

Congress Comhdháil AMLÉ

USI

Union of Students in Ireland

Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

2017

ENNIS, CO. CLARE



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| President's Welcome | 4 |
| Welcome from the Congress Director | 5 |
| Safety at Congress | 6 |
| The Chair of Elections Subcommittee | 8 |
| Welcome from the Chair of Steering Committee | 9 |
| Steering and Elections Committee | 10 |
| How Congress Works | 12 |
| Motions Before Congress | 14 |
| Candidates for re-election | 62 |
| Officer reports | 76 |

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

| 9.30 | | | | | |
|-------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 10.00 | Registration | | | | |
| 11.00 | | Welfare | | Undiscussed Motions | Accounts & Finances |
| 12.00 | National Council | | | | Emergency Motions |
| 13.00 | | | | | Officer Reports |
| 14.00 | Lunch | Voting | Lunch | Lunch | The President-elect |
| 15.00 | Congress Briefing | Fringe | Fringe | Fringe | |
| 16.00 | Opening Address | Academic Affairs | | Constitutional Amendments | |
| 17.00 | | | | | |
| 18.00 | Policies Due to Expire | Union Organisation | | | |
| 19.00 | Dinner | Dinner | | Unscheduled | |
| 20.00 | | | | | |
| 21.00 | | National & Int. Affairs | | | |
| 22.00 | Election Hustings | Equality & Citizenship | | Congress Dinner | |
| 23.00 | | | | President's Address | |
| | | | | Steering Awards | |



Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

RED lines are immovable guillotines.

The times of elections will be announced on Monday.

When it is convenient, Steering may move to discuss other undiscussed motions if a section completes before its allocated time.

Delegates must vacate their rooms by 11 am on Thursday Morning.

Welcome from the President of USI

ANNIE HOEY



A chairde,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to USI Congress 2017. It has been a number of years since my first USI Congress but I still remember the excitement reverberating around the room as the first day kicked off, and the buzz I felt coming off the stage after I spoke for the first time. I was terrified and not sure if my contribution was valuable, but I got up there and I said it anyway. And I haven't really stopped since! The debates I have had at various USI Congresses, and the people I have met, have all shaped the opinions I hold today.

This week we will discuss motions and policies that will shape the work of the national student movement for the coming year. There will be ideas that you agree with, and policies that you think are downright batty. There will be debates that you will have a strong opinion on, and there will be others that you simply won't care for. You will hear debates that will challenge the great oration of Cicero, and others that wouldn't seem out of place waddling home after a strenuous night out. But no matter! For these each of these debates are important, and play a role in formulating the work and policies of the national student movement. You are here to help decide the direction of the student movement, not only for the next year, but quite possibly for many years to come.

Aside from all the debating and policy-making, there are elections and Fringe Sessions going on. The USI Officerboard elections take place during Congress, and you have an opportunity to choose who you want to represent you nationally for the next academic year. These are the people who will put the policies and motions passed here at Congress into action next year, and they are the team who will represent you on a national level. Ensure that there is a fruitful body of work laid out for them by engaging in the debates throughout the week.

The Fringe Sessions have been organised to allow delegates an opportunity to come together to discuss ideas, vent, self-organise and meet people who are interested in the same topics as each other. The sessions each take a different format, so be sure to read the descriptions first! This is the first year we are running the Fringe Sessions, and I hope they become a regular feature for Congress for years to come.

Over the coming few days you will meet lots of great people, have interesting (and sometimes terribly heated) debates, shape national policy, and formulate the direction of the student movement for the year to come. We on the USI Officerboard team and want you to have a fantastic time, and to feel that you have truly participated and contributed throughout the week. We are on hand all week to answer any queries you have and to ensure you enjoy your time at USI Congress 2017.

In advance I want to thank you for the valuable contribution you will make this week.

With pride,

Annie
USI President 2016/17

Congressional Greetings from the Congress Director

BEN ARCHIBALD



Dear Delegates and observers,

Since I lay out the Congress Documents, I get to be the second person to welcome you to Ennis, Co. Clare - to the spiritual home of USI. And you are welcome - whether this is your first rodeo or you've been collecting delegate cards for a while, it's good to have you.

More people have been elected to lead the student movement here than anywhere else in Ireland - more decisions have been taken, more votes have been cast in this hotel than anywhere else. But those things are matters for your elected officers and committees to worry about. I'm obsessed with things like meals, bedrooms and safety.

I'm your liaison with the good people at the West County Hotel. If you have any issue with the hotel, come to me with it first and we'll try to resolve it as quickly and painlessly as possible. In our experience, the hotel has always been excellent at helping us fix the tiny number of problems which occur when they arise, and I am sure it'll be the same this year.

Any time a large number of strangers are brought together, it's important to create a shared understanding of how we'll all interact. Please pay close attention to your own safety and the safety of others at the hotel - if you see anything which could endanger delegates, please do what you can to remove the danger, and if you need help to do so, call the Safety Champion number on the back of your delegate card.

Pay attention to the code of conduct in this document. Give respect and you'll be respected. I don't recommend trying out the alternative. Congress is as good or as challenging as delegates make it. My team will make sure you're fed and watered and that you have beds to sleep in - and the spirit of Congress will take care of the rest.

Welcome aboard.

Safety at USI

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

USI SAFETY CHAMPION

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

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

ABUSIVE / 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.

CONSENT

At all USI events, we apply a standard of 'explicit consent'. If you want to engage in sexual activity, you need to be certain the other person wants it too. Get a yes, or GTFO.

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. (or any part of it) and not allowed to participate in future USI events.

AUTHORITY TO EJECT

The authority to require a person at a USI event to leave the event (temporarily or permanently) lies with the SU delegation leader, President, and the Congress Director. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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*

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.

Welcome from the Chair of Elections Subcommittee

RICHARD HAMMOND



Elections Sub-Committee is comprised of Nora Duncan, Scott Ahearn, Cathy Pembroke and me.

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,

Chairperson

Welcome from the Chair of Steering Committee

COLM MURPHY



Delegates,

Do not be alarmed! The older, haggard, grizzled people you see on Congress floor are in fact members of Steering Committee. We will be chairing sessions of Congress over the next few days. All of us are former activists/union officers and our job is to make sure that the rules get applied objectively so that whether your motion passes or fails, you'll know that at least the process was fair and impartial.

Congress is great fun, and a great opportunity to try out your public speaking skills and show your passion for your fellow students. However, you are each here to represent your fellow students, your own Union and your college. Have respect for each speaker, even if you fervently disagree with every word and they are a minority of one. One day you could be in that minority of one and you would appreciate the same respect.

Other than chairing sessions one of our most important jobs is Steering Awards! These awards, rivalling the Oscars in their glamour and star-studded celebrity, will be given out towards the end of the week. Categories change every year but best speaker, best maiden speaker, angry young speaker, best delegation (small, medium & large) are some of the awards you can expect. So if put on a good show, make sure a member of Steering Committee knows your name and college!

Finally, on behalf of Steering Committee 2017-2019 I would like to welcome you to USI Annual Congress 2017.

Colm Murphy

Chairman

Steering and Elections Committee

Chairperson



Colm Murphy

After serving terms as USI Deputy President and VP Academic, Colm worked in the US for the Washington Ireland Program before moving onto various educational institutes and professional bodies. Colm now works in continuing professional development for Engineers Ireland. Colm is a graduate of WIT where he studied law before serving two terms as Education Officer in WITSU. Talk to Colm if you have any questions about; the USI Constitution, the best TV series ever (which is House of Cards, US or UK versions) or putting together a bucket list. Colm is also a qualified private pilot.

Deputy Chairperson



Aodhán Ó Dea

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 le Conradh na Gaeilge mar Stiúrthóir Forbartha. Is breá leis ag labhairt le daoine éagsúla as Gaeilge nó as Béarla- abair "haigh" leis má tá deis agat

Firic spraoiúil- Bhí Aodhán i roinnt cláracha teilifíse náireach, ar nós The Morbegs, Fair City agus Paisean Faisean.

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 to work with Conradh na Gaeilge where is now Director of Development. He loves a good chat in Irish or English, say "hi" if you get a chance.

Fun Fact- Aodhán was in a string of cringey TV shows- including The Morbegs, Fair City and Paisean Faisean.

Chairman of Elections Subcommittee



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 three children

Paul Lynam

Paul Lynam is the Policy and International Relations manager of the Royal Irish Academy (RIA). He has worked on issues such as equity of access to higher education, Seanad reform, STEM education in Ireland. He currently manages the RIA's submission to the Cassell's expert group on funding of higher education. He previously worked as a parliamentary assistant for Eoghan Murphy TD. As a student representative Paul was Eastern Area Officer for USI, he also acted in a custodial role as Deputy President, Postgraduate Officer and Welfare Officer. He was Education Officer of UCDSU and President of UCDSU. He's a certified mediator by the Mediation Institution of Ireland (MII) and has delivered training modules on negotiation and policy development.

Steering and Elections Committee



Scott Ahern

Scott is an Family Therapist and Student Counsellor for TCD Student Counselling Service. Over the years Scott co-founded PleaseTalk.org, is a Guinness World Record Holder, HSE Trainer in suicide prevention and established the national Green Ribbon Campaign. In his Student Union days he served as UCD Deputy President/Welfare Officer and as USI Welfare Vice President. Back in his college days he was active member of the L&H and Law society. Scott is on twitter at @Scottytipp



Denise McCarthy

Denise McCarthy, a WIT Social Care graduate from Tipperary first got involved in the student movement when she was elected Class Representative in 2006 and continued as Class Rep for four years. Denise is a former two term Welfare Officer with WIT Students' Union and then went on to serve two years as USI Vice President for Welfare. In her second term with USI, Denise was Deputy President. Denise is currently Senior Account Manager on the Office of Government Procurement contract with Datapac. Denise's Fun (and embarrassing) Fact: During the Presidential Election Hustings at Congress 2014, Denise fell off the stage after making her intro speech!



Cathy Pembroke

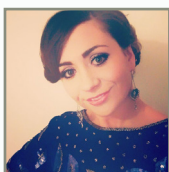
Cathy Pembroke is a graduate from Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) and served a total of three years in WIT Students' Union as a Deputy President for Education and then two years as President. Following this, Cathy also proudly served one year as USI Southern Area Officer. Cathy now works in WIT Student Life and Learning (SLL) as the Student Engagement Officer and Acting Retention Officer where she works as part of the student support team.

Fun Fact: Hates Hershey's chocolate with a passion and will never be seen eating it!!!!!!



Helen Campbell

I was Vice President/Welfare Officer in IT Sligo for two terms 2013/14 14/15. I returned to college in IT Sligo and completed my degree in Public Health and Health Promotion. I currently work as a personal trainer and mind movement coordinator in Right Balance Fitness in Galway and strength and conditioning with a number of teams in the Galway region. A fun fact about me is that I am cycling from Croke Park to Killimor on Saturday (186 km) for both my club and pieta house. If you see me around please say hi!



Nora Duncan

A Ulster University BA Hons Drama Graduate from County Antrim. Student Union Involvement began as a volunteer then class representative as well as part time Equality officer UUM in her final year. Nora served 1 term as Welfare Officer followed by 1 term as President of UUSU, she has also worked for two terms as a SU co-ordinator for Waterford Institute of Technology.

Nora currently works for the Public Health Agency as a Youth Health Co-ordinator in Belfast, specialising in the areas of high risk behaviour, anti social behaviour, drugs and alcohol awareness as well as sexual health.

FUN FACT: Nora barely missed out on a place of the final of RTE's TV show Fame due to all judges informing her frankly that she couldn't dance! Friends still don't let her forget it but she's still trying to prove them wrong with every step on the dance she takes!

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 members of the Officerboard.

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.

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.

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 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.

What if the amendment fails?

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

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.

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 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.

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 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.

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.

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 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.

ONE MINUTE to propose

ONE MINUTE to oppose



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.

Motions before Congress

Gaelige

IL1 Support for Irish Language Act in Northern Ireland

Proposed by NUIGSU

Congress notes

The opportunity for an Irish language Act to be implemented in the North of Ireland.

Congress further notes

The positive impact having an Irish Language Act has had in the South of Ireland since it was passed in 2003.

Congress believes

That the Irish language should be supported legally by the government in the North as it is in the South. An Irish Language Act would increase funding for Gaelscoileanna, funding which would ensure the growth of the Irish language and would encourage learning Irish amongst the young people. Irish is a living language and should be treated as such.

Congress therefore mandates

That the USI President and An Leas-Uachtarán don Gaeilge to support any advancements made by the relative groups (notably An Dream Dearg) towards having an Irish Language Act in the North.

IL2 Irish Language Act

Molta ag an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

Aithníonn an Comhdháil

Na failí atá déanta ag an bhFeidhmeannas ó thuaidh i leith an tAcht Teanga a gealladh sa bhliain 2006 mar chuid de Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn i gceangailt B.

Cáineann an Chomhdháil

Na failí atá déanta ag an bhFeidhmeannas ó Thuaidh agus na céimeanna atá glactha ag roinnt dá mbaill seasamh a thógaint in aghaidh an teanga in ainneoin go bhfuil siad ag dul i gcoinne an méad atá ó mhóramh an phobail.

Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil

Don Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge mar aon leis an gcuid eile den Bhord Oifigigh feachtasaíocht a dhéanamh ó Thuaidh le haghaidh Acht Teanga agus le dul i ngleic leis na failí atá déanta ag an bhFeidhmeannas i leith an tAcht Teanga a gealladh sa bhliain 2006 mar chuid de Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn i gceangailt B. Mar aon le comhoibriú le grúpaí eile ar nós Conradh na Gaeilge agus an Dream Dearg leis an sprioc seo a bhaint amach.

Congress notes:

That the Executive did not fulfil the commitments made in Annex B of the St Andrews Agreements in 2006.

Congress condemns

That the commitments for a Language Act were not fulfilled and the steps taken by certain members of the executive to actively work against any furthering of the language, against the wishes of the majority of the population.

Congress mandates

The LU don Ghaeilge and Officer Board campaign for a language act in Northern Ireland working with groups like Conradh na Gaeilge and an Dream Dearg to ensure that the populations Language rights do not continue to be violated. Also to ensure that all of the commitments made regarding the Irish Language in the St Andrews Agreement in 2006 are filled.

NOTES

National affairs

NA1 Amendment to Article 40.3.2 of Bunreacht na hEireann

This motion will require a 2/3rds majority to pass

Proposed by DCUSU

Congress notes

The effect of article 40.3.2 of Bunreacht na hEireann in the case of The Housing (Private Rented Dwellings) Bill referred under Article 26 to the Supreme Court that forbade the state from introducing rent controls.

National affairs

NA1 Amendment to Article 40.3.2 of Bunreacht na hEireann continued

This motion will require a 2/3rds majority to pass

Proposed by DCUSU

Congress believes

that this article has had a negative and erroneous effect on public policy with regard to the right to safe and affordable housing in Ireland.

Congress therefore mandates as policy the position that

Article 40.3.2 of Bunreacht na hEireann should be amended in order to allow for a fairer and more equitable regulation of the rental market by the Oireachtas.

NA2 The Impact of Brexit both North and South

This motion will require a simple majority (50%+1) to pass.

Proposed by Queen's University Belfast Students' Union

Congress recognises:

- That on 23rd June 2016, the United Kingdom voted in a referendum to leave the membership of the European Union.
- That 56% of the electorate in Northern Ireland voted to Remain in that referendum.
- That young people and students in particular voted overwhelmingly to Remain within the EU on 23rd June 2016, in Northern Ireland, and across the UK.
- That, as a result, there exists a democratic deficit between the north of Ireland and other regions.
- That due to this democratic deficit, there exists a possibility that the rights of students, and the values of the students' movement in Northern Ireland, may be diminished, neglected or ignored during Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU.
- That there will also be a number of worrying ramifications for the Republic of Ireland.
- That there has already been a fall in the number of international students, particularly EU students, applying to study in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Congress is concerned that:

- That withdrawal from the EU will have profound political, economic and social effects on our society, and on opportunities for students.
- That hugely successful initiatives for student mobility such as the Erasmus+ scheme may be severely curtailed.
- That the number of students who are from Northern Ireland and want to study in the Republic of Ireland, or vice versa, will reduce as a result of withdrawing from the EU.
- That access to healthcare via the European Health Insurance Card will be under threat.
- That the number of people from the Island of Ireland who want to access reproductive healthcare in Great Britain will now face additional barriers due to withdrawing from the EU.
- That EU nationals, including students and academics, living in the UK may be used as 'negotiating capital' in Brexit negotiations and their 'right to remain' will be threatened.
- That civic society in Northern Ireland, and the needs and interests of our society and citizens will be neglected during Brexit negotiations.
- That issues of border control and immigration in Britain will have a profound impact on the Irish border, with freedom of movement curtailed, and trade on the island hampered.

Congress mandates

- The USI Officer Board to actively campaign to ensure that the rights and values of the student movement are not diminished or ignored, and are reflected and promoted, during Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU, and during any negotiation between Governments in London and Dublin.

NOTES

National affairs

NA2 The Impact of Brexit both North and South cont'd

This motion will require a simple majority (50%+1) to pass.

Proposed by Queen's University Belfast Students' Union

These rights, opportunities and values include, but are not limited to:

- Access to EU funding and participation in EU teaching, learning, travel and research programs.
- Freedom of movement through Europe, especially for students and academics
- Protection of Equality Legislation and the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in Northern Ireland.
- The 'right to remain' for EU nationals living in Northern Ireland and throughout the UK.
- Retaining the Erasmus+ Scheme
- Access to European Healthcare
- Retention of the Common Travel Area, and the right to unhindered free movement, across the island of Ireland
- The USI Officer Board to engage with NUS-USI, NUSUK, ESU, and with civic society, in order to develop clear and informed policy stances on the implications of Brexit.

NA3 Gambling Control Bill 2013

This motion will require a simple majority (50%+1) to pass.

Proposed by Dublin Regional Committee

Congress notes:

That USI has a stance to campaign to educate its members on the prevalence of problem gambling for students.

Congress also notes:

That Ireland has one of the loosest regulations on gambling in Europe while the Gambling Control Bill 2013 hasn't been acted on since it was first drafted.

Congress believes:

That with increase awareness of gambling and improvements in technology, that this bill must be passed to ensure that students and future generations are protected from gambling addiction.

Congress mandates:

That the VP Welfare work with organisations such as Problem Gambling Ireland & the Rutland Centre to lobby the Minister for Justice, relevant Junior Ministers and Oireachtas members on introducing the Gambling Control Bill.

NA4 Car Insurance Campaign

This motion will require a simple majority (50%+1) to pass

Proposed by: USI Campaigns Committee

Congress Notes With Concern:

The cost of car insurance claims has increased by 44% from 2012 to 2015 while insurance costs have soared by more than 70% since June 2013.

Congress Acknowledges:

The increase of fees, rent, cost of college materials, transport and other costs on students have made attending third-level a financial difficulty.

Congress Further Acknowledges:

The Cost of Insurance Committee, Chairpersoned by Minister of State Eoghan Murphy TD, has published its report containing 33 recommendations comprising 71 actions with recommendations that implementation needs to be swift in order for these recommendations to be felt for consumers.

Congress Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective.

Congress Further Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Campaigns to join the external campaign led by taxi drivers, road hauliers, older people groups and sympathetic political parties to take action on car insurance increases.

NOTES

National affairs

NA 5 Water Charges

Proposed by Athlone ITSU

This will require a simple majority to pass

Congress Notes:

That there is still varying levels of hostility towards the payment of water charges in Ireland.

Congress recognises:

That the cost of third level education continues to rise and that water charges compounds this issue further for students

Congress observes

That the cost of water charges in many cases is not handled by landlords and is passed down to student tenants

Congress Therefore Mandates:

The President lobbies the Department of the Environment to seek that Third Level students and the property that they reside in, independent of their family home are exempt from water charges

NA 6 Sugar Tax

Proposed by Athlone ITSU

This will require a simple majority to pass

Congress Notes:

That Finance Minister Michael Noonan announced plans to introduce a sugar tax in Budget 2017

Congress further Notes

That the United Kingdom is working towards an implementation of a similar tax in 2018

Congress further Notes

A public consultation process is currently underway regarding its implementation in the Republic of Ireland

Congress Therefore Mandates:

That the Vice President for Welfare to engage with this public consultation process

Congress Further Mandates:

The President to Lobby for the proceeds of any new tax to be used as an additional funding stream for third level education in the Republic of Ireland

NOTES

Academic affairs

AA1 Refugee Access to Education

Proposed by IT Blanchardstown Students' Union

Congress Notes:

That there is a refugee crisis occurring globally, with refugees seeking residency particularly in countries within the European Union

Congress Further notes:

That many of these refugees are seeking Third Level Education in Ireland.

Congress Further notes:

That to seek financial support through SUSI to attend College one must be a resident in Ireland for 3 out of 5 years.

Congress believes

That Education is crucial in integration to the communities and the development of the individual.

Congress further Believes

That it is unjust that refugees have this barrier put before them, in preventing them from accessing financial support from The Irish Government.

Congress Mandates

The VP for Equality and Citizenship and VP AA to campaign and lobby the department of Education and Skills and the Minister for Education to change legislation for grant access to apply to cases of refugees.

AA2 Fees Sanctions

Proposed by IT Blanchardstown Students' Union

Congress Notes:

That many students are unable to pay their fees by the deadline put in place by each Third Level Institute.

Congress Further Notes:

That there is no best practice guidelines in place to deal with the issue of late fee payment of students.

Congress Further Notes:

That in an attempt to encourage to students to pay their fees, they can be locked out of online resources including moodle and emails.

Congress Further Notes:

That this is resulting in students becoming very distressed, as the sanctions put in place are having a direct negative impact on each of the students academics, as students are unable to access upload continues assessments or sit online exams.

Congress Mandates

The Students Union President to lobby the HEA to set up a Sub group to examine best practice guidelines in relation to sanctions for late fee payment.

AA3 Borrowing model of IOTs

Proposed by GMITSU

Congress notes

There is a huge crisis in relation to the current financial state of many IOTs across the country. IOTs are not allowed to borrow money in the such ways Universities can. According to recent reports in the media, currently there are six Institutes of Technology in a vulnerable state.

Congress further notes

This causes huge issues for IOTs regarding progress and helping to advance their status the same way Universities can. This can also come into effect as IOTs cannot borrow money to help with the accommodation crisis, and they cannot borrow money to build.

Congress therefore mandates

The USI President as a member of the HEA board to highlight with the HEA and lobby the government for IOTs to access additional funding the same way Universities can access it.

NOTES

Academic affairs

AA4 Student Participation in Governance

Proposed by Queen's University Belfast Students' Union

Congress:

Repeals 15 AAQA 8 and 14 AAQA 6

Congress notes:

That student participation in the academic governance of their institution is integral to ensuring that the perspective of the learner is embedded and reflected in decision-making.

Congress further notes:

Tertiary-level education is becoming increasingly marketised and competition-driven, with HEI Management engaged in strategic work around recruitment, marketing, and internationalisation. Students are increasingly denied a role in academic governance, creating a democratic deficit in our institutions.

Congress believes that:

Students and student representatives are partners in their education, and should have a key role to play in governance throughout structures in their institutions.

Congress recognises:

- The experiences of MOs in student participation and institutional democracy is varied.
- The work to date with NStEP on institutional analysis and academic representation.
- The work to date with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning on partnership.

Congress mandates the President and the VP Academic Affairs:

- To carry out diagnostic work with MOs to get a broader picture of institutional democracy and student representation in governance structures.
- To create resources around best practice examples of democratisation and decentralisation of institutional governance structures.
- To work with individual MOs, as appropriate, to support efforts to improve student participation in academic governance.

AA5 National Student Charter

Proposed by Presidents' Committee

Congress notes

That there is currently no national Student Charter.

Congress further notes

That in institutions that have a Student Charter, it forms the backbone of the relationship the students' union has with their institution and management.

Congress applauds

The work USI did in relation to students engagement and students as partners in higher education institutions, and believes that a National Student Charter is the next logical step for the work on student engagement to take.

Congress mandates

The USI President to lobby the Minister for Education and the HEA to form a Committee with the aim of developing a National Student Charter.

AA6 Class Rep Best Practice

Proposed by Academic Affairs Committee

Congress Notes:

Class reps are the backbone of a Students' Union in terms of providing a student voice on institutional activities.

Congress Further Notes:

The role of Class Rep, their elections and their implementation operates differently in each individual Member Organisation.

Congress Mandates:

The VP Academic Affairs to coordinate a piece of research that establishes best practice across all third level HEIs in terms of electing, training and empowering Class Reps to perform their roles on a local level, bearing in mind the challenges posed by institution type and size.

NOTES

Academic affairs

AA7 Class Rep Accreditation

Proposed by Academic Affairs Committee

Congress Believes:

Class Representatives form the backbone of SU and institutional activities in terms of providing a representative student voice within an institution.

Congress Notes:

The role of class representatives is increasingly being recognised by the HEA and QQI, through national initiatives such as the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP).

Congress Further Notes:

Class Representatives involvement is crucial to the success of such programmes.

Congress Recognises:

Student time is becoming increasingly scarce due to the nature of semesterisation, and that therefore it is not always possible for them to fully and actively engage with programmes such as the NStEP, and the other functions associated with the role of a class representative.

Congress Therefore Mandates:

The USI VP Academic Affairs to work with the HEA and QQI to look into the feasibility of rolling out accreditation for the position of class representative, similarly to how standard modules are accredited.

AA8 Multi-campus support

Proposed by GMITSU

Congress notes

There are many colleges with multi-campus. Multiple campuses are important in delivering education to regional communities.

Congress further notes

That in setting up multi-campus there was additional funding provided. That funding has since stopped, giving no help to colleges to support the running of the many satellite campuses. This has resulted many colleges facing satellite campus closures, and high financial difficulty.

Congress therefore mandates

USI President and VP AA to put pressure on TDs and the HEA to support the fact that multi-campus' need more support to sustain a comfortable financial state and security for the survival of these vital campuses within regional communities.

AA9 The effects of IR issues

Proposed by WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS' UNION

Congress notes:

That students may be used as a mechanism during industrial relations disputes within institutions.

Congress believes:

That the holding of exam results and student supports, particularly VLE, should not be used in disputes.

Congress notes:

The possibility of a national student charter.

Congress therefore mandates:

The VP for AA to investigate if it is feasible to include that exam results and that student supports including VLE, would not be affected by IR issues in any national student charter and in national policy.

AA10 Shared Feedback Standards

Proposed by Academic Affairs Committee and Waterford Institute of Technology SU

Congress Notes:

Current assessment and feedback structures vary across all institutions. This results in highly varied teaching standards. Students are suffering as a result.

Congress Also Notes:

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning have chosen "Assessment Of/For/As Learning " as their most recent enhancement theme. It places a special focus on assessment in Irish higher education.

NOTES

Academic affairs

AA10 Shared Feedback Standards cont'd

Proposed by Academic Affairs Committee and Waterford Institute of Technology SU

Congress Further Notes:

ISSE data collected since its initiation, which indicates that first year students experience a low level of interaction with lecturing staff.

Congress Mandates:

VP AA to engage with the Department of Education, QQI and HEA to introduce shared standards for feedback on assessed work across all third level institutions that improves the students' experience and develops quality of assessment across the country.

AA11 Motion on residency criteria for returning emigrants

Proposed by VP for Academic Affairs

Congress notes

That students who have not lived in Ireland or another EU member state for 3 of the last 5 years do not qualify for EU tuition fee levels or the student maintenance grant, regardless of their nationality and/or citizenship.

Congress regrets

That this policy has particularly affected the many young people who emigrated from Ireland during the economic crisis. Those who wish to return to Ireland to pursue higher education at both undergraduate and postgraduate level face significantly higher non-EU fee levels as a result of their residency in a non-EU state. In practice, this serves as an incentive to defer or reconsider repatriation.

Congress also regrets

That for a huge number of emigrants, emigration has not been a "lifestyle choice". Hundreds of thousands of people have emigrated from Ireland over the past 10 years and many of whom did so under the obligation of a scarcity of opportunity.

Congress accordingly asserts

That it is unjust to penalise those Irish citizens who were forced by external circumstances to seek opportunities abroad. Moreover, the current policy is inconsistent with government strategy to incentivise the repatriation of those same emigrants.

Congress believes

That returning emigrants should be subject to less strict conditions of residency in order to qualify for EU fee levels and student supports
Congress therefore mandates
Officer board to liaise with the Department of Education and the Higher Education Authority to pursue the implementation of less strict conditions of residency for these people.

NOTES

Welfare

WEL 1 Age Threshold for Cervical Cancer Checks

Proposed by IT Tralee Students' Union

Congress Notes

The Cervical Check Ireland provides free Smear tests to women over 25 years of age.

Congress Notes With Concern:

The lack of services available to students under the age of 25 with concerns and the time it takes to get appropriate treatment.

Congress Therefore Mandates:

The VP Welfare to lobby the appropriate bodies to campaign on lowering the initial age of smear screenings.

Congress Also Mandates:

The VP Welfare to provide un-biased information on the HPV Vaccine and its availability.

Congress Therefore Repeals:

10 WEL 6 CERVICAL CANCER

Welfare

WEL 2 Self Care

Proposed by IT Tralee Students' Union

Congress notes:

That self-care is an important aspect of sabbatical officers' day to day work. Self-care grants officers the opportunity to effectively deal with the variety of student issues they deal with on a continuous basis.

Congress notes with concern:

That self-care has not been prioritised nor developed for sabbatical officers. Self-care training needs to be more effective so that sabbatical officers can deal with their work and allow them assist students knowing they are sufficiently trained.

Congress mandates:

The VP for Welfare to provide training to Sabbatical Officers so they can effectively use self-care and/or reflection to more effectively deal with issues that may affect their own health.

Congress also mandates:

VP for each region to provide Self Care training in their own areas for access purposes and also to allow colleges avail of this critical training.

WEL 3 Dealing with students in distress

Proposed by the Border, Midlands and Western Regional Committee

Congress Notes:

Student's mental health issues are prevalent from the beginning of a Sabbatical officer's term

Congress Believes:

Although basic Mental Health Training is offered at SUT, Sabbatical Officers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to assist students during times of distress from the start of the welfare officers elected term.

Congress Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Welfare to organise comprehensive and practical training at SUT to ensure Sabbatical Officers are capable of dealing with students in distress from the early stages of the officer's term.

Congress Repeals:

16 WEL 19

WEL4 SilverCloud Counselling

Proposed by NUIGSU

Congress notes

The correlation between counselling support and student retention.

Congress also notes

The high demand and insufficient resources of on-campus counselling services.

Congress further notes

The successful and positive feedback of SilverCloud Counselling.

Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to undergo a feasibility study as whether SilverCloud Counselling could be made available to all Universities and Institutes of technology as an additional support service to students.

WEL 5 Legislative change to protect students living in Digs style accommodation

Proposed by GMITSU

Congress recognises

That appropriate accommodation in Ireland for the student population is extremely low.

Congress further recognises

That digs style accommodation has become the accommodation that student now rely on more due to this fact. It has become increasingly alarming that students who rent Digs Accommodation do not have the same right as renting from a private house/ landlord.

Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for welfare to set up a committee to lobby the government for protection of a tenants rights to be carried out for digs accommodation

NOTES

Welfare

WEL 6 Mental Health Explanation Campaign

Proposed by GMITSU

Congress notes

There is a difference between mental illness and mental health

Congress further notes

The differences are not explained correctly in society. This causes massive confusion for anyone suffering with their mental health. It also does not explain the difference between positive and negative emotions people may face.

Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for welfare to create a new campaign in conjunction with the relevant organisations, solely around explaining the difference between mental health and mental illness. This campaign, would study the various areas of under the heading Mental Health, both positive and negative.

WEL 7 Rental Restrictions for HEI Owned Campus Accommodations'

Proposed by DCUSU

Congress notes

the impact the housing and rental crises is having on students participating in higher education.

Congress further notes

that a number of HEI's own and operate on-campus accommodation services for their respective students, through companies established and owned by the HEI's.

Congress further notes

that student renters using these accommodation services have not benefited from rental restriction measures introduced between 2014-2016 under varying amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 2016, mainly due to the type of rental agreements these services utilise.

Congress believes that

it is important that such accommodation is accessible for all types of students participating in higher education and that HEI's should not be allowed use the rental crises to plunder the pockets of student renters.

Congress therefore mandates

The USI President to seek the HEA to issue guidelines to see that similar rental restriction measures are introduced for HEI owned student accommodation.

WEL 8 Consent classes

Proposed by Welfare Committee

Congress notes:

The importance of educating our members around sexual health particularly around consent.

Congress further notes:

That USI has worked closely with organisations like DRCC, Smart Consent and ICOS in raising awareness around consent, domestic violence and sexual assault through campaigns, training and lobbying efforts.

Congress applauds:

The work that USI has done in relation to the above in pioneering and spearheading national campaigns and the dialogue around consent and sexual health.

Congress believes:

That USI should assist local Officers in creating policies locally in their Institutions to implement consent workshops in order to educate their members and continue the dialogue surrounding consent.

Congress mandates:

The VP for Equality and Citizenship and VP for Welfare to conduct research and design, with the assistance of external expert bodies, a national student-focused consent workshop based on recommendations from the 2016 Trinity consent workshops.

Congress further mandates:

The VP for Equality and Citizenship and VP for Welfare carry out 'train the trainer' consent courses for Officers in order to educate them on implementing inclusive consent courses for their students.

NOTES

Welfare

WEL 9 Gambling Control Bill 2013

Proposed by Welfare Committee and Dublin Area Regional Committee

Congress notes:

That USI has a stance to campaign to educate its members on the prevalence of problem gambling for students.

Congress also notes:

That Ireland has one of the loosest regulations on gambling in Europe while the Gambling Control Bill 2013 hasn't been acted on since it was first drafted.

Congress believes:

That with increase awareness of gambling and improvements in technology, that this bill must be passed to ensure that students and future generations are protected from gambling addiction.

Congress Mandates:

That the VP Welfare work with organisations such as Problem Gambling Ireland & the Rutland Centre to lobby the Minister for Justice, relevant Junior Ministers and Oireachtas members on introducing the Gambling Control Bill.

WEL 10 Training for Officers dealing with students with mental illness or disability

Proposed by Welfare Committee

Congress Notes:

That MOS should be trained in basic awareness in how to deal with difficult situation if they arose and how to refer them on and how to refer the students to the proper services

Congress Believe:

That MOS are not equipped with the basic skill on how to deal and refer people who might have a mental illness, a Disability or a medical condition.

Congress Further Believes:

That if MOS are equipped with the basic skill it will help the student receive help from the right services as quick as possible.

Congress Mandates:

The Vice President for Welfare to organise training for MOs in the basic skills for dealing with a student with a mental illness, a Disability or a Medical Condition if a difficult situation arose and which are the proper services to which to refer students.

WEL 11 Accommodation Strategy

Proposed by the VP for Welfare

Congress Notes:

That the accommodation strategy was passed in Congress 2016.

Congress also Notes:

That the accommodation strategy must be edited due to legislative changes.

Congress Mandates:

The adoption of the USI accommodation strategy with the included edits.

WEL 12 Public Health (Alcohol) Bill

Proposed by the VP for Welfare

Congress notes:

That USI officially dis-associated from Drinkaware.ie in November 2013

Congress also notes:

That the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill is currently being discussed in the Dáil and is currently being lobbied against by the drinks industry which is successfully stalling the introduction of the Bill in full.

Congress Believes:

That the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill must be introduced in its current full form to protect future generations and save lives.

Congress Mandates:

The USI President with assistance of the VP Welfare to lobby the government to support and introduce the bill.

NOTES

Welfare

WEL 13 USI Health Promoting Strategy:

Proposed by the VP Welfare

Congress notes:

11/WEL 4 mandating the creation of a strategy document in the main areas of work for the VP Welfare.

Congress applauds:

The creation of the USI Health Promoting Strategy which encompasses the following strategies:

- Mental Health Strategy
- Sexual Health Strategy
- Physical Health Strategy
- Healthy Eating Strategy
- Body Confidence Strategy
- Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy
- Drugs Harm Reduction Strategy
- Smoking Cessation Strategy
- Gambling Awareness Strategy

Congress recognises:

The importance of having a streamlined strategy

Congress therefore incorporates

the following motions into the Strategy, which has been published accordingly:

Health

16/wel 14
16/wel 13
16/wel 12
16 wel11
16 wel 1
15/Wel 13
14/wel 4
14/wel 5
14/wel 6
14/wel 8
14/wel 16
13/wel 1
13/wel 2
12/wel 7
13/wel 11
13/wel 13
12/wel 7
11/wel 5

Sexual Health

15/wel 9
14/wel 11
13/wel 3
12/wel 3
11/wel6
11/wel 7
10/wel 7
9/wel 1
9/wel 9

Congress mandates:

The VP Welfare to follow the above-created USI Health Promoting Strategy with a review every 3 years.

WEL14 Cervical Cancer Awareness

Proposed by Cork Institute of Technology SU

Congress Notes:

Cervical Cancer is sadly statistically increasing amongst the younger population of women in Ireland.

Congress Further Notes:

Cervical Check – Irelands National Cervical Screening Programme currently provides free smear tests to women aged between 25-60 years of age.

Congress Believes:

Although free smear tests are provided for all women over the age of 25, women under this age may also develop Cervical Cancer.

Congress Notes With Concern:

That women who are under 25 years of age, and who are sexually active (which gives them an increased risk of contracting cervical cancer), and who may have symptoms or desire a smear test, currently must pay for it.

Congress Mandates:

The USI VP Welfare, to work with the HSE to develop an awareness campaign on cervical cancer including the symptoms, risks and how and where to get tests.

Congress Also Mandates:

The VP Welfare to lobby the government to lower the age of the first FREE Smear test to 21 years of age in order to detect the early stages of cervical cancer.

NOTES

Welfare

WEL 15 Student Survey on Perceptions of Consent

Proposed by Queen's University Belfast Students' Union

Congress notes

that a 'Say Something' Survey was carried out in 2013, to research the instances of unwanted sexual contact and levels of reporting, but not the perception and culture of consent and sexual misconduct.

Congress also notes

that in the last 3+ years since the survey was carried out, the topic of consent and sexual misconduct within Educational institutions has become a larger topic of conversation for more institutions than ever.

Congress believes

that to truly tackle the issue of sexual misconduct, culture and social norms must be changed.

Congress believes

that this survey, if repeated at a later date, will allow USI, MO's and the wider community to evaluate campaigns, policies and strategies that they may have implemented and evaluate whether these have worked in changing social perceptions and norms.

Congress believes

that this research will better shape campaigns on the topic of consent and allow for MO's to lobby institutions (if required) on the Implementation of consent classes, policies and strategies.
Congress mandates
the VP Welfare and the VP Equality and Citizenship to investigate the feasibility of such a survey.

WEL 16 Student Assistant Fund & SUSI Recipients

Proposed by Equality & Citizenship Committee

Congress notes:

The purpose of the Student Assistance Fund is to provide support to fulltime students who may be experiencing extreme financial difficulties, have experienced a major change of circumstances or are experiencing extreme personal hardship

Congress further notes:

In some third level institutions in Ireland the Student Assistance Fund application process is closed to those who are in receipt of SUSI.

Congress mandates:

VP Equality & Citizenship to work towards the Student Assistance Fund being accessible to all students regardless of whether they are in receipt of SUSI or not across Institutes in Ireland.

WEL 17 Key Welfare Campaigns Directory

Proposed by the Southern Area Regional Committee

Congress Notes

The previous campaign directories designed and distributed by previous officers to aid MO's in planning key Welfare Campaigns throughout the year.

Congress also Notes

The time and coordination it takes to organise campaigns which can sometimes be daunting if they are new to their role.

Congress Applauds

The work done previously by welfare officers in this area.

Congress therefore mandates

The VP Welfare and VP Campaigns to collate a campaign directory to be distributed to welfare officers with poster and event ideas in the style of previous years.
This is to be completed for the 2nd national council of the SU year

NOTES

Welfare

WEL 18 PrEP Availability in Ireland

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship Committee

Congress Notes:

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is an important tool in reducing the rate of HIV infections and that PrEP is not currently available in Ireland. PrEP, is a safe and highly effective way for HIV-negative people to prevent HIV.

Congress also notes:

PrEP is recommended as a prevention option for people at substantial risk of HIV by the World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control and UNAIDS.

Congress further notes:

HIV diagnoses are increasing in Ireland, but PrEP offers a way to prevent new transmissions. Condoms have been our main HIV prevention method for 30 years. While they have been very successful, they have not been enough to stop HIV alone. In 2016 the number of new HIV diagnoses in Ireland was the highest ever recorded. New options like PrEP won't replace condoms and other risk-reduction approaches, but will be additional tools to help meet the wide range of needs in the real world.

Congress mandates:

The VP Equality and Citizenship campaign for the accessible introduction of PrEP in Ireland, and work with advocacy organisations already working in the area, eg. ACT UP Dublin.

Congress also mandates:

The VP Welfare to lobby the HSE and to seek availability of PrEP in Ireland as part of the National Sexual Health Strategy moving forward.

WEL19 Combating Cyberbullying in Third Level

Proposed by VP Southern Region

Congress Notes

The detrimental effect cyberbullying and online abuse can have on a person and their everyday lives.

Congress Notes with Concern

The increasing amount of time we spend living our lives online, and how easily students may be attacked online anonymously or otherwise and to have information shared about them without their permission.

Congress Also Notes with Concern

The rising number of incidents in relation to revenge porn online and the lack of regulation around the issue.

Congress therefore mandates

USI to adopt a new updated version of the USI Cyberbullying policy which reflects current social media trends.

Congress therefore also mandates

The current USI Cyberbullying policy to be repealed in place of the new Cyberbullying policy.

WEL 20 Road Safety

Proposed by VP Southern Region

Congress Notes

Previous collaborations with the Road Safety Authority to create awareness of safe driving on our roads.

Congress Notes with Concern

the rate of fatal accidents among young drivers, and the dangers of driving witnessed in the Southern Region.

Congress Also Notes

The importance of raising awareness of road safety to students of which many rely on to get to and from college.

Congress Therefore Mandates

The VP Welfare to look into collaborating with organisations such as the Road Safety Authority in promoting Road Safety to students.

NOTES

Welfare

WEL 21 Student Bereavement Support

Proposed by VP Southern Region

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.

Congress also Mandates

The VP for Welfare to also provide self care information for officers who have to deal with bereavement within their line of work.

Congress therefore Repeals

14 Wel 8 to be replaced by Student Bereavement Supports.

WEL 22 Social Inclusion Campaign

Proposed by WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS' UNION

Congress notes:

Isolation and loneliness are two issues that affect many students across all institutions in Ireland.

Congress acknowledges:

AITSU 'Mind Your Mates' campaign and WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS' UNION 'Be Their Buddy' campaign as being a successful social inclusion initiative in their campuses respectively.

Congress mandates:

VP Welfare to run a social inclusion campaign where students are encouraged to support each other at the most basic level of interaction. Within this campaign, information on appropriate referral services is to be included so students are aware of pathways if an issue is disclosed.

WEL 23 Increase the Legal Age of Gambling to 21

Proposed by NUIGSU

Congress recognizes

Both the negative financial implications of gambling and also its addictive nature.

Congress notes

The large cohort of students who receive grants and financial aid.

Congress further notes

The link between financial pressures and retention rates within colleges.

Congress therefore mandates

The President and the Vice President for Welfare to lobby that the legal age of gambling is raised to 21 in Ireland, as a means of protecting young people from the negative financial implications of gambling.

WEL 24 Additional Opportunities Available to Post Second Level

Proposed by NUIGSU

Congress notes

The pressure placed on Second Level students to gain entry into University and Institutes of Technology.

NOTES

Welfare

WEL 24 Additional Opportunities Available to Post Second Level cont'd

Proposed by NUIGSU

Congress further notes

The level of drop-out rates amongst first year students at Third Level.

Congress believes

A lack of career guidance and pressure to have to achieve Third Level contribute to these drop-out rates.

Congress mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns to liaise with the Second Level Students' Unions and relevant bodies to run a campaign to emphasize the valuable opportunities available from postponing Third Level education, by means of sampling the world these institutes try to prepare people for.

WEL 25 Personal Safety Campaign during Freshers' Week

Proposed by Dublin Institute of Technology SU

Congress notes:

Every September vast amount of students enter college for the first time, and find it difficult to transition from secondary to third level educational life.

Congress further notes:

That many students travel or commute/move to dif/bigger counties/cities and are not familiar with the surroundings of their new college.

Congress notes with concern:

Students are most vulnerable during freshers week, as they are exposed to new independence and environments, such as nightlife etc.

Congress notes with great concern:

That there is a lack of active promotion around personal safety for students.

Congress therefore mandates:

USI Welfare Officer, to research and develop a personal safety campaign, during freshers' weeks', that can be implemented into all universities and IOT's across the country.

WEL 26 Drug Testing Kits: Awareness and Promotion

Proposed by Dublin Institute of Technology SU

Congress notes:

Many third level students partake in recreational drug use.

Congress further notes:

That students are not exposed to the necessary information or tools/apparatus needed to make informed choices about drug usage.

Congress notes with concern:

That lack of information/ apparatus around drug safety and fear mongering with students is resulting in misinformation and putting students at risk. This is why the promotion and education of drug testing kits is beneficial to all students across the country

Congress mandates:

VP Welfare, to circulate information around drug testing kits and look into the feasibility of selling them or making them available via the students union.

Congress further mandates:

VP welfare to provide a workshop to other su welfare officers about how to use the drug testing kits. So they can go back to their colleges and implement the educational message around safe drug use and using drug testing kits.

NOTES

Welfare

WEL 27 Stim Room for ASD students

Proposed by Dublin Institute of Technology SU

Congress notes:

That some students find it hard to concentrate and integrate into the student body during lectures and exams due to environmental sensitivity, such as florescent lighting, overcrowding, heat temperature and distracting sounds.

Congress further notes:

That students internationally with conditions such as ASD (autism spectrum disorder) have benefited from stim rooms, which is a low cost resource that can be easily implemented into universities and institutes across the country.

Congress mandates:

VP Equality & Citizenship to run a pilot project with a university or IOT of their choice, with a diverse student body for example students from DEAR schemes etc. for investigate the feasibility of implementing this across all colleges in the country.

NOTES

Accounting and finance

AF1 USI Financial Transparency

Proposed by the VP for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

Congress believes

That having clear and accessible transparency for the Union of Students in Ireland will strengthen the organisation and also allow students engage more functionally and effectively.

Congress Believes:

That members have a right to have easy access to such documents.

Congress therefore mandates:

The USI President to ensure that financial accounts are uploaded to the USI Website no more than 5 working days after being approved by Congress each year.

Congress Deletes:

15 AF1

Union organisation

UO1 Independent Students' Unions

Proposed by Presidents' Committee

Congress notes with concern

The creeping intrusion on students' union democracy and independence occurring around the country.

Congress believes

The backbone of the student movement is for students' unions to be allowed to democratically self-govern, and to be free from interference by outside bodies.

Congress further notes with concern

The attempts to censor some students' unions, and encroach on their freedom of association.

Congress mandates

The President to have the Independent Students' Union campaign as a priority campaign for the year, and to form a Committee, made up of the President and members of national council, and any external bodies that National Council see fit. This Committee is to report back to each National Council.

Union organisation

UO2 Protection of Students' Union Autonomy

Proposed by DCUSU

Congress notes with the concern

the attack on students' union's autonomy by HEI's over the past year.

Congress believes

that students' unions must be autonomous in order to represent the best interests of their membership and that attacks to undermine them are harmful to the respective student bodies and to the shared-governance model of HEI's as enshrined in the Universities Act 1997 and the Institute of Technology Act 2006

Congress therefore mandates

the President, in consultation with National Council, to lobby for an amendment to the aforementioned Acts that ensures that HEI Executives and or Governing Bodies cannot use their powers to undermine the autonomy of students' unions.

UO3 USI on campus

Proposed by TCDSU

Congress notes

that students should have the opportunity to see more of what USI is doing for them.

Congress further notes:

that this helps MO engagement when they can see that their officers are working on national issues with USI.

Congress mandates

that USI distributes information (via poster campaigns, social media and shoutouts) to every campus once a term with MOs to give them a national update and tell them which projects they have been doing with that MO during the year.

UO4 USI Entertainments Agency

Proposed by IT Tralee Students' Union

Congress Recognises:

The opportunity for USI to develop an Entertainment agency. This agency would aim to provide MO's with access to book acts, collaborate on events, cost share on acts/ events and provide cost saving options for merchandise and event marketing options.

Congress Mandates:

The USI President to develop an Entertainments agency.

UO5 Employability & Personal Skills Development

Propose by the Southern Area Regional Committee

Congress believes:

That upskilling is important alongside students' degrees to improve employability upon graduation, in securing part-time work to fund their education and to develop their own personal skills.

Congress notes:

The Upskill Week run by WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS' UNION which was then followed by similar campaigns & workshops in ITTSU and NUIGSU.

Congress also notes:

The on-going upskilling opportunities that institutions and SUs offer throughout the year. This includes first aid training, bar training, barista training, Safe talk training, CV workshops, Volunteering opportunities, Interview skills, restorative practices, self defence etc.

Congress therefore mandates:

Regional officers to create a list of resources and contacts for MOs undertaking the campaign or running workshops.

NOTES

Union organisation

UO6 USI Policy book transparency

Proposed by the VP for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

Congress Believes:

The USI Policy Book is essential in directing the work of USI and Officerboard.

Congress notes with concern:

That it is not always clear what motions have been completed.

Congress therefore mandates:

The USI President to ensure an up to date Policy Book is made available online with a clear indication of mandates complete, mandates ongoing and mandates not complete.

Congress also mandates:

Members of Officerboard to give updates on mandates complete in their officer reports to National Council.

UO7 Utilising National Council

Proposed by the Border, Midlands and Western Regional Committee

Congress Notes:

The importance of National Council in steering the work of USI and deciding interim policy.

Congress Believes:

That National Council is best utilised with contributions from every Member Organisation.

Congress Mandates:

The USI president to organise training at SUT for Sabbatical Officers on how to interact with National Council.

UO8 Student Engagement with TDs

Proposed by the Border, Midlands and Western Regional Committee

Congress notes:

Both the importance and the current shortfall in a desired level of student engagement with TDs.

Congress Mandates:

The Regional Officers and Vice President for Campaigns to organise in conjunction with relevant MOs a Questions & Answers forum where students can question TDs on topics nominated by the local MO.

UO9 Marketing Skills Training

Proposed by Entertainment Committee

Congress Notes:

The need for officers in National Council to have skills to be capable of using design, knowledge of design, branding, marketing and other communications strategic planning.

Congress Further Notes:

The facilities available to provide software and spaces for formalised training and the skills available from students who could provide this type of training.

Congress Mandates:

The Chairperson of the Entertainments Committee to hold training on design, branding and digital media before September every year.

UO10 USI and Member Organisations Entertainments Collaboration

Proposed by Entertainment Committee

Congress notes:

That the Entertainments Committee is under-utilised as a forum for USI and MO's to collaborate on events such as Freshers Week, RAG Week etc.

Congress further recognises:

The difficulty MO's can have when organising events and negotiating with entertainment companies to book acts, negotiate fees and riders and organise theme night events. Entertainment companies can take advantage of MO's in early negotiations non-negotiable fees into etc.

NOTES

Union organisation

UO10 USI and Member Organisations Entertainments Collaboration

Proposed by Entertainment Committee

Congress recognises:

The potential for greater collaboration between USI and MO's to book acts collectively which can reduce total event costs.

Congress Mandates:

The Chairperson of Entertainments Committee to present a draft a list of MO events and campaigns before SUT+.

Congress further mandates:

The Chairperson of Entertainments Committee to develop and share costings for acts, event hire agencies and merchandise etc for their events on/off campus for the Committee

UO11 Ents Committee Reform

Proposed by Entertainments Committee

Congress Notes:

That the Ents Committee has experienced low turnout.

Congress Mandates:

That the Chairperson of the Ents Group conducts a survey of former and current marketing and ents officers, including officers who may have a brief including Ents , to see what they would like the Ents Committee to be.

Congress Further Mandates:

The Chairperson of the Ents Group to compile the results of this survey into a terms of reference document, to be passed by National Council in June.

UO12 Regional Training Events

Proposed by Cork ITSU

Congress Notes:

Training events for Students' Union Officers are frequently held within the Dublin Region.

Congress Further Notes:

That therefore it is not always feasible for officers from other areas to attend these vital training events.

Congress further believes:

During the academic term it can be difficult for SU officers to find the time to travel for required training.

Congress Believes:

All training is important to SU officer's roles. Therefore by making it more accessible through regional training more SU officers will likely be able to attend the training.

Congress Mandates:

USI Officer Board to ensure that when they are organising training events aside from SUT, SUT+ and other events as determined by the officer board, that they do so in each region where logistically and financially possible.

Congress Further Mandates:

The USI Officer Board to clarify and justify to USI National Council and/or relevant officer working groups why it is not possible to facilitate regional training events aside from SUT, SUT+ and other events as determined by the officer board in detail prior to the events being organised.

UO13 Part-time Officer Training

Proposed by Cork IT SU

Congress Notes:

Part-time Officers are a vital component of Students' Unions and of the national student movement.

Congress Further Notes and applauds:

That training is currently provided annually to part-time officers on a regional basis.

Congress believes:

This practice should continue.

NOTES

Union organisation

UO13 Part-time Officer Training

Proposed by Cork IT SU

Congress Recognises:

That part-time officers would benefit from further more in-depth training, as well as the opportunity to meet their counterparts from across the country.

Congress Mandates:

The USI Officer Board to facilitate a centrally organised training and bonding event for all SU part-time officers.

UO14 USI Calendar

Proposed by Cork IT SU

Congress notes:

USI organise a number events over the course of the year.

Congress recognises:

The dates and volume of events organised by the organisation may need to be adapted from time to time.

Congress believes:

Students benefit from attendance at USI events.

Congress further believes:

If students had sufficient notice in regards to the timing and location of events, attendance at these events would be increased.

Congress mandates:

The USI President in conjunction with the Officer Board to develop a set calendar of USI events and activities, including the location when known/available, for their term of office within the first month of taking up office.

Congress further mandates:

The USI President to make this calendar available to Member Organisations and students via the USI Website and other mediums they feel appropriate.

UO15 Comparative Research Manual

Proposed by Cork IT SU

Congress Recognises:

Students' Union Officers sit on a number of boards and committees within their respective institutions.

Congress Notes:

Students' Union Officers roles on these boards and committees is to represent students and to defend their rights predominantly.

Congress Believes:

Students' Union Officers need at their disposal statistics and figures from other member organisations to strengthen their arguments on a number of issues, for example but not limited to library opening hours, on campus catering prices etc.

Congress Therefore Mandates:

The Regional officers of USI to compile together a comparative research manual following a consultation process with students and the USI National Council in terms of which areas should be covered within this manual.

UO16 Students in Distress training for Education Officers

Proposed by NUIGSU

Congress notes

The large amount of casework that both Welfare and Education Officers endure.

Congress also notes

That often Education Officers have to cater to students in distress, despite not having the relevant training.

Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to ensure sufficient training is provided to Education Officers as a means of catering to students in distress.

NOTES

Union organisation

UO17 Comms-specific training

Proposed by TCDSU

Congress Notes

that the Communications training at USI events is limited and often very introductory.

Congress mandates

USI Officerboard to hire trainers for specific communications training to be given to relevant officers at SUT or over the summer period.

UO18 Secretary for standing committees and action points

Proposed by TCDSU

Congress Notes

that fluent discussion can come from standing committees of National Council.

Congress mandates

USI Officerboard to ensure that as part of standing orders for Committees, a secretary should be elected to take minutes and action points are created from these minutes, which track the work of these committees in an effective manner.

UO19 Election Training

Proposed by GMITSU

Congress acknowledges

That each Students' Union would hold elections to elect their full-time sabbatical officers.

Congress further acknowledges

That it can be difficult to get the correct information and know exactly how to run a successful campaign. It is important that students who put themselves in an election that they feel they know how to run an election.

Congress therefore mandates

USI Officerboard to run a training event, which offers advice on how to run a successful election campaign. This may include the correct messaging, manifesto writing, speech training, debate training, managing a team, getting the right campaign manager, and so on.

UO20 Approaching Further Education Colleges at a Regional level

Proposed by Carlow College Students' Union

Congress Notes

Further Education Colleges can join USI once they have the correct structures for student government in place.

Congress believes

USI can reach out to FE's and help them create these structures for student government.

Congress therefore mandates

Regional Officers approach 2 FE's in their region per term.

UO21 Regional planning days

Proposed by the Dublin Regional Committee

Congress Notes:

That the work of the Regional Officers is paramount in supporting and communicating the goals and objectives of the Union of Students in Ireland.

Congress Believes:

That to continue successes of USI and to continue great communication, that USI should co-ordinate Regional planning days to allow USI be more connected to the problems, issues and spirit of MOs.

Congress mandates:

The Regional Officers to coordinate regional planning days with the Region to set the priorities of the year for USI but also for Member Organisations.

NOTES

Union organisation

UO22 Trans* Training for Officers

Proposed by the Institute of Art, Design and Technology Students' Union

Congress notes:

Officers may be unaware of the inequalities faced by trans* students whom they represent. It is often the case that officers are unsure how to best support their trans* students.

Congress further notes:

Educating officers can often fall to students who identify within the trans* community which can be a strain on them.

Congress applauds:

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship recent efforts to open Pink Training to higher numbers of Students' Union officers as allies and mentors.

Congress therefore mandates:

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to organise trans* awareness training in partnership with relevant professional advocacy groups (for eg TENI and BelongTo) for SU sabbatical officers to be provided before September of each year.

UO23 The Governance Code

Proposed by: The USI Vice President for Campaigns

Congress Notes:

The Governance Code is a resource to assist community, voluntary and charity (CVC) organisations develop their overall capacity in terms of how they run their organisation and places a greater emphasis on values, accountability, transparency, probity, maintaining control, leadership and the diversity of opinions and skills.

Congress Further Notes:

The increasing need for better governance within organisations for the purpose of board function and for funding opportunities and development of the Union.

Congress Applauds:

USI committing to compliance with the Governance Code and registering as being 'On The Journey' in efforts to become accountable, transparent and better governed.

Congress Mandates:

The USI President, as CEO of the Union, to commit to complying with the Governance Code and to report to the membership of National Council on the progress of this journey at every National Council.

UO24 Early Education and Carers Campaign

Proposed by: USI Campaigns Committee

Congress Notes:

Early years workers and providers are dedicated and passionate about delivering a quality service that focuses on the needs of children and realising their full potential. Workers are paid too little and are struggling to make ends meet. The cost of Early Years services in Ireland are among the highest in Europe, an average of over €750 per child per month. However most early years educators are earning less than the living wage.

Congress Applauds:

The 'Big Start' campaign led by SIPTU and the efforts to build a coalition of organisations and groups on the issue and the involvement of USI in this coalition.

Congress Acknowledges:

A lack of State investment where Ireland spends only 25% of the European average investment in early years services. Lack of empirical evidence to show that early education and carers students and graduates are looking for recognition of the sector and a living wage and if other issues exist.

Congress Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to work with the relevant trade unions, and other organisations, to assess the issues that may exist and to further mobilise students on a campaign on the issues of: pay, work, and recognition of the sector.

Congress Also Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective.

NOTES

Union organisation

UO25 Policies and Submissions Made Widely Available

Proposed by: USI Campaigns Committee

Congress Notes:

The work done by USI Officerboard in creating policy, reports, strategies and submissions on behalf of students

Congress Acknowledges:

That these policies, reports, strategies and submissions could be used by the media, researchers, students' unions and other stakeholders in their own policies and submissions.

Congress Mandates:

That the USI President should ensure that policies, reports, strategies and submissions which are not subject to confidentiality are made available on the USI website in an easily accessible manner.

UO26 Entertainment Committees at National Council

Proposed by IT Carlow SU

Congress notes

There are many entertainment officers in Students' Unions and officers who take responsibility for entertainment in their MO around the country

Congress notes with concern

That there is not always a suitable forum for entertainment officers and other officers who take responsibility for entertainments to discuss experiences and gain support from other entertainment officers.

Congress therefore mandates

The USI President to ensure that a meeting of the Entertainments committee takes place at minimum at every second National Council.

UO27 Presidents' Training Day

Proposed by Presidents' Committee

Congress repeals

UO 25

Congress Notes

Many students' union presidents do not have in-depth managerial, financial or HR training prior to entering into their role.

Congress further notes

That SUT and SUT+ are already jam-packed with modules, and that there isn't enough time to provide adequate training in a number of areas relevant to the role of the president of an SU. These areas include, but are not limited to, HR, management, budgeting and finances.

Congress recognises

The USI Training Policy, and the methodology within it of assessing the needs of a group before providing training, and seeks to uphold this policy when ascertaining the additional training to be provided under the remit of this mandate.

Congress mandates

In line with the USI Training Policy, the USI President to undertake facilitate a daylong training day- "Pres Day"- where training will be provided in essential managerial areas as needed through assessing the needs of the SU presidents. This Day is to occur no later than August 30th in any given year.

NOTES

Union organisation

UO 28 Student Sport Ireland

Proposed by Athlone ITSU

Congress Notes:

That the European Students Union and the European University Sports Association signed a memorandum of understanding in November 2016

Congress further Notes

Student Sport Ireland is the National Governing Body for third level sport in Ireland

Congress further Notes

The Union of Students in Ireland are members of the European Students Union

Congress further Notes

Students Sport Ireland is a member of the European University Sports Association

Congress Affirms

That both organisations are play a pivotal role in supporting the student educational experience

Congress Therefore Mandates:

The President seeks to enter in to a memorandum of understanding with Student Sport Ireland.

UO 29 Freshers Packs

Proposed by Athlone ITSU

Congress Notes:

That the Union of Students in Ireland has delivered "Fresher Packs" to Member Organisations in the first week of the academic year for several years

Congress further Notes

That the USI has had unrivalled access to first year student cohorts, advertising their services and the Union of Students in Ireland brand

Congress further Notes

The expense to individual Member Organisations to supply their members with similar backs individually

Congress Therefore Mandates:

The President to ensure an adequate number of packs (to be decided by presidents working group) are distributed to member organisations by the start of their academic terms

UO30 TU Bill Merging of Student Unions

Proposed by Dublin Institute of Technology Students' Union

Congress Notes:

The introduction of the TU Bill in Ireland may cause the need for individual SUs to merge into one larger students' union.

Congress further notes:

That this is an opportunity for the USI to play a pivotal role in the creation of a new type of Students' Union.

Congress mandates:

The President of USI to work with merging Students' unions, to assist them with the formation of a Technological University Students' Union.

Congress further mandates:

The President of USI to give monthly updates to USI National Council on the progress regarding the merging of Technological University Student' Unions.
This motion shall be completed by September 2017.

NOTES

International affairs

IA1 Protection of J1 Visa Program

This motion will require a simple majority (50%+1) to pass

Proposed by DCUSU

Congress notes with deep concern

the policy effects of the selection of Donald Trump by the Electoral College of the United States to be their 45th President.

Congress in particular notes

that Mr. Trump had indicated that he would seek to repeal the J-1 Visa programme and the impact this would have on Irish students who seek to participate in the program.

Congress believes

that this program has been beneficial for positive relations between the United States and Ireland and a deeper sharing of the historical relationship between Ireland and the United States.

Congress therefore mandates

the President to lobby the Irish Government to make the preservation and continuation of this program a diplomatic priority in their engagement with the United States.

Constitutional Amendments

CA1Defending SU Autonomy as a Core Principles of USI

Proposed by Democratic Review ad hoc Committee

Add in Article 3.7

USI shall defend the right of students' unions to be autonomous, democratic, student led organisations, independent of all external authorities, with decision making being made at the level closest to students as possible, and where formulation of policy by the students ordinarily occurs by the democratic procedures as laid out by their constitution.

NOTES

Constitutional Amendments

CA2 Removal of position of Vice President for Campaigns

Proposed by the Constitutional Review Ad Hoc Committee
Remove 5.1.4 and 5.6.

CA3 Removing unpaid status and part-time status of the Vice President for the Irish Language

Proposed by LU don Ghaeilge

Replace

"5.12.1 No member of the Officerboard may serve a cumulative total of more than three years on the Officerboard. With the exception of the VP/Irish, who shall be unpaid, the other members of Officerboard shall be paid a salary decided by Finance Committee. Their term shall be from the 1st July until the following 30th of June."

with

"5.12.1 No member of the Officerboard may serve a cumulative total of more than three years of the Officerboard. Members of Officerboard shall be paid a stipend decided by Finance Committee. Their term shall be the 1st July in the year of their election until the following 30th of June."

5.10 An leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge:

Replace:

5.10.1 An Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge (hereinafter referred to as the LU/Gaeilge) shall be responsible for carrying out, in the capacity of a part-time officer Union policy on the Irish language. They shall act as an advocate for the Union's Irish policy on a national level, encourage the use of Irish within the Union, and represents the Union's membership on various external bodies as agreed by Nation Council.

With :

5.10.1 An Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge (hereinafter referred to as the LU/Gaeilge) shall be responsible for carrying out Union policy on the Irish language. They shall act as an advocate for the Union's Irish policy on a national level, encourage the use of Irish within the Union, and represents the Union's membership on various external bodies as agreed by Nation Council.
i.e. Remove:"in the capacity of a part-time officer"

CA4 Creating a Vice President for the Dublin Region

Proposed by Dublin Institute of Technology Students' Union

Article 4: Governance and Policy Setting Structures of USI
4.1.5

Add in

Vice President of the Dublin Region

Amend to read

The Annual Congress shall elect all members of the Officerboard excluding the NUS-USI President. Any ordinary member of the Union is entitled to contest any elected position at Congress. All registered delegates are entitled to vote in each election at Congress except in the case of the elections for the regional Vice Presidents. The electorate for the positions of Vice President for the Dublin Region, Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region and Vice President for the Southern Region shall be the registered delegates from Member Organisations located wholly or mainly in that Officer's region, as defined by Schedule G and the relevant Vice President.

Article 5: The Officerboard

Add in

5.1.10 The Vice President for the Dublin Region

AND INSERT AFTER ARTICLE 5.9 A NEW ARTICLE 5.10 AND RENUMBER ACCORDINGLY

NOTES

Constitutional Amendments

CA4 Creating a Vice President for the Dublin Region

Proposed by Dublin Institute of Technology Students' Union

5.10 The Vice President for the Dublin Region

5.10.1 The Vice President for the Dublin Region, (hereinafter referred to as the VP/ Dublin) shall be responsible for Union development and liaison in their region. They shall also be responsible for the overall direction of the work of their region in conjunction with and reporting to the Officerboard.

5.10.2. The VP/Dublin shall communicate the message of the Union to ordinary members, Member Organisations, external organisations and the general public through various means including, but not exclusively, social media, traditional media, meetings, conference events, campaigns and training events.

5.10.3 The VP/Dublin shall communicate regional and Member Organisation's issues to the Officerboard.

5.10.4 The VP/Dublin shall work with all Colleges in the Dublin Region to develop their Unions focusing on Unions who have been suspended or where a College does not have a functional Union, to assist the students of that College to establish one.

Article 7: Committees and Advisory Panels

Amend Article 7.1.3 to read:

7.1.3 The Committees shall be chaired by the corresponding Officer on the Officerboard save for the Dublin Regional Committee and the Entertainments Committee where the President shall nominate a member of the Officerboard to chair the Committee. Each Committee shall elect another member of the Committee to act as Deputy Chairperson and another member to act as Secretary. The Secretary shall be responsible for taking and circulating minutes of each meeting. The Chairperson shall be responsible for putting together the agenda for each meeting.

Remove

"Dublin Regional Committee and" and "Each Committee shall elect another member of the Committee to act as Deputy Chairperson and another member to act as Secretary. The Secretary shall be responsible for taking and circulating minutes of each meeting."

Add in

Each Committee will agree Standing Orders for the committee meetings no later than the second National Council of the year.

Amend to read

7.1.3 The Committees shall be chaired by the corresponding Officer on the Officerboard save for the Entertainments Committee where the President shall nominate a member of the Officerboard to chair the Committee. Each Committee will agree Standing Orders for the committee meetings no later than the first National Council of the year. The Chairperson shall be responsible for putting together the agenda for each meeting.

CA5 Role of observers in Congress

Amend C3.1 from

"Each Member Organisation shall be entitled to send a maximum of two observers to Congress. Observers shall have speaking but not voting rights except where a delegate from the same Member Organisation transfers their voting card to an accredited Observer. No person may exercise more than one delegate vote at one time"

to

"Each Member Organisation shall be entitled to send a maximum of two observers to Congress. Observers shall not have speaking rights or voting rights except where a delegate from the same Member Organisation transfers their voting card to an accredited Observer. No person may exercise more than one delegate vote at one time"

NOTES

Constitutional Amendments

CA6 Creating a Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

Proposed by DCUSU

- (i) Introduction of "The Vice-President for Postgraduate Affairs" to Article 5.1.
- (ii) Introduction to Article 5 of the following: "
5.X The Vice-President for Postgraduate Affairs
- 5.X.1 The Vice-President for Postgraduate Affairs (hereinafter to be referred to as the VP/Postgraduate Affairs) shall have special responsibility for the Union's work on academic policy and quality assurance for students at level nine and upwards on the National Qualifications Framework.
- 5.X.2 The VP/Postgraduate Affairs shall be responsible for policy and research on postgraduate issues and shall assist the VP/Campaigns in relation to campaigns on Postgraduate issues.
- 5.X.3 The VP/Postgraduate Affairs shall sit on the Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance Committee and shall assist in supporting member organisations with regard to postgraduate issues."
- (iii) Amendment to Article 5.4.1 to read:
"5.4.1 The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance (hereinafter referred to as the VP/Academic) shall have special responsibility for the Union's work on academic policy and quality assurance at levels five to eight on the National Qualifications Framework, including, full- time and part-time students in Further Education and Higher Education, students on Labour Market Activation Programmes and Apprenticeships. They shall act as an advocate for the Union's education policy on a national and international level and shall assist the VP/Campaigns in relation to campaigns on education matters."
- (iv) Removal of Article 5.4.3.

CA8 Amendment to create candidate membership

Proposed by VP for Academic Affairs

Delete Article 2 and replace with:

"Article 2: Membership

2.1 The Union is a confederation of Students' Unions, referred to as Member Organisations.

2.2 All Students' Unions are eligible to be accepted as Member Organisations provided that:

2.2.1 Their constitution has been approved by National Council.

2.2.2 They have applied and been accepted as a Member Organisation according to the application procedure as defined in Schedule A and who pay affiliation fees as decided by National Council.

2.2.3 They have accepted the Union Constitution and agree to facilitate the implementation of policy as decided at Congress, keeping in mind the confederal nature of the Union.

2.2.4 They have accepted in writing that they may not disaffiliate without providing twelve months written notice to National Council. During the notice period the Member Organisation shall continue to be a Member with all the rights and duties pertaining thereto.

2.2.5 Upon affiliation, a Member Organisation shall enter into a legally binding contract confirming their acceptance of provision 2.2.4 of the constitution.

2.3 Individual students are said to be ordinary members of the Union and have such rights as are outlined in this Constitution and its schedules by virtue of being a member of an organisation accepted in accordance with Article 2. The elected officers of the Union's Officerboard are ordinary members of the Union for the duration of their term of office and have such rights and duties in addition as are laid down by this Constitution and its Schedules.

NOTES

Constitutional Amendments

CA8 Amendment to create candidate membership

Proposed by VP for Academic Affairs

2.4: Students' Unions are eligible to be accepted as Candidate Member Organisations provided that:

2.4.1 The organisation does not fulfil the criteria to be accepted as a Member Organisation at the time of application but;

2.4.1.1 The organisation writes to the USI President to commit to a defined programme of capacity building, jointly managed by USI officer board, with the objective of meeting the criteria for acceptance as a membership organisation as defined in Schedule A;

2.4.1.2 The organisation accepts the Union Constitution and agrees to uphold its values;

2.4.2 Candidate Member Organisation status shall be granted for a maximum period of two years, upon the expiration of which National Council may decide to extend the status for one more year.

2.4.2.1 Candidate Membership Organisation status shall confer observer status as defined in Schedule A."

CA9 Role of The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

Proposed by VP for Equality & Citizenship

Replace 5.7.1 with:

"5.7.1 The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship (hereinafter referred to as the VP/Equality) shall have responsibility for the implementation and development of all Union policy in relation to issues of discrimination on the grounds specified in S.75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the grounds of the Equal Status Acts 2000-2004."

CA10 Ordinary members at National Council

Proposed by the Constitutional Review Ad Hoc Committee

Amend 4.2.1 to read:

"4.2.1 National Council is composed of the members of the Officerboard and one delegate from each Member Organisation who shall have the voting rights of that Member Organisation. All elected officers, and ordinary members, from each Member Organisation shall have a right to attend National Council. Speaking rights at National Council shall be in accordance with the Standing Orders of National Council as provided for in Schedule E."

CA11 Vice Presidents for the Regions

Proposed by the Constitutional Review Ad Hoc Committee

Insert 5.8.5 and 5.9.5

"The VP/[BMW or Southern] shall be responsible for the implementation of Union campaigns within their region"

CA12 Associate Organisations

Proposed by the Constitutional Review Ad Hoc Committee

Insert 8.3

The Union may establish a formal working relationship with external organisations. Such relationships shall require the approval of 2/3 of the membership of National Council. At least 7 days notice of any such motion must be provided to the members of National Council. Such organisations shall be referred to as Associate Organisations of the Union. Associate Organisations shall be invited by the President to attend Congress as observers.

NOTES

Constitutional Amendments

CA13 Establish The Union Development Committee

Proposed by: The USI Vice President for Campaigns

Union Development Committee

amend 7.1.2:

7.1.2 The Committees shall be:

7.1.2.1 The Presidents Committee

7.1.2.2 The Academic Affairs Committee

7.1.2.3 The Welfare Committee

7.1.2.4 The Campaigns Committee

7.1.2.5 The Equality and Citizenship Committee

7.1.2.6 The Entertainments Committee

7.1.2.7 The Southern Regional Committee

7.1.2.8 The Border, Midland & Western Regional Committee

7.1.2.9 The Dublin Regional Committee

7.1.2.10 The Irish Language Committee

7.1.2.11 The Union Development Committee

amend 7.1.4

The Presidents Committee, the Academic Affairs Committee, the Welfare Committee and the Equality and Citizenship Committee, the Irish Language Committee, the Regional Committees, and the Union Development Committee, shall be forums to inform and advise relevant members of the Officerboard, to formulate, review and implement policy and to share expertise and experience.

add 7.1.6

The Union Development Committee shall be a forum for its members to discuss the development of the Union, and the development of member organisations, and share ideas in relation to achieving the goals of the Union.

CA14 Attendance at Congress by election candidates

Proposed by: The USI Vice President for Campaigns

Attendance at Congress by election candidates

Add to Schedule C:

Any candidates for elections to be held at Congress shall have Candidate status if they are not acting as a delegate or observer for their Member Organisation and shall not be counted as such for the purposes of C3.1. This status shall be the equivalent of observer status, and shall not confer speaking rights.

CA15 Finance Committee Representation

Proposed by Democratic Review ad hoc Committee

Amend 9.1.4.3 to read:

9.1.4.3 Four members, who must be members of the National Council at the time of their election, but not members of the Officerboard and are directly elected by the National Council. The first two members shall be elected at the last meeting of the academic year and shall hold office for following twelve months. The second two members shall be elected at the first National Council of the academic year and shall hold office for the following twelve months. These members may be dismissed by a two thirds plus one vote of National Council, provided that at least one month's notice of such motion is given. In the event of a vacancy of either of these members it must be filled at the following National Council.

CA16 Separating Steering Committee and Elections Committee; forming an Elections Commission

Proposed by Democratic Review ad hoc Committee

Amend 6.1.1 to read:

6.1.1 Elections for Steering Committee shall be held every two years and shall be organised and supervised by the President. Each candidate must be proposed by a Member Organisation or the President.

NOTES

Constitutional Amendments

CA16 Separating Steering Committee and Elections Committee; forming an Elections Commission

Proposed by Democratic Review ad hoc Committee

Insert: 6.1.1.2

Electoral Commission
The Officerboard elections, and any by-elections, shall be supervised by the Electoral Commission. This Electoral Commission shall be composed of two external members, one member of Steering Committee (as nominated by Steering Committee) and two members of National Council. Elections for the Electoral Commission shall be held every year and shall be organised and supervised by the President. Each candidate must be proposed by a Member Organisation or the President. They shall be elected no later than the second National Council of the academic year. The Terms of Reference for the Commission shall be found in Schedule X, and shall be approved by no later than the third National Council of the year. If a member of National Council decides to seek nominations to run for a position on USI Officerboard, they will immediately cease to be a member of the Commission.

CA17 Chairpersons

Proposed by Democratic Review ad hoc Committee

Amend 4.2.9 to read:

4.2.9. National Council shall have a Chairperson and a Deputy Chairperson. Elections for these positions shall be held at National Council every two years and shall be organised and supervised by the President. Each candidate must be proposed by a Member Organisation or the President and shall not be current members of the Union but shall have attended a previous Congress and shall have been a member of the Union. The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of National Council shall be ex officio full voting members of Steering Committee and may not also fill the position of Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson of Steering Committee, Finance Committee or the Electoral Commission.

CA18 Adding a Student finance expert to the Welfare advisory panel

Proposed by Southern Area Regional Committee

In Schedule H, replace H3.6 with:

H3.6 A person with expertise in Student Finance

To Schedule H, add:

H3.7 Such other persons as the VP/Welfare may feel are necessary.

NOTES

Equality

EQ1 Access to Orkambi, the Cystic Fibrosis medication

Proposed by WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS' UNION

Congress Notes:

Cystic Fibrosis (CF) is an inherited chronic illness that is acting as a barrier to education for students who suffer from it. Students with CF need regular IV drips where they must be admitted to hospital for long periods of time. These lengthy visits to hospital affect students' college attendance.

Congress further notes:

Orkambi, a revolutionary drug, corrects the mutated genes in 45% of patients with cystic fibrosis. It has the potential to improve the living conditions and the educational experience for these students.

Congress Mandates:

VP Welfare and VP Equality & Citizenship to lobby the Government to make Orkambi available in Ireland for those who require it.

Equality

EQ2 Equality Grounds

Proposed by the VP Equality & Citizenship

Congress notes:

That the VP Equality & Citizenship works on behalf of students in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Congress mandates:

The VP Equality & Citizenship to review the equality legislation in both legal jurisdictions in their work on behalf of students across the island.

EQ3 Integration of displaced persons into education

Proposed by VP Academic Affairs & VP Equality & Citizenship

Congress recognises

The ongoing refugee crisis, in which over 20 million people have been displaced due to war, terrorism, and other conflicts.

Congress asserts

That education is an emancipator and affords people the tools with which to become independent and self-determinant.

Congress calls on

The Irish government to partake in the resettlement and relocation of displaced persons (such as refugees and asylum seekers) in numbers appropriate to the scale of the crisis.

Congress calls on

The education sector in Ireland to proactively support the integration of such displaced persons.

Congress calls on

The Minister for Education to extend "domestic" fee status to such displaced persons resettled in Ireland who wish to pursue their studies. This status should also extend to eligibility for the student maintenance grant and other student supports.

Congress calls on

Institutions of third-level education to follow the lead of Dublin City University and pursue "University of Sanctuary" designation.

Congress therefore mandates

The officer board to campaign for the integration of such displaced persons into education in Ireland with particular focus on access, student supports, retention, recognition of prior learning and cultural integration, the latter including the provision of English language lessons.

Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to provide for student leaders, particularly elected officers, to become "No Hate Speech" ambassadors.

EQ4 Expansion of '2in2u' Campaign

Jointly proposed by the VP Equality & Citizenship & WIT Students' Union

Congress recognises:

The organisation Women's Aid runs a successful '2in2u' dating abuse campaign which is supported by the Union of Students in Ireland. This campaign helps young women to spot the 'danger signs' of dating abuse and provides information to combat online stalking and digital abuse, as well as signposting support services.

Congress notes:

The campaign, whilst being very beneficial, has limitations in regards to the types of relationships and genders it focuses on.

Congress recognises:

That several national organisations are doing work in the area of domestic violence, sexual harassment, violence, and emotional abuse, and the USI should build partnerships with them in order to ensure students are part of their target audiences moving forward.

Congress mandates:

That VP Equality & Citizenship and VP Welfare to work with Women's Aid to expand their 2in2u campaign to become more inclusive of all genders and relationships. If this is not feasible, then a similar campaign and materials should be developed to compliment the 2in2u campaign which is more inclusive of gender and sexuality.

Congress further mandates:

The VP Equality & Citizenship to develop a partnership with the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) in their project work nationally to end sexual violence and harassment at third level.

NOTES

Citizenship

CZN 1 Environmental Sustainability

Proposed by Equality and Citizenship Committee

Congress notes:

The importance of the goal of environmental sustainability - to conserve natural resources and to develop alternate sources of power while reducing pollution and harm to the environment.

Congress notes:

The great work undertaken on divestment campaigns by student groups, notably Fossil Free TCD and Fossil Free QUB, who worked on environmental sustainability campaigns and succeeded in their efforts.

Congress also notes:

The Green campaigns run by WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS' UNION, MSU and other MOs over the last couple of years.

Congress therefore mandates:

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and the Vice President for Campaigns to undertake a student focused environmental sustainability campaign to work towards promoting sustainability and energy conservation behaviour and knowledge.

NOTES

Policy renewals

Higher Priority Policies for Renewal Debate

NC 01 (UO) Strategic Review of USI

National Council Notes:

As the representative organisation for Students' Unions across the country, the USI has a responsibility to operate in a way that effectively strengthens the student movement.

National Council Mandates:

That the President appoint a suitably qualified consultant to complete a full review of all aspects of the USI organisation and structure with a view to bringing forward proposals to strengthen the role and performance of the USI as the central voice of student organisations across the country.

The President should also instruct the consultant to obtain the views of all Students' Unions, whether currently affiliated or not, and make such recommendations as they see fit and present their report to a specially convened general meeting to be held, at the latest, by 31st March 2018.

NC02 (UO) Policy Book / Officer Report 'Traffic Light' System

National Council Notes:

Every year at USI's annual Congress event; students from across the Member Organisations come together to debate, discuss and direct the work of the national union for the coming year.

National Council Further Notes:

There are uncompleted mandates within the USI Policy Manual which stretch back several years, up until the point that they lapse.

National Council Mandates:

The mandates within the USI Policy Manual will be organised according to a 'Traffic Light' system according to their status of completion. Mandates which are incomplete will be highlighted in red, mandates currently in-progress will be highlighted in orange and mandates which have been completed will be highlighted in green. The Policy Manual will be presented at each National Council meeting showing the cumulative numbers of mandates that are either incomplete, in-progress or complete at the time of each meeting according to the officer responsible.

National Council Further Mandates:

That each member of Officer Board's Officer Report will contain a list of the mandates specific to them, each one highlighting its progress under the 'Traffic Light' system.

NC 03 (UO) Motion: Strategic Review of USI

National Council Notes:

As the representative organisation for Students' Unions across the country, the USI has a responsibility to operate in a way that effectively strengthens the student movement.

National Council Mandates:

That the President appoint a suitably qualified consultant to complete a full review of all aspects of the USI organisation and structure with a view to bringing forward proposals to strengthen the role and performance of the USI as the central voice of student organisations across the country.

The President should also instruct the consultant to obtain the views of all Students' Unions, whether currently affiliated or not, and make such recommendations as they see fit and present their report to a specially convened general meeting to be held, at the latest, by 31st March 2018.

NC 04 (AF) Motion: Financial Statements at Every National Council

National Council Notes:

Every year; the USI operates from a budget derived from the membership fees of the individual Member Organisations.

National Council Further Notes:

As it is student money being used, financial transparency and accountability is always a core ideal.

NOTES

Higher Priority Policies for Renewal Debate

NC 04 (AF) Motion: Financial Statements at Every National Council

National Council Mandates:

That at every National Council financial statements showing cumulative income and expenditure from 1st July each year are presented up to the time of each meeting. A member of Finance Committee or Officer Board will present the accounts to the MO representatives present and allow them to question and seek clarification on the accounts as presented.

NC 05 (AA) Motion: Early Education and Carers Campaign

National Council Notes:

Early years workers and providers are dedicated and passionate about delivering a quality service that focuses on the needs of children and realising their full potential. Workers are paid too little and are struggling to make ends meet. The cost of Early Years services in Ireland are among the highest in Europe, an average of over €750 per child per month. However most early years educators are earning less than the living wage.

National Council Applauds:

The 'Big Start' campaign led by SIPTU and the efforts to build a coalition of organisations and groups on the issue.

National Council Acknowledges:

A lack of State investment where Ireland spends only 25% of the European average investment in early years services. Lack of empirical evidence to show that early education and carers students and graduates are looking for recognition of the sector and a living wage and if other issues exist.

National Council Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to work with the relevant trade unions, and other organisations, to assess the issues that may exist and to further mobilise students on a campaign on the issues of: pay, work, and recognition of the sector.

National Council Also Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective.

NC 06 (NA) USI supports the Migrant Rights Council of Ireland (MRCI) campaign for regularisation of undocumented migrants

USI supports the Migrant Rights Council of Ireland (MRCI) in their campaign for regularisation of undocumented migrants to Ireland, with particular attention to the issue of young undocumented people who, having successfully completed second level education in Ireland, are now struggling to enter the third level system and are being entirely locked out.

USI will work with MRCL in lobbying the government on this issue, while endeavouring to prepare sabbatical officers to fully support these students both during their transition to third level education, and in their time in third level education.

Higher Priority Policies for Renewal Debate

NC 07 (UO) Gender Balancing in Delegations to ESU Events:

National Council Notes:

The ongoing debate at ESU Board level surrounding the participation of women at statutory events. A recent report presented in Gdansk found that women made up fewer than 35 per cent of delegates at the 70th Board Meeting in Bergen and that men commanded 80 per cent of speaking time.

National Council Further Notes:

That the Board has long since been considering measures to incentivise female participation, including and most recently proposing to charge lower participation fees to gender-balanced delegations.

National Council Believes:

That USI should be a positive force for promoting the participation of our self-identifying female members at all levels.

National Council Therefore Mandates:

That USI delegations accompanying the international representatives to ESU statutory events (i.e. the European Students' Convention and Board Meetings) shall be balanced for gender. The unavailability of female members shall not be a barrier to USI's attendance of statutory event, but the international representative shall seek to ensure as balanced a delegation as possible from those willing and available to participate.

14 AAQA 1 USI/NERI THIRD-LEVEL FUNDING POLICY

Congress notes:

Congress policy 11/ ED 11 mandating Officer Board to compile a single comprehensive and researched document on the public-funding model proposed through various USI policies.

Congress applauds:

The securing of research support from the Nevin Economic Research Institute on areas of shared concern, including initially the development of a public-funding policy for third-level on behalf of USI, as part of the SIPTU-USI Agreement.

Congress believes:

This provides USI with credible, well-researched and solutions-based policy for which to advance the argument in favour of our ideological position on third-level funding.

Congress approves:

The third-level funding policy paper developed by NERI as USI policy.

Congress mandates:

USI Officer Board to campaign and lobby extensively for the adoption of this policy as the roadmap for the future funding of the Irish Higher Education system, through every possible political, media and policy platform.

14 AAQA 3 CONSULTATION ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE STUDENT CONTRIBUTION CHARGE

Congress notes:

That in November 2011 USI agreed with the Higher Education Authority that HEIs were obliged towards 'meaningful consultation' with students on the expenditure of the student contribution charge.

Congress regrets:

That meaningful consultation does not occur in many institutions; most HEIs consult ineffectively and insincerely in forums where students have legally-mandated representation but are not the only representatives present.

Congress therefore mandates:

The President to work with the HEA to define best practice for 'meaningful consultation' in the context of the distribution of the student contribution charge, and to lobby the HEA to ensure the application of this established best practice.

NOTES

Higher Priority Policies for Renewal Debate

14 NA 1 LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

Congress notes:

That the Living Wage is the minimum hourly rate at which one can live on without fear of poverty. Eurostat statistics show that 20.7% of the workforce receive low pay.

Congress also notes that:

- There is a strong campaign in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for a living wage and that the current living wage rate in London is £8.55 (€10.25); outside of London the rate stands at £7.45 (€8.95). Over 100 high street businesses in the UK support the living wage
- In Denmark it costs an employer €39.61 for each employee per hour, while in Ireland it costs €24.57. Research also shows that business profits in Ireland have increased by 21% since 2007, at a much faster pace than anywhere else in Europe. The argument that employers can't afford to pay a living wage should be dismissed in the context of lower-than-European-average labour costs, high increases in business profits, and the increased benefits to business of paying a living wage.

Congress believes:

- Students and workers have the right to be able to afford to live and not just survive.
- The introduction of a living wage would be a strong commitment to decent living in our society and enable workers to afford the basic requirements of everyday living.
- The living wage not only ensures that the employees are lifted out of poverty, it is also beneficial for the employer. We believe that a living wage improves retention rates, reduces absenteeism and produces a higher level of staff morale.

Congress further believes:

- That the education sector should be amongst the most progressive employers in the country.
- Education institutions and students' unions have a civic and societal obligation to pay their staff a fair wage for a fair day's work.
- Education institutions should commit to paying a living wage.

Congress mandates:

- The USI President to call for a living wage in Ireland for all of society.
- The USI Officer Board to support students' unions who commit to paying the living wage and lobby their institutions to do the same.
- The USI President to continue to collaborate with trade unions to work in partnership for students and workers.

14 NA 2 ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS

Congress notes with concern:

The problems of Zero Hour Contracts, seeing them as exploitative, precarious and disproportionately altering the relationship between employers and employees, many of whom are students.

Congress regrets:

That this has additional problems in relation to families/ single parents, given the difficulties of combining Zero Hour Contracts and childcare.

Congress mandates:

USI to confirm its opposition to Zero Hour Contracts, and work with the trade union movements and sympathetic political parties to bring about the abolition of ZHC.

14 UO 8 SIPTU-USI AGREEMENT

Congress welcomes:

The development of the SIPTU-USI Agreement, approved by the Executives of both Unions.

Congress recognises:

The significant benefits to students, particularly those in part-time employment, arising from the terms of the Agreement, and the tangible added value to USI membership it brings about.

Congress believes:

USI and SIPTU have a considerable amount of shared concerns and issues, and should work and campaign together on these areas where possible.

NOTES

Higher Priority Policies for Renewal Debate

14 UO 8 SIPTU-USI AGREEMENT CONT'D

Congress approves:

The SIPTU-USI Agreement.

Congress mandates:

The USI President to oversee the terms of the Agreement, and work to ensure their implementation.

14 AAQA 14 SUSI SUPPORT FOR YOUNGER INDEPENDENT STUDENTS

Congress applauds:

USI's work in dealing with the SUSI system, and particularly the vast improvement on grant payments to students this year.

Congress notes:

The large category of students who are neglected by the current SUSI application process who are not dependent on their parents between the ages of 18-23.

Congress acknowledges:

Students who are legal adults (18 + years) and support themselves through college, cannot be assessed as independent adults, unless they are mature students or have proof of estrangement.

The great difficulty many students face in claiming estrangement through the current system.

Congress notes with concern:

Students are required to inform SUSI of change in circumstances, this does not allow for a transition to financially independent living. Students that partake in work throughout college most often do so because they would otherwise be unable to remain in college, through current systems the sum of the students earnings is added to the cumulative family income and thus further hinders the students potential to receive financial aid via the SUSI grant system regardless of whether or not they are actually receiving financial assistance from their parents.

Congress Mandates:

The VP AAQA and Officer Board to lobby and campaign for the restructuring of the SUSI grant application process to include a category for students who support themselves financially.

14 WEL3 CASEWORK TRAINING

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.

14 WEL 4 APPLIED SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING (ASIST) FOR STUDENTS' UNION OFFICERS

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.

NOTES

Higher Priority Policies for Renewal Debate

14 WEL 4 APPLIED SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING (ASIST) FOR STUDENTS' UNION OFFICERS

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.

14 WEL 7 STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

Congress notes:

The importance of the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) and the role it plays to support students in hardship across the country.

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.

14 EQ 2 WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Congress believes:

That women are still significantly under-represented in Student Union politics, as well as politics nationally.

Only 20% of Presidents are women in USI member colleges are women.

Only 33% of UK Students Union Presidents are women.

In the Dáil Éireann the representation of women is even worse. Only 15% of TDs are women.

In local councils across Ireland the representation of women is below 20%.

In Northern Ireland, only 19% of MLAs in Stormont are women

Ireland ranks 23rd out of 27 EU countries for their percentage of women in parliament.

Congress also believes:

Despite forming a majority of students in higher and further education, women are under-represented in powerful positions in colleges and students' union.

Women's representation in colleges and students' unions is vital to women's equality and to overcoming the inequality and discrimination that women face.

Congress mandates:

The USI President and the VP Equality and Citizenship, to run a national campaign supporting and empower women in leadership and create a support network in order to encourage more women candidates to run for election. The USI President and the VP Equality and Citizenship to campaign on increasing the number of women who run for all sabbatical positions, all student councillors and voluntary roles within students unions. The VP Equality and Citizenship to make links with the NUS-USI and the NUS Women's Campaign and work together to encourage women in leadership.

14 UO 13 SUSI TRAINING

Congress notes:

That SUSI has improved its processing system this year but yet still some students are still finding it difficult, to understand some of the documentation required for their grant to be accessed. Unlike the VEC, SUSI grant students do not have a point of contact to sit down with in their local area and discuss their grant issues.

Congress mandates:

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance to arrange with SUSI to provide training for all sabbatical officers in the summer months and to provide them with a sample pack with dealing and addressing common issues. This information and training will assist in providing students with a support system if they have any queries in regard to their grant application.

NOTES

Lower priority for review

14 AAQA 2 ALTERNATIVE ADMISSIONS

Congress regrets:

The almost exclusive focus of the current third-level admissions route on prior academic attainment.

Congress believes:

That taking into consideration contextual data can ensure that an individual's true potential for performance in higher education is considered.

Congress also believes:

That such consideration would broaden the socio-economic demographic of the third-level student body; the current admissions system disproportionately advantages applicants from fee-paying secondary schools.

Congress notes with approval:

That an Irish Universities Association (IUA) alternative admissions route is being piloted in Trinity College Dublin. The alternative route shall offer 7530 students in total a place in a competitive Level 8 degree programme in September 2014 on the basis of Leaving Certificate results, performance relative to classmates, and a personal statement.

Congress mandates:

That the USI shall support initiatives to create an alternative common admissions route for all publicly-funded third-level institutions where contextual data, including but not limited to socio-economic background, is considered in addition to prior academic attainment.

Congress also mandates:

The President to lobby for state investment in retention activities to prevent disproportionate drop out levels of those from non-traditional backgrounds.

Congress further mandates:

The President and the VP Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to lobby for improved information, advice and guidance and careers information at all levels of education.

14 AAQA 9 USI PARTICIPATION IN ESU

Congress recognises:

That many policies and initiatives developed and agreed at European Union and European Higher Education Area level effect the Irish Higher Education system and our students.

Congress believes:

As a member of the European Students' Union USI has an important role in the shaping of international policies and has the opportunity to inform national and local policies with international best practice.

Congress mandates:

The Officer Board members who attend each bi-annual ESU Board meeting to present a report to the following meeting of National Council including explanations of the policies proposed and voted on by USI.

Congress also mandates:

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance to co-ordinate a delegation, selected from National Council participants, to attend each bi-annual European Student Convention. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance is also tasked to investigate funding opportunities to cover the associated costs.

14 AAQA X Technological Universities

Congress notes:

That legislation creating the Technological Universities has been enacted and that the development of the Dublin TU is now moving ahead quickly.

Congress further notes:

The agreement in principle from the three ITSUs in question to work together by way of a steering group, chaired by the USI President.

Congress affirms:

That student consultation in this development must be thorough and meaningful, with a view to students being seen as the key stakeholders at the table.

Congress mandates:

The USI President to continue to assist in ensuring that this steering group is recognised at HEA and DoE's level as the collective representative voice of the three ITSUs.

NOTES

Lower Priority Policies for Renewal Debate

14 AAQA 10 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Congress recognises:

The lack of transparency regarding the measurement of the quality of teaching by academics in third level.

Congress acknowledges:

That the proposed legal amendment which will allow The Teaching Council to sanction underperforming teachers at second level, thus creating an environment of quality learning.

Congress believes:

That the third level sector needs to adopt a similar approach to ensure that students receive the best quality of education.

Congress therefore mandates:

That the VP for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance and The President work alongside the HEA, QQI and/or all other relevant stakeholders to establish and utilise a watchdog which will monitor the quality of teaching in higher education.

NOTES

Welfare

14 WEL 5 USI MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Congress notes:

13 / WEL 13 MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Congress further notes:

The creation of 'Student Lives, Minds and Wellbeing' in 2010.

Congress reaffirms:

The importance of having a Mental Health Strategy within USI to guide the VP for Welfare on all work relating to mental health. Congress therefore adopts the proposed USI Mental Health Strategy 2014-2017

Congress mandates:

The Vice President for Welfare to implement the USI Mental Health Strategy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations by disseminating the strategy at the start of the year as well as providing support and training throughout the year.

14 WEL 6 AVAILABILITY OF COUNSELLORS IN THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

Congress notes:

A study commissioned by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors that found cutbacks have significantly reduced the time available for one-to-one student counselling in schools.

Congress notes with concern:

Reports from Welfare Officers, that waiting lists for an appointment with Counselling services are at least two weeks with some students waiting up to 6 weeks in extreme cases and also the increasing numbers of students reporting mental health issues.

Congress further notes:

That there is an embargo on hiring of more public sector staff and that many Institutes may not be able to afford to hire more counselling staff either.

Congress mandates:

The Vice President for Welfare to lobby the relevant bodies including the Minister for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People to lift the embargo on the hiring of counselling staff in Higher Education Institutes and for increased funding to be given specifically for the provision of adequate Counselling services to all Third Level Students either through the direct employment of more Counsellors or in purchasing external counselling session hours.

Welfare

14 WEL 9 STUDENTS IN REMOTE AREAS

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 be based are far from central student support services and local support services.

Congress applauds:

That some organisations have made efforts to tackle the above issues in rural communities i.e. Headstrong have set up Jigsaw Centres in communities in many parts of Ireland.

Congress believes:

That there should be more focus put on supporting our students in remote areas and communities

Congress mandates:

The Vice President for Welfare and Regional Vice Presidents to support MO's who are faced with this issue and to work with MO's on developing a support system or campaign in order to reach out to these students.

14 WEL 11 MORNING AFTER PILL

Congress notes:

The cost of the Morning After Pill is currently unregulated here in Ireland, and prices vary hugely throughout counties, cities, towns and pharmacy chains in Ireland.

Congress further notes:

Getting the morning After Pill can set you back anywhere from €10 to €45 or even higher.

Congress believes:

That a standard, maximum price should be set for the Morning After Pill, so that women are aware of how much the drug will cost them irrespective of where they live.

Congress therefore mandates:

The VP Welfare to engage with other groups who are campaigning for maximum pricing for emergency contraception, including the Real Productive Health campaign, with the aim of setting a national maximum price for emergency contraception.

14 WEL 16 STUDENT SUICIDE

Congress notes with regret:

The continual loss of student's lives to suicide.

Congress notes:

The importance of local officers in the support structure for students who have experienced bereavement and who are contemplating taking their own life by suicide.

Congress further notes:

The importance of comprehensive training in bereavement support for local officers.

Congress mandates:

The VP for welfare to ensure that Safetalk training are offered to all Welfare Officers and any other officer who wish to avail of such training by September before students return to college.

NOTES

National Affairs

14 NA 4 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Congress notes:

The year on year cut backs to Public Transport funding in Ireland.

Congress further notes:

The constant hikes in the cost of using Public Transport with no apparent improvement of service.

Congress notes with concern:

The decreased availability and increased cost of accommodation for students forcing more students to commute to college.

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.

14 NA 5 OPT-OUT ORGAN DONATION

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.

14 NA 7 STUDY ON THE LEGALISATION OF CANNABIS IN IRELAND

Congress notes:

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

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.

NOTES

Union Organisation

14 UO 4 GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN SURVEYS AND FORMS

Congress regrets:

That a recent USI survey asked participants to declare their gender as male or female.

Congress believes:

That accidents/incidents such as these are alienating to Trans* or Gender Questioning students who may wish to participate in a USI survey

Congress therefore mandates:

That in all future forms, if gender is not necessary for the outcome aims of the form, then it should not be included.

Congress further mandates:

If gender is required for identification purposes regarding a particular student, the form should be sensitive to how it approaches this question. Where possible, the form should offer the structure: 'gender: _____' – letting the person fill it in as they like. Where a blank is not possible due to the need for statistical analysis, forms should offer Male, Female, or please specify: _____ or failing that and as a last result, Male, Female, Other. It is important to note that this format will not adequately or confidentially render statistics on the Trans* or Gender Questioning student population, but rather will provide those students with options which more adequately and accurately reflect their gender experience.

14UOX Investing in a Future for Youth

Congress notes:

The approval of National Council of 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.

14 UO 6 ONLINE VOTING FOR ELECTIONS

Congress notes:

The debate around direct elections for USI Officer Board which has been ongoing for many years.

Congress believes:

That a move towards this system would promote greater involvement and engagement by the general student body in USI Elections. It would also lend itself to better communication and promotion of USI Election candidates and key issues. The online video profiles and debates organised for this year's Officer Board Elections already represents a shift towards increased online campaigning.

Congress mandates:

The President to work with USI staff and Elections Committee to put in place an optional online voting platform for MO's for all USI elections.

Congress further mandates:

The President to ensure that all MO's who choose to utilise this system for elections will see their voting allocation transferred directly to the candidate with the most votes cast online in their college, requiring no secret ballot vote at Annual Congress.

14 UO 10 STUDENTS' UNION FUNDING

Congress welcomes:

The work of the Presidents' Working Group on a comparative study of the funding of Students' Unions which was carried out this year.

Congress notes:

The importance of this data in highlighting the under-funding of individual Students' Unions both on a national level, and also for internal lobbying purposes.

NOTES

National Affairs

14 UO 10 STUDENTS' UNION FUNDING

Congress therefore mandates:

The President to further develop the funding survey in order to collate additional relevant data which will enable the study to have greater comparability and granularity.

Congress further mandates:

The Regional Vice-Presidents to assist member Students' Unions in collecting the required information in their colleges and completing the survey.

14 UO 18 SUPPORTING FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

Congress notes:

That there are a number of further education colleges in the south that have no student union representation on a local or national level.

Congress further notes:

That a lack of local representation may act as a barrier to membership of the national union.

Congress further notes:

The inclusion of FE colleges from the Northern Region.

Congress recognises:

The efforts of USI to include all third level students in its organisation.

Congress therefore mandates:

The President of USI along with the VP AAQA and the Regional officers to establish the plausibility of establish student representation amongst FE colleges currently without representation with a view to them joining the national Union at a later stage. The deadline for this is the 30th of June 2015.

14 UO 22 USI PROMOTIONAL PACKS

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.

NOTES

Candidates for election

Candidate statements

Candidate for President



Michael Kerrigan

With the future funding of higher education likely to be decided, the autonomy of our Students' Unions being threatened and the possibility of a General Election being called, next year will be one of the most crucial in USI's history.

From the experience I have gained over the past 4 years representing and campaigning for students, running a Students' Union of over 6,000 students and leading a team of 23 Sabbatical officers from 8 Students' Unions with varying sizes and structures, I know I am the best person to lead USI to face these challenges head on.

I want to look back on my time in the student movement fighting for something, not just against something. The drive and enthusiasm I have for fighting for students' rights has only increased since the first day I put my name on a ballot paper 4 years ago. It is for that reason I am asking you to elect me the next President of the Union of Students in Ireland.

Michael has produced manifestoes and these will be available at Congress and on the USI Website.

Candidate statements

Candidates for Vice President for Campaigns



My name is Sean Cassidy. I'm currently a final year Economics, Politics and Law student in DCU. In my time in DCU I have been a Class Representative, Union Constitutional Review Chair, Part-Time Executive Officer, Chair of DCU LGBTA, The College View Section Editor and have sat on our Societies, Clubs and Staff & Finance Committees.

In my time as a student activist I have led campaigns that have secured reformed Union constitutional changes that have led to year on year increases in student engagement; an increase in student representation at governing body level; a commitment that examinations will not be held on future Irish election or referendum dates and have led numerous campus referendums, including the DCUSU-USI re-affiliation referendum that saw my Union re-affiliate to USI for the first time in 13 years.

The focus of my manifesto is Strengthening the National Campaign, Running A Student General Election Campaign, Improving MO Supports & Training, Restarting the Activist Academy and Improving USI Communication. I have a long held passion for student activism and engaging students to become active participants in the wider student movement. I have the motivation, experience and skills to become the next Vice-President for Campaigns.

Seán Cassidy is ainm dom. Faoi láthair, táim sa Bhliain Deireanach ag déanamh stadéir ar Eacnamíocht, Polaitíocht agus Dlí i DCU. Le linn m'am i DCU, bhí mé i m'Ionadaí Ranga, Cathaoirleach Athbhreathnú Bunreacht an Aontais, Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin Páirtaimseartha, Cathaoirleach don gCumann LADT, Eagarthóir Roinne don College View agus bhí mé páirteach i gCoiste na gCumann, Coiste na gClubanna agus in san gCoiste Foirne agus Airgeadais.

Le linn m'am mar ghníomhaí do mhic léinn, stiúirigh mé feachtais a chruthaigh athrúithe bunreachtacha feabhsaithe don Aontas. Ba chúis le sin ná méadú bainte na mic léinn ó bhliain go bliain, méadú ar ionadóacht na mic léinn ag leibhéal an bhord rialaithe, tiomantas nach eagrófar scrúdaithe ar dhátaí reifreann nó toghachán in Éirinn sa todhchaí. Chomh maith le sin, stiúirigh mé feachtais éagsúla ar champus, i measc sin bhí reifreann faoi athcheangal DCU le AMLÉ.

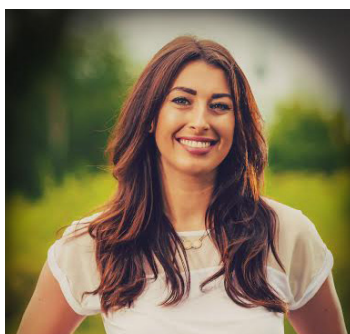
Cheangal m'Aontas le AMLÉ don chéad uair i 13 bhliain mar gheall ar sin. Is iad na rudaí a dhíríonn m'fhoróga ar ná an Feachtas Náisiúnta a Neartú, Feachtas Toghcháin do Mhic Léinn a Reachtáil, Tacaíocht Balleagraíochta agus Oiliúint a Fheabhsú, An Acadamh Ghníomhaí a Athosnú agus Cumarsáid AMLÉ a Fheabhsú. Tá dúil agam ar feadh i bhfad sa ghíomhaíocht do mhic léinn agus go mbeadh mic léinn páirteach i ngluaiseacht na mic léinn i gcoitinne. Táim spreagtha agus tá na scileanna agus an taithí agam chun bheith i do chéad Leas-Uachtarán do Fheachtais eile.

Mise le meas,

Seán Cassidy

Candidate statements

Candidates for Vice President for Campaigns



Amy Kelly

Dia daoibh a cháirde!

Is mise Amy ní cheallaigh agus tá mise an seo ag lord do vóta le haghaidh an leas Uachtarán le haghaidh na feachtasaíochta le AMLÉ.

I am the current President of GMIT Student's Union. I studied Gnó agus Cumarsáid in GMIT before being elected to the role of Vice President for Welfare for two consecutive years.

Throughout my time in GMIT I feel I have gained a lot of experience in running successful campaigns and having to be creative to get student engagement.

I have put myself forward for the role of Vice President for Campaigns as I have worked closely with USI during my time in the student movement and I believe I have gained the skills needed to further this role.

I have always had a love for campaigning throughout my time as a student and also during my time with GMIT Students' Union. I brought new interactive ways to get students involved with the issues including mental health, eating disorders, healthy living, personal safety, sexual health and accommodation.

This year I have been elected to the USI campaigns sub-committee and the democratic review committee, and I believe this has given me a huge insight into the running of the national union and what is involved as a national officer.

I have compiled my manifesto around issues I feel need to be addressed on a national level from speaking with officers, executives, class reps and students. The main areas of focus in my manifesto are the national campaign, worker's rights, union development, training and accommodation.

I want to be an active supporting role for all officers' whether running a local campaign, regional campaign or national campaign. We need to ensure we as the national movement are providing the right training and resources for each campaign to run successfully.

I am a highly motivated, and I am eager to represent students on a national level. I know I have the skills and experience to ensure that USI campaigns are a thriving part of USI and the back bone to achieving a stronger union.

I look forward to meeting you all over the next few days, and I welcome any questions or ideas that you may have in vision for this role, as it is to represent the student voice on a national level and I want to ensure that is our main focus.

Amy x

Candidate statements

Candidates for Vice President for Campaigns



Dylan McGowan

Hi there, my name is Dylan McGowan, I'm 24 years old, and I'm from County Leitrim. I am seeking your vote to become Vice President for Campaigns with the Union of Students Ireland. I have been SU President in Letterkenny Institute of Technology for the past two years, and I want to bring this experience on to the National Platform.

In LYIT I have managed to reduce financial difficulty by running a successful part-time employment campaign in which companies such as Vodafone, Menary's and M&S all took part in. I have also represented students on campaigns with regard intern students nurses, early childhood, and veterinary nurses on issues such as low pay, underfunding, issues in placement in relation to work conditions and zero bursary with regards to travel or accommodation.

USI Campaigns is the only position I have had my eyes on for the past 2 years, I've got to understand, and learn how the position works. I am a member of the USI Campaigns Sub-Committee and I have also kick-started campaigns on for Early Childhood education students, in where I highlighted evidence based on the poor treatment of students and workers in this field of practice.

Early year's educators and the Intern nurses were a big passion of mine this year, the students were not happy and I am proud to state I was one of the strongest campaigners nationwide on their behalf. Being part of the national union will enable me as a national officer to work on all campaigns that affect students not just the specifics in the college I represent.

I have made contacts with each trade union, lobbied over 20 government officials and have effectively broke the media barriers both locally and nationally, in voicing not only the problems facing LYIT but problems that face the majority of students nationwide. I have travelled all over the country from the very tip of the northwest to seek support, highlight my ambition, and express to you why I am the best candidate for this position.

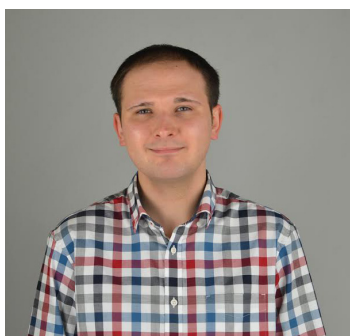
I believe I am the best candidate through experience in lobbying, breaking the media barriers, campaigning for 3rd level funding, intern nurses, early years educators and I have made the correct contacts in unions and organisations that can collaborate support.

Voting for me, is voting for experience, passion and determination on representing the national body make your vote count.

Thanks
Dylan

Candidate statements

Candidate for Vice President for the Southern Region



Shane Falvey

A Chairde,

It is with great pride that I'm a candidate for the position of Union of Students in Ireland (USI) Vice President for the Southern Region at this year's congress.

I believe in the students of the South, I believe in the students of this island, I believe in each and every one of you reading this statement. I believe that together we can work to build a stronger Ireland; one which values third level education, an Ireland which adequately funds education and treasures it.

I have had the great honour of being a student representative for the past three years in Cork Institute of Technology Students' Union, having served one term as Vice President Education and currently I'm in my second term as SU President.

I began my involvement in the student movement as a first year student and have had the privilege of representing students in various forums ever since. As well as my experience as a Students' Union sabbatical officer, I have four years Class Representative experience, and society involvement.

In 2014, I founded the CIT Cancer Society, and if you like, built it up with a team from nothing. I'm proud to say the society is going from strength to strength to this day. Setting up the society thought me an awful lot, lessons I carry with me to this day.

Most of all that if you have belief in a cause and can get others behind it you will be successful. Having sat on the USI Campaigns sub-committee this year, I believe there's a lot of work to do on a regional level in terms of campaigns and effectively communicating what USI does, this is a challenge I would prosper.

#TogetherWeAreStronger I believe I have the knowledge, experience and people skills to carry out this role to the very best of my ability. Students of the South, a vote for me I promise will not be a vote in vain.

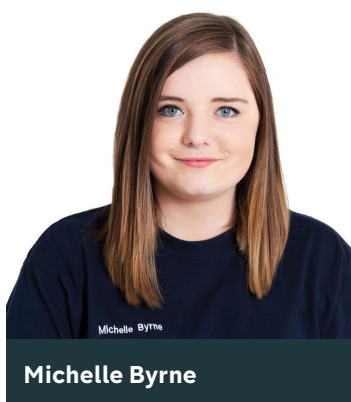
I have the same passion for representing students that I've always had. I believe in the power of the student voice as much as ever and I would be honoured to have the opportunity to work with the students and Students' Union teams of the South on creating positive change and shaping the future of third level education in this country, as well as contributing to USI as an organisation. #Falv4TheSouth #Shane4USI

Beir Bua,

Shane Falvey
Candidate for Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

Candidate statements

Candidate for Vice President for the Southern Region



Hi I'm Michelle and I want your support to serve the south. With either candidate you will get someone who's engaged in meetings and can give experienced advice, but with me you'll also get someone good on the ground in your campus, for campaigns & communications when you need that support.

I'm currently WITSU President, past Education officer and previously class rep who volunteered on the welfare and entertainments crews. Before that, not only was I on the student council in school, I helped set it up! I also worked in promotions and for the last few years I've also been a co-director of a music festival. I'm always ready to get stuck in. This has taught me the importance of win win, a union needs to mobilise it's members to show it's strength and members gain skills & confidence with training & volunteering. It's our job to develop & support new talent, so our movement remains strong. During my time in WITSU, I have overcome such challenges as: ending the 8 year long dispute of our academic calendar and introduced new initiatives such as NStEP, a new constitution and online voting.

I believe engagement will strengthen the South. My experience is campaigns, demonstrations, promotions and training events - I love them. I know how to engage students.

A vote for me will ensure:

- Each Member Organisation (MO) in the South has regular engagement from USI
- satellite campuses are not forgotten about
- motivational engaging training events, with a focus for class reps
- support for MOs rolling out NStEP in their institutions.
- Support for MOs going through merger processes
- A Southern campaigns directory
- A travel links database
- A clear plan for USI Membership expansion in the South (I have already meet with UL and some PLC/FE colleges

Communications, I've a design degree & digital marketing diploma and loads of promo experience. I will use these skills to develop communications in the South. Facebook and Twitter are important means of communication for live updates and group interactions, but not all students are on these mediums. Targeting email calls to action will help promote the work of USI and circulate information about events, conferences and training opportunities. Planning is vital for the year ahead. I will support MO's in creating long term goals, as well as planning for events and campaigns. I will also support MOs in any issues that may arise throughout their year & ensuring that officers receive the training they need. For more information on these, please read my manifesto.

I am experienced, hard working, engaged in student issues and passionate about helping students receiving the best experience they can. My motto is Plan, Communicate, Engage. If you agree, please Vote Michelle Byrne #1 for the Southern Region

Let the South #ByrneBright.

Candidate statements

Candidate for Vice President for Equality and Citizenship



Síona Cahill

A chairde,

Now is not the time to pause in the drive for equality across our education system, communities and in wider society. Students have always been at the forefront of the fight for equal access, opportunities and supports for those who are marginalised, left behind or squeezed out of what is on offer because of their socio-economic status, their disability (invisible or visible), or where they grew up - and we must continue to lead that fight.

This continues in our campaign for publicly funded education as the threat of fees & loans loom. This fight can't stop at achieving full marriage rights in the Republic of Ireland, when those in Northern Ireland remain second class citizens. We must strive together to advance disability rights (Ratification of UN CRPD) & reproductive rights (Repeal of the 8th Amendment). Equality isn't a tick the box exercise, it must be a consistent strive for better.

Over the last few months, I have been appointed directly to the governmental advisory group and steering committee for the National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy, I've been invited to represent students on the National Women's Strategy committee, as well as the High Level Group on International Education after I argued for student voices to be at the table. Our submission prepared for the Citizens Assembly was chosen for presentation to the members, and was the only one of 17 to represent students and young people.

As a young gay woman who grew up in Longford, I have my own experiences from a system and society that struggles to respect diversity, while celebrating difference. As VP for Welfare & Equality in Maynooth SU for two years, I also know first hand the day-to-day struggles of students and the barriers continuously placed in front of them.

Your lived experience matters, and I will carry it to the decision making tables and out onto the streets so that you are heard and change can happen. This role so far has taught me that I can't do everything, but we can do a hell of a lot.

Let's face our challenges, together.
Ar Scáth a Chéile a mhaireann na ndaoine.

Le meas,
Síona Cahill
siona.cahill@gmail.com
@AnTaobhRua

Candidate statements

Candidates for Vice President for Welfare



Niamh Murtagh

A Chairde,

My name is Níamh, and I am running for the position of the Vice President for Welfare in the Union of Students in Ireland.

I have been involved in the student movement from the moment I stepped into college, and have devoted my life to the cause of students ever since.

As a graduate of IT Tralee and IT Tallaght, I have had so many experiences during my time as a student. I was that student that failed an exam and had to fight my way through appeals, the one who had to wait over 6 weeks to see a counsellor and who had no every issue thrown at me while trying to apply for my SUSI grant.

Unfortunately, I am not alone and students are suffering every day with very limited resources to turn to.

I am running for this position as I understand the many issues students face and I am the best person to do this job. My experience as a two-term part time officer, a two-term Vice President for Welfare, and now as the current Vice President for the Southern Region, as well as the experience and qualifications that I have built, will enable me to build on the already great work being done and strengthen the welfare position.

After seeing USI Welfare Officers over many years, I know how tough it can be, but I am fully up to the challenge ahead If elected. There are so many key issues that I wish to work on such as Mental Health, CyberBullying, Personal Safety, Road Safety, Finance and Housing, Consent and Sexual Health to name but a few.

Students need their welfare officers on the ground to be trained, equipped and supported, and I am fully ready to ensure that will be the case across the country.

Please have a read of my manifesto to see more information or contact me anytime with any queries you may have.

Go raibh mile maith agat,

Niamh

Candidate statements

Candidate for VP Welfare



Daniel Khan

My name is Daniel Khan, and I am the current Vice President for Welfare in NUI Galway Students' Union. I'm 22, Irish-Pakistani and I'm from Mayo via London and Pakistan.

In my second year of college I joined the Students' Union Welfare Crew and became a very involved and vocal volunteer. Initially I joined because I thought it would be fun to hand out free contraception on campus, but mental health became quite a prevalent issue on campus so as a group we were very pro-active in promoting positive mental health and the importance of talking through Mental Health Weeks and the 'Chats for Change' and 'See Change' initiatives.

This had me hooked and I stayed a dedicated volunteer for 3 years after which I ran for my current position as VP/Welfare.

I ran for this position on the basis that I would be helping students face to face. We all know that the student experience can be quite difficult at times and sometimes people need a helping hand.

During the first month of my term as Welfare Officer, I got the chance to meet many of the other Welfare Officers from around Ireland, north and south of the border and I was amazed to meet so many people that had the same passion and dedication to helping people.

As an officer that deals with casework day in and day out, you can never know what to expect when a student comes to you for support. It is a long year of dealing with sensitive issues but it is also very rewarding at the same time.

If you elect me as your Vice-President for Welfare, I will strive to ensure that every Welfare Officer gets the support and motivation they need to maintain their passion and dedication for helping students that made them run in the first place.

There are a number of issues that affect the student population that I have addressed in my manifesto so please take a read of it and get in touch if you have any questions, comments or queries.

Vote Dan Khan #1 for USI Vice President for Welfare

Candidate statements

Candidate for Vice President for the Irish Language / Leas Uachtarán don Gaeilge



Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha

Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha

A chairde, Is mór an onóir dom seasamh sa toghchán seo mar iarrthóir don ról mar Leas – Uachtarán don Gaeilge in Aontas na Mac Léinn. Is as Dún na nGall dom, agus tógadh mé i mbaile beag ar an teorainn leis an Tuaisceart. Tógadh le Béarla amháin mé, ach thaitin an Ghaeilge chomh mór liom gur shocraigh mé tabhairt fúithi mar ábhar ollscoile in OÉ Gaillimh.

Tá mo bhunchéim díreach bainte amach agam – céim sa Ghaeilge, Stair, agus Scríbhneoireacht Chruthaitheach – agus i láthair na huaire tá mé ag plé le máistreacht sa Nua – Ghaeilge, fós i nGaillimh. Ní dóigh liom go bhfagfaidh mé an áit ariamh! I 2015, toghadh mé mar Oifigeach na Gaeilge do Chomhaltas na Mac Léinn in OÉ Gaillimh, ról a thaitin go mór liom. Obair fhiúntach a bhí inti, agus ba mhaith liom leanúint le mo thuras fhoghlama, gníomhaíochta, agus teangeolaíochta mar Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge.

Tuigim go maith na deacrachtaí a bhaineann le foghlaim teanga, le deacracht na Gaeilge mar teanga – mar is féidir léi bheith deacair! Ach mar dhuine a d'fhoghlaim an teanga mar fhoghlaimeoir T2 (dara teanga), tá eolas maith agam ar phróiseas na foghlama, agus na deacrachtaí a chuirtear romhainn ag an chóras oideachais. Is é mo thuairim gur cheart dúinn an 'bagáiste' seo a cheanglaítear leis an Ghaeilge a bhréagnú – go bhfuil sí deacair, go bhfuil sí dódhéanta, nach bhfuil fiúntas ag baint léi, gur le muintir na Gaeltachta nó le páirtithe polaitíochta poblachtanacha amháin í, go mbaineann sí le treibheanna áirithe.

I mo thuairim, tá sé thar am an bagáiste seo a scaoileadh ón teanga. Is rud neodrach í, agus is linne uilig í. Níl seasamh polaitiúil aici. Ba thrua mór na tíre seo go ceanglaíodh an teanga le hÉirinn fhoirfe na hathbheochana, agus gur chuir ceannairí na tíre seo dualgas an chaomhnaithe ar mhic léinn na tíre seo, le córais lochtacha, le cúrsaí Gaeilge lochtacha, le meon lochtach. Caithfidh muid súil a thabhairt ar an todhchaí. Caithfidh muid uirlis nua a dhéanamh den teanga.

I mo ról mar Leas – Uachtarán don Ghaeilge, déanfainn cinnte go dtabharfainn súil ar an todhchaí, aran Ghaeilge mar mheán bríomhar cumarsáide, mar oidhreacht pháistí na tíre seo – iad uile.

Candidate statements

Candidate for Vice President for the Irish Language / Leas Uachtarán don Gaeilge

Hi everyone!

It's a great honour for me to stand in this election as a candidate for the role of Vice President for the Irish language in the Union of Students in Ireland. I am from Donegal, and I was raised in a little town on the border with the North. I was raised with only English, but I liked Irish so much that I decided to undertake it as a university subject in NUI Galway.

I have just finished my undergraduate degree – a degree in Irish, History, and Creative Writing – and at the minute I am doing a Masters in Modern Irish, still in Galway. I don't think I'll ever leave the place! In 2015, I was elected as Irish Officer for the NUIG Student's Union, a job I really enjoyed. It was worthwhile work, and I would like to continue on with my learning, activism, and linguistic journey as the Vice President for the Irish Language.

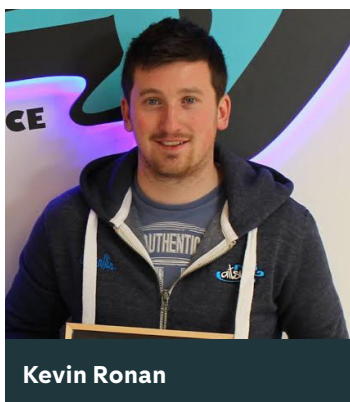
I understand well the difficulties that come with learning a language, with the difficulties that come with learning Irish itself as a language – because it certainly can be difficult! But as someone who learned the language as purely a second language, I really understand the learning process, and the difficulties that are put before us within the education system. It is my opinion that we should get rid of the 'baggage' that comes with the Irish language – that it's too difficult, that it's impossible, that it's worthless, that only those in the Gaeltacht or the republican parties can have any right to use it, or that only certain groups have any say over its future.

In my opinion, it's over time to free the language from this baggage. It is a neutral thing, and therefore it belongs to us all. It is not a political stance. It was the greatest shame of this country that the Irish language was attached to ideals of a perfect, old – fashioned Irish – Ireland of the Revival period, and that the leaders of this country placed the responsibility for reviving the language on the students of this country, with faulty systems, faulty Irish syllabi, faulty mindsets. We must turn our faces to the future. We must make a new instrument from this language of ours.

In my role as the Vice President for Irish Language, if elected, I would be certain to turn my face to the future, to the Irish language as a vibrant means of communication, as the rightful heritage of the children of this country – all of them.

Candidate statements

Candidates for Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region



Hi there,

My Name is Kevin Ronan and I am asking for your vote for the position of Vice President of the Border Midlands and Western Region. I have been involved in student movement for the past number of years in Athlone It Students' Union holding the role of Deputy President for Education in 14/15 and the role of President for the past two academic years 15/16 and 16/17. Previous to my time as a sabbatical officer I was also a class representative and served one year as the Unions Clubs Officer with responsibility for the promotion of sports and society engagement across the campus for the Students' Union.

Throughout my time in the student movement I have always put my members first, constantly questioning and demanding more from the elected officers of the Union of Students' in Ireland. I see this as my opportunity to put my own stamp on the role and give back to the movement that has given so much to me.

I want to help to continue to build strong independent Students' Union across the region where together we can fight the battles on both a regional and national level. With my experience as a three term sabbatical officer I feel I am in a great position to pass this on to those who may be taking up their roles for the first time, moving position or staying in the same role in the coming academic year.

Over the past two years I have been elected to the USI Finance Committee and have been elected to the USI Campaigns Sub Committee by my peers in the USI. I also took part in the first Democratic review of the organisation in January 2017.

Outside of the my roles within AIT Students' union and the USI I am the Hon. Vice Chairperson of Student Sport Ireland the National Governing Body for Third Level Sport in Ireland and have been selected as one of 9 representatives from across Europe for the European University Sports Association Student Commission.

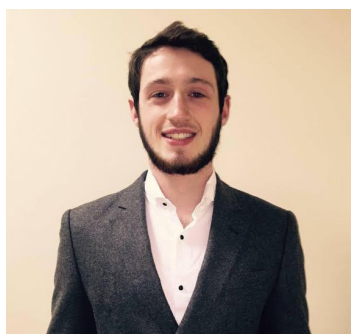
I am asking for your vote to let me help your Students' union grow and flourish over the next academic year.

Yours,

Kevin

Candidate statements

Candidates for Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region



Jimmy McGovern

The Student Experience is completely unique to every individual student, yet it opens a common floodgate of opportunity and social consciousness for each person – something I am incredibly passionate about.

Every member of our society is deserving of an education and deserving of open access to support. Our USI, our Students' Unions and our student movement is the best place to advocate just that. With both Publicly Funded Education and a Student Load Scheme being on the table for discussion, next year will be a defining year for the student movement. I cannot stand by to see the student experience change to something that no longer offers the same opportunities due to financial debt.

My name is Jimmy McGovern, I am the President of NUI Galway Students' Union, and that is why I am running to be a national representative for the BMW Region in the Union of Students' in Ireland. I believe USI will only ever be as effective as the local Students' Unions it represents, and I believe it is the USI's Regional Officers that ultimately define the success of any given year.

It is essential that those officers on a local level are given the support, time and education from their national representatives. To achieve this there must be a strong sense of trust, confidence and commitment in the work of the Regional Officers.

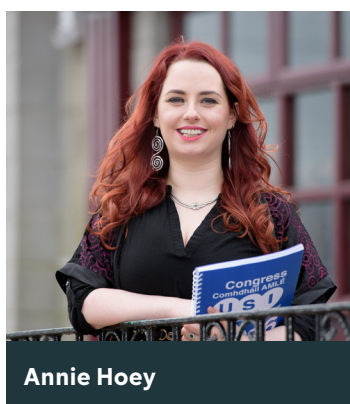
My manifesto is comprised of number of achievable goals that will make impact and progression on USI's overall goals. However my number one priority will be the unknown challenges each SU will face throughout the year.

I am asking for your trust, and I offering my unquestionable loyalty and commitment, to the lead and represent our BMW Region nationally. With gratitude and sincerity, vote Jimmy McGovern #1 for the BMW Region.

Officer Reports 2016-2017

Officer reports

President



Annie Hoey

This year has been an absolute whirlwind. We started off with a whoosh when the Cassells Report was formally launched on the first day of SUT, and it feels like we haven't stopped running at high speed ever since! We have launched numerous campaigns, brought in new staff, received more grants and funding than the organisation has in a very long time, won three huge affiliation referendums, hosted seminars and conventions, ran training events, travelled up and down the country to visit MOs and support our students on the ground, sat in high level committees and boards fighting students' corners, got massive coverage in both local and national media, lobbied everyone and anyone who would listen about the future funding of higher education and the need for students' unions to govern independently, travelled to Europe to learn from our European colleagues, worked closely with NUS-USI and NUS to ensure the student voice is central to peace and stability in Northern Ireland, and we marched and chanted through the streets in solidarity with others, defending our corner, and demanding a fairer and more just Ireland.

This year would not have been possible without the support of many people. National Council, and in particular the Presidents' Working Group, have kept this year going, and have provided invaluable guidance and steering for the work of the national Officerboard. The staff in USI provide constant support, and tend to look the other way as we tear about the office planning some other bonkers scheme. Finance Committee, Steering Committee and my Advisory Panel are always there to share knowledge and insight, and have been invaluable to me this year.

This year's Officerboard team have gone above and beyond expectations. It is not often that you find yourself in a job with colleagues you implicitly trust, but also people you consider friends. Jack, Síona, Cian, Dan, Mike, Niamh, Maria and Fergal have been a pleasure to work with, and I look forward to seeing what we achieve in our last three months in office together.

I could not write this report without thanking the people who paved the way for me and the team this year - the Officerboard teams who have come before us. In particular I want to thank my predecessors, Joe O'Connor, Laura Harmon and Kevin Donoghue, who have provided me with friendship, guidance and support over the past four years.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my term as President of the Union of Students in Ireland, and I want to thank you all for granting me this opportunity.

Officer reports

President

National Campaign for Publicly Funded Higher Education

Starting the year with a bang, the Cassells Report was launched on July 11th, the first day of SUT. There was an immediate media flurry, requiring Officerboard and the student leaders gathered in AIT to get ourselves in gear with a response. One of the first acts as National Council was for all the presidents of the various member unions to sign a public letter, declaring our united stance in favour of publicly funded higher education, renouncing any support of an income-contingent loan scheme, and committing to working together as a united movement to further these aims.

Since we all co-signed that letter, the student leaders of the student movement have continuously been working on this campaign. The Campaigns Sub-committee worked on the logistics of the national demo, and coordinated the national lobbying effort of public representatives. I set to work with the Coalition for Publicly Funded Higher Education (CPFHE), which was set up by my predecessor, Kevin Donoghue. The CPFHE is made up of TUI, IFUT, SIPTU and IMPACT trade unions.

On October 19th, 12,000 people took to the streets. I addressed the demo from the stage, along with Carly Bailey (TCD student and parent), Gina O'Brien (Chair of the IMPACT Education Executive Committee), Jane M Hayes Nally (ISSU President) and Blind Boy (Rubber Bandits). We garnered huge media coverage from the day, and have been able to reference attendance at the demo during our subsequent lobbying meetings.

On December 6th, USI held a second lobbying day in Buswells Hotel with a number of students' union officers in attendance. The day ran from 11am to 4pm with a steady flow of TDs and Senators coming throughout the event. On December 8th, I presented to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills on the topic future funding of higher education.

In 2017, we have continued to lobby and build support for the campaign, and we have lobbied over 100 TDs to date. We have also made alliances with more trade unions, and have sought to make presentations to County, City and Town Councils. We are working on getting a motion brought to the Dáil opposing income-contingent loans, and we are constantly working on building support on the ground for publicly funded higher education.

Officer reports

President

Independent SUs

This is an issue that has been brewing for the past few years, but is really beginning to come to a head this year. Across the country, the issue of SU independence and governance has been under threat, and there have been various attempts to erode autonomy. These attempts include withholding of funding, demanding full access to accounts and internal documents, pressurising SUs to sign new memorandums of understanding that would erode SUs right to self-govern, censoring who the SU can engage with, and placing undue hoops and duress in front of SUs. A working group has been set up to lead this campaign, and USI has sought legal counsel on the matter. We are trying to build a picture of what is going on at a local level, so that we can react at a national one. During our lobbying, we have brought the issue of the need for SU independence up, along with seeking support and advice from trade unions. This is a long campaign, but it is one we must begin the groundwork for now.

Speaking Engagements

Throughout my term as President of USI, I was invited to speak at a number of events. These engagements include an all party Repeal Bill briefing in the AV Room, Leinster House, and an all party briefing on the Sexual Offences Bill. I spoke on the topic of publicly funded higher education at the TCD Funding Symposium, and I was a panelist alongside the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton, at a Young Fine Gael event entitled "future of the higher education landscape in Ireland". I gave a keynote address at the Teaching Hero Awards, which was an incredible event co-hosted and organised by USI and the National Forum for Enhancement in Teaching and Learning. I also spoke on the topic of activism at Zeminar (#SnailPatrol); discussed ending pay discrimination for students and young people at a Labour Youth panel on equal pay; shared my experiences at numerous women in leadership sessions; and spoke on a panel at a public meeting on drug decriminalisation with Anna Quigley (Citywide), Marcus Keane (Ana Liffey) and Fr Peter McVerry, hosted by Senator Áodhan Ó'Ríordán.

USI All Hacks

As unbelievable as it may sound, I somehow managed to be Captain of a USI tag rugby team- the All Hacks- and perhaps even more unbelievably we won the league! The team was made up of members of National Council, with a few external extras brought in. We preach about self-care, but never practise it, so this was a thoroughly enjoyable and social way to get out and about over the summer months.

Officer reports

President

#Repealthe8th and Students for Choice

USI Students for Choice has a huge delegation at the ARC Rise and Repeal March for Choice. We were kindly hosted by TCDSU as our pre-march meeting point before we joined the march proper at the Garden of Remembrance. This was the largest delegation USI has had at a March For Choice to date.

I spoke at an all party briefing in Leinster House on the AA-PBP Repeal Bill, and spoke at a media briefing ahead of proposals to reduce the sanction for procuring the abortions pills online to a €1 fine. Along with the USI VP Equality and Citizenship, I have been an active member of the Steering group for the Coalition to Repeal the 8th Amendment. Due to my involvement with the repeal campaign, on September 22nd I was invited to attend a round table dinner with Gloria Steinem and other reproductive rights activists.

USI supported the #Strike4Repeal, and attended actions across our campuses on the day.

In a highlight of our campaign so far, and what we see as recognition of all the work the student movement has done over the years on reproductive rights, USI was invited to present to the Citizens' Assembly. I made clear our historical commitment to the campaign for bodily autonomy, and for wombs health care to not be legislated for with the constitution. There was an incredibly positive response to our presentation, and I think we are going to be gearing ourselves up for a referendum very soon.

Democratic and Constitutional Review

On 1 February, USI undertook a democratic review, utilising the feedback form the Democratic Review Survey, along with taking into consideration issues which had been raised by MOs previously. The review group went through a number of democratic functions within USI such as the USI OB elections, the running of National Council and Congress, and engagement with members. A number of recommendations were made, some of which were subsequently brought to the Constitutional Review Group. The group will meet again after Congress 2017 to assess how implementing these recommendations has gone, and to lay out further plans of action.

On February 2nd the Constitutional Review Group met to discuss submissions made to the group, along with our own findings and recommendations. The group debated and discussed a number of proposed amendments and additions, along with tracking any anomalies or contradictions we found in throughout. A lot of amendments suggested from the group are in relation to smooth-lining USI operations, or clearing up any unnecessary red-tape. I am confident that we are putting forward recommendations that will ensure the USI Constitution is fit for purpose and will facilitate the organisation in achieving its aims.

Officer reports

President

Affiliation Referendums

We had three major affiliation referendums this year, which took up a huge amount of time in terms of preparing and actually canvassing during the referendums themselves. Fortunately, we returned three incredibly high results in favour of remaining affiliated to USI, which I believe shows strong support and recognition for the work the national union is doing for students.

DCUSU

2,176 students from DCUSU voted to remain with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) with a total of 2,304 votes cast. Polls opened at 9am on Thursday the 1st of December and closed at 5pm on Friday the 2nd of December. Final result was 94.6% of DCUSU voters said yes to USI.

MSU

2,027 students from Maynooth University (MSU) voted to remain with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) with a total of 2,142 votes cast. Polls opened at 9am on Wednesday the 8th of March and closed at 6pm on March 8th. Final result was 95.7% of MSU voters said yes to USI.

DITSU

2,989 students from DIT Students' Union (DITSU) voted to remain with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) with a total of 3,265 votes cast. Polls opened at 10am on Tuesday 14th of March and closed at 8pm on Wednesday the 15th of March. The count took place in DIT Bolton Street with Students' Unions candidates present. Final result was 91.5% of DITSU voters saying yes to USI for another 3 years.

And everything else!

Other national campaigns include our accommodation campaign #homesforstudy, #SHAG17, mental health week, the national voter registration day, our Pre-budget submission, the Assembly Elections in Northern Ireland, student teachers campaign, early years and childhood education campaigns, workers' rights, Student Switch Off, refugee inclusion, Ask About Alcohol, drugs harm reduction campaigns, Irish Survey of Student Engagement, and student participation in quality assurance. We also hosted a number of events, such as Pink Training, #WomenLead17, Mature Students' Seminar, part-time officer training, consent training and top-up training. In between the referendums we hosted the ESC33 (European Student Convention) with ESU and NUIGSU in NUI Galway, on the topics of access to higher education and the impact of Brexit on higher education in Europe. Please take the time to read the Officer Reports of each member of USI Officerboard for a more detailed outline of these campaigns and events.

Officer reports

Deputy President/Vice President for Academic Affairs



Jack Leahy

Student Participation in Quality Assurance

As expected, the National Student Engagement Programme has served as the primary vehicle for our work on student engagement and student participation in quality assurance. While this work falls under my brief, and I've been involved with the various initiatives, a lot has been lead by the National Student Engagement Coordinator Cat O'Driscoll.

Since April I've acted as the chair of the NStEP pilot working group, while also representing the programme to its steering group: the HEA and QQI's Memorandum of Understanding Implementation Forum. I've assisted the coordinator on a number of initiatives, including a training day for sabbatical officers and the recruitment of trainers. The programme has been enormously successful to date with almost exclusively positive feedback from students, institutions, and partner agencies alike.

Going forward, there are some exciting developments that will strengthen the programme even further. We're recruiting a larger number of trainers, fulfilling a Congress mandate by establishing a student quality assurance expert pool, and extending the programme to a further 12 institutions on an expanded pilot basis.

International (Academic) Affairs

An important part of my role as USI's international representative is engagement with other national unions of students through the European Students' Union. In September I participated in the 32nd European Students' Convention in Bratislava, which presented European approaches to issues of access, transfer and progression. With a delegation of 7, we attended the 71st Board Meeting near Gdansk, Poland in December, and we recently hosted the 33rd European Students' Convention with a focus on accessibility and, separately, Brexit. In May, the President and I will attend the 72nd Board Meeting in Malta with our successors. Hosting the ESC was particularly challenging, but a worthwhile exercise whose output has been reported directly to the Bologna Follow-Up Group for the Social Dimension.

We have developed a strong working relationship with a number of organisations, including ANSA (Armenia), NUS-UK (England, Wales & Scotland), LSVb and ISO (Netherlands), and VVS (Belgium). With these and other national organisations, we can engage in focussed capacity building, comparative research and international campaigns. We have engaged with the global #FundOurFuture campaign through ESU, and been awarded funding for a refugee integration project. In an age where international cooperation is threatened, this work has a self-evident importance to our core mission of improving the student experience.

Officer reports

Deputy President/Vice President for Academic Affairs

Teaching & Learning

Our major teaching & learning projects this year have been run in association with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education. As a board member of the Forum, I've been helping to co-ordinate student-led projects and realising the Forum's strategic objective to be student-centric.

The foremost project was the Teaching Hero Awards, which began with fieldwork in the Spring and concluded, after a lengthy process of grading and awarding, with a ceremony in October. In all, 45 "Teaching Heroes" received awards. This year's awards strengthened the reputation of Europe's first student-led national teaching awards and made a powerful statement that students are important and invested stakeholders in quality teaching & learning. The outcomes of the awards will be fed into further sectoral awards for further national awards.

Other teaching & learning projects include engaging with the national enhancement theme 2016-2018 (Assessment), exploring scope for improvements in how students are assessed and - particularly - how technology can support those improvements. I've also acted as a student representative on panels reviewing the effectiveness of funded projects, tasked in particular with assessing the involvement of students in the development of projects receiving public funding.

Other Academic Affairs

Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)

As a member of the ISSE plenary group and the stakeholders' forum, I've continued to advocate for the use of ISSE data as an instrument of enhancement at a national level. Moreover, the group has planned for an expanded survey in future years - allowing institutions to add its own questions if they so wish (but with a requirement to keep the survey short!) and establishing a second survey specifically for Postgraduate Research Students. This will hopefully be modelled on the successful PGR survey piloted by TCD's Graduate Students' Union in 2015.

Quality & Qualifications Ireland

By nomination of the Minister for Education (ex-officio in my capacity as USI's VP Academic Affairs) I have served two years as a board member for Quality and Qualifications Ireland. In addition to attending board meetings and participating in QQI's overall governance and strategic accountability, I've also served as a member of the Approvals and Review Committee. This is the committee that awards and reviews the right of some providers to issue accredited qualifications and plays a major role in national policy.

Officer reports

Deputy President/Vice President for Academic Affairs

Deputy President

As Deputy President, I have a wide range of responsibilities in addition to the role of Vice President for Academic Affairs. Aside from approving leave and expenses, I have also taken on responsibility for a number of important events and initiatives, including:

- A 17-page policy position, developed with the VP Campaigns, to be used as a basis for our lobbying efforts as part of the National Campaign;
- Serve as a member of the Campaigns Sub-Committee;
- Organising the Student Achievement Awards Ireland 2017;
- Lobbying TDs and Ministers in individual meetings with the President and/or the Public Affairs intern;
- Assisting in organising referendum campaigns;
- Assisting in the coordination of the democratic and constitutional reviews.

It's been an honour to serve as a two-term Vice President. We've achieved so much as a movement since 2014, and our credibility is the highest it's been in a long time. I've spent two years surrounded by incredibly capable people, over-achieving tag rugby players, and dreadful chess players. Thank you to those whose hard work made it possible.

Officer reports

Vice President for Welfare

Congress 2017, it has been the greatest pleasure and honour to represent you for the last nine months. This year for Officerboard has been an incredibly productive year with the remit of welfare being a particular strong pillar in this year's work. In my capacity I was also nominated and elected to be this year's Dublin Region Officer at our first National Council, the two roles which I have been very proud to hold and represent. The following is my Officer Report for the year 2016-17.

Mental Health

This year I have worked heavily in the remit of mental health, within the first month being appointed to the National Youth Mental Health Taskforce, chaired by the Minister for Mental Health and Older People, Helen McEntee. My work on this taskforce has allowed USI be instrumental in constructing how youth mental health issues are tackled in Ireland, and in my role on the Taskforce. Work is still underway and we are keen to have a final report in July when I finish my term.

In addition to sitting on this Taskforce, I worked on the mental health campaign - Chats for Change - with PleaseTalk and Walk in My Shoes. I arranged a partnership with Roberts and Roberts which delivered sponsorship in the form of extra teabags for the Chats for Change packs. We sent 20,000 packs out to member students' unions and visited GMITSU, LITSU, MSU and ITBSU for the roadshow.

We launched the first ever national Student Support Card on World Suicide Prevention Day October 10th as part of which we sent 20,000 cards out to our member students' unions.

I secured training from St. John of Gods in mental health first aid for our students, and formalised a partnership with the National Office of Suicide Prevention in rolling out ASIST and Safetalk training for our members over the coming months.

Sexual Health

This year for sexual health I formalised a partnership with the HSE Crisis Pregnancy programme as part of our SHAG weeks. This officially states that our SHAG campaign is now quality assured and nationally recognised. We sent out 30,000 condoms, lubes and info to MOs, along with 20,000 Say Something cards and handed out 11,000 condoms throughout the SHAG Week Roadshow. The roadshow was hosted by in DCUSU, ITSSU, WITSU and QUBSU. I am working on more project collaboration with HSE and stakeholders in coming months to solidify partnerships to expand our sexual health initiatives.

Officer reports

Vice President for Welfare



Cian Power

Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling

Alcohol, substances and gambling campaigns have been key pillars of my work to date. In terms of alcohol I have been working with the Alcohol Programme in the HSE on the new alcohol campaign Ask About Alcohol, of which we are key stakeholders.

In relation to substance use, we collaborated with the HSE and drugs. ie in creating the NPS (New Psychoactive Drugs) harm reduction poster campaign, covering MDMA, Mephedrone, Ketamine and Cannabinoids. This poster campaign explains how to more safely use substances, and the effects that they produce.

In relation to gambling addiction and culture, I have been working with the Ruthland Centre and Problem Gambling Ireland in lobbying for the Gambling Control Bill 2013 to be revised and enacted as soon as possible. We sent in a submission to the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality and will be working on a new campaign shortly.

SUSI

Alongside the Deputy President/VP AA we have represented USI on the SUSI Advisory Board. Following from that we have initiated a development in how we in USI train our Officers surroundings SUSI and finances. We have created a new online accredited SUSI training which will allow local Officers assist students faster, but also allow Officers be more efficient in their knowledge of SUSI.

Training

The following training has been provided to Union Officers this year from my brief with the assistance of OB:

- SafeTalk
- SUSI training
- Casework training
- Drugs & Substances
- Mental Health
- Sexual Health
- Consent
- Accommodation
- Disclosure training
- DRCC training on Sexual assault
- Part-time Officer training
- Class rep trainings
- Policy Training
- Headline training
- Campaigns training

Officer reports

Vice President for Welfare

Student Accommodation

USI launched the new Student Finance and Accommodation Guide in Maynooth. The new guide was sent out to 20,000 students across Ireland. The new guide, which is supported by the Residential Tenancies Board, was re-branded, bigger and included up-to-date information from the Residential Tenancies Act 2016. I also supported the VP Campaigns in rolling out the #homesforstudy campaign.

The VP for Campaigns and I coordinated the National Student Housing Survey with the Student Housing Project Office, which received over 3,500 responses. The survey gives a breakdown of the experiences of students and the reality of student access to accommodation and the quality of accommodation while studying. This survey and the results will benefit our lobbying and also the input in the housing strategy which is soon to be released.

The Student Housing Project Officer and myself have submitted a document for the rental strategy to the Department of Housing, which coincides with the overall Rebuilding Ireland project and consultations that are currently taking place.

Dublin Region

At the beginning of my term I was appointed as the Dublin Region Officer. The brief was extensive and demanding, given that I had to coordinate the region's participation in the #EducationIs demo on October 19th, the voter registration day, lobbying TDs, budget campaign and MO engagement, along with being the campaign lead for two major referendums.

For the #EducationIs demo, the Dublin Region had the biggest turnout with over 6,000 students from Dublin colleges. For voter registration we registered nearly 2,000 students. I also led two winning referendums in DCU (vote 94% in favour) and the second referendum in DIT (vote 91% in favour). In conjunction with the regional role, I have lobbied heavily with the rest of officerboard and the Region on the Cassells report. I coordinated the region to lobby their TDs and elected representatives. This work was the most important pillar in the team's work it is reflected in Officerboard's reports.

I want to express thanks to all members of Officer Board for all the assistance this year and sharing this year with me, I couldn't have asked for a better team to work with. To members of National Council, thank you for your guidance and support. To Welfare working group thank you for your friendship and compassion and to all the students and leaders I have met in my time in the student movement, thank you for your love, your ideas and your dreams of a better Ireland and a brighter place to live.

Officer reports

Vice President for Equality & Citizenship



Síona Cahill

It has been a privilege to have served 2016-17 as your VP for Equality & Citizenship, I have been lucky not only to have had an incredible team with me, but an amazing crew of sabbatical and part-time officers working with me who made it all possible. I have dedicated almost every weekend of my role to activism in relation to issues relating to equality, and it has absolutely been worth it.

Reproductive Rights & Gender Equality

I have steered the national student campaign on reproductive rights with particular focus on repeal of the 8th amendment in the Republic of Ireland, along with the USI President. In August, I created the all-island 'Students for Choice' taskforce of which I am chair, and led the largest student delegation ever to participate in March for Choice 2016 (over 500 students).

I have spoken at numerous marches, solidarity demonstrations and protests this year in relation to reproductive rights, and have sought to ensure trans* inclusivity in our language around Repeal. I have partnered with Amnesty Ireland to run student lobbying trainings across the country, which started in March. The submission I prepared for the Citizens' Assembly was chosen by members for presentation in March 2017, the only one to represent students and young people in Ireland. I have also been an active lead with the Coalition to Repeal the 8th Amendment.

After making a submission to the Department of Justice & Equality for the National Women's Strategy in January, I was appointed by Minister David Stanton to join the oversight and steering committee for the National Women's Strategy in February 2017. In 2016, I launched the 'Women Lead Project' beginning with training for female sabbatical officers in August, and expanded in January 2017 with a partnership with Accenture as a residential weekend with 32 delegates from across member institutions. In February 2017 I was also appointed by the National Women's Council of Ireland to the advisory committee for 'ESHTe' (Ending Sexual Harassment at Third Level), which will launch in April this year. I also worked with the Vice President for Welfare on a unique partnership between USI, Smart Consent NUIG and the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre to provide consent workshop skills training to SU officers.

LGBTI+

From launching 'ipropose' highlighting LGBT issues one year on from Marriage Equality to being chosen by the National Youth Council of Ireland as their representative to Minister Zappone's National LGBT Youth Strategy, I have worked hard on LGBTI+ advocacy on behalf of students this year. I successfully lobbied for a change in the name of the strategy itself to include reference to intersex people as well as a "+" to ensure inclusivity of those outside binary identities. I launched an incredible booklet with an LGBT Charter for third level students with the Dundalk Otcomers, co-facilitated DITSU's first safe space, and attended prides in Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Sligo and Galway during the summer. '#Out4Love' saw USI National Council lobby candidates in the Northern Irish assembly elections to support Marriage Equality in the North along with support from students all across Ireland.

Officer reports

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Pink Training was my term's greatest undertaking, and was hosted by UCC Students' Union on November 24th, 25th and 26th 2016. We had just under 300 delegates participate in the residential training weekend, the largest of its kind in Europe, which for the first time ever, was supported by Microsoft and the US Embassy. #PT16 trended for 16 hours, and included keynote speakers Dena Lawrence (Microsoft), Colm O'Gorman (Amnesty International) and Dave Roche (Cork Gay Project). We hosted the Cork Queer Archive to put the focus back on LGBTI+ history, doubled the number of conference facilitators, doubled the number of workshops every hour, introduced new safe spaces, created the role of 'Student Support' officer for Unions to encourage wider participation, introduced Rapid HIV testing and the inaugural all-island lip sync battle, and several new modules focusing on activism, disability, PrEP and HIV. We also ran a post-Pink Training event to raise awareness and funds for HIV Ireland with Phomo. In March, I contributed to an 'Ally Workshop' event run by Eir, and highlighted the need to provide supports and networks for graduates.

Refugee Inclusion

With the Vice President for Academic Affairs, I secured funding from the European Students' Union under the 'Better Together' project to run a national refugee inclusion campaign with third level institutions, to include anti-hate speech training and capacity building. I also steered a National 'Build Bridges not Walls' action on the Halpenny bridge in collaboration with the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) in reaction to the Trump inauguration.

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In February 2017 I was appointed to be the student lead nationally on the campaign to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UNCRPD) with activist Joanne O'Riordan and national disability organisations. I have worked year-round on the board of AHEAD, in particular to ensure part-time students have access to the fund for students with disabilities. I developed relationships between USI and employers to promote the need to make HR practices more accessible, and presented to Dell in November.

I relaunched our annual mature students' event as the 'National Mature Students Seminar' which we hosted in WIT Students Union, and had the largest participation to date from across the country with revised layout and modules provided.

In January 2017 I was appointed by Minister Richard Bruton TD to the high-level group on International Education, and I have built strong relationships this year on the board of ICOS (Council for International Students) as well as confirmed quarterly direct access to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) for international students.

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Citizenship

In the Autumn, I coordinated with Regional Vice Presidents of USI to register over 6,000 students to vote across the country, and ran a national voter registration day in partnership with the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) and spunout.ie in October.

Officer reports

Vice President for Campaigns



Dan Waugh

It has been a pleasure being your Vice President for Campaigns for two years and thank you Congress for putting your trust in me the whole way. Having worked with a team that have gone above and beyond expectations every day I'm glad to be leaving the Union of Students in Ireland inspired.

'Education Is' National Campaign

The USI Campaigns Subcommittee created the campaign from messaging to how to promote the campaign and build support. The USI Pre-Budget was launched outside Leinster House on September 6th and on October 11th the Government allocated €36.5m in core funding to higher and further education colleges.

The #EducationIs campaign was launched in St Stephen's Green with USI, ISSU, TUI and NYCI on September 26th announcing October 19th as a day of national action in Dublin against student loans and for publicly-funded higher education. On September 28th, the Coalition for Publicly Funded Higher Education launched their bid for a publicly funded higher education model as proposed by the Cassells Report. To add, supporters for the campaign now include: SIPTU, IMPACT, TUI, IFUT, INMO, NYCI, INTO, Unite, Youth Work Ireland, Parents Council PostPrimary, ICTU Youth, SpunOut, TENI, Ireland Underground, AHEAD, ISSU, See Change, ARC, Irish Rugby Union Players Association and ReachOut. This totals support from 1,917,760 people in Ireland (based on the numbers these supporters represent). In terms of engagement, we focussed on hard copy petitions and collected 17,221 petitions over two weeks all over campuses.

On October 19th, 12,000 people took to the streets. We had originally planned for 5,000 and almost tripled our attendance. At the stage, we had Carly Bailey (TCD student and parent), Gina O'Brien (Chair of the IMPACT Education Executive Committee), Jane M Hayes Nally (ISSU President) and Blind Boy (Rubber Bandits) as well as USI President speaking at the event. Coverage for the national demonstration reached RTE, UTV, TV3, Irish Times, Irish Examiner and every national and regional media source in Ireland. The total estimated audience reach for that day was 41,897,467.

USI held a lobbying day with a number of Students' Union officers on the 6th of December with 77 public representatives (TDs, Senators). Over 3,099 e-mails were sent to TDs over one week in the lead up to the event from our TD Letter App. From our demonstration and campaigning efforts, the USI President was invited to present to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills on the 8th of December to make the case for publicly funded higher education. 2017 has emphasised lobbying, presenting to County Councils, increasing public support and tabling a motion to the Dáil on funding of higher education to get a firm commitment from parties not to introduce an income contingent loan scheme.

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Officer reports

Vice President for Campaigns

Union Development and Entertainment and Marketing

Student Summit 2017

On March 21st, the Printworks in Dublin Castle will hold 600 students who will interact with over 35 start-ups, learn from 6 different workshops and hear from engaging, motivational speakers from across the start-up sector. A lot of my work has been in promoting and branding the event along with the new regional pitch competitions in Galway, Cork, Belfast and Dublin.

USI Membership Referendums

I assisted the Vice President for Welfare and the Vice President for the BMW in their referendums through assisting with planning and coordination. My main contribution was to create budgets, and brand and order materials for all referendums. I canvassed for all referendums and was very glad to see over 94% yes in DCUSU, 95.7% yes in MSU and 91.5% yes in DITSU.

Training

As part of the Union Development brief, I assisted the Regional Vice Presidents in co-ordinating and running Part-Time Officer Training in the Southern Region, Dublin Region and BMW Region. With the Deputy President and per the training policy we used surveys on members to determine what training should be provided. I managed events and marketing training at Students' Union Training (SUT) in the areas of digital media training from Twitter, fundraising and marketing from One in Four Ireland, event management from Cuckoo Events and event bookings and promotion from USI Commercial Executive. I also provided PR and branding training at SUT+.

Officer reports

Vice President for the Southern Region



Niamh Murtagh

Officer Board Planning

After taking up office in July we spent a lot of time extensively reviewing and planning for the year ahead. We set goals of what we wanted to achieve for the year and planned month by month what we would be doing in order to plan successfully.

We set out to complete overarching tasks for the year such as improving communication, tackle and win any upcoming USI Referendums, lead an effective national campaign against fees and grant cuts, and lobby TD's and senators on the issues facing students with a particular focus on fighting for publicly funded education.

Southern Region Bonding

We were lucky enough to get beautiful weather for our Southern Regional bonding in August which took place in Killarney Co.Kerry.

We spent our time in Killarney National Park exploring the lakes, doing team bonding exercises and taking in the scenery before going on a Ghost Tour of Muckross Abbey. We all got on so well, enjoyed our time together, and bonded as a group. It was a great way to start before students returned and spend proper time getting to know each other.

Class Representative Training

During September and October I was delighted to be able to go to all the Class Representative Training events in the Southern Region and meet Class Representatives that hailed from all over the country.

It was great to be able to explain to Class Reps who USI are, and what we do and to talk to them about the various issues they are facing. I also got to share some of my own experiences of how I got to and through third level and how difficult it can be for students.

With a national demonstration fast approaching it was the perfect opportunity to mobilise students to get out and demonstrate their disdain for possible loan schemes being introduced.

Part-Time Officer Training

CIT kindly hosted Part-Time Officer training for Officers from the Southern Region. Officers from all over the region were able to attend a number of modules provided and were fully briefed on the national demo which was due to take place October 19th.

'Education IS' National Campaign

After the release of the Cassells Report in July, it was clear we needed to take immediate action to highlight the option of publicly funded higher education and the detrimental effects of the proposal of a contingent loan scheme.

Officer reports

Vice President for the Southern Region

'Education IS' National Campaign

Officer Board and the Campaigns Sub-Committee constructed and planned a framework to roll out the national campaign or pre budget campaign to ensure that we had every avenue covered. I travelled to every college to mobilise students to take to the streets of Dublin and collect petitions against a proposition of loan schemes. During that time I made contact with every TD in the Southern Region and hand delivered our pre-budget submission to the constituency office of Micheál Martin with Officers from UCCSU and CITSU.

On October 19th thousands of students from the Southern Region travelled to Dublin to march through the City to the Dáil. Over 12,000 came out in force led by USI Officer Board, Campaigns Sub-Committee and Students' Union Officers from all over the Country, North and South.

This is an ongoing campaign with TD's being continuously lobbied and fighting against any funding model that poses a barrier to students entering into third level.

National & Regional Campaign Launches

We had both Education and Welfare Campaigns with two roadshows coming to the Southern Region for Mental Health Week and SHAG Week. As part of these I was able to assist in the organising of regional launches and the hosting of USI campaigns.

During the Chats for Change Roadshow we went to LSAD to promote Chats for Change, but to also talk to students about their mental health and how to look after it. It was a great event and was wonderful to see such engagement and creativity.

During the Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance Roadshow we visited WIT, along with the 'Johnny's got you covered' team. We distributed thousands of condoms, lube and information on sexual health, contraception, STI's and more.

Voter Registration

Voter Registration has become a big part of what we do on the ground, ensuring students are actively engaged in the people representing them, and to become a viable voting block.

Since the Marriage Equality Referendum in 2015, students have actively sought to register to vote. We registered thousands of students to vote up to and after holding a national voter reg campaign.

Officer reports

Vice President for the Southern Region

Referendums

So far this year we have seen many unions re-affirm their membership to the Union of Students in Ireland. I worked on various referendums, lobbying students, doing lecture addresses and talked about the various benefits of the membership of USI. In December we canvassed students in DCU. 94% voted in favour of remaining part the national union. Then this month we travelled to Maynooth with 95.7% voting in favour of reaffirming their membership. Straight after Maynooth we went all over Dublin City to the many campuses of DIT and met hundreds of students, and got to talk to them one to one about the work we do on their behalf every day.

Conclusion

After many years of being a student representative, nothing can truly prepare you for the transition to working on a national level. It has been an honour to be able to serve as the Vice President for the Southern Region so far this year. It has being challenging and exhausting but the most enjoyable, rewarding and humbling rollercoaster that I have ever had the privilege of experiencing.

This was all made possible by the unbelievably hard working Officers from across the Southern Region who have gone above and beyond to work on behalf of their students. Thank you so much inviting me into your colleges with open arms and allowing me to offer my support and visa versa, and giving me the opportunity to meet so many inspiring students.

I have also could not have been more lucky, to get to have the chance to work on Officer Board with the most inspiring group of people who work tirelessly on behalf of students across the country. They are a constant support and would not be able to do what I do without them.

I can't wait to see what the next few months will bring, and to see the wonderful things the Students' Unions in my region and nationwide will continue to do.

Officer reports

Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region



Michael Kerrigan

MO Engagement

Planning

At the start of the term I met with all Sabbatical Officers in the region to plan the year ahead. At the beginning of the second semester I met with all MO's to review the first semester, plan the second semester and to discuss how my position could be of benefit to them going forward.

Class Rep Training

I attended 6 class rep training in the region giving a presentation about the work of USI, it's structure and the National Campaign.

Class Rep Council

I made myself available as much as possible throughout the year to attend SU Councils and Senates throughout the region, attending 21 meetings in total giving update on the work of USI and looking for feedback.

Referendums

I spent 3 days in DCU Campaigning for #YesToUSI, this mainly involved lecture addresses, house addresses, manning a stand and stopping to talk to people on their way to and from class. I also coordinated officers from GMITSU, ITSSU, AITSU and NUIGSU who helped out during the week.

I was the lead on the on our referendum in MSU that resulted in a 95.7% vote in favour of remaining affiliated to USI. This mainly involved gathering and organising canvassers and volunteers over 3 days.

For the DITSU referendum I was the lead on the Kevin Street campus. I coordinated volunteers from GMITSU, NUIGSU, STACSSU, AITSU, MSU and DKITSU. I also assisted the VP Welfare co-ordinate timetable for canvassers and volunteers across all campuses.

Campaigns & Events

I attended as many other campaigns and events on campuses as possible, this mainly included Welfare Campaigns and Clubs & Societies days.

National Campaign

Demonstration

From my experience in getting numbers to demonstrations, I created a to-do list for MO's outside of Dublin which I felt would get numbers on buses. I was in constant contact with SU Presidents and officers leading the campaign on their campus to ensure that the lists were being completed. I ensured that at least one member of Officerboard was on every campus in the region for at least one day in the 2 weeks prior to the demonstration. I personally spoke to over 5,000 students over 8 campuses over the 2 weeks and as a region we hit our target of getting over 2,000 people to the demonstration on October 19th.

Officer reports

Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

Voter Registration

I Coordinated voter registration drives across the region while attending events in NUIGSU, DKITSU and LYITSU. Almost 6,000 students were registered to vote across the country over the space of 7 days with 3,291 of those coming from the BMW Region.

Lobbying

I created an excel sheets to keep on top of contact that has been made with TD's in every MO in the Dublin, South and BMW Region. This file contained the contact details of every TD in the country as well as links to their KildareStreet.ie accounts that shows their main interests as well as their Dáil history.

Since September, 37 of the 56 TD's in the BMW region have been met by either myself or Sabbatical Officers in the region. I have also met with Senators Trevor ó Clochartaigh and John ó Mahony. The other 19 TD's in the region were contacted and sent our proposal for the funding of higher education.

Other Campaigns & Events

BMW Regional Bonding

I organised BMW Bonding and Regional Council over 2 nights on Inís Mór. I also gathered information and designed a booklet with information on all SU's in the region which included information on Student numbers, full and part time officers, welfare campaigns, entertainment, staff, class reps, library hours and exam times.

SUT

During SUT I helped facilitate the core group #Squad4Life, attended and modules on entertainment and marketing organised by the VP campaigns and organised a sports event with over 50 participants.

Budget Submission

I was delegated the task of writing up the proposals and costings for the grant section of our Pre Budget Submission under the headings of Reinstatement of postgraduate grants, Reinstatement of previous adjacency rates and Reversal of cuts to grant rates. I also presented our Pre-budget submission to Enda Kenny's office along with students from the GMIT Mayo campus on the day of our launch.

Part Time Officer Training

I organised the BMW Part-time officer training in NUIGSU on the 22nd of September with Modules on USI, Boundaries of a part-time officer, Working with staff, Communication/Class rep engagement, event management, National Campaign, Public Speaking and Time management. I also organised a second Part-time Officer training event in Maynooth University on the November 15th which was open to officers from each region.

Officer reports

Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

ESU

I attended ESC 32 in Bratislava with the VP Academic Affairs and the President of WITSU which discussed the links between non-formal, informal and formal learning, recognition of education as an instrument to broaden the participation in education, communities and defining student views on employability and skills policies and the development of the #FundOurFuture campaign.

Student Summit 2017

I worked with the Commercial Development Executive and the VP Campaigns to launch Student Summit 2017, promoted the regional pitch competition and acted as a judge for the pitch competition in Galway.

Become a student leader

I gathered information from each MO to design and print an election booklet that gave information on elections in USI and in every MO that provided the information. I also secured sponsorship for the booklet which minimised costs.

Welfare Roadshows

I assisted the VP Welfare with the Chats for Change launch in GMITSU and the the SHAG Campaign in DCUSU and ITSSU.

Officer reports

Leas-Úachtarán don Ghaeilge / Vice President for the Irish language



Maria Schäler

Bhain mé an-taitneamh as an mbliain a chaith mé mar Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge. Bhí bliain dúshlánach ag an teanga ach sheasamar le chéile agus cloiseadh ár nguthanna, toisc sin tá sí níos láidre anois ná a raibh leis na blianta. Cinnte tá fós roinnt mhaith gur gá dúinn tabhairt faoi, agus leanfar leis an obair sin amach anseo. Ach tá an-bhród orm go fóill as ucht an méad atá bainte amach againn. I mbliana bhíomar dearg le fearg, rinneamar feachtasaíocht ar son maoinithe don teanga, bhí traenáil na gCumann Gaelacha agus na nOifigeach Gaeilge againn, ghlacamar páirt in Oireachtas na Gaeilge agus bhí an céad Tionól Tríú riamh (agus eile) againn.

Tá sé chomh speisialta go bhfuil ár dteanga féin againn agus caithfear cuimhiú gur linne í ar fad, má tá idir cúpla focal nó fluirseacht agat sa Ghaeilge. An rud is mó gur féidir a dhéanamh chun an teanga a choimeád beo ná í a úsáid. Mar sin bainfimid úsáid as an nGaeilge, agus bímis bródúil go bhfuil sí againn. Ní hí seo an athbheochan is í seo an réabhlóid.

Go raibh maith agaibh as ucht chuile rud i mbliana, an tacaíocht, an fuinneamh, an cairdeas agus an Ghaeilge.

It was an honour to serve as your Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge this year. Although it was at times a challenging year for the language, we stood together and our voices were heard and because of that the language is in a stronger position than it has been for a long time. Of course there is a lot of work still to be done, and we have to keep working to improve language rights. I'm so proud of what we have achieved this year. This year we were "dearg le fearg", we had Irish Society and Irish Officer Training, we took part in the annual Oireachtas na Gaeilge event, and we had our very first Tionól Tríú.

Not many people can say they have their own language, and it's so special to say that we can. It doesn't matter if you're fluent or if you only have a few words she's our language. The most important thing we can do for the Irish language is speak it! So let's use our cúpla focal, and be proud that we can! This isn't the revival, this is the revolution!

Go raibh míle maith agaibh for everything this year, for the support, the energy, the friendships and the Gaeilge!

Traenáil Gaeilge

Ghlac breis agus 75 duine ó 13 choláiste éagsúla páirt i dTraenáil na gCumann Gaelacha agus na nOifigeach Gaeilge i mbliana. Bhí breis agus deich aoichainteoirí i láthair thar an deireadh seachtaine a labhair ar rogha leathan ábhair, a thug traenáil do na hionadaithe agus a roinn eolas maidir le saol na Gaeilge. Bhí an traenáil ar siúl againn idir campais Choláiste na Tríonóide agus IT BÁC agus Conradh na Gaeilge ón 14-16 Deireadh Fomhair.

Over 75 students from 13 colleges took part in Irish Society and Irish Officer Training this year. Over ten speakers ran sessions and workshops over the course of the weekend discussing issues facing the language. The training took place between Trinity and DIT campuses and Conradh na Gaeilge from the 14-16 November.

Officer reports

Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

Comhrá 16

Ritheadh an togra seo ón 11-18 Deireadh Fómhar 2016 i gcomhar le Conradh na Gaeilge. Glac na céadta daoine ó timpeall na cruinne páirt, mar aon le ceithre grúpaí le breis agus daichead daoine ó choláistí timpeall na tíre. Is léirgeas a bhí anseo de fhorbairt na teanga agus éagsúlacht na gcainteoirí. Buíochas le Conradh na Gaeilge as ucht an deis a thabhairt dúinn comhoibriú a dhéanamh leo ar an togra seo.

This campaign was run from the 11-18 of November 2016 in conjunction with Conradh na Gaeilge. Hundreds of people from all over the world took part, including four groups of more than forty students at third level. It was a great insight into development of the language and the diversity of her speakers. Buíochas to Conradh na Gaeilge for the opportunity to work with them on this project.

Gaeilge24

Ritheadh an togra seo i gcomhar le Conradh na Gaeilge i mbliana. Dúshlán a bhí i gceist le Gaeilge a labhairt ar feadh 24 uair an chloig. Ghlac na mílte duine páirt i nGaeilge 24 i mbliana, agus na céadta dóibhsan ina mic léinn tríú leibhéal.

This campaign was run from on the 15 November 2016 in conjunction with Conradh na Gaeilge. Thousands of people took part in the campaign including over 200 students. It was hugely successful and we plan on continuing our partnership on this project in the future.

Oireachtas na Gaeilge

Bhí breis agus 500 mac léinn i láthair ag Oireachtas na Samhna i mbliana, a raibh ar siúl i gCill Airne. Over 500 students travelled to Killarney for the Oireachtas na Samhna festival.

#Dúshlán

Ritheadh an togra seo i gcomhar le Conradh na Gaeilge i mbliana. Is mór an spreagadh a bhí ann do Ghaeilgeoirí ó fud fad na tíre tabhairt faoi tascanna as Gaeilge. Bhí an comórtas níos mó i mbliana ná riamh le breis agus 140 foireann de thriúr. Is cabhair mór a bhí sa chomhoibriú a ndeanadh le Fóras na Gaeilge, ISSU agus Conradh na Gaeilge. Ainmneodh na buaiteoirí mar chuid de Lá na Meán Soisialta i gceanncheathrú Facebook at an 16 Márta mar chuid de Seachtain na Gaeilge le Energia. This campaign was run from from the 31 January - 2 February 2017 in conjunction with Conradh na Gaeilge. The competition was focussed on getting young people from all over the country to undertake everyday tasks as Gaeilge. The campaign was bigger than ever this year with over 140 teams of three taking part, a big part of this is in thanks to the support of Fóras na Gaeilge, ISSU and Conradh na Gaeilge. The winners were announced on Lá na Meán Soisialta on the 16 March as a part of Seachtain na Gaeilge.

Officer reports

Leas-Úachtarán don Ghaeilge / Vice President for the Irish language

Tionól Tríú

Is é seo an céad uair a eagraíodh an Tionól Tríú, agus ritheadh i gcomhair le hArdFheis Chonradh na Gaeilge i mbliana é ón 24-26 Feabhra 2017 i gCathair na Gaillimhe. An fáth taobh thiar den ócáid seo ná an deis a thabhairt do Ghaeilgeoirí ghníomhcha ag déanamh staidéar ar an tríú leibhéal teacht le chéile pléigh a dhéanamh ar chúrsaí teanga ar a campais fein agus go náisiúnta. I mbliana tháinig Pádraig Ó Tiarnaigh le labhairt linn maidir le cúrsaí teanga ó thuaidh agus an obair atá i mbun ag an Dream Dearg faoi láthair agus maidir leis an bhfeachtasaíocht go ginearálta. Toisc gur eagraíodh mar chuid de ArdFheis Chonradh na Gaeilge, thug sé deis do na daoine a bhí i láthair a bheith páirteach i bpléigh an Chonartha chomh maith.

This is the first Tionól Tríú AMLÉ that has taken place and this year it was hosted in Galway City from the 24-26 February as a part of the Conradh na Gaeilge ArdFheis. This is an important event, giving language activists who are studying at third level the opportunity to come together to discuss the situation facing the Irish language on their own campuses and nationally. This year Pádraig Ó Tiarnaigh from An Dream Dearg spoke to us about the difficulties facing the language in Northern Ireland and the campaigns being run by An Dream Dearg at the moment. Because the conference took place on the same weekend at Conradh na Gaeilge's ArdFheis it gave us the opportunity to take part in the discussions and debates that were being had at the event.

Seachtain na Gaeilge

Bhí Seachtain na Gaeilge ar siúl ón 1-17 Márta i mbliana, rinne mé comhordú le foireann Seachtain na Gaeilge le tacú le mic léinn tríú leibhéal le hócáidí a chur ar siúl ar campais timpeall na tíre. Seachtain na Gaeilge took place from the 1-17 of March this year, I worked closely with the Seachtain na Gaeilge team to support students organising events that were part of the festival.

Obair leis na Cumann Gaelacha

Bhí an-chomhoibriú i gceist leis na Cumann Gaelach i mbliana agus tháinig an-fhás orthu. Thug mé tacaíocht ar campais ITBÁC agus ITMÉG cumainn nua a bhunú agus thug mé tacaíocht do na cumainn eile timpeall na tíre chomh maith. Rinne mé comhordú idir na cumainn chomh maith, ag tógáil caidrimh idir na coláistí a chabhróidh leis an teanga neartú ar na campais agus go náisiúnta.

The Cumann Gaelacha around the country are growing and I had the pleasure of working with many of them throughout the academic year. I supported students in DIT and GMIT in setting up Cumann Gaelacha and I supported other Cumann Gaelachas around the country with campaigns and events. I also coordinated between societies building connections that will help maintain the strength of the language on and off campuses around the country.



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