are seeking employment this year, and that the persistent lack of opportunities for graduates of all disciplines is likely to lead to mass emigration, making future economic recovery more difficult.

**Congress further notes**

Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 23 - - 23 -  
That up skilling of the workforce and capital investment is vital to secure the long-term stability of the country.

**Congress mandates**

The Union President, Deputy President and Education Officer to actively campaign and lobby for:

- Expand free third level tuition fees scheme to include part-time courses.
- Provide funding for third level institutions to create part-time courses in targeted areas for future national development such as green energy.
- Increase the number of, and capacity of HEA educational courses to upskill students in more sectors on a long-term basis.
- Increase the capacity and diversity of work placement and labour activation schemes.

## 10/ED 8 BTEA CAMPAIGN

**Congress notes**

That the removal of the entitlement of Back to Education students to a maintenance grant will cost unemployed mature students in the region of €7,000 a year in expected income.

**Congress firmly believes**

That the decision to bring in this measure was wrong, unfair, and is not in the interests of this country, either financially or socially.

**Congress notes**

That for many people trying to go back to education, the Budget cuts represent a loss of over 25% in expected income  
Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 24 - - 24 -

**Congress mandates**

The Education Officer to organise a sustained campaign to reverse this decision before the Department of Education & Science finalises its implementation over the summer.

## 10/ED 10 NUI LEVY

**Congress notes**

The Minister for Education has decided to dissolve NUI.

**Congress also notes**

Each student who is attending a college associated with NUI pays a levy from their non-tuition fee to cover the cost of that office.

**Congress acknowledges**

That when NUI is completely dissolved, students affected will not be refunded their levy money and there is a risk that either the University or the Government will use that proportion of funding towards other resources without consulting students.

**Congress mandates**

The USI President to draft a policy on where this levy money could be put to use for students when the NUI is dissolved. This policy proposal should be presented at National Council for members consideration. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 25 - - 25

## 10/ED 11 APPRENTICES

### **Congress Notes**

That over the past number of years the increase within the trades industry with regards to Ireland.

### **Congress Further Notes**

That with the economic downturn many of these apprentices have been left with no job and in some cases incomplete qualifications.

### **Congress Recognises**

The need to provide further education opportunities in the face of the ever-changing employment landscape of Ireland.

### **Congress Mandates**

The President and the Education Officer to lobby the Department of Education and the Higher Education Authority to clearly state, in a national framework, the eligibility of qualified apprentices to progress into relevant degree courses.

## 10/ED 12 BUDGETS

### **Congress Notes**

That the current volatile economic climate, each Budget is likely to have significant impact on students.

### **Congress Further Notes**

That the fear and worry caused by budgets may cause avoidable harm to the welfare to Students.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The USI Education Officer, as soon as possible subsequent to the delivery each budget, to write an explanatory memorandum of the impacts of the budget on student and communicate it to all CO's.

2009

## 09/ED 1 TUITION FEES

### **Congress notes**

That it has long been a core principle of the student movement that education should be accessible to all people.

### **Congress recognises**

That tuition fees constitute a serious barrier to entry into third level education.

### **Congress strongly believes**

That education is a public and social good, which benefits not only the individual but the wider society. It should therefore be paid through progressive taxation like all public services. Investing in education is one of the most important investments we can make; not only does having an educated population strengthen our economy, but graduates pay on average 70% more in tax and have thus directly repaid the cost of their degree through taxation within ten years. Importantly, providing a college education to all is an important factor in creating a fair and more democratic society with equal opportunity for all.

### **Congress further notes**

That the OECD's "education at a glance 2008" lists Ireland at the top of selected industrialised countries for "providing the most equitable access to higher education". This shows that the abolition of fees has had a significant impact on increasing equity of access, despite successive governments' failure to follow up the success of free fees with a corresponding commitment to educational equality across the board.

### **Congress further notes**

That in two decades Ireland has seen an increase in access to third level education from 20% to 55%, and that a large factor in this has been the abolition of third level fees.

### **Congress believes**

That the economic crisis means that now, more than ever Ireland must make education accessible to all, in order to equip our people with the skills and knowledge that will help them innovate, create new jobs and attract foreign investment. Ireland's future depends on investing in its people.

### **Congress notes**

That the cost of going to college in Ireland is, according to bank of Ireland's cost of college survey, €38,000 for a four year degree. This cost will rise significantly if fees are introduced.

### **Congress condemns**

The proposals by minister for education and science to reintroduce third level fees, and his attempts to raise the registration fee to €1,500 per year, which is a tuition fee higher than almost any other European country charges for their public universities and colleges.

### **Congress hereby reaffirms**

Its commitment to an equal, fair and accessible education system, and to the complete abolition of tuition fees, including the registration fee.

**Congress notes**

The huge campaigns in 2002/03 and 2008/09 run by USI to oppose tuition fees.

**Congress mandates**

USI officer board to redouble its efforts to fight fees in any guise and to continue to place this issue at the centre of its lobbying and campaigning efforts.

**Congress calls for**

A commitment by the government to fund third level education and all essential services through progressive taxation, where those on higher incomes pay the most.

**Congress urges**

All local students' unions to recognise their central role in the national campaign against fees, and to make fees their priority as students' union representatives and as members of the national union. The USI is not officer board - it is all members. Therefore all members are responsible for engaging with the campaign.

## 09/ED 2 STUDENT LOANS/GRADUATE TAX

**Congress notes**

That the principle that education should be accessible to all people, has always been a core value of the student movement.

**Congress strongly believes**

That education is a public and social good, which benefits not only the individual but the wider society. It should therefore be paid through progressive taxation like all public services. Investing in education is one of the most important investments we can make; not only does having an educated population strengthen our economy, but graduates pay on average 70% more in tax and have thus directly repaid the cost of their degree through taxation within ten years. Providing education to all citizens equally is fundamental principle for any fair society.

**Congress notes**

The 2005 study in the UK by Professor Claire Callender and Jonathan Jackson that shows that for those on lower or middle income backgrounds in the UK, the fear of debt is a significant barrier to entry to third level education in the UK. This is a result of the student loans system in the UK.

**Congress also notes**

The research by Professor Kathleen Lynch of UCD's equality studies centre on the Australian HECS system, that shows the detrimental impact that a deferred loans system can have on equity of access to third level and on increasing student impoverishment.

**Congress notes**

That Australia's education minister Julia Gillard has described the HECS student loans system as "at best complex and at worst anomalous, inconsistent and irrational".

**Congress also notes**

That the fairest and most egalitarian way of paying for higher education is through a progressive taxation system.

**Congress condemns**

The suggestions by minister for education Batt O'Keeffe that an Australian-style student loans system might be introduced in Ireland, at the same time as the Australian government itself is recognising that the system doesn't work.

**Congress also opposes**

The suggestions by some politicians for a graduate tax. Graduates already pay 70% more in tax than non-graduates, therefore a graduation tax is not necessary nor is it fair.

**Congress mandates**

USI officer board to continue to oppose fees in any guise, including student loans and a graduate taxation system.

**Congress calls for**

Investment through progressive taxation in a fair, equitable education system from primary to third level, whereby those on higher incomes pay higher taxes which funds all essential services. This is an investment in strengthening our economy as well as creating fairness in our society.

## 09/ED 10 REINTRODUCTION OF FEES

**Congress believes**

That USI should be in a position to fight for a fair and equitable access system to higher education in every circumstance.

**Congress therefore mandates**

Officer board to renew their fight for a fair grant system by researching and proposing a system that will work in a better way to the current System and in a way that will ensure equitable access for all to third level education.

### **Congress further mandates**

The president to as much as possible ensure that USI gains a seat at any government or HEA organised group set up to look at the change of the current or introduction of a new grant system.

## **09/ED 11 BOLOGNA PROCESS**

### **Congress notes**

That the bologna process has, since its inception in 1999, become one of the most important and dominant themes in further and higher education in Europe with significant reforms being introduced throughout Europe and here in Ireland as a result of the bologna process.

### **Congress further notes**

That the reforms introduced as part of the bologna process have seen a dramatic transformation in further and higher education, much of which has been positive.

### **Congress recognises**

That these reforms have, however, also introduced considerable uncertainty into further and higher education and there is a need to ensure that as part of the bologna process, the quality of education is not undermined.

### **Congress welcomes**

That the union of students in Ireland has been involved at both a national and European level in the formation and development of policy in the key areas of the bologna process.

### **Congress regrets**

That on an issue as critical as the bologna process, which is now entering second decade, USI does not have official, formalised policy on the bologna process.

### **Congress believes**

That it is imperative that the national students' union develop policy on an issue that is having and will have a profound impact on its membership.

### **Congress further mandates**

USI to adopt the following principles on the Bologna process to be implemented by the president and the education officer

#### **Bologna process (general principles)**

USI welcomes the creation of the bologna process and the importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies.

The bologna process should be based on creating opportunities for mobility within higher education in Europe and should not be focused on purely developing a higher education system that suits the needs of enterprise and employers

USI strongly believes that the over-arching goal of the bologna process should be to create a student-centred learning environment that is flexible, transparent, accessible to all and encourages the development of lifelong learning.

Future development of the bologna process must be driven through consultation and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, which must include student representatives.

The bologna process should aim for significant and continuous improvement in the standard of education provided to students and that students are full and complete partners within institutions and at sectoral, national and European levels. Education must also be transparent with embedded and appropriate QA mechanisms focused on improving standards and academic provision.

#### **Social dimension**

Participation in further and higher education must be widened and the demographic of these sectors should reflect the diversity of the population of the signatory countries to the bologna process.

Further and higher education is a public good and should primarily be publicly funded.

USI is opposed to any and all attempts to privatise further and higher education.

USI strongly welcomes the commitment enshrined in the bologna process to student services and will work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that student services are adequately resourced and improved in line with the needs of students.

All obstacles to participation further and higher education should be removed and USI will campaign strongly on this.

The social dimension of the bologna process must continue to be one of the central action lines of the bologna process.

#### **Mobility**

Increased opportunities for student and staff mobility as a result of the bologna process is to be welcomed and contributes positively to the academic and personal development of students.

There should be a mobility target of 20% of the student population by 2020. The participative equity within this 20% must be improved and institutions must create measures to ensure that credits gained during mobility are recognised on return.

A central mobility fund should be created and contributed to by EHEA countries and financed according to the principle of public financing.

USI believes that higher education institutions should provide extensive language tuition to students to encourage and promote mobility.

The USI education officer and the USI equality officer shall campaign and lobby for the simplification of visa and work permit rules and procedures to allow for greater mobility and to prevent mobile students being subject to undue stress, difficulties and discrimination.

### **Qualifications frameworks and recognition**

USI supports the adoption and implementation of the ECTS credit system whereby each academic year is comprised of 60 ECTS with each module being in multiples of 5 ECTS (e.g. 5, 10, 15 etc.). An ECTS credit should represent 20 - 25 hrs of student input including, but not limited to, lectures, assignments, self-directed learning, study and practical classes and placements.

USI welcomes and supports the development of modularisation where a module represents a block of teaching and learning with a combination of linked modules constituting a programme.

Semesterisation, whereby the academic year is comprised of two equal length teaching terms, is welcomed by USI. However, there should not be a nationally standardised set of term dates.

USI welcomes the introduction of learning outcomes, defined as "learning outcomes are statements of what a student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning". All modules, subjects and programmes must be designed around learning outcomes which are regularly quality assessed to ensure they are appropriate and fit for purpose. Learning outcomes must be used to create a student-centred learning environment and may not be used to create a box-ticking environment.

USI continues to support the national framework of qualifications and shall campaign to ensure that learning outcomes align with the knowledge, skills and competencies associated with the relevant level of the NFQ.

All qualifications in further and higher education should be comparable and readable so that a student's qualifications can be mapped on to both the European qualifications framework and the qualifications framework of all countries in the Bologna process with ease. The comparability should be verified for the student by the relevant authority (such as ENIC-NARIC) free of charge.

The USI education officer shall run a campaign, in conjunction with constituent organisations, to raise awareness of the NFQ and to ensure that no student is disadvantaged by its operation.

### **USI Bologna Process Campaign**

USI reaffirms that the Bologna process is of extreme importance to the education that students will receive.

USI shall undertake all necessary effort, under the direction of the USI education officer, to assist constituent organisations in ensuring the proper implementation of all Bologna process related reforms.

USI will promote awareness of the Bologna process and of related reforms and opportunities to students through constituent organisations.

USI will work with all relevant stakeholders sectorally, nationally and internationally to ensure adequate student representation and that the Bologna process develops in lines with the above principles.

The USI education officer will develop and regularly update a USI strategy on the Bologna process.

## **09/ED 13 EQUITY OF ACCESS**

### **Congress notes**

That the introduction of the 'free fees' initiative was designed to widen access to further and higher education for those from traditionally under-represented backgrounds.

### **Congress recognises**

That while much progress has been made, with an overall participation rate of 55%, there are still a number of socio-economic and non-traditional backgrounds which do not participate in further and higher education at the level of other groups.

### **Congress welcomes**

Recent moves to broaden the participation rate, in particular the creation of the national office for the equity of access to higher education and the publication of the national plan for equity of access to higher education 2008 - 2013.

### **Congress reaffirms**

That one of the fundamental principles of the Union is that it strives for an education and training system open to all, irrespective of any consideration, including consideration of national origin, ethnic background, age, ability, sex, sexuality, creed, political beliefs or economic circumstances, so that each individual can realise their full potential.

### **Congress believes**

That in order to uphold and defend this principle, USI must have a co-ordinated policy on equity of access and encouraging the widening of participation in further and higher education.

### **Congress mandates**

That USI adopts the following principles as its policy on equity of access to further and higher education to be implemented by officer board:

#### **Equity of Access (General Principles)**

- USI shall campaign for an education and training system open and accessible to all.
- All sectors of society should have equal opportunity to participate in further and higher education.
- Further and higher education institutions should take all steps necessary to encourage and broaden participation
- USI shall build links and work with all relevant stakeholders and organisations to widen the participation rate and address all obstacles that may prevent individuals from accessing further and higher education
- The USI education officer shall develop and regularly update a USI strategy for equity of access to further and higher education
- Targeted access funding and programmes must be expanded to ensure that all students who come from traditionally under-represented backgrounds are able to access further and higher education
- USI fully endorses, supports and shall campaign to ensure the meeting of the targets as outlined in the national plan for equity of access to higher education 2008 - 2013
- All cuts to the student assistance fund, access offices or strategic innovation funded access projects shall be vigorously opposed by USI
- All constituent organisations shall be supported by USI in promoting access within their own institution and in supporting the proper representation of access students through policy development, practice, promotion and partnership
- The USI education officer and the USI deputy president/campaigns officer shall develop a public campaign promoting access to further and higher education, highlighting the current obstacles and building momentum to have these issues addressed.

## **09/ED 15 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **Congress notes**

That quality assurance is an increasingly important issue facing higher and further education and one which USI needs a strong, coordinated campaign on.

### **Congress also notes**

That USI currently has eight existing motions relating to the area of quality assurance, each with different mandates and emphases.

### **Congress recognises**

That while each motion covers an important topic, it has created a disparate and sometimes sectoral approach to quality assurance that prohibits the development of a coherent campaign that could affect real change.

### **Congress also recognises**

That as USI represents students across all sectors of further and higher education, it must establish a common set of principles that will underpin and inform the organisation's approach to quality assurance

### **Congress further mandates**

That USI adopts the following guidelines as its policy on quality assurance to be implemented by the education officer:

#### **Aims and principles:**

- 'Quality assurance' includes processes such as evaluation, accreditation and audit.
- Students have a right to a high quality of education and to have that education reviewed and assessed regularly
- The interests of students as well as employers and wider society are served through good quality higher education
- Institutional autonomy, tempered by a recognition that this brings with it heavy responsibilities
- The need for external quality assurance to be fit for its purpose and to place only an appropriate and necessary burden on institutions for the achievement of its objectives
- Centrality of student involvement and representation at all levels of the quality assurance process
- QA mechanisms should result in demonstrative improvements and that these improvements should be communicated back to students
- All elements of the QA process shall be transparent and accountable

#### **Quality Assurance of Modules, Programmes and Academic Units (General Principles)**

- Institutions should have policy, procedures and formal mechanisms for the quality assurance of their programmes and awards
- Institutions should have a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work
- Each institution should have a central quality assurance office and/or committee that oversees the implementation of QA; this body shall have student representation
- All panels formed to conduct a QA review should have student representation
- All panels formed to conduct a QA review should have expert external representation
- The quality of teaching staff shall be periodically reviewed as part of any programme, academic unit or institutional review and shall be commented on in the final report

- The quality of education provided should be the central element in a review and each module and programme shall be assessed as to whether it is meeting its stated learning outcomes
- The appropriateness of the stated learning outcomes as they support a high quality education should also be reviewed
- Any and all QA reviews should also examine the quality of resources to support student learning including information systems, library resources and any and all other relevant services
- Modules should be assessed annually with programmes and academic units reviewed on a cyclical basis with programmes reviewed at least once every three years and academic units at least once every five years
- All quality assurance evaluations (module, programme, academic unit) should be made available online and all module and programme reviews be distributed to the students affected
- Following each assessment an action plan and timeline to implement the recommendations should be produced and communicated to students

#### **External Quality Review of Institutions (General Principles)**

- All institutions should be subject to review at least once every seven years
- Panels should be chosen and overseen by the accreditation and/or awarding body
- All panels should have student representation from a different institution with the pool of student representatives drawn up in consultation with USI
- All panels formed to conduct an institutional review should have expert external representation
- All panels should be fully independent and free of any influence or conflict of interest
- Guidelines for institutional reviews should be drawn up by the accreditation agency based on standardised best practice, such as ENQA's 'standards and guidelines'
- As part of the review process the institution should produce a self-assessment report which should include progress on the recommendations of the previous report
- The effectiveness and suitability of the institution's internal QA policies, procedures and mechanisms should be assessed
- The review should also examine the overall quality of the student experience, learning resources, information systems, institutional culture (academic and professional) and academic structure
- All institutional review reports should be made available online and all module and programme reviews be distributed to the students affected
- Following each assessment an action plan and timeline to implement the recommendations should be produced and communicated to students and the institution

#### **Student Participation in Quality Assurance**

- Student participation in quality assurance is essential in order to ensure that any QA system is credible
- The institution seeks to enshrine the value of student participation in quality assurance activities at module, programme, departmental, faculty and institutional level.
- Each institution should produce a guide for new students and should aim to produce a quality assurance handbook
- Student representation on all QA fora is essential
- The student representation system should be designed to afford opportunities for student engagement in decision-making and quality management arrangements

#### **USI Campaign on Quality Assurance**

- USI will campaign to ensure high quality teaching and QA standards throughout the further and higher education sectors in accordance with the policies above
- USI shall produce, or work with any sectoral body producing, a handbook for students on quality assurance detailing the rights of students and the importance of student involvement in QA
- The USI education officer shall assist constituent organisations in developing and implementing QA policies in accordance with the above principles
- The USI education officer shall assist constituent organisations in designing and producing materials to inform students about QA procedures and their right to a high quality education.

## **09/ED 23 IREL INITIATIVE**

#### **Congress notes**

IREL is a national initiative by government agencies SIF and HEA to fund access to electronic journals, databases and e-books in science, technology and medicine, humanities and social sciences. It has proved to be an essential resource for students - both postgraduate and undergraduate. First set up in 2004 it is worth approximately €1 million per year to each of the 7 universities.

#### **Congress further notes**

It was extended this year to include the 14 institutes of technology however these institutes were only given access to 2 collections of journals - giving a total of €211,000 to be shared between them all.

#### **Congress believes**

That it is unfair to institute of technology students as they do not have equity of access to such resources.

#### **Congress mandates**

The education officer to lobby to ensure that the initiative as a whole continues as it is very cost effective through

economies of scale and ensures that all university students have access to the same key resources.

Congress further mandates

The education officer to lobby the government to ensure the initiative is extended fully to the 14 institutes of technology.

## 09/ED 25 POSTGRADUATE WORK PLACEMENTS

### **Congress notes**

The cost incurred by students entering into work placement positions. Often these placements take on the form of free labour for employers.

### **Congress believes**

That all students entering into work placements should receive payment for the duration of the placement.

### **Congress mandates the officer board**

To campaign for payment for these types of placement.

## Welfare

## 10/WEL 1 SEXUAL HEALTH

### **Congress applauds**

The fantastic work done by the USI welfare officer and welfare officers across the country with sexual health promotion.

### **Congress notes**

The enthusiasm, helpfulness and usefulness of agencies such as the CPA, and campaigns such as Think Contraception in the push towards safer sexual practices.

### **Congress notes with concern**

The spiralling rate of STIs, particularly amongst young people with 60% of STIs, on average, diagnosed in people aged between 20 -29.

### **Congress notes with horror**

The figures released by St. James's Hospital on World AIDS Day 2009 that revealed they have experienced a 20% increase in cases of newly diagnosed patients with HIV.

### **Congress mandates**

The Welfare officer to work closely with national bodies concerned with this are to feed into all national education strategies to bring the emphasis in sexual health education on good health and consistent use of barrier methods of protection to prevent STI infection as well as regular STI Testing. The Welfare Officer to ensure that SHAG week material promotes sexual health testing and provides a list of local STI testing clinics in the vicinity of or on the campus of local Cos. The Welfare Officer to continue to make SHAG week inclusive of all sexualities and those for whom pregnancy is not a risk during sexual activities.

## 10/02 STUDENT PREGNANCY

### **Congress notes**

The lack of policy and support in the area of student parenting, both for student mothers and students Fathers.

### **Congress further notes**

That while staff who fall pregnant are recognised under equality law, students exist within a grey area of legislation in this sector and subject to discrimination as the college chooses in terms of concessions and special accommodations.

### **Congress applauds**

The efforts of institutions such as Mary Immaculate College in the formation of a student parent liaison officer.

### **Congress mandates**

The Welfare and Equality Officers to research best practice policies on student parents both within Ireland, the UK and beyond with a view to formulate a template for local COs to negotiate with their institutions.

The Welfare and Equality Officers to meet and work with relevant organisations with a view to formulating a policy document for Welfare officers and other relevant CO officers as to how best to support student parents and what supports are needed. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 14 - - 14 -

The Welfare and Equality Officers to HEI authorities for better provisions and rights for student parents.

## 10/WEL 3 STUDENTS & ALCOHOL

### **Congress Notes**

The consumption of alcohol in Ireland is an issue that is reaching problem levels.

Congress further notes The consumption of alcohol amongst the student population can result in illness, absenteeism, anti-social behaviour and bad press because of a minority of students who are unable to control their drinking or behaviour whilst under the influence.

### **Congress observes**

The change in licencing laws resulting in 10pm closing time for off licences has changed the drinking culture in Ireland tremendously, with alcohol purchased earlier and in bigger quantities because of the lower prices in the off licences. Drinking at home has become a primary activity.

### **Congress strongly believes**

That it is only with leadership at a national level that this problem can be tackled.

### **Congress mandates**

The Welfare, Deputy President and Area officers to lobby the government to re-examine the licencing laws, and the laws surrounding the regulation of bartending certificates. The Welfare Officer to investigate alcohol awareness campaigns run abroad and how these can be adapted to Irish Campuses.

### **Congress also mandates**

The Welfare, Deputy President and Area Officers to investigate the effectiveness of the introduction of minimum price measures in other countries as a means of combating drink culture.

## 10/WEL 4 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

### **Congress notes**

The following USI Policies: 09/Wel 2 (Abortion Rights Campaign), 09/Wel 11 (Crisis Pregnancy Agencies), 07/EM 1 (Crisis Pregnancy Information), 06/Wel 6 (Abortion), & 06/Wel 11 (Pregnancy Counselling).

### **Congress welcomes**

The Human Rights Watch report published in January 2010 "A State of Isolation: Access to Abortion for Women in Ireland" and the recommendations outlined in this report.

### **Congress mandates**

The Welfare & Equality Officers to campaign for the implementation of the recommendations as outlined in the Human Rights Watch report in order to achieve the mandates set by the membership in 09/Wel 2 (Abortion Rights Campaign), 09/Wel 11 (Crisis Pregnancy Agencies), 07/EM 1 (Crisis Pregnancy Information), 06/Wel 6 (Abortion), & 06/Wel 11 (Pregnancy Counselling). Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 15 - - 15 -

## 10/WEL 5 HEADSHOPS

### **Congress Notes**

The number of Smart Head Shops now opening across the country which sell psychoactive substances.

### **Congress Further Notes**

The dangers which these substances impose on today's society.

### **Congress Believes**

That more awareness of the components which form the base of the products sold in these stores should be highlighted to students.

### **Congress Mandates the Welfare Officer**

To run an awareness campaign which will identify the dangers of the merchandise sold in these stores.

## 10/WEL 7 SEXUAL HEALTH

### **Congress Notes With Concern**

The worrying lack of information and knowledge among Student Health Services and other college supports about issues pertaining to lesbian sexual health.

### **Congress Further Notes**

That oftentimes, women who identify as lesbian, bisexual or queer are unaware of lesbian sexual health issues.

### **Congress Mandates**

The Welfare Officer to work with the LGBT RO to ensure that the sexual health module at UOS also covers lesbian sexual health issues; so that the welfare officers can be equipped with the knowledge to deal with these issues.

## 10/ WEL 9 TAX RELIEF ON ACCOMMODATION

### **Congress notes**

The existing Revenue policy that allows individuals to claim tax relief on rent in private rented accommodation.

### **Congress notes**

The large amount of students living away from home in private rented accommodation, for which their parents/guardians may pay.

### **Congress understands**

That in a case where a parent/guardian directly pays a landlord for rent on behalf of their child, they are not entitled to claim rent relief.

### **Congress notes**

the policy on third-level tuition fees, which allows parents/guardians who pay these fees for their children to claim tax relief.

### **Congress mandates**

the Deputy President to develop a policy paper establishing the Organisation's position on this matter, and to lobby members of the Oireachtas for its implementation.

### **Congress also mandates**

the Deputy President to investigate the feasibility of extending this scheme to students living in campus residences and 'Section 50' apartments.

## 10/WEL 10 DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEME

### **Congress notes**

That the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government is conducting a review of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004.

### **Congress notes**

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The large number of students who leave home to attend third-level institutes and who live in private rented accommodation.

### **Congress notes**

With grave concern the difficulties that students can encounter when attempting to rightfully retrieve their deposit. It is frequently reported that some unscrupulous landlords seek to withhold deposits in the hopes that students will not be fully versed in their rights and thus ignorant of the correct action they are entitled to take against these rogue landlords.

### **Congress further notes**

The financial difficulties facing students in the current precarious economic environment, and that a lost deposit on private rented accommodation would constitute a serious financial blow to a student.

### **Congress recognises**

The long-established and successful deposit protection schemes in operation in the UK, New Zealand and Australia, which offers a barrier to rogue landlords behaving in such a fashion.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

the Deputy President to prepare a policy document on the implementation of a deposit protection scheme in Ireland similar to those in operation overseas, and to lobby members of the Oireachtas for its immediate introduction.

## WEL 11: Non-Academic Services Proposed by DIT SU

### **Congress notes**

The current lack of quality assurance systems with regards to an Irish National Policy Framework for non-academic students services provided by the third level institution, such as health centres, counselling services etc.

### **Congress further notes**

The importance of quality assurance with regard to non academic aspects of student services.

Congress recognizes

The value of the overall student experience within the higher education system in Ireland.

### **Congress mandates**

The President and the Welfare Officer to lobby the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education for the formation of a non-academic student services policy relating to quality assurance. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 18 - - 18 -

## 10/WEL 11 NON-ACADEMIC SERVICES

### **Congress notes**

The current lack of quality assurance systems with regards to an Irish National Policy Framework for non-academic students services provided by the third level institution, such as health centres, counselling services etc.

### **Congress further notes**

The importance of quality assurance with regard to non academic aspects of student services.

### **Congress recognises**

The value of the overall student experience within the higher education system in Ireland.

### **Congress mandates**

The President and the Welfare Officer to lobby the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education for the formation of a non-academic student services policy relating to quality assurance.

## 10/WEL 12 MABS

### **Congress Notes**

The continuing financial strain that is being placed on our students and their families during this economic crisis.

### **Congress Further Notes**

That these economic pressures are forcing students to withdraw from Third Level Education at an increasingly alarming rate.

## 09/WEL 1 EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

### **Congress notes**

The continuing lack of Emergency Contraceptives available 'over-the-counter' in pharmacies in Ireland, and the continuing need for a doctors appointment for a prescription for the ECP which comes at an extra cost to the student.

### **Congress further notes**

Dependant on location, time of week, travel plans, unforeseen circumstances (i.e. sex without consent or awareness) etc that availing of a doctors appointment for aforesaid prescription may not be possible, and that the efficacy of EC decreases significantly over a 72-hour period.

### **Congress believes**

That people are entitled to complete control over their sexual reproduction and fertility, and that freer availability of ECs in Ireland is essential to this intrinsic right.

### **Congress welcomes**

Research carried out on the effects of the ECP introduction in Britain by the British Journal of Medicine that reported:

- a 10% decrease in the amount of teenage pregnancies with only a 2% increase in those using the ECP following its over-the-counter introduction
- no reduction in the usage of other contraceptive methods
- And the research document prepared for this debate on the myths, realities and physiological & health impacts of the different ECPs by UCC's Welfare Officer, Keith O' Brien.

### **Congress Mandate**

The USI Welfare Officer to co-ordinate with relevant groups to provide more comprehensive information on the different forms of EC

USI Officer Board to campaign for the introduction of 'over-the-counter' emergency contraception for people over the age of 17, as this is the age of consent.

## 09/WEL 4 MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION

### **Congress notes**

That there is a stigma surrounding the issue of mental health amongst the student body, and in Irish society generally.

### **Congress believes**

Welfare Officers of COs are very effective means of dispersing information to students regarding various issues, notwithstanding mental health issues; however issues around mental health still require coverage by Cos, mainly to provide factual information on various mental illnesses and to remove the stigmas associated with said.

### **Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer**

- To provide supports to individual Students' Unions by way of centralised sourcing materials and information, targeting the stigma surrounding mental health issues
- To further engage with relevant groups and NGOs to publicise the various means of dealing with mental illness to the wider student population
- To run a campaign on the issues raised above

## 09/WEL 5 COUNSELLING SERVICES

### **Congress notes**

The severe problem Ireland faces with a large population of alcoholic and drug addicts, some of whom are/will be parents.

### **Congress further notes with concern**

The lack of supports put in place for the children of such parents, who in turn may be faced with mental health problems (such as depression etc.) that may affect them for the rest of their lives.

### **Congress acknowledges**

The availability of AL-anon, AT-Teen, Barnardos etc services in Ireland for these children. However the lack of supports from the HSE itself on a psychiatric & counselling basis along with an average 2 year waiting list for psychiatric evaluation, and how these psychological problems will affect the life of a student at 3rd level, must be realised and changed.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

Officer Board to lobby the relevant bodies to put in place funding for the introduction of counselling services for the children of alcoholic and drug addicted parents.

## 09/WEL 6 MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

### **Congress Notes**

The huge increase in numbers of international students now studying a 3rd level here in Ireland and how diverse the student population has become

### **Congress also notes**

The huge impact studying abroad can have on a person and that adapting to a new culture, language, society and surroundings can have a significant effect on a students well being

### **Congress recognises**

The strength and accomplishments of this year's Mental Health Campaign

### **Congress Mandates**

The Welfare Officer to work in conjunction with the Equality Officer to design campaign materials for the Mental Health Campaign which are specifically aimed at International students and the Welfare Officer in conjunction with the Equality Officer to highlight the specific issues surrounding the specific stresses placed on international students.

## 09/WEL 7 HEADSUP

### **Congress notes:**

The inclusion of student services on the HEADSUP text service which is run by Rehab.

### **Congress further notes**

That ease of access to information is important for students in difficulty. This services offers information on resources that are available when students services are closed.

### **Congress mandates the Welfare Officer**

To continue to work with and promote the HEADSUP service as part of the mental health awareness campaign.

## 09/WEL 9 SHAG WEEK

### **Congress notes**

06/WEL 6

### **Congress recognises**

That throughout the year, and particularly during SHAG week, material is distributed by USI to students that contains contact information for crisis pregnancy agencies that only provide two choice information.

### **Congress mandates the Welfare Officer**

To only provide information from three choice agencies.

## 09/WEL 11 CRISIS PREGNANCY AGENCIES

### **Congress notes**

That there is no legislation controlling crisis pregnancy agencies in Ireland.

### **Congress notes with concern**

That as a result a number of rogue crisis pregnancy agencies have started up

### **Congress recognizes**

That a rogue crisis pregnancy agency is one where the sole purpose of the agency is to prevent a pregnant woman

from having an abortion. They misinform and intimidate women to achieve their aim, using methods such as harassment, bullying and been given blatantly false information. [Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)]

**Congress acknowledges**

The work done this year by Choice Ireland in campaigning against rogue crisis pregnancy agencies

**Congress mandates the Welfare Officer**

To work with Choice Ireland, and other relevant agencies, to protest against these rogue crisis pregnancy agencies

**Congress further mandates the Welfare Officer**

To lobby for the introduction of legislation in this area

## 09/WEL 12 VIOLENCE IN YOUTH RELATIONSHIPS

**Congress notes with concern**

That violence within youth relationships is not part of any current campaign within USI

**Congress also notes**

That statistics surrounding the prevalence of violence in youth relationships is scarce

**Congress believes**

That this issue needs to be highlighted among students

**Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer**

To work with various agencies to run a campaign on the issue of violence in youth relationships

## 09/WEL 13 ALCOHOL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

**Congress notes**

08/ WEL 7 (Students and Alcohol) which mandates the prioritisation of the alcohol awareness/reduction campaign.

**Congress also notes**

The persistent difficulty in designing a campaign around alcohol awareness which is not patronising to or judgemental of students.

**Congress recognises**

That alcohol consumption and over consumption remains a key issue for students.

**Congress also recognises**

That students are best placed to assist the Welfare Officer in designing a campaign on this issue.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The Welfare Officer to hold 4 regional forums to gather student feedback, opinions and ideas on how best to approach this issue and to present a campaign idea to Welfare Working Group.

# Equality

## 10/EQ 2 MIGRANT STUDENTS

**Congress notes**

That Erasmus, EU and non EEA (European Economic Area) students have access to dedicated support services in third level colleges.

**Congress further notes**

That there are clear policy guidelines on issues affecting Erasmus, EU and non EEA students with regard student fees, leave to remain in Ireland and the right to work while studying.

**Congress recognises**

That the same level of service and policy does not exist for migrants, children of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and/or children of same, some of whom are now completing primary and secondary education in Ireland.

**Congress believes**

That these groups are entitled to receive a third level education in Ireland.

**Congress mandates**

The Equality Officer to investigate what government and HEI policies exist in this area and to collate the responses in a position paper accompanied by suggestions for future actions. Such a position paper should be presented to National Council prior to Congress 2011.

## 10/EQ 3 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

### **Congress notes**

That in order to communicate with students with disabilities, the USI Equality Campaign is reliant on Disability Support Services and Access Offices in each third level campus. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 51 - - 51 -

### **Congress further notes**

That this year there have been significant difficulties in reaching out to students with disabilities in third level colleges.

### **Congress also notes**

That these difficulties are not specific to USI and are also experienced by other organisations working in this area.

### **Congress mandates**

The Equality Officer to make it a priority of 2010/2011 to design a system whereby USI Equality can connect directly with students with disabilities in third level and to seek assistance from members of Officer Board, USI staff and external organisations on how best to achieve this.

## 10/EQ 4 COMMUNICATING WITH PART TIME OFFICERS

### **Conference notes**

That part time officers exist in each CO who work in the area of equality

### **Conference also notes**

That these officers are elected at different times in different colleges and so it is difficult to organise a networking event at the beginning of the year

### **Conference believes**

Part time officers stand to gain a lot from being involved with the USI Equality Campaign

### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to meet individually with relevant part time officers once they are elected and outline the positive benefits getting involved in USI Equality can have.

### **Conference also mandates**

The Equality Officer to maintain contact with part time officers by circulating a campaign update email once per fortnight

### **Conference further mandates**

The Equality Officer to compile a contact list for part time officers and to circulate this to Equality Working Group as early as possible in the year

## 10/EQ 5 NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES IN IRISH MEDIA

### **Conference notes**

That often minority groups are represented poorly in both national and local print media in Ireland

### **Conference regrets**

That over the past 12 months there has been an increase in the number of such articles, in particular on the issue of access of third level education

### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and all members of Equality Working to respond and counteract negative images and stereotypes of minority students in the media through letters to the editor of the publication involved.

## 10/EQ 6 STUDENTS ATTITUDE TO EQUALITY

### **Conference notes**

The recent research by the Equality & Rights Alliance into Irish attitudes on equality

### **Conference also notes**

The research is not specific to student attitudes

### **Conference believes**

That the Equality Campaign cannot be effective in campaigning on equality until it establishes what students think about the issues involved

### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to commission a nationwide student survey on attitudes to equality in third level education and to use the results of this survey to inform the equality campaign going forward.

## 10/EQ 7 ONLINE CAMPAIGNING

### Conference notes

The necessity for USI Equality to campaign through various online media, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Blogging.

### Conference also notes

The increasing success of the current online activities of the USI Equality Campaign

### Conference mandates

Equality Working Group to continue utilising online media to further the aims of the campaign

### Conference further mandates

All members of Equality Working Group to write a blog on an issue relevant to the campaign at least once a month

### Conference mandates

The Equality Officer to run competitions through online media in order to encourage students to be more interactive with the campaign

## 10/EQ 8 BRANDING USI EQUALITY

### Conference notes

The success of the rebranding of the USI Equality Campaign in rejuvenating the image of the campaign among students, COs and NGOs

### Conference mandates

The Equality Officer and Equality Working Group to continue to use the new logos and colour coding in all aspects of the Equality Campaign

## 10/EQ 10 TRAINING

### Conference notes

That full time officers in COs are provided with in depth training at UOS

### Conference also notes

That a similar event does not exist for part time officers and club and society committee members

### Conference acknowledges

That the USI Activist Academy held this year provides a great forum and training opportunity for part time officers and club and society committee members

### Conference mandates

The Equality Officer & Equality Working Group to run a training day for part time officers and club and society committee members at the start of each year and where possible to incorporate this training into an Activist Academy event. Topics for this training should include at a minimum: public speaking, campaign skills, running a society/club, chairing meetings and how to get involved in the USI Equality Campaign.

## 10/EQ 11 USI EQUALITY NEWSLETTER

### Conference notes

The success of the USI Equality monthly newsletter which started this year

### Conference recognises

That funding is an issue for USI

### Conference mandates

The Equality Officer to investigate offering commercial advertising space in the USI Equality Newsletter

## 09/EQ 1 DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

### Congress notes

The budget cutbacks that are occurring across most 3rd level institutions.

### Congress regrets

That a lot of these cutbacks are disproportionately affecting vital frontline student services.

### Congress recognises

The effectiveness and importance of disability support services for students suffering from both physical and intellectual disabilities.

### Congress opposes

Any and all cutbacks in these disability support services across the country.

### **Congress mandates**

The Equality, Disabilities and Education Officers to actively campaign to ensure the rights of support to these students by lobbying the appropriate national bodies to provide ring-fenced funding for these services.

## **09/EQ 3 FRIENDS OF THE ELDERLY**

### **Congress notes**

That Friends' of the Elderly is a voluntary, non-denominational organisation that brings friendship and social opportunities to the elderly, especially those who live alone.

### **Congress also notes**

That many student members in the Eastern Area volunteer with Friends of the Elderly.

### **Congress further notes**

That this year a pilot campaign entitled 'Open to the Elderly Week' took place in USI member colleges. The campaign consisted of organising one afternoon of entertainment for the elderly who lived near each college and was developed following the success of similar afternoons in UCD.

### **Congress recognises**

That such a campaign helps to combat ageism in our society.

### **Congress mandates**

The Equality Officer to continue to work with Friends of the Elderly.

## **09/EQ 5 WORKING WITH DISABILITY**

### **Congress Notes**

The excellent practices employed by the disability services in some higher education institutes

### **Congress Further Notes**

The disparity that exists in disability services available to students in different higher education institutes

### **Congress Mandates**

The Equality Officer and the Disability Rights Officer to investigate the various practices employed in by the disability services of institutes and, based on this, to construct a code of best practice for such services which shall be distributed to all COs and their relevant college authorities

## **09/EQ 8 IRISH TRAVELLER MOVEMENT**

### **Congress notes**

That there exists policy (08/EQ2) mandating the Equality Officer 'to lobby the government for the full and speedy implementation of the recommendations and conclusions laid out in the Department of Education & Science Survey of Traveller Education Provision.'

### **Congress also notes**

That while this motion is well intentioned, it does not provide the Equality Officer with a realistic mandate to address the issues facing members of the Traveller Community in third level education.

### **Congress recognises**

The work of this year's Equality Officer in building links with the Education Worker of the Irish Traveller Movement.

### **Congress notes**

That the Irish Traveller Movement is a national network of organisations and individuals working within the Traveller community.

### **Congress mandates**

That the Equality Officer continues to build links with ITM and to formulate a realistic strategy for addressing the issues faced by Travellers in third level education.

## **09/EQ 10 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

### **Congress notes**

That the numbers of EU and non EU students in the Irish Higher Education have increased steadily over the past number of years

### **Congress further notes**

That while these students share the same concerns as their Irish counterparts, they also need specific support in certain areas

### **Congress recognises**

That these students receive a lot of support from both international education offices and international student societies

**Congress is aware**

That very few structures exist within both local students union and USI to cater for the specific needs of both EU and non EU students and that this has led to very poor participation by international students at all levels of student representation (see USI Participation Working Group Final Report)

**Congress believes**

That Students Unions must cater for the needs of all their membership and that USI has a responsibility to support local unions in this and to lead by example

**Congress further believes**

That the current structures employed by students unions, both local and national, may need to be reviewed in order to serve the needs of these students more effectively

**Congress therefore mandates the Equality Officer**

- To continue to sit on the board of the Irish Council of International Students (ICOS);
- To work with ICOS to create support structures for EU and non EU students within local unions and within USI;
- To compile best practice guidelines for local unions on how to make their union accessible for EU and non EU students;
- To continue to monitor changes in governmental & HEI stipulations for EU and non EU students; to publicise these changes to the membership; to lobby against changes which will have a negative effect on students and to be proactive in seeking changes which will have a positive impact.

## 09/EQ 11 FORUM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**Congress Notes**

That participation in third level education among students with disabilities has grown in the last number of years.

**Congress Believes**

That it is difficult to provide adequate support and representation for these students without their input into highlighting their specific needs.

**Congress Mandates**

The Equality Officer and Disability Rights Officer to setup a forum in which students with disabilities can advise USI on the Disability Rights Campaign.

## Disability Rights

### 10/DR 1 DISCLOSURE AT CAO

**Conference notes**

That the CAO provides students with an option to disclose their disability.

**Conference further notes**

That many Leaving Certificate students may be uncomfortable making this disclosure, as they feel it may negatively impact upon them.

**Conference therefore mandates**

The Disability Rights Officer to work alongside the ISSU and other relevant organisations to highlight the positive effects of disclosure.

### 10/DR 2 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

**Conference notes**

That funding cuts have affected all college services, including disability support services

**Conference also notes**

That Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) have a legal responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities

**Conference believes**

That colleges must fulfil this legal responsibility to all students and that funding cuts do not absolve college authorities of this responsibility

**Conference mandates**

The Disability Rights Officer to work with AHEAD and other relevant organisations to run a 'Know Your Rights' campaign which highlights to students the legal responsibilities of HEIs to provide support and reasonable accommodations.

## 10/DR 3 INFORMATION

### **Conference notes**

There are many different disabilities

### **Conference also notes**

That sabbatical officers may not be aware of the different needs of all disabilities

### **Conference mandates**

The Disability Rights Officer to provide information to sabbatical officers on different disabilities and the possible reasonable accommodations which a student may require

# Gender Equality

## 10/GE 2 ADVOCATES FOR SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE

### **Conference notes**

That USI has numerous policies on issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

### **Conference also notes**

That USI has worked closely with the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) over the past number of years on SRHR

### **Conference welcomes**

The establishment of a youth specific campaign (ASK – Advocates for Sexual Knowledge) within the IFPA

### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and the Gender Equality Officer to work with ASK to progress USI policy on SRHR issues.

## 10/GE 4 LACK OF LEGAL PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN YOUTH RELATIONSHIPS

### **Conference notes with concern**

That young people in dating relationships are not covered by current domestic violence legislation because of strict cohabitation criteria.

### **Conference also notes**

That current Irish domestic violence legislation falls short of current UN Guidelines on Domestic Violence Legislation. These guidelines recommend that all individuals who are or have been in an intimate relationship, regardless of marital status or cohabitation, should be eligible for protection from domestic violence.

### **Conference believes**

That protection from domestic violence should not be contingent on current or previous cohabitation, and therefore Safety Orders should be available to all parties who are or have been in an intimate relationship, as is supported by UN Guidelines on Domestic Violence Legislation.

An opportunity exists under the current Civil Partnership Bill to make amendments to the Domestic Violence Act.

### **Conference therefore mandates**

The Equality & Gender Equality Officer to write immediately to all TDs and Senators to encourage them to support amendments to the Domestic Violence Act under the Civil Partnership Bill that would extend protection under domestic violence legislation to those who are or have been in intimate relationships regardless of marital or cohabitation status.

## 10/GE 5 COPENHAGEN DECLARATION

### **Conference notes**

That USI has many motions and policy on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

### **Conference also notes**

That members of USI Officerboard were involved in creating a pan European political statement on SRHR (known as the Copenhagen Declaration)

### **Conference further notes**

The Copenhagen Declaration reads as follows:

### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to sign the Copenhagen Declaration on behalf of USI and to use it when lobbying on SRHR issues

## 10/GE 6 CAMPAIGNING FOR WOMEN

### Conference notes

That USI had a successful Womens Rights Campaign in the past

### Conference also notes

That in recent years there has been very little policy on Womens issues

### Conference believes

That there is a problem with female participation in USI

### Conference also believes

That the creation of a gender equality officer position in 2009 was a positive step to increasing female participation in USI

### Conferences further believes

That current officers could learn a lot from the experience of past female officers, particularly those who were involved in the womens rights campaign

### Conference mandates

The Equality Officer and Gender Equality Officer to convene a roundtable with interested ex officers to discuss how to progress womens involvement in the union.

## 10/GE 7 OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN IN POSTERS

### Conference notes

That images used by clubs, societies and students union to promote events have become increasingly sexual and objectify young men and women

### Conference believes

That clubs, societies and students union should be leaders in creating a campus environment that is free from such overt sexualisation and objectification

### Conference mandates

The Gender Equality Officer to highlight the negative impact of objectification to clubs, societies and students unions and to create a best practice promotion guide that student groups can use when advertising events and activities

# International Students

## 10/IS 1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CAMPAIGN

### Conference notes

That is important that international students have access to a campaign which represents their views to government and other relevant organisations

### Conference also notes

That students should be able to access information about what colleges participate in the USI International Students Campaign prior to applying for a course of study

### Conference mandates

The International Student Officer to highlight on [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie) what third level colleges in Ireland are members of USI and active in the International Students Campaign.

## 10/IS 2 CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

### Conference notes

That the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform (DJELR) are currently reviewing immigration procedures for non EEA students

### Conference also notes

That the Department of Education & Science (DES) has established a high level group to coordinate the international education sector in Ireland

### Conference further notes

That USI has worked closely with ICOS to secure a student seat on the high level group and has made a submission to the DJELR on the immigration proposals

### Conference is disappointed

That the DJELR considers it adequate to promote such changes through a statement on their website

**Conference encourages**

The DJELR to be more proactive in consulting with students, who are the main stakeholders in this issue

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and International Students Officer to:

- seek a meeting with the DJELR to outline the need for proactive consultation with students on these issues and to establish such a system for consultation
- continue to work with ICOS on representing student views to the high level group
- seek student feedback regularly on proposals coming forth from either group/department
- advertise changes clearly on [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie) and through all other available media

## 10/IS 3 INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**Conference notes**

That many international students do not receive adequate information about Ireland and/or immigration procedures before they arrive here to study

**Conference believes**

This lack of information has a negative impact on the student experience for international students

**Conference mandates**

The international student officer to create an easy to read guide for international students on life in Ireland and immigration procedures and to make this available on [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie)

**Conference also notes**

That many international students do not understand the role of the SU in the college environment

**Conference therefore mandates**

The international student officer to create an easy to read guide for international students entitled 'What is a Student Union?' and to make this available on [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie).

## LGBT

### 10/LGBT 1 LGBT INTEREST GROUPS

**Conference notes**

That the USI LGBT Campaign has been working closely with various LGBT interest groups over the past few years, to the mutual benefit of all organisations

**Conference applauds**

The recent USI roundtable meeting, which brought all these organisations together to discuss the broader civil marriage campaign (which was the first meeting of its kind in over a year)

**Conference recognises**

That working with these groups is essential to the success of the campaign and as such should continue into the future

**Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to continue to work and liaise with the likes of Marriage Equality, LGBT Noise, EQUALS, GLEN (the Gay & Lesbian Equality Network), the NLGF (National Lesbian and Gay Federation), TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland) and BeLonG To, as well as any other group which they feel can further the USI LGBT Campaign

### 10/LGBT 2 HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING

**Conference notes**

That the results of the "LGBT Lives" survey (2009) show that 12 years old is the most common time for an LGBT person to come out to themselves, with 17 being the age most of them start to come out. This means most LGBT people are in secondary school while beginning their coming out process, or just starting college

**Conference further notes**

That over 58% of LGBT people reported homophobic bullying in their schools, and that 80% of LGBT people currently experience verbal abuse due to their LGBT identity in their day to day lives

**Conference believes**

That LGBT students can be victims of homophobic abuse in college

**Conference mandates**

The LGBTRO to work alongside the ISSU on a joint anti homophobic bullying campaign, covering both secondary school and college students to raise awareness of this issue

### Conference further mandates

The LGBTRO to work with BeLonG To on this campaign, as they have established points of contact for the area of homophobic bullying.

## 10/LGBT 3 STUDENTS' UNIONS INVOLVEMENT IN THE LGBT CAMPAIGN

### Conference believes

In order to have a real impact on student life, SU as a whole need to get involved with LGBT rights.

### Conference mandates

The LGBT RO to work closely with SUs as well as LGBT Societies.

## 10/LGBT 4 ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA CAMPAIGN

### Conference believes

It should be obvious to all students in USI colleges that homophobia will not be tolerated in any form on campus.

### Conference mandates

The LGBT RO to prepare information leaflets or pack for a campus-wide anti-homophobia campaign in all USI campuses on a certain day and to encourage all SUs to get involved.

## 10/LGBT 5 FRESHERS PACKS

### Conference believes

We constantly need to aim to reach all students who identify as L,G, B or T

### Conference mandates

The LGBT RO to prepare information for insertion by all SUs for a section in their fresher's booklets on LGBT issues specifically.

## 10/LGBT 6 LGBT WORKING GROUP

### Conference repeals

The motion

- 09 LGBT 19 Working Group
- 06 LGBT SSC 6 USI LGBT Working Group Team Dynamics
- 06 LGBT 21 Sabbatical Officers on Working Groups
- 06 LGBT 22 Working Group Changeover
- 06 LGBT 23 Participation By Working Group Members

### Conference notes

That the LGBT Policy Manual makes numerous references to LGBT Working Group.

### Conference further notes

That this group no longer exists under the restructuring of the USI LGBT Campaign.

### Conference therefore mandates

The LGBT RO to go through the manual and replace every instance of "the LGBT RO and Working Group" with "the LGBT RO"

Proposed by USI LGBT Rights Officer

## 10/LGBT 7 PINK TRAINING

### Conference repeals

The motions

- 09 LGBT 6 Financing of Pink Training
- 09 LGBT 07 Structure of Pink Training
- 08 LGBT 08 Lesbian Sexual Health at Pink Training
- 08 LGBT 12 Bisexuality Awareness at Pink Training
- 08 LGBT 19 Intervarsity Event Forum
- 08 LGBT 22 Pink Training Accommodation Requests
- 08 LGBT 23 Pink Training Workshops and Timetable
- 08 LGBT 25 Sexual Empowerment and Queer Studies at Pink Training
- 07 LGBT 03 Transgender Information for Welfare Officers
- 07 LGBT 10 Closed and Open Transgender Workshops at Pink Training
- 07 LGBT 11 Making Standing Conference More Accessible
- 06 LGBT 11 Biphobia
- 06 LGBT 12 Transgender Issues
- 06 LGBT 16 Pink Training
- 06 LGBT 2 Welfare Training at Pink Training

**Conference notes**

That over the past few years, repetitive motions relating to Pink Training were passed at various LGBT Standing Conferences, which lead to the LGBT Policy Manual becoming very disorganised.

**Conference recognises**

The importance of Pink Training as the single biggest gathering of LGBT people after Pride, and as such should cover many areas in which awareness needs to be raised.

**Conference also recognises**

That delegates can be too tired to participate fully after a certain time each day, which can lead to a lack of engagement.

**Conference further recognises**

That it can be difficult for new members to integrate at Pink Training. If a delegate is allowed specify one other delegate with whom they would like to stay, this may make the event less intimidating.

**Conference further notes**

That there may be Trans\* students in attendance, and that they may not be out to their friends or fellow society members. As such, they should be able to attend a closed coming out workshop running simultaneously to several other workshops to prevent them having to out themselves.

**Conference believes**

That the sexual health workshops are an integral part of Pink Training, and that these should all be run simultaneously with no other workshops at the same time, to ensure all delegates attend at least one workshop. Sexual empowerment workshops should also be part of the timetable, as it is important for delegates to be confident in their sexuality.

**Conference further believes**

That the bonding and networking aspects of Pink Training are essential to the Pink Training weekend. As such, ice-breakers and society networking events should be a part of the timetable.

**Conference therefore mandates**

The LGBT RO to:

- Consult with LGBT Students prior to Pink Training in order to assess the kind of modules they wish to see for the weekend
- Ensure that the Friday night consist only of opening speeches by the LGBT RO, the USI President and a guest speaker, and for these to be followed by ice-breakers
- Plan the timetable so that the Sunday consist only of open spaces and light interactive modules to allow for winding down, and for these to start no earlier than 11am in order to facilitate students preparing to leave
- Host a feedback session at the end of the weekend to assess delegates' thoughts and feelings about the success of the weekend
- Provide at least one meal which is to be included in the cost of the event
- Timetable the coming out workshops to be an hour and a half long
- That accommodation requests to share with a friend should be facilitated where possible

**Conference further mandates**

The LGBT RO to have, at a minimum, the following modules on the timetable:

- Bisexuality Awareness (Covering Biphobia)
- Sexual Health Workshops (Both Men's and Women's)
- Coming Out Workshops
- Sexual Empowerment
- Queer Studies/Queer Theory
- Trans\* 101 module, covering the areas of FTM, MTF, Intersex and Genderqueer.
- A closed Trans\* Coming Out Workshop, timetabled against several other modules to allow for privacy.
- LGBT Mental Health
- LGBT Drugs and Alcohol Awareness

## 09/LGBT 5 DIGNITY AND RESPECT

**Conference recognises**

the work done by COs to ensure that everybody feels equal.

**Conference notes**

that some COs have policies that are open to misinterpretation and this may lead to unintended discrimination.

**Conference believes**

that situations like this should never happen in any CO.

**Conference further believes**

that since it is against the law to discriminate, college officials should not be allowed to get away with doing so.

**Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to Draft up a generic policy on Dignity and Respect for use in CO's that don't have any.

**Conference further mandates**

the LGBT RO and WG to ensure that every CO's Union is aware of the existence of such policies and to ensure that such policies are being applied to everyone.

**09/LGBT 6 FINANCING OF PINK TRAINING****Conference Notes**

That in previous years, many students who book places at pink training, never show up and as a result, never pay for the place they booked.

**Conference further notes**

That in most years, the LGBT Campaign and USI have lost money as a result of this non payment.

**Conference Believes**

That the LGBT campaign should not financially suffer due to a non payment.

**Conference recognises**

That it is a standard business practice that most costs allow a margin of error, onto the cost price, to allow for hidden costs and last minute dropouts.

**Therefore Conference Mandates**

The LGBTRO and the LGBT Working Group to include as part of the initial payment, a margin of error fee of no more than 5 euro, to allow for some non payment.

**Conference Further Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that any money raised is returned directly into the LGBT Campaign Budget and is used for the printing of materials, attendance at a conference or any other event or training requiring financial assistance from the USI LGBT Campaign.

**Conference Also Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that, if the cost for pink training should ever exceed 90 euro, that the five euro margin of error is not included as the cost would be too excessive for students.

**Conference Additionally Mandates**

That anyone who has not paid for more than two years or whose collective debts exceed 3000 EUR shall be refused entry to pink training until at least half of the money is paid off with a guarantee that the rest will be paid no more than one month after the event

**09/LGBT 9 ADOPTION POLICY****Conference notes**

The controversial nature of the issue of gay adoption within Ireland.

**Conference Applauds**

The work done in relation to this issue by organisations by way of debates and seminars.

**Conference Notes with concern**

the lack of protection to children offered by the civil partnership bill.

**Conference believes**

That policy needs to be clarified regarding USIs stance on adoption rights.

**Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to ensure that USI lobby for better protections for children within the Civil Partnership Bill in the form of a Guardianship Rights Bill

**Congress Further Mandates**

The LGBTRO and the LGBT WG to form a campaign seeking to introduce full Adoption Rights and to only accept guardianship rights as a stepping stone towards full adoption rights

**Congress Also Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that a brief synopsis of guardianship rights versus adoption rights are drawn up and distributed to the LGBT Societies and SUs to inform them of both the pros and cons of each system.

**09/LGBT 13 MSM BLOOD BAN****Conference Notes**

That the IBTS still has not reviewed its policies on Blood donation

**Conference Further Notes**

That the NAT test has reduced the window of detection of the HIV virus down to 12 days.

### **Conference Notes with Concern**

The IBTS has passed obligation over to the Department of Health and the World Health Organisation. The IBTS will refuse to review the deferral criteria until the WHO and the Dept. require them to.

### **Conference Believes**

That the IBTS should set up a working group to investigate the viability of reducing the deferral period from an indefinite deferral down to a more reasonable timeframe

### **Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO and the LGBT Working group to:

- Continue to letter lobby the Minister of Health, asking for a working group to be set up.
- Write a submission to the Dept. Of Health, outlining current trends on HIV infection and HIV statistics and use this to seek a reduction.
- Outline a deferral period of one year instead of a lifetime deferral

### **Conference further mandates**

The LGBTRO to keep the information accurate and up to date with current statistics

### **Conference Also Mandates**

The LGBT RO to lobby both the department and WHO for the setting up of a working group to review their own policies regarding blood donations from the MSM community.

## **Mature Students**

### **10/MS 1 DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH NIMSO & AONTAS**

#### **Conference notes**

That USI benefits from having a positive working relationship with a number of external organisations

#### **Conference believes**

That the USI Mature Students Campaign would benefit from creating links with both NIMSO (Network of Irish Mature Students Officers) and AONTAS (the Irish National Learning Organisation)

#### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer & Mature Students Officer to meet with both NIMSO and AONTAS and explore possible collaborations in order to create a coherent lobbying effort on behalf of mature students across Ireland.

### **10/MS 2 MATURE STUDENTS OFFICER**

#### **Conference notes**

The high increase in the number of mature students attending third level education

#### **Conference also notes**

That increasing access to lifelong learning and creating diverse student populations is to be welcomed

#### **Conference is aware**

That mature students have additional needs and that these are often not represented at local level in colleges

#### **Conference believes that**

In order to represent the needs of mature students, each student union should have a part time mature students representative

#### **Conference therefore mandates**

The Mature Students Officer to lobby local COs to create part time mature student officer positions and to assist all unions in the development of this position.

### **10/MS 3 PEER SUPPORT FOR MATURE STUDENTS**

#### **Conference notes**

The success of peer support networks across Irish Third Level Institutions

#### **Conference also notes**

The difficulties faced by mature students returning to education

#### **Conference believes**

that other mature students are best placed to understand these issues and support mature students in first year

#### **Conference mandates**

The Mature Students Officer to lobby each college to establish a mature student's peer support network.

## 10/MS 4 SOCIAL EVENTS

### **Conference notes**

That often college entertainments focus on pubs and nightclubs

### **Conference also notes**

That this may not appeal to mature students

### **Conference mandates**

The Mature Students Officer to work with Entertainments Officers to create events which are more welcoming for mature students.

## 10/NA 1 TV LICENCE

### **Congress Notes**

- TV Licences are issued for 12 months
- The onus to pay the licence is not on the landlord
- The majority of students stay in student accommodation nine months

### **Congress Further notes**

In England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland students can apply for a refund of an unused portion of their TV Licence. If you have bought a licence at the beginning of the Autumn and do not remain in College accommodation or lodgings over the summer, you are entitled to a refund of any unused quarter (three full calendar months).

### **Congress mandates**

The Welfare Officer to lobby the Minister for Communication, energy and natural resources to implement a change in legislation that will provide students, and those who may be emigrating with a refund facility identical to the system used in England, Wales Scotland and Northern Ireland.

## 10/NA 2 HEADSHOPS

### **Congress Notes**

The dramatic increase on the number of "headshops" opening around the country.

### **Congress Further Notes**

That there is currently no regulation of the substances which are sold in these shops and the potentially harmful effects that these substances may have on a person.

### **Congress Mandates**

The welfare officer to campaign for the regulation of these shops in line with the recent trends in other Countries

# National Affairs

## 09/NA 3 ORGAN DONOR STATUS

### **Congress notes**

08/ NA 1 (Organ Donors) which mandates the area officers to promote the distribution of organ donor cards and organ donor information leaflets to each student member of USI.

### **Congress also notes**

The successful implementation of this mandate by the Eastern Area Officer this year

### **Congress believes**

That organ donor status should be included on student identity cards

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The President and Welfare Officer to lobby HEI's and any other relevant agencies for the inclusion of organ donor status on student identity cards.

# Union Organisation

## 10/UO 1 STRATEGIC & QUALITY REVIEW

### **Congress notes**

The extraordinary progress of the national student movement in the past 50 years under the leadership of USI.

### **Congress further congratulates**

The successive Officer Boards and ordinary members for their valuable contribution to political and social Irish life, which has directly impacted on the lives of students in Ireland.

### **Congress believes**

It is important that the Union re-evaluates its position, strategic direction, and fitness for purpose, especially in the current economic and political climate. Furthermore, that to re-evaluate this position, input and buy-in from every stakeholder in the national movement must be considered.

### **Congress mandates the President**

To lead a Strategic and Quality Review of the structure and operation of the Union of Students in Ireland, incorporating the views of external review bodies, similarly politically active organizations, ordinary members, past officers of Constituent Organizations, present officers of Constituent Organizations, current staff members, current members of Officer Board, and former members of Officer Board.

## 10/UO 2 USI NEWSLETTER PROPOSED

### **Congress notes**

The success of the monthly USI Equality Campaign Newsletter (distributed via email) in increasing the profile of the campaign among the student body this year

### **Congress mandates**

The Equality Officer to continue to produce this newsletter on a monthly basis and to increase the circulation of the newsletter

### **Congress further mandates**

The Deputy President to compile a quarterly newsletter on all USI Activities & Campaigns and circulate this to the membership

## 10/UO 3 PRESIDENTIAL VISITS

### **Congress notes**

The importance of area council meetings, to address regional problems and to build links with COs in the region.

### **Congress further notes**

Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 27 - - 27 -

The need for the COs to have a direct link with the President of the USI.

### **Congress mandates the President**

To attend, where possible, all area council meetings throughout the year.

## 10/UO 4 PAST WELFARE OFFICERS

### **Congress Notes**

That the newly instated USI Welfare Officer would benefit immensely from the advice and guidance of the outgoing, and other previous, welfare officers.

### **Congress Acknowledges**

The vast amount of experience from previous welfare officers can be passed down to the newly instated welfare officer to assist them in carrying out their job efficiently and making improvements to the procedures involved in running welfare campaigns.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI Welfare Officer to utilise Cairde USI to convene a meeting with past and present USI welfare officers to learn from their experience of the job and to prepare for the challenges that they can expect in the coming year.

## 10/UO 5 NON-AFFILIATES

### **Congress Recognises**

The difficulties in enticing Non Affiliates back into USI.

### **Congress Believes**

That however while there are difficulties in luring back non affiliates a different approach needs to be taken.

### **Congress applauds**

The work done by the President in completing an updated USI Re affiliation document this year

### **Congress Mandates**

The President should make contact to the respective non affiliate Presidents and request to make a presentation to them, either in USI HQ or on the Non Affiliate Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 28 - - 28 - Campus itself. The President and Deputy President to develop a Presentation outlining what USI does for it's members.

This should outline:

- Free Materials distributed
- Training Events Organised
- Representation on National Committees
- General help Officer Board provides to COs
- Testimonials from Sabbatical Officers in COs
- As well as any further information the respective officers feel is relevant

## 10/UO 6 TRAINING EVENTS

### **Congress notes**

The success of the Activist Academy and Green training hosted by USI this year.

### **Congress also notes**

That Pink Training remains one of USI's most prominent and foremost events and remains a unique selling point of USI to non-affiliates.

### **Congress mandates**

The President and members of Officerboard to:

- Hold at least one Activist Academy and Green Training within the first two months of college terms.
- Present the dates for these events at the first National Council.
- Investigate holding more than one Activist Academy in the first semester.
- Heavily promote these two events for the years 2010 - 2012 in order to make it synonymous with USI

## 10/UO 7 NATIONAL CHARITY

### **Congress Recognises**

That each year USI chooses a National Charity which at the end of the year will receive any some of money raised by USI

### **Congress Believes**

That there is huge potential to raise a very substantial amount of money for said Charity each year.

### **Congress Mandates**

The Officer board, particularly the Deputy President to organise at least one large fundraising activity in the academic year, utilizing the large amount of students available from all across the country. The Deputy President will consult with all COs on this after the National Charity has been selected and will make a decision on when the event shall be held and what that event should be at the subsequent Campaigns Working Group.

## 10/UO 8 OFFICER BOARD TRAINING

### **Congress notes**

The value of training events such as UOS for CO Officers

### **Congress Further Notes**

That a similar training does not take place for those who take up positions on USI Officerboard

### **Congress Mandates**

The President to organise an in depth training specifically for Officerboard before UOS on such issues as structures of USI, time and resource management and office operations.

## 10/UO 9 TEAM BUILDING

Congress mandates the immediate repealing and deletion from the Policy Manual of 07 / UO 31

### **Congress Recognises**

The importance of having a strong Team Ethos on Officerboard in order to have a successful year and also the importance in developing trust among officers in order to work together successfully.

### **Congress believes**

That the simplest way of achieving this is by having a team building event consisting of modules based around, but not limited to Teambuilding. And to also have a meeting on the Officerboard's first day of Office to discuss the plan of the forthcoming year outlining specific campaign ideas and dates for these. Important Event Dates such as National Council schedule and other events such as possible dates for the Lobby of the Oireachtas, Activist Academy and Pink Training should be discussed and possible dates for these should be outlined.

### **Congress Mandates**

The President to organise this event for the Officerboards first week in office.

### **Congress Further Mandates**

The Officerboard to take part in a refocusing exercise in January consisting of a review of the first half of their term and lay out an updated plan for the remainder of their time in office.

## 10/UO 11 SOCIETY TRAINING PROPOSED

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

Go n-eagraíonn Conradh na Gaeilge lá traenála do na hOifigigh Ghaeilge agus na Cumainn Ghaelacha i gcomhpháirt le Gael-eagraíochtaí eile.

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil chomh maith**

An fás agus forbairt ar an lá traenála le cúpla bliain anuas agus buntáiste atá sa lá do Oifigigh Ghaeilge áitiúla

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil le h-aiféal**

Nach raibh AMLÉ i gcónaí páirteach i eagrú na traenála atá mar chuid thábhachtach de forbairt na teanga sna coláistí tríú leibhéal

### **Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil**

Oifigeach na Gaeilge le Traenáil Ghaelach a eagrú i gcomhpháirt le Gael-eagraíochtaí eile Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdháil Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 31 - - 31 -

### **Congress Notes**

That currently Conradh na Gaeilge organise a training day for all Irish Language Officers and Irish Language Societies in conjunction with other Irish Language organisations.

### **Congress Further Notes**

The growth and success of the training day in recent years and its benefit to local Irish Language Officers.

### **Congress Regrets**

That USI has not always been involved with the organisation of this training which is a fundamental part in the development of the Irish Language in third level colleges.

### **Congress Mandates**

The Irish Language Officer to organise Irish Language Training in conjunction with other Irish Language Organisations

## 10/UO 12 CAIRDE USI

### **Congress mandates**

The President and Deputy president to ensure that at least one Cairde USI social event is organised in the first semester of every year with the aim of:

- Engaging with the experience of past officers to develop the collective memory of USI
- Helping the current officers build a network of useful contacts
- Fundraising for the organization

## 10/UO 13 LOBBY OF THE OIREACTHAS

### **Congress mandates**

The immediate repealing and deletion from the Policy Manual of 08 / UO 22.

### **Congress commends**

The success of the Lobby of the Oireachtas in past years.

### **Congress mandates**

The Deputy President/Campaigns Officer to strive to organise two lobbies of the Oireachtas each year to give each local union an opportunity to meet and speak to their public representatives.

**Congress recommends**

That that the USI Lobbies of the Oireachtas take place in the run-up to a national General Election wherever possible, and in late Autumn to coincide with the pre-Budget submissions.

**10/UO 14 FORMER PRESIDENTS COUNCIL****Congress applauds**

The organisation for fifty years of making a difference in students' lives. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 32 - - 32 -

**Congress believes**

That the fiftieth celebrations should be built upon and Cairde USI is a useful tool for the organisation in terms of institutional memory.

**Congress notes**

The large and diverse roll call of former presidents.

**Congress also notes**

That many of these presidents have offered advice, financial support, legal opinion, marketing expertise to our organisation at times when it was needed.

**Congress mandates**

The president to organise a council of former presidents who will meet informally at least twice a year to capitalise on the advice, services and goodwill of these former presidents to further the aims and objectives of USI.

**Congress further mandates**

The president to ensure that this council of presidents exists under the umbrella of 'Cairde USI'.

**10/UO 15 FULL-TIME POST GRADUATE OFFICER****Congress notes**

The important role that a knowledge economy would play in strengthening Ireland's economic position and in providing opportunities for graduates.

**Congress welcomes**

The work undertaken by higher education institutions in promoting graduate study to current students, and their work in attracting international students to study here.

**Congress notes**

External commentary predicting the number of applicants to postgraduate courses to rise as a direct result of the economic recession, with employment opportunities at a low ebb and the increase in understanding that postgraduate qualifications greatly aid career prospects.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The President to investigate the necessity of creating a full-time postgraduate officer position based on these important developments in fourth-level education.

**10/UO 16 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY****Congress Recognises**

The importance of a professional and easily accessed online presence for USI.

**Congress Realises**

Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 33 - - 33 - That the current website and blogs for USI are quite fragmented and do not currently form a professional image for the organisation.

**Congress Recognises**

That many CO memberships have a high level of knowledge of online communication strategies.

**Congress Notes**

The advances in collaboration technology, including google groups, and tele-conferencing that lessen the importance of face to face meetings.

**Congress Therefore Mandates**

The President to form a working group on this issue, entitled "Cohesive Communication Strategy Working Group", to be comprised of the president ex-officio, ordinary members of the organisation as nominated by their CO's, and external experts in the field, all to be approved at National Council, with a total membership of no more than 10 and no less than 3.

**Congress Further Mandates**

That this group be setup by the end of July 2010, with the group to present its final report to National Council within 18 months of its first meeting with progress reports to National Council every 6 months.

### **Congress Further Mandates**

That this group be governed by their own terms of reference, and their remit to include, but not limited to, the search engine optimisation strategy, social networking, the current USI website and inter CO communications.

## **10/UO 17 CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Congress Notes:**

That change is a powerful force for good.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The establishment of a Constitutional Review Board, membership of which will comprise of the President and Deputy President ex officio, three ordinary members from each of the four regions – to be nominated by COs, who will serve two year terms beginning July 2010 and ending July 2012, and ratified by their Area Councils and an Independent Chairperson, whose nomination will be ratified at National Council.

### **Congress Further Mandates:**

That this group be advised by experts with experience in the construction of organisational constitutions, and shall seek advice from organisations with knowledge of students' union constitutions e.g. AMSU.

### **Congress Further Mandates:**

The Constitutional Review Board to undertake a full review of the USI Constitution, to have its first sitting by July 2010 and present the amended document to USI National Congress 2012 for voting.

### **Congress Stresses:**

That the passing of this motion will not affect the ability of individual delegates to propose CAs.

## **10/UO 18 POLICY MANUAL REPORT**

### **Congress notes**

The policy manual has many mandates which have not yet been fulfilled.

### **Congress believes**

Officer Board must refer to the policy document on an ongoing basis throughout the year to ensure that the objectives outlined by their members at Congress are being actively pursued.

### **Congress also notes**

Many incoming officers from around the country are not aware of the existence of the USI policy document and only become familiar with policies before congress.

### **Congress Mandates**

The President to issue each CO with a hard copy of the policy document at UOS each year and the policy document should be explained at a UOS session.

## **10/UO 20 CENTRALISING NATIONAL COUNCIL**

### **Congress notes**

That the cost in terms of money and time of attending USI meetings, and particularly National Councils, can be very significant for Students' Union officers.

### **Congress believes**

That regular meetings between USI officers and Students' Union officers are essential to Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 35 - - 35 - build trust between our organisations and to ensure students are united on issues of national importance.

### **Congress mandates**

The President to examine the idea of holding all National Councils in one centralised location in order to cut down on travel time for Students' Union officers.

## **10/UO 22 IT DATABASE PROPOSED**

### **Congress believes**

That good communications structures are essential for large federal organisations such as USI.

### **Congress notes**

Information technology advances such as Google Documents has made taking advantage of IT easy and cheap.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

Incoming members of Officer Board to, at the beginning of their term, create a list of policy documents and other such documents as they may deem fit which are in their possession and which may be of use to Sabbatical Officers in COs, and communicate this list to them as a matter of priority.

**Congress further mandates**

Members of Officer Board to update this list and continue to communicate it to CO Sabbatical Officers on a bi-monthly basis during their terms.

**10/UO 23 PRESIDENTS' TRAINING SEMINAR****Congress notes**

The enormous benefits of a CO President who is able to provide team leadership and conflict resolution from the start of their term in office.

**Congress congratulates**

USI Officer Board on their efforts in providing and highlighting this issue at previous Presidents Working Groups. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 36 - - 36 -

**Congress mandates**

USI to offer to CO Presidents a full training program in Human Resource Management at UOS training conferences.

**10/UO 24 NON-AFFILIATED CO AT TRAINING EVENTS****Congress Believes**

That the benefits of USI are for its members and the services it provides such as pink training, activist academy and more importantly UOS.

**Congress Notes**

Currently non-affiliated colleges are allowed to attend such events and training seminars organised and facilitated by USI.

**Congress Further Notes**

It is affiliation fees which help maintain the organisation and which help to provide these services.

**Congress Does Not Believe**

That the fees charged for attending USI events such as UOS, reflects the true economic cost of hosting such events.

**Congress Therefore Mandates**

Officer board to take such steps as they deem necessary to ensure that only affiliated colleges attend USI training events and conferences except where the President of the non-affiliated student union has furnished the President of USI with a written statement stating the intention to hold a referendum to re-affiliate to USI. Once sought, the President of USI must obtain the consent of USI National Council to allow the non-affiliate to attend USI activities.

**Congress Further Mandates**

The President and Deputy President of USI to publicise the merits of affiliation to USI to incoming sabbatical officers in non-affiliated colleges.

**10/UO 25 ANNUAL VISIT****Congress notes**

That the president of USI is strategically located in Dublin as it is the capital of the country.

**Congress further notes**

That residing in Dublin ensures the President of the USI is close to the organizations it petitions and lobbies on behalf of the students.

**Congress feels**

The president is a leader of a national organization and should be visible and known to all of its members inside and outside the Dublin region. This visibility would increase the effectiveness of the office of President and increase the knowledge about USI at ground level.

**Congress mandates**

That the president of USI makes visits to each CO during the year.

**10/UO 27 UNION ORGANISATION PROPOSED****Congress Notes**

That USI and NUS UK work together on an ad hoc basis and that a semi-formal arrangement would be preferable.

**Congress Mandates**

The adoption of the following memorandum of understanding between USI and NUS UK.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 38 - - 38 -

Between the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and the National Union of Students in the United Kingdom (NUS UK).

The USI and NUS UK recognise the need for inter-organisational communication and cooperation with a view to furthering both organisations' aims of promoting the interests of their members, building a strong national students' campaign and fostering strong local students' unions.

Due to the cultural similarities between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom and to the history of progressive cooperation between the USI and NUS UK, it is felt that the possibility of further collaboration could be of great benefit to both Unions.

#### **Historical Context**

In 1973, USI and NUS UK jointly established NUS/USI to promote student unity across the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland and is still seen as a hugely progressive and effective initiative.

Since then, informal systems for further cooperation and exchange of information and ideas have been arranged by officers of either Union on an ad hoc basis depending on the need.

#### **AIMS AND SCOPE**

The purpose of this memorandum is to formally recognise channels of communication and cooperation between USI and NUS regarding:

- Training events
- Conferences/Congress
- Policy development
- The European Students' Union

It is hoped that relevant officers would be mutually invited to significant training events and that officers would be able to share information and best practice and seek input in relation to the above.

In this way, the knowledge and experiences of both organisations can be mutually beneficial to both.

It is not expected that either organisation will adopt any policies of the other.

## **09/UO 17 INCREASING CO PARTICIPATION**

#### **Congress notes**

The USI Participation Working Group investigated the participation of CO's within the structures of USI.

#### **Congress recognises**

That for many officers USI represented creating links with officers in other unions and that the creation of such links was hugely beneficial as officers could brainstorm and problem solve together.

#### **Congress also recognises**

That the geographical location of some student unions creates a barrier to their participation within the democratic structures of USI.

#### **Congress is also aware**

That in order to ensure participation from student unions in Northern Ireland, USI Campaigns, particularly Welfare & Equality, must be more relevant to students in Northern Ireland.

#### **Congress therefore mandates**

- The President to ensure a specific team bonding event, inclusive of all CO Officers and Officer Board, is organised to take place at UOS;
- Area officers to organise area specific team bonding events before September of each year;
- Officer Board to receive an induction training on NUSUSI before UOS takes place;
- Officer Board to consult the Northern Area Officer on modules being organised at UOS, in particular modules related to Welfare & Equality, to ensure that UOS remains relevant to our members from Northern Ireland;
- The Welfare & Equality Officer to consult NUSUSI when compiling materials for their respective campaigns;
- The Deputy President to gather feedback from CO's once per year on the barriers and incentives to participating in USI and to bring any recommendations coming from this feedback to Congress.

## **09/UO 20 COMMUNICATION SUCCESSES**

#### **Congress believes**

SU officers are the best placed to communicate the successes and strengths of USI to its members

#### **Congress notes**

That it can sometimes be difficult for SU officers to list off successes and on going work within USI for various reasons.

#### **Congress mandates**

The President to compile a brief list of achievements for distribution to all COs before the end of January in the second semester

## 09/UO 26 PROMOTING USI

### **Congress Notes**

The good work done by the Officer Board of Union of Students in Ireland in promoting student rights and views and in advancing the student movement

### **Congress notes with concern**

That many ordinary members of Union of Students in Ireland are unaware of much of the work done by their national union and in many cases are unaware of whom their national elected representatives are

### **Congress mandates**

The Officer Board to run a comprehensive USI awareness campaign for ordinary students detailing the structures, purpose and functions of USI and including information on the members of Officer Board

### **Congress further mandates**

The Officer Board to produce a short monthly report which shall detail the current achievements, objectives and the month ahead in the Union of Students in Ireland to be provided to all Constituent Organisations for optional inclusion on their website or in their union publications

Accounting and Finance

## 10/AF 1 USI MEMBERSHIP CARD PROPOSED BY EASTERN AREA OFFICER

### **Congress Notes**

The need for the Union of Students in Ireland to expand its stream of revenue. That the Union of Students in Ireland plays a great role in advocacy on behalf of its members, however in order to achieve a higher level of recognition it must look at additional ways of promoting the social and economic interests of its members.

### **Congress Notes**

The lack of commercial activity on the part of the Union of Students in Ireland.

### **Congress Believes**

That in working as both a union and a service provider USI and its day to day work will receive greater recognition. That USI's membership of over 200,000 students provides access to a huge market for potential commercial activity.

### **Congress Notes**

Attempts by USI in recent years to either abolish the Student Travelcard or to tender for its licence.

### **Congress Calls Upon**

USI to continue to tender for the licence for the travel card.

Failing that congress calls upon USI to set up its own discount card for students such a card could also act as a membership card.

### **Congress Mandates**

- The President to set up a working group to investigate expanding commercial activity
- The President to tender for the Student Travel Card licence if possible
- The President to examine the possibility of establishing a USI discount card.

## 10/AF 2 AFFILIATION FEE

### **Congress notes**

Policy 07 / AF 2 USI Affiliation fee, which states:

### **Congress notes**

For the Union of Students in Ireland to reach its full potential, Officers must be supported by a full complement of support staff.

### **Congress recognises**

That existing elected Officers would be better able to work on fulfilling policy if the organisation had more administrative & support staff. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 60 - - 60 -

### **Congress mandates**

The President to propose to National Council to raise the Union of Students in Ireland membership fee to €7 per full-time student and €3.50 per part-time student.

### **Congress further mandates**

The President to propose to Finance Committee to use this extra revenue to employ a full time research executive and a communications / campaigns executive."

### **Congress further notes**

That the economic climate is significantly different since this policy was adopted at National Congress in 2007.

**Congress regrets**

That that Live Register currently stands at 12.7 per cent, 100,000 graduates are unemployed and 60,000 people emigrated last year.

**Congress recognises**

That students and their families are under extreme financial pressure at the moment.

**Congress recognises**

That CO finances are also under considerable strain, and many of their commercial activities are facing difficulties. Cognizant of this;

**Congress repeals**

Policy 07/AF 2 USI Affiliation Fee and in light of the above, mandates the President to liaise with the Finance Committee to investigate reducing the affiliation fee and report back to the first National Council of the 2010/2011

## 10/AF 3 ADDITIONAL SERVICES

**Congress notes**

The breadth of the Organisation, spanning every corner of Ireland, encompassing over 20 COs.

**Congress recognises**

That the Organisation has immense power as a standing representative body, and has established itself as a formidable lobbying body within the political arena.

Congress further notes that the Organisation has the ability to provide a number of additional services to its COs.

**Congress mandates**

Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliantuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 61 - - 61 -

The President to conduct a feasibility study in conjunction with the Finance Committee and relevant staff, to assess the provision of additional services to COs. The results of this study must be presented no later than at the second National Council of the 2010/2011 academic year, and must include at least the following:

- Commercial services such as bulk-purchasing
- Preferred suppliers of common services (e.g. printers, mobile phone providers, etc.)
- Combined CO entertainments booking service.
- Emergency Motions

(These may not be reprioritised)

## EM1: THE NATIONAL MATHEMATICS SYMPOSIUM

**Congress Notes:**

The appalling state of the teaching of maths in the Republic of Ireland, as noted in a report and at the National Mathematics Symposium on the 16th of March 2010, and that over half of maths teachers in the Republic of Ireland only have one year of third level maths.

**Congress Believes:**

That without proper focus on a vital skill such as maths graduates will be unable to compete internationally and domestically for jobs and opportunities.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Education Officer to lobby the new Minister of Education and Skills to ensure that adequate resources are put into the teaching of maths at second and third level.

## EM2: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

**Congress notes:**

The recent reshuffle of Government ministers and the reorganisation of the Departments of state.

**Congress notes with alarm and concern:**

The breaking up of the Department of Education and Science resulting in the move of responsibility for research and educational innovation to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to release a statement opposing this change and asking that it be reversed.

## EM3: NEW FUNDING MODEL

**Congress notes:**

That three of the primary source of revenue for 3rd level institutes in the Republic of Ireland are: undergraduate numbers, research funding and international students.

**Congress further notes:**

That none of these sources bear a direct relation to the quality of teaching and learning at undergraduate or post-graduate level.

**Congress notes with alarm:**

That because of this situation institutions are actually encouraged to treat taught students as revenue generators to subsidise research.

**Congress also notes:**

This situation is resulting in a decline in the quality of teaching and learning in supports and facilities for taught students.

**Congress also further notes:**

That this competition for funding will worsen significantly given the recent division of funding responsibilities in the cabinet reshuffle.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Education Officer to lobby to bring in a new funding model which will be cognisant of the quality of teaching and learning as a factor in awarding funds to third level institutions.

## EM 4: STUDENT HOUSING

**Congress Notes:**

The motion passed at the 2010 Sinn Fein Ard Fheis which calls for compulsory university regulated accommodation for first year students living away from home.

**Congress further notes:**

That the complete text of Sinn Féin Ard Fheis motion 149 (Education) reads:

**This Ard Fheis:**

- Recognises the contribution of universities to the educational and academic life of the country.
- Acknowledges the negative experiences of communities such as the Holyland in South Belfast.
- is mindful of the potential for communities in North Belfast to suffer the same erosion with the relocation of the University of Ulster.

The Ard Fheis therefore adopts a framework policy for the protection of residential communities which neighbour universities, which contains the following components:

- Provision of sufficient university accommodation to meet demand, with compulsory university regulated accommodation for first year students living away from home.
- Compulsory landlord registration.
- Tighter control and regulation of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs).

**Conference recognises:**

That as Sinn Féin are members of the government in the North and have the potential to be part of a future coalition in the south that this poses an immediate threat to students across the island of Ireland.

**Congress Mandates:**

The USI President and Officerboard to actively oppose this policy by demonstrating that it is unfair, unworkable and unreasonably restricts a young person freedom of choice.

**Congress further Mandates:**

The USI President and Officerboard to lobby Sinn Féin elected representatives, both North and South, to secure a reversal this policy.

## EM5: DOMESTIC & SEXUAL ABUSE

**Congress notes:**

That many students are, have been, and will become victims of sexual abuse in Ireland.

**Congress mandates:**

The Equality Officer to actively lobby for the increased awareness of the above issue, and of the supports available as well as the legal options for victims of abuse.

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**Union of Students in Ireland**  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

NAME/AINM