



**VOTE
LEON DIOP
FOR VP CAMPAIGNS**

Me, Myself & I



Hello, thank you for reading my manifesto.

My name is Leon Diop, I'm 24 years old and I'm from Tallaght. I have a degree in Psychology and I am currently in my second year as Maynooth Students' Union President. As a student union President, I have learned some amazing things about the student movement and the power it can have when we work together in a structured and organised fashion.

I am running to be the next Vice President for Campaigns in the USI and I hope, that after giving this a read, you will support me at National Congress this year. I want to talk about a couple of things I have achieved, why I want to run and what I want to bring to the role. If you have any further questions please feel free to email me on Leon.diop@hotmail.com or call me on 0879083602. Thanks again for reading and remember, Vote Leon #1 for Campaigns.

Key Achievements

- The leverage of an additional €2 million from the University to enhance the new Maynooth University Student Center.
- The successful restructuring of the MSU staffing structure to help the Students' Union deliver on more key projects.
- The enhancement of governing structures of MSU through constitutional review and a strategic plan.
- The re-branding of a number of key areas in MSU including our building, services and campaigns to improve their reach to students.
- The successful delivery of over 15 campaigns in MSU since I took up office including lobbying, welfare, equality, charity, funding, education etc.
- Driving equality and inclusion both in MSU through a number of different initiatives and campaigns
- Helping a number of MOs with issues they have faced with their HEI regarding funding, autonomy and much more.

Why I'm Running

As someone who came through the HEAR scheme to college, I faced a lot of barriers in my time accessing and attending Higher Education. I want everyone in Ireland and who comes to Ireland to have the same opportunity to get a third level education as the next person. It shouldn't matter if you come from a low income family, if you're a mature student, if you are a refugee, if you have a disability, or if you're a minority, you should get the education that you deserve. I believe the USI is a vehicle of change that can work on the issues that are barriers to people accessing a good quality education in our country, and I believe strong campaigns are the greatest weapons the USI has in breaking down these barriers.



I'm running for the Position of VP Campaigns because I know I can bring the creativity, organisation and skills to deliver campaigns that will make tangible change for every single student in Ireland and break down whatever barrier is in our way. I have the experience to help build unions up so that they can engage USI campaigns fully and not feel like they are not focusing on their own work. I have the awareness of good governance to ensure unions feed into and can fully get behind the campaigns that USI roll out and lastly I have the people skills to work well with officers co-create campaigns that will make a difference to the students we represent.

Key Points: 1. Core Business Campaigns

I believe it is time for the USI to evaluate what it is doing and why it is doing it. From speaking with many officer, the USI is stretched to its capacity and now is doing a load of little things kinda well rather than hitting its core business targets. I believe the USI must focus on barriers to education and the quality of education in Ireland. We must deliver on the funding of Higher Education, we must deliver on a radical reform to housing, we must fight the discrimination of our members, we must promote the well being of our members. These along with others are our core business Items and we must be delivering on these before we get caught up in other items which take our focus away from these.

Key Points: 2. The Fight For Funding

THIS NEEDS TO BE AT THE FRONT OF WHAT WE DO. The financial barrier to education must be our biggest fight each and every year until we get a result we want. If we don't lead the charge for Publicly funded education or to at least a radical investment in Higher education, then someone else with different ideals will. Loan schemes may be "off the table for now" but realistically at any moment they may come back onto it. As someone who came to college through the HEAR scheme and never thought I would be able to get a college education growing up, I believe the opportunity for everyone in Ireland to get an education must be equal. It is core business for the USI to not only be making students aware of the current funding crisis in Ireland but also the general population. If that means we need to canvas door to door getting people to understand then so be it. Ireland is considered a system in danger by the European University Association, and if the people making decisions are too afraid to make changes then we need to force their hand.



Key Points: 3. Governance

To ensure that USI is able to hit its targets, we must ensure there is strong governance in place. If elected I would ensure a strong reform of the Campaigns sub-committee to increase MO's say on it and also raise awareness of what happens at campaigns sub-committee by sending the minutes via an all sabbatical email. I would ensure that the committee meets and reports to the National Council at least three times per semester and has standing items on it based around core business items. It is also important that MO's get campaign materials they need in good time. I will ensure all MO's receive all packs and materials before national campaigns.



Key Points: 4. Friends In The North

While we have delivered a more equal Ireland with marriage and abortion rights, our friends in the North are yet to acquire such rights. I believe that until all of us are free, none of us are free. We have a responsibility to show stronger solidarity with our friends in the north than ever before. If elected, I would look to establish a strong group of solidarity campaigners who will go up north when called upon. I will also ensure that Northern support is a standing item on the campaigns sub-committee agenda so constant feedback and support can be given.





Key Points: 5. Union Development

The USI is a confederation of MO's and thus must help them to develop and grow while developing itself. It is difficult for an MO to contribute to everything the USI is doing while they are facing concerns from their HEI and battling issues in their own backyard. As the VP for Campaigns has the remit of Union development, I want to work on the short and long term development of both the USI and the MO's that all feed into it. It is evident that MO's are all different in how developed they are, so I would work on a number of different levels of development to ensure everyone is benefiting from this area of the VP's work.

Some ideas I have are:

- a. To create a governance group of student friendly GMs who MOs without staff support can submit questions to and be answered by SU orientated staff.
- b. To build the union development survey from recent years and use it to help each MO develop tailored funding agreements with HEIs, strengthen their representation structures and to benchmark themselves off of other unions.
- c. Help the president with the MO funding working group to ensure it's continuity and development.

Key Points: 6. Merger Support

With the recent success of DITSU, ITBSU and ITTSU merging to TUDSU, there are still many challenges ahead for students' unions who will be merging in the coming years. If elected I will work with the regional officers to ensure unions are prepared to undergo a merging process at the same time, if not before the institutes.

Key Points: 7. Interaction With Fellow Officers

If elected, it is important to get the balance right with the fellow officer board members. The VP for campaigns does not fit into the category of either a regional officer or a policy officer. I would like to fully define this role into it's own field. The support officer. An officer who will support the regional officers by empowering them to deliver campaigns and development strategies to the different campuses around Ireland. An officer who will support the policy officers by co-creating ground breaking campaigns that will deliver the true meaning of USI to every campus and enabling them to be the front and face of their field. An officer who will support the President by ensuring the national campaigns are well governed and that the Union is going from strength to strength. An officer who will support the MO's of the USI by helping them to build themselves so they may reach their full potential. An officer who most importantly will support the students of Ireland by helping it's national representative body to create, manage and execute campaigns that will deliver change for them.

Conclusion



Thank you again for reading my manifesto. I hope the points above show that I am competent and determined to deliver the campaigns that the students of this Island deserve. We have a long way to go together, but I believe there is nothing stronger than a unified student movement.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.

#Opt4Diop