



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

# CONGRESS 2013

25-28 MARCH

# COMHDHÁIL AMLÉ 2013

25-28 MÁRTA

**CARLTON SHEARWATER HOTEL  
BALLINASLOE, CO. GALWAY**

**ÓSTAN CARLTON SHEARWATER  
BÉAL ÁTHA NA SLUAIGHE, CO. NA GAILLIMHE**

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# PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

A chairde,

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you to the 53rd USI Annual Congress, a gathering of student leaders from across the island of Ireland. From 250,000 students in over thirty institutions, you are one of the select few tasked with representing students over the week ahead. This is a great honour but one that must not be taken lightly.

The students we represent face many challenges over the next twelve months. Many are struggling with ever increasing fees and ever decreasing student supports. Many are achieving admirably in college only to face unemployment and emigration once they graduate. Many are facing mental and physical health issues, or being mistreated because of their gender, sexual orientation, nationality or age.

Over the next four days we will decide upon the future direction of the student movement. It is a fantastic opportunity to debate ideas, learn from others in the student movement and to hear from inspirational leading figures in preparing for the challenges that lie ahead.

Over the next four days I challenge you set a standard for the student movement. If we are to succeed for those we are here to represent, it will only be achieved through unity of purpose and unwavering determination. The time for ensuring equity of access, the time for ensuring our best and brightest are not forced to leave in search of opportunity, and the time to get this country back up off its knees is always right now.

In short, we have work to do. On behalf of my team, I am delighted to bring you USI Annual Congress.

Beir bua,

John Logue  
President



# GETTING TO CONGRESS

## Car

*Ballinasloe-Galway: 30 minutes  
Ballinasloe-Dublin: 90 minutes  
Ballinasloe-Athlone: 15 mins*

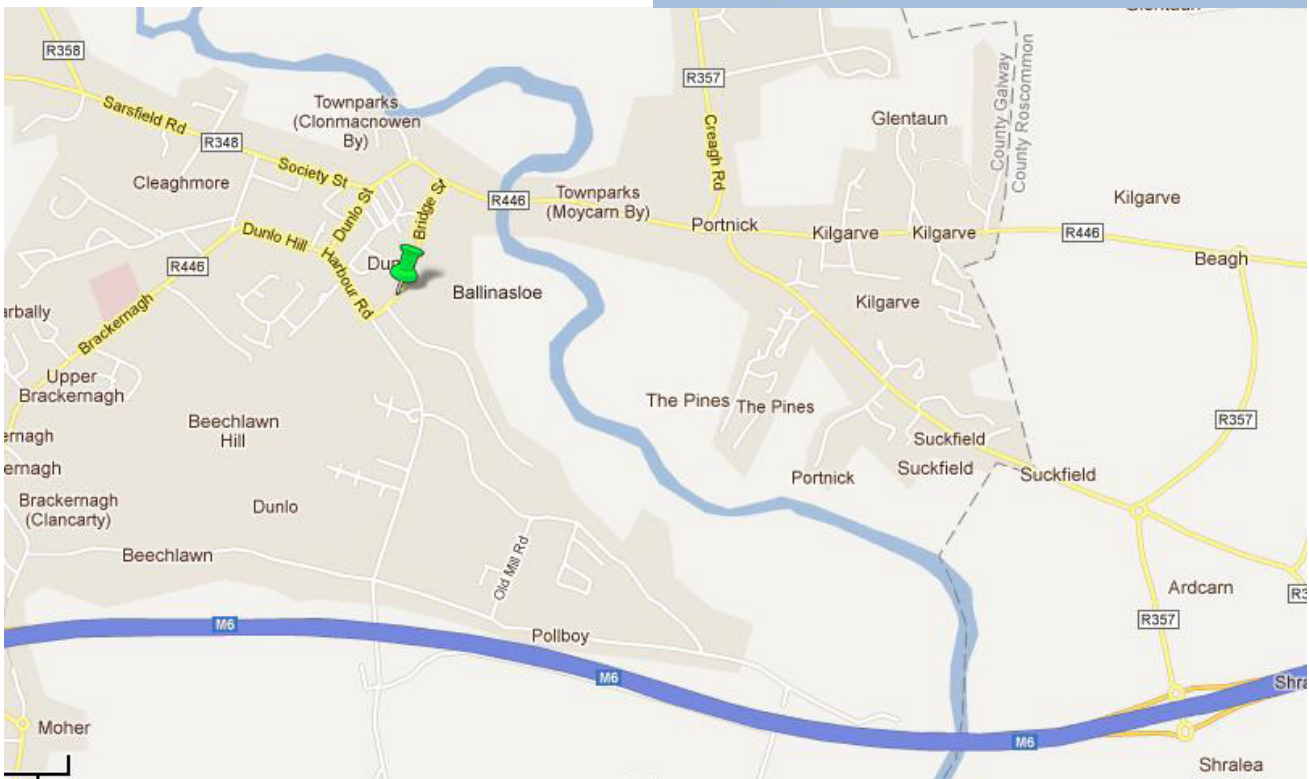
*There is secure, free underground car park available in the basement of the hotel.*

## Rail

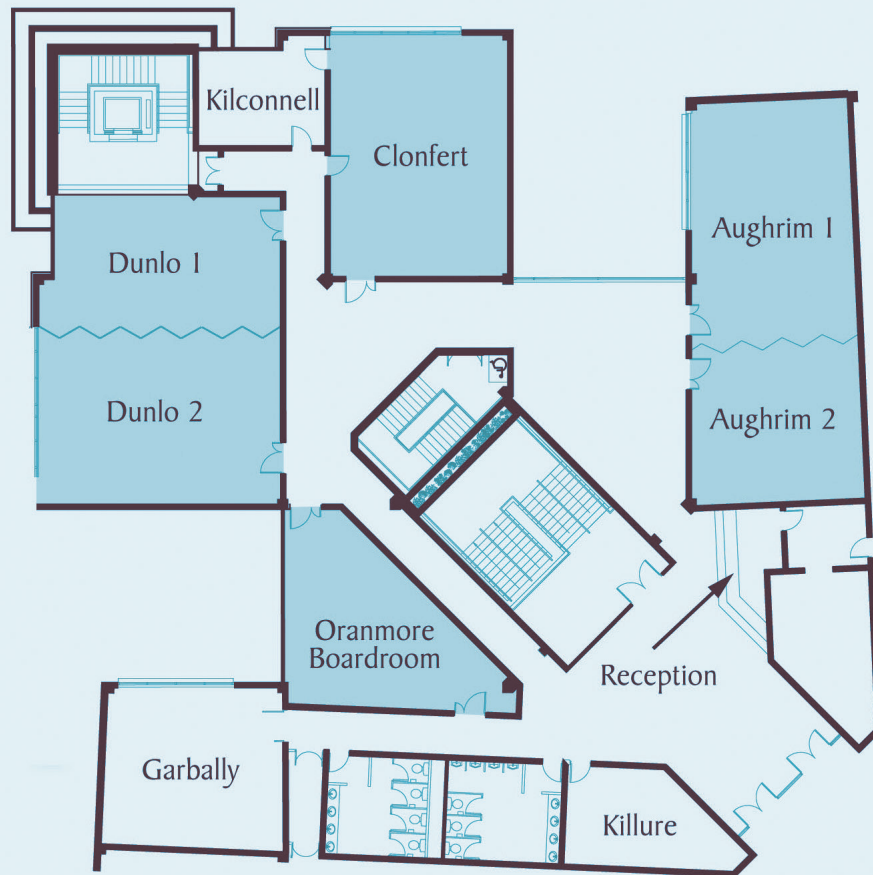
*Located on the Dublin to Galway Trainline.*

## Bus

*Regular Bus Eireann Services from throughout Ireland*







# HOTEL MAP



# **WELCOME FROM THE CONGRESS DIRECTOR**

On behalf of the staff of USI, allow me to be approximately the twelfth person to welcome you to Ballinasloe and Congress 2013. I'm Ben Archibald, the General Manager of USI and USI Congress Director.

USI staff's priority is the safety and smooth logistical running of USI Congress. We liaise with the hotel and the various committees of USI in order to make sure the practical stuff like food and hotel rooms are up to standard, that the technical parts of the congress happen on time and everybody is safe and comfortable at congress. Basically, I try to make sure everything else gets out of the way for you, the Steering Committee and the Officer Board to get on with the much more important job of deciding the policy and future of the student movement.

If something serious goes wrong between you and the hotel, please make sure you come to me about it and not the hotel - we know from many years experience this is the way to get things sorted quickly. Feel free to also inform your delegation leader or a member of USI Officer Board.

Finally, if you become aware of something which could make you or another delegate unsafe, please don't hesitate to contact me immediately to resolve it. The sooner you contact me, the sooner it'll be fixed.

Kindest regards,  
Ben Archibald  
Congress Director

-  
**Emergency Telephone: 083 146 2353**

***STEERING  
COMMITTEE  
& ELECTIONS  
SUB-COMMITTEE***







# WELCOME FROM CHAIR OF STEERING COMMITTEE

*A chairde,*

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

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

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

*Ag súil le caint libh i rith na Comhdhála,*

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

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

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

Looking forward to talking to you during Congress,

Julian de Spáinn,  
Cathaoirleach.





# ***WELCOME FROM ELECTIONS SUB-COMMITTEE***

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

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

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

Richard Hammond

# STEERING & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE



## AODHÁN Ó DEÁ

Bhí Aodhán mar Uachtarán agus Oifigeach Gaeilge i gColáiste na hOllscoile Bhaile Átha Cliath. Chuir sé spéis san Aontas ar dtús chun an Gaeilge a chur chun cinn agus dimigh sé ar aghaidh le bheith mar Oifigeach Gaeilge le AMLÉ ar feadh dhá bhliain idir 2009-2011. Bhain sé céim amach sa Gnó agus Dlí ó COBÁC ach bhí a paisean sa Ghaeilge i gcónaí agus ina dhiadh dó críochnú san Ollscoil lean sé ar aghaidh ag obair leis an Ghaeilge. Bíonn Aodhán ar an mbóthar gach lá ag labhairt le daoine óga ó scoileanna agus coláistí tríú leibhéal faoin teanga. Is breá leis ag labhairt le daoine-bíodh comhrá agat leis!

Aodhán was President and Irish Language Officer of UCD Students' Union. He originally got involved in the Union to help promote the Irish language and he eventually went on to be Irish Language Officer for USI for two years between 2009 -2011. He graduated with Business and Law from UCD but his passion was always for the language and after graduating he went on working to promote the language.

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



## COLM JORDAN

Colm Jordan is a former DIT student and DITSU sabbatical and is currently Independent Chairman of DITSU Council. He was elected to five consecutive Officerboards serving as an area officer x 2, education officer x 2 and USI President. Colm worked as a trade union official and then a political party. Colm now works in government and has trained sabbatical teams and class reps around the country. Friendly and approachable, Delegates are welcome to ask Colm questions about congress and elections procedure. Be sure to ask if you have difficulty with any unfamiliar terms; Colm knows his HEA from MLAs!



## COLM MURPHY

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

Please feel free to ask Colm any questions.



## **CHRIS NEWELL**

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



## **BRIGID BREATHNACH**

Brigid Breathnach is a former Oifigeach na Gaeilge and the first ever female Education Officer elected to USI. As Education Officer she coordinated the European Student Convention in Dublin Castle in 2004. She is a Graduate of UCD (BA in Gaeilge, Politics and History) and a Postgraduate of NUI Galway (Ard-Diplóma i gCumarsáid Fheidhmeach). While in UCD, she was Accommodation & Employment Officer, as well as Reachtaire ar an gCumann Gaelach.

Brigid now works as a TV producer for RTÉ and TG4. Delegates should feel free to talk to her if they have any thoughts on Galway/Conamara Hurling or Football.



## **LAYNE ASTON**

Layne Aston is a former IT Tallaght student who was involved in ITTSU from early in 1st year. She served as Welfare Officer and President in Tallaght and went on to become Welfare Officer in USI where she was instrumental in setting up SHAG week.

Layne has served as a board member of the IFPA and as a member of USI Steering Committee for many years. Layne has worked for the ISPC and Rehab Group and is currently working for the Citizens Information Service. Please feel free to approach Layne with any queries.



## **JULIAN DE SPÁINN,**

### **CATHAOIRLEACH COISTE STIÚRTHA AGUS COMHAIRLE NÁISIÚNTA AMLÉ**

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

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

Ná bíodh drogall ort ceist a chur air maidir leis an gComhdháil as Gaeilge, as Béarla nó Gearmánais! Julian is a former NUI, Galway student and sabbatical. He also is a graduate of GMIT and DCU (and was also an IT Tallaght senator). He served on 4 USI Officer Boards as Oifigeach na Gaeilge, Deputy President/Campaigns Officer and President.

Julian is the General Secretary of Conradh na Gaeilge since 2005 and uses his campaign experience from student involvement to promote, lobby and encourage the use of the Irish language. Feel free to ask him about the running of Congress in Irish, English or German!



## **RICHARD HAMMOND**

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



## ***EIMEAR DORAN***

Eimear is a graduate of St. Angela's College, Sligo with a B.Ed in Home Economics with Irish. She first got involved in student politics when she entered third level in 2008, getting involved in various clubs, societies and student demonstrations that year. In 2010, she ran for Welfare Officer in STACS SU, however was unsuccessful in her campaign. In 2011, due a change in STACS SU constitution, she ran and succeeded in being elected as STACS SU's first Education Officer in two years. Eimear is now working as a second level teacher in Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair teaching Home Economics through Irish.



## ***KELLY MACKEY***

Kelly is a former Welfare & Equality Officer (Deputy President) of IADT, Dún Laoghaire Students' Union (2005/2006) and was the first IADT student to be elected to USI (Welfare Officer, 2006/2007). Having originally studied graphic design, she was bitten by the law bug during her tenure in USI and is now re-training to become a solicitor.

Kelly currently works for the Communication department of the International Organization for Migration, Ireland and is also a member of the board of the Irish Family Planning Association. Delegates are welcome to ask Kelly any questions or queries they may have about congress.



## ***PAUL LYNAM***

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

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



## ***SCOTT AHEARN***

Scott was Welfare Officer and Deputy President of UCD Students Union from 2009-11 and severed as USI Welfare Officer 2011/12. Over his three years in Students Union Scott was also the national coordinator for PleaseTalk.ie, the 3rd level national mental health campaign for the island of Ireland. Currently he is working as Outreach and Partnership officer for See Change, sits on numerous boards and committee relating to mental health and studying Systemic Therapy.

Scott is the youngest member of steering committee and can be found looking up cat video's on youtube on his laptop.







# HOW DOES CONGRESS WORK?

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

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

## WHO ATTENDS CONGRESS?

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

## WHO IS IN CHARGE AT CONGRESS?

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

## WHAT DOES STEERING COMMITTEE DO?

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

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

You 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.

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

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

## ***HOW OFTEN CAN I SPEAK?***

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

## ***HOW LONG CAN I SPEAK FOR?***

The person who proposes a motion, can speak for five minutes on why the motion should be passed. Once she or he is finished, Steering Committee will invite delegates to speak for or against the motion. Each of these speakers will have three minutes to outline their reasons for supporting or opposing the motion. The order of speakers will be as follows: Proposer, speaker against, speaker for, speaker against, and so on until a vote is called for. Note that you must speak for or against the motion. Once a vote is called for, the Proposer has the right to sum up, unless an amendment to the motion has been passed, in which case, the proposer of the amendment has the right to summate.

## ***HOW DO AMENDMENTS WORK?***

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

<i>PROPOSER</i>	<i>5 MINUTES</i>
<i>SPEAKER FOR/AGAINST</i>	<i>3 MINUTES</i>

## ***WHAT IF THE AMENDMENT FAILS?***

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

## ***WHAT IF THE AMENDMENT SUCCEEDS?***

If the amendment is passed, then the original motion, together with the amendments agreed on, becomes the substantive motion. The motion is debated as if it was originally put forward in the amended format by the proposer of the amendment. The proposer of the amendment now 'owns' the revised motion and it is she or he who has the right to sum up when the vote is called.

# WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURAL MOTIONS?

Procedural motions are motions that can be proposed at any time, except during the act of voting, a speech or a point of order. They refer to the conduct or procedure of the debate, and not to the content of the speeches. See Schedule E (Section 9) of the USI Constitution for details. Hence they are called 9a etc. They require a proposer and a seconder. The proposer can speak for one minute on why the motion should be carried, followed by a speaker for one minute on why it should not be carried. The proposer of the substantive motion usually has priority in replying to a procedural motion. There is then a vote on the procedural motion.

*1 MINUTE TO PROPOSE*

*1 MINUTE TO OPPOSE*

## WHAT PROCEDURAL MOTIONS CAN BE PUT??

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If passed, refers the matter back to a specified time or a specified Officer, or a specified Committee, or to a National Council. It is therefore not voted upon at Congress.

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

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

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

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

## WHAT ARE POINTS OF ORDER?

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

## WHAT ARE POINTS OF INFORMATION?

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

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

# ***HOW IS THE VOTING ON MOTIONS CARRIED OUT?***

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

## ***WHO IS ENTITLED TO VOTE?***

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

## ***CAN THESE RULES BE CHANGED DURING CONGRESS?***

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

Standing Orders may only be suspended in exceptional circumstances

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





# ***OFFICER REPORTS***



# **PRESIDENT JOHN LOGUE**

## ***'Fed Up? Stand Up!' Pre-Budget Campaign***

Based on political affiliation, previous statements, electoral performance and proximity to Labour and Fine Gael Ministers I compiled a list of the most influential and strategically important members of the Oireachtas which was the focus of our lobbying strategy leading up to Budget 2013. I also researched the non-government sector to assess our allies leading up to the Budget. I pinpointed a number of organisations who have a kinship to the message of protecting and enhancing higher education.

Following this I met with the President of the Irish Farmers Association to discuss our respective pre-Budget strategies. We discussed the synchronisation of messages and working together on town hall meetings across the country. Officer Board carried out a risk assessment to pinpoint any potential weaknesses in the campaign. We discussed campaigning methods used by other movements across the world that have been effective and attempted to adopt a tailored approach to our own strategy.

We adopted strategies to involve the business community, both multinational and local, by highlighting the need for highly skilled graduates and the total loss to the local economy that four years of increases to the Student Contribution would bring. I also prepared a strategy on informing and engaging both students and parents on the issues facing them over the years ahead. This was an invaluable tool when mobilising these respective groups over the campaign.

I produced a guide to effective lobbying for students, parents and local businesses in the lead up to Budget 2013. It detailed the most effective outcomes from meetings with members of the Oireachtas including the provision of parliamentary questions, private members' motions and raising issues at parliamentary party meetings. It detailed how to make a case to members of the Oireachtas in a manner that maximises political effectiveness.

I kept in regular contact with the respective Opposition Spokespersons on Education in the Oireachtas to maintain political pressure on the Government in the lead up to the Budget. I personally met with a majority of TDs and Senators, particularly those on the Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection who were especially interested in the issues facing students in Budget 2013.

From the beginning of the campaign I felt there was a need to make the negative impact of cuts to higher education tangible to the wider public beyond students. To this end, I drew up figures on potential losses to local economies across Ireland if Minister Quinn proceeded with increases in the Student Contribution and cuts to the Maintenance Grant. These figures gain good traction in the media and I felt were crucial to making the campaign about the wider community as opposed to just students.

A vast majority of time during the campaign was spent touring the country and attending public meetings organised as part of USI's 'Fed Up? Stand Up!' campaign. At each meeting I gave a speech about the need for each respective community to protect higher education for the good of the community itself. While attendance has varied across the country the energy across the country and the willingness to engage with the campaign was very positive.

I gave a presentation at a significant number of class rep trainings highlighting the issues affecting students and their families and what class reps can do to lead the campaign in their own communities. I researched and produced a pre-Budget submission, 'An Opportunity in Crisis', which was presented to the Task Force on Higher Education Funding for consultation and amendment. The document went into significant detail about the benefit of protecting higher education.

The document made the argument that if Ireland wants to make a full economic and social recovery, no further cut to the grant is sustainable. It argued that it is possible to negate the need to increase the Student Contribution by addressing excess spending and waste, incentivising alternative income streams and promoting innovation in higher education.

It stated that it is necessary for any reform of the Back to Education Allowance qualifying criteria to protect financial assistance for recipients who participate in third level. It made the case for maintaining equity of access by providing for the continuity of the Student Assistance Fund beyond 2013. It also discussed solutions for combating the graduate unemployment by instilling an ethos of entrepreneurship in third level students and improving the employability skills of graduates.

I spent any additional time I had in Leinster House meeting members of the Oireachtas and engaging with the media to get our message to the forefront of the national debate. To date, we have multiplied coverage of student issues fivefold in national and local media. I believe this is testament to the decentralised nature of the campaign spread over a much longer timeframe. While this has increased the workload of officer board immensely over the campaign, I feel we have put students back on the agenda in a year we were expected to go unnoticed given the Minister's previous outline of fee increases.

## *Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI)*

Following considerable lobbying and discussions with the Department of Education & Skills, it was agreed that USI would form a SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) Forum where officers from Member Organisations would represent their own views and their students' views with issues arising in the grant application process. The purpose of this forum is to communicate to the SUSI support system any known difficulties that have arisen. USI set out the Terms of Reference for the forum and I designated the Deputy President and Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to sit on this committee along with Students' Union representatives once it has been set up.

I met on multiple occasions with the Chief Executive Officer of SUSI, Ms. Jacinta Stewart, and the Head of the Equity of Access Section of the Department of Education & Skills, Mr. Brian Power, to discuss issues pertaining to delayed grant payments. We discussed a number of issues surrounding the new system including the volume of incomplete applications, difficulties with the SUSI helpline, the lack of communication from SUSI to Students' Unions and USI, and the understaffing of SUSI at the processing level.

Following these meetings and significant media pressure exerted by USI, SUSI hired twenty additional staff members to cope with the backlog of applications. They also appointed a constant point of contact within SUSI for USI to ensure that Students' Unions have a definitive contact for getting information and updates from SUSI alongside the SUSI Forum. We also arranged with the Department that the Minister make a statement calling on institutions to accommodate students who are unable to fully register on account of delayed grant payments.

USI are designated as a primary stakeholder in the external review of SUSI currently underway. This was the result of lobbying of the Department and will ensure that USI can heavily influence the change management process in SUSI.

## *Bank of Ireland Undergraduate and Postgraduate Loans*

Following the announcement of 'College Finance', it became apparent that this initiative would not be isolated to one institution. Furthermore, it became clear that Students' Unions were not adequately consulted on their institutions' involvement. USI swiftly set about assessing the situation in each Member Organisation, researching the scheme and composing a briefing document which was disseminated to Students' Unions.

Once it was clear that a majority of institutions were involved in the initiative and, as a further concern, a discrepancy existed between information provided by local branches and Bank of Ireland centrally, USI launched a media campaign against the scheme on the basis of poor information provision, lack of consultation and implications.

Accordingly, a meeting was arranged with senior representatives of Bank of Ireland to discuss the loan initiative. USI raised concerns over the contradictory information and the lack of consultation with student representatives. BOI agreed to consult with student representatives on the undergraduate loan and further products aimed at third level students. Furthermore, the bank agreed to provide a briefing document for students.

At the close of the meeting regarding undergraduate loans, it was revealed by senior representatives within the Bank that a postgraduate loan, 'backed by the Department of Education & Skills', would be launched on the following Tuesday. USI raised a number of concerns in relation to this postgraduate loan and ascertained as much information as possible.

A counter media event was prepared for the postgraduate loan launch and USI compiled information on the scheme for an MO briefing document and contacted the Department of Education and Bank of Ireland to get information on the launch and a copy of the BOI press release. Subsequent to this announcement, USI broke the story to the national media and launched a campaign to highlight the negative implications of the initiative. We received unprecedented media coverage and worked closely with the Oireachtas to shape the message.

I met with a number of postgraduate representatives to discuss the implications of the scheme in greater detail and formulate a strategy of response. It was decided that USI would take a proactive stance and propose a solution to the issue of funding postgraduate education. The first step in this process was to organise a postgraduate seminar and invite postgraduates from all over Ireland to come together to discuss a more equitable solution. Following this, I engaged a research who will take the discussions outlined at the postgraduate seminar and research international best practice so that USI can lobby the Department to implement a fairer scheme in the interim.

Conscious that such a solution may take in excess of twelve months to implement I met with senior representatives of the Irish League of Credit Unions to discuss the possibility of offering a more equitable solution to prospective postgraduate students in the short-term. The ILCU were very open to the idea of catering for a postgraduate market and indicated that

the various Credit Unions are eager to lend at the current time and this may be a viable option for all concerned. I provided the ILCU with a comprehensive briefing document that is being disseminated to all local Credit Union branches. I also produced an article for the Credit Union magazine which was circulated to all local branches.

## Referenda

It was evident from the beginning of our term that a number of referenda would take place in Member Organisations across the country over the months that followed. The outcome of these referenda would affect the influence and financial sustainability of the organisation. Comprehensive strategic plans were put in place for each referendum. In the fortnight preceding the first referendum in Trinity College Dublin, we engaged students who wished to support USI in the referendum.

We discussed campaign strategies and put together a comprehensive plan of action for the two week period. The plan encompassed a social media strategy, ground campaigning, publications, debate preparations and lecture addressing. Students voted in favour of affiliation to USI by 1496 votes to 829.

We then faced a significant logistical challenge with three referenda taking place over a fourteen day period. Aside from human resource allocation and scheduling challenges, the co-ordination of the respective campaigns included significant research into the student demographics on each campus, tours of each campus to familiarise Officer Board with heavy footfall areas, creation of campaign materials, recruiting and organising campaign teams on each campus.

The Deputy President and I met with the UCD Students' Union and Maynooth Students' Union Executive as well as the UCDSU Council ahead of the USI referenda on campus to answer their queries and address any issues they had. I participated in a UCD Literary & Historical Debate Society debate on the issue of USI affiliation. The regulations in the UCD referendum meant that only current UCD students and alumni could participate in the campaign.

While the UCD referendum was lost by a margin of 62% to 38%, 87% of Maynooth students voted in favour of remaining affiliated to the Union of Students in Ireland. The DCU Students' Union Council passed a motion to hold a USI re-affiliation referendum on 26th and 27th February. Again, a strategic plan was drawn up to ensure maximum engagement with DCU students. Following a considerable campaign, DCU students voted to re-affiliate to the Union of Students in Ireland for the first time in over a decade.

## Household Tax/ Maintenance Grants Issue

In response to the announcement that Clare County Council were refusing to process maintenance grant applications for students until they provided evidence that their parents had paid the Household Charge, USI organised a protest outside Clare County Council in Ennis, Co. Clare. A media strategy was drawn up to raise as much awareness of the issue among the public.

Legal counsel on whether the actions of Clare County Council and other local authorities was ultra vires their powers under delegated authority. We collated data from every County Council and City Council in Ireland to investigate which local authorities had taken similar actions.

I spent a majority of the time on local and national radio and it was subsequently announced by government that no local authority was proceeding with these actions. Credit must also be given the Students' Unions who acted swiftly by mobilising students on the ground in such a short time frame.

## Commercial Services

I consulted a number of companies prior to taking office in order to assess the viability of USI engaging in commercial activity for the benefit of our members. USI is currently in discussions with several companies in relation to offering commercial services through [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie). One initiative which has been successfully implemented is our partnership with Rehab Recycle, an organisation which encourages companies to pass on their computer and other electrical equipment for the benefit of others at very low cost.

## BÉ Club: the Bus Éireann Loyalty Scheme

Strategem iLabs invited us in January to discuss engagement and endorsement of the Bus Éireann service BÉ Club. The service offers points for bus travel booked online in advance. These points may be redeemed for goods or services from third parties curated by Bus Éireann, from 'experiences' to money off food items. In the case of most student offers, this will require no further purchase by the student.

In addition to third party offers, the service offers at least two free bus fares per annum for members. We believe there is scope to extend this offer for students. USI promotes and endorses the BÉ Club as a way for students to make savings, and to engage businesses with exclusive deal offers for USI members. If a student were to take advantage of just the free BÉ Club travel offers (no extra purchase necessary), they would save in excess of the cost of their USI affiliation fee.

A prominent mobile phone network responded to an invitation to meet in January 2013.

We met with the Commercial Propositions Executive handling student and youth offerings.

The company is a 1st tier mobile operator with its own network. We made a proposal around supporting deals aimed at students which offer good value to our members. The proposal extended beyond mobile deals to incorporate possible tie-ins with the company's other ventures, possible sponsorship by the company of the Student Achievement Awards and other possible ventures.

We were clear that deals which offer a significant benefit for students could be supported and promoted through our website, Facebook and Twitter. We were clear that the deal had to offer promotions which generated goodwill and saved students money.

We agreed that exclusive deals work best for us, but we recognized the complexity at this stage of setting one up, and were happy to pursue good value deals for students in general.

We have also engaged with a prominent car insurer, which currently offers insurance cover for students and offers another product which rewards safer driving with a reduction in insurance premiums. The safer driving product would reduce premiums by 20% initially with a reduction of up to 10% in the cost of the annual premium if the driver stays within the safe driving parameters set by the insurer. The deal would be exclusive to USI members and would revolve around the addition of cover items to the standard deal – examples would be breakdown recovery or glass cover. This would reduce the overall cost of the benefits to members.

We are currently engaged in discussions with one of the most prominent homeware, sportswear and general merchandising companies in the country. They offer two brands – one aimed at sports equipment, sportswear and clothing, the other aimed at homeware and general merchandise. The company is keen to generate brand awareness among students and parents. The basis of the discussed offering was as follows:

A bundle of homeware to 'fit out the student flat' would be offered at a significant discount to USI members. Online and in-store 15% reduction weekends would be publicised as exclusive deals to USI members. Two distinct but related offerings would be made by the two brands and co-advertised. A student making use of the bundle offer would save significantly more than their affiliation fee to USI and would likely make further savings in other areas of the shop. Student deals on sports clothing, training gear and footwear would be offered throughout the year. Students would be introduced to a company committed to offering a wide and varied range of goods at significant savings.

Deal Effect is a new group purchasing and offers scheme established by The Wheel, the umbrella group for NGOs in Ireland. USI is a long-standing member of the Wheel and has joined Deal Effect as a founding member. Deal Effect will offer discount deals to consumers on a similar model to GroupOn, with some significant exceptions – it will have an ethical product promotion framework and each deal purchased will remit a small amount to the referring organisation.

For every purchase made by a student who signed up to Deal Effect through the USI website, USI will receive a small amount – but the student will still get the product at a reduced price – the remittance to USI will not inflate the price. USI will likely not make significant revenue from Deal Effect – but any member who elects to buy something through Deal Effect will make savings. The

offering will increase the commercial footprint of USI and raise awareness of our existence as an entity seeking value for money.

## *USI/Irish Times 'Campus Times' Partnership*

Following numerous meetings with senior staff in the Irish Times to discuss the potential of USI/Irish Times partnership initiative- 'Campus Times', they agreed to set up a section on the Irish website entitled Campus Times, which served as a hub for all issues pertaining to students. This initiative was a partnership between USI and the Irish Times and was branded and promoted as such.

As part of the partnership USI produced videos to help prospective third level students with the transition to higher education during the leaving certificate results/ CAO 1st round offer period. These videos included top tips for college, students talking about college life, advice from welfare officers on accommodation and life in college, etc.

Over the medium-term Campus Times will be revived each year in the lead up to the Leaving Certificate results release date. It is also the intention of USI and the Irish Times to enhance the section as a student news service, with contributions coming from student journalists from across the country.

## *Higher Education Authority (HEA)*

At HEA level I have been doing a lot of work on the issue of sustainability. Over the months ahead the HEA is setting out its position on the capacity of the system, opportunities to improve capacity, opportunities to improve resourcing of the system, and identifying issues arising that need to be addressed to enable such changes, i.e. how the system can do more with similar levels of funding.

I have also been involved in policy discussions around system governance and performance including agreed system configuration, agreed missions, medium term system funding plan, high level system outcomes, and mission based performance funding compacts with each Higher Education Institution setting out the agreed performance goal for that college.

Work has begun on the next national access plan and there is an intention to have a very thorough consultative process next year. USI have pushed at HEA level for increased input from students, and the HEA have asked USI to facilitate this consultation process which is a very welcome development ensuring that students have a tangible voice in the policy-making process.

A major part of my role on the HEA Board has centred on the completion of the landscape process for Irish Higher Education. In February 2012, as part of the implementation of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, the HEA published its document -Towards a future higher education landscape -and invited higher education institutions to engage with the HEA in respect of the future position of each institution in the higher education landscape. The HEA intends to provide advice to the Minister for Education and Skills at



the end of this month on its view of a future configuration of the Irish higher education system.

Throughout the process, I stressed the need for any reconfiguration of the landscape to improve student experience; both to provide more opportunities for all those who can benefit from HE to access HE, and to ensure that their time in HE allows for the full development of their capacities and potential. I also stressed the need to improve quality, having regard to international benchmarks and standards, as well as improve impact on society and economy; specifically to ensure that the outputs of HE in terms of skilled graduates, application of existing knowledge and development of new knowledge are available to the wider society and the economy to improve quality of life and economic development.

## *Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI)*

I have been appointed as a Board Member under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The authority undertook the functions of NQAI, HETAC and FETAC in relation to the maintenance and development of the National Framework of Qualifications and the validation and awarding of qualifications (outside the university sector and Institutes of Technology with delegated authority to make awards). The authority also has responsibility for the external quality assurance review of the universities, a function which was previously performed by the IUQB and the Higher Education Authority.

## *Children's Rights Referendum*

In the lead up to the referendum I worked closely with the Campaign for Children to promote the need for a 'Yes' vote. We worked with Spunout.ie and Students' Unions to organise voter registration drives on college campuses and communicated the need for a 'Yes' vote to students on the ground via our member Students' Unions. I appeared on national and local radio stations and released a joint press release with the Campaign for Children. I also participated in a photo call with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald TD.

## *Graduate Nursing & Midwifery Salaries*

USI have been working closely with the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) to protest graduate nurses and midwives who are being asked to take drastically reduced salaries disguised as a graduate initiative. Following the approval of National Council, the Deputy President and I attended the INMO rally in support of graduate nurses and midwives who are threatened with a further 20% reduction in starting salary having already endured a 24% cut over the past 24 months. I also worked with the Media and Communications Executive to assist the INMO with public opinion forming during the campaign. I liaise regularly with the Chief Executive of the INMO, Mr. Liam Doran, offering the full support and assistance of the Union of Students in Ireland. We have also tailored out TellYourTD.com site

to allow student nurses and midwives to contact their local public representatives and voice opposition to the graduate initiative.

## *USI Student Finances Survey*

USI engaged Amarách Research in relation to a joint research project with USI and Member Organisations on students' financial wellbeing, impact of the Budget on students' funds, impact on their family, job prospects, likelihood to emigrate, etc. Amarách Research agreed to script and host this as an online survey following which Amarách will write a report on the findings. These findings can then be used reliably in blogs, reports, media interviews, etc. Each individual Member Organisation will receive a report specifically pertaining to their own students' feedback which will be invaluable in making an argument on their behalf at Academic Councils and Governing Bodies. Amarách Research is a highly respected research organisation and has been in the public eye recently following the publishing of recent reports for the CPSMA and another for UPC.



# VP CAMPAIGNS / DEPUTY PRESIDENT KATE ACHESON

During my term as Deputy President and Campaigns Officer, I have enjoyed working with the students' unions across the country. Anything I undertook this year was aimed at making sure the students of Ireland had the best student experience they could have. Having ran for the position of Campaigns Officer I was then appointed as the Deputy President and was also assigned the role as the Dublin Region liaison officer. With these three areas to cover my work load was varied and heavy yet enjoyable. From working alongside Officer Board and students' unions to roll out the National Campaign, to co-ordinating and assisting USI campaigns to running training events.

I have written a short explanation of the work carried out under each heading, but I will elaborate on anything you may be unsure of or have questions on. My National Council Reports contain full details of work carried out and are available to you.

## USI Training Events & Conferences:

**STUDENTS' UNION TRAINING (SUT), PINK TRAINING, PART TIME OFFICER TRAINING, WELFARE CAMPAIGN TRAINING, CAMPAIGNS TRAINING, EUROPEAN STUDENT CONVENTION, OLDER & BOLDER PRESENTATION, ANNUAL CONGRESS.**

**STUDENTS' UNION TRAINING – SUT:** During the week long Students' Union Training Event, I assisted the President and worked alongside officer board when organising the seminars and workshops. The week welcomed over 70 sabbatical officers from across the country. Tasks from the week included; inviting speakers, confirming speakers, introducing speakers, liaising with the accommodation complex manager, working alongside the host SU AIT with night time entertainment and everything in between.

**WELFARE 101 CAMPAIGNING MODULE:** In conjunction with the Welfare Officer and the Equality & Citizenship we prepared a presentation for the Welfare Officers on how to run Campaigns, Welfare Campaigning focus and campaign inclusion. We presented this at the start of the Welfare Top-Up training set up by our Welfare Officer.

**ENTS TRAINING:** In preparation for the Ents Training day I assisted the President with the organisation and contacting presenters for the event. I facilitated the day in conjunction with the VP for the Southern Region. During the day we collected this year's Ents Contact List, ran an Ents Forum and assisted any officers that attended.

**PART TIME OFFICER TRAINING:** I prepared and presented a 'Running a Campaign' presentation to the part time officers at TCD. I went through the key areas in running a campaign: research, brainstorming, planning, preparing, confirming, running order, resources and follow up, evaluation and Top Tips. I also prepared the National Campaign Presentation and presented it along with the President. We divided the group into smaller groups and carried out a brainstorming workshop and asked the part time officers to come up with ideas on how they could get involved with the campaign.

**OLDER & BOLDER PRESENTATION:** The VP for Equality & Citizenship invited me to present at an Older & Bolder Event in Dublin. I prepared a presentation that would give an overview on the USI Fed Up? Stand Up! campaign that would allow attendees have an insight into the student movement and the angle we took on the campaign. I presented to a group of Older & Bolder members along with Member Organisations officers and students. I engaged in a group discussion afterward where we discussed the methods of campaigning used by the Older & Bolder Members and the USI members.

**PINK TRAINING:** I attended Pink Training to assist the VP for Equality & Citizenship Officer. In conjunction with the VP for Welfare and the President I assisted with the registration process to ensure it was run smoothly and efficiently.

## Officer Board Work Planning/My Annual Plan/Officer Board Bonding

In the run up to the start of our term we each prepared provisional work plans for the year ahead. On our first day in office we worked together intensely on our plans as a group and examined the key areas one another was focusing on for the year ahead. The nine members of Officer Board attended a Bonding event in Annalong, Co. Down with Coly McGivern. We engaged in outdoor group activities and we also looked at the 12 months ahead and the challenges we may face but that we will overcome along with our members. We examined our various working abilities and how to deal with conflict.

## Dublin Region Students' Unions:

**DUBLIN REGION BONDING, DUBLIN REGION COUNCILS AT NATIONAL COUNCIL, DUBLIN REGION GRANT AND ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION EVENING, DUBLIN REGION PUBLIC MEETINGS, DUBLIN REGION SABBATICAL OFFICERS FACEBOOK GROUP**

As the liaison officer for the Dublin Region I worked closely with the sabbatical teams of: NCI SU, IT Tallaght SU, IT Blanchardstown SU, UCD SU, TCD SU, IADT SU, DITSU.

**DUBLIN REGION COUNCILS:** At every National Council (Held once a month since July 2013) I chaired the Dublin Region Council. Here we discussed local issues to students' unions. These councils aimed to bring sabbatical teams together to work together for local and national issues. I created a Facebook page specific to the Sabbatical Officers in the Dublin Region Students' Union. I prepared guidelines and checklists for upcoming SU events such as Class Rep Training events.

**DUBLIN REGION BONDING:** I organised a bonding event for the Students' Union in the Dublin Region in Xtreme.ie, Balbriggan. We were joined by DIT Students' Union, TCD Students' Union and Mater Dei Students' Union.

**DUBLIN REGION GRANT AND ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION**

**EVENING:** The Students' Union present at the council agreed to run one centrally and on the one night. The Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance Officer and I prepared the venue, checklist and publicity for the event with the assistance of the Media and Communications Exec.

## USI Campaigns

**WELFARE CAMPAIGNS:** In preparation for the year ahead the Welfare Officer and I ran through a number of key areas that she had been focusing on including; The USI Welfare Campaign Directory, Rent Book, Mental Health Campus Tour, Finance Guide and Road Safety Week. We ran through initial preparation and checklists to ensure the campaigns been rolled out were well thought out.

Throughout the year I assisted the Welfare Officer with her campaigns by running through the events, proof reading documents, contacting the Dublin Region Sabbatical teams, coming up with ideas. I also assisted her at the Rent Book Launch in IADT and the SHA

**EQUALITY & CITIZENSHIP CAMPAIGNS:** I met with the Equality and Citizenship Officer to commence planning the USI Ally Week and the March for Marriage Campaign that will see USI lead its members on August 12th apart of the LGBT Noise March. We also held initial discussions about the Constitutional Convention and the Voter Registration which we will both be working on this year.

**MARRIAGE EQUALITY DEMO WITH UCD SU AND LGBT NOISE MARCH FOR MARRIAGE:**

**AND LGBT NOISE MARCH FOR MARRIAGE:** In the run up to the LGBT Noise March for Marriage UCD Students' Union organised an Equal Marriage Demo outside the Department of an Taoiseach with the support of USI. I liaised with the UCD SU Campaigns officer to run through a checklist and I also attended the event.

USI Officer Board were briefed in the run up to the March for Marriage by two organisations Marriage Equality and LGBT Noise to give up a deeper insight into the issues that face the LGBT Community and we discussed where USI OB can be of assistance during the march.

USI Video: For USI Promotion and awareness along with our Media and Communications Officer I have begun to prepare a short USI video that focuses on our MO campuses and the daily student life with the overall message highlighting the work USI Officers are carrying out on an annual basis for the students.

## National Campaign

Following National Council at GMT and the discussions held at Campaigns Working group on this year's National Campaign, officer board and staff spent a considerable amount of time brainstorming, researching and preparing a proposal that will be brought to this national council at UCC in September. With the challenges we are facing ahead of Budget 2013 we are recommending that the officers across the country join us in focusing in on the key and important people that we need to put strong and constant pressure on. As September is the preparation month, October and November will see a well-run, organised and effective campaign with officer board supporting member organisations in any way that we can. I have been working with the President on the Presentation and documents that will be up for discussion this weekend.

**PRE-BUDGET PROTESTS:** During the Pre-Budget Campaign I attended and spoke at the majority of the protests set up by the host MO and the VP for that Region. They included; The Cork Protest, The Sligo Protest, The IT Tallaght Protest, The Galway Protest, The Dundalk Protest, The Thurles Protest, Dublin Central Protest, The Tralee Protest & Sleep In, The Limerick Protest, The Letterkenny Protest, The Waterford Protest.

**PRE-BUDGET PUBLIC MEETINGS:** Preparation: In the run up to the Public Meetings I worked with the Regional VPs, the Media and Communications Exec, our Administrator and the President when setting up the Public Meetings. I prepared a checklist for the week before the public meeting, a checklist for the day of the public meeting, MO President Speech Tips, a checklist for the hotel, the invitation to public representatives and the running order for each public meeting.

I chaired the following public Meetings: Dublin South Public Meeting, Dublin Central Public Meeting, Thurles Public Meeting, Blanchardstown Public Meeting and the Tallaght Public Meeting. I deputised for the President at the following Public Meetings: Athlone Public Meeting, Waterford Public Meeting and Carlow Public Meeting where I gave the speech to the audience alongside the respective MO President. I prepared the sign in sheets, the parents' guide, the Prezi Presentation and attended the following Public Meetings: Letterkenny, Dublin South, Galway, Athlone, Carlow, Dublin Central, Maynooth, Thurles, Waterford, Tralee, Blanchardstown and Tallaght Public Meetings.

## Postgraduate Loan Scheme Campaign/ Postgrad Seminar

I attended the Postgraduate Seminar in UCD and liaised with officers in the BMW Region ahead of the seminar to ensure their attendance.

Following the Postgraduate Seminar I conducted research into new proposed Postgrad Loan Scheme from Bank of Ireland that was supported by the Department of Education and Skills in preparation for the press release USI was issuing condemning the Loan Scheme. I participated in numerous radio interviews (all listed below) following the take up of our Press Release. I also prepared a campaign on the loan scheme where I pinpointed the key areas Officer Board had to research/ conduct, the areas Member Organisations had to

complete on their campus in terms of on the ground research with their respective Postgraduate Students. I also looked into how we would pitch the press release to the media and most importantly the message we wanted to get out to the Postgrad Students across the country. I sent the 4 page document out to all member sabbatical officers and liaised with the VP Regional Officers for the roll out of the campaign.

Along with the Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance Officer I met the researcher that the President hired to conduct into Postgrad Loan Scheme.

## NUS-USI Rebranding Workshop

Along with the General Manager I attended the NUS-USI Rebranding Workshop in their office space in Belfast. I found the exercise to be fascinating and historical as they delved into the routes of the names and the purpose of their Students' Union in Northern Ireland. They had a professional from London running the workshop and examining all areas of the student market to identify the areas that we focus on, on a year to year basis.

## National Council Effectiveness Working Group

I am the chair of this working group that was set up to look at the National Council Structure. We have met twice and the report from the last meeting will be voted on at the next National Council in April.

## Áras an Uachtaráin

Following an invitation from Áras an Uachtaráin I liaised with MO Presidents regarding their attendance in order to complete the guest list for the event. I also created a checklist regarding the details for the day for the MO Presidents and Officer Board. As we were extended the invite in conjunction with the 'Being Young and Irish Initiative' I compiled a list on how Students' Union across the Country would advertise and promote the event on their own campus and on their social media outlets.

## County Council Protests

In response to the announcement that Clare County Council were withholding Grant Applications from students until they had proven their parents had paid the household charge I organised a protest outside the County Council Offices in Ennis, Co. Clare. I contacted the Students' Union Officers in LIT SU, NUI Galway SU, GMT SU, UL SU and Mary I SU. UL SU was willing to join the USI team of GMT SU, NUIG SU and LIT SU when preparing for the local demo outside the offices. In USI HQ we prepared the posters, the checklist, contacted the media, and rang every County Council and City Council in Ireland to investigate whether any other council was carrying out the same procedure. During that particular day, mid-September, it came to light that South Tipp County Council were also withholding Grant Applications so I contacted LIT Tipperary both Thurles and Clonmel Campus and WIT SU. LIT Tipperary Thurles and Clonmel Students' Union carried out the demo in Clonmel. Both decisions were overturned by the



County Councils and a sincere thank you to the Students' Union who organised transport and mobilised students to the protests.

## USI Referenda Campaigns

This year, to date, we have had 4 USI Referenda. TCD SU held one in October and MSU, DCU and UCD held referenda in March.

### TCD REFERENDUM

Over the course of September along with Officer Board I attended meetings with the 'No Campaign Team' from TCD that was led by a TCD Student. I prepared plans and guidelines for the duration of the referendum and rolled them out accordingly in conjunction with the Campaign Team Manager. In the run up to the polling days I prepared plans and the schedule for the team on campus that would be campaigning for a NO vote.

### MSU REFERENDUM

The MSU Referendum was led by the VP for the BMW Officer. I assisted her by organising all the materials for the campaign and by co-ordinating the campaign team.

### UCD REFERENDUM

I worked with the UCDSU Campaigns Officers in terms of organising the campaign team for the campaign. I worked with the President and Media Exec when organising the materials for the referendum. I also met the 5 UCDSU Sabbatical officers a month before the referendum to conduct research on the campaign.

### DCU REFERENDUM

Our Campaign leader, a student from DCU was extremely helpful in the set-up of the Yes to USI Campaign Team. During the two week campaign I organised the materials for the campaign in conjunction with the Media Executive, I organised the campaign team to conduct polling of DCU students, I organised the campaign team to be on campus during the polling. I led this referendum with the exceptional help of officer board and sabbatical teams from across the country.

### LOBBY OF THE OIREACHTAS

During this year's Pre-Budget Lobby of the Oireachtas i was in charge of welcoming all TDs and MOs who attended the Lobby. The VP for Welfare signed and welcomed them in and i introduced them to the MOs from their constituency or a member of Officer Board. I also ensured there was a top up on the water supplied and the room was kept clean and there was a constant flow throughout the day to ensure both the MOs time and the TDs time was used effectively.

## INMO Rally

Following discussions with a sabbatical from a MO i contacted the Student Officer of the Irish Midwives and Nursing Organisation to get full details of the rally taking place in Croke Park, January 2013 in relation to the proposed scheme of 1,000 jobs being offered by the HSE for 80% pay. I then emailed all sabbatical officers asking if they would support the march or not and following a minority yes vote i compiled all the details and liaised with the President and Media Executive in publicising

to our members and the public that USI would support the INMO rally. I attended the Rally in Croke Park with the President. I also attended the rally outside the HSE Headquarters and the rally outside the Dail. I met with the INMO President and Student Officer to discuss what USI could bring to the campaign and we brought this question to sabbatical officers at the National Council in February.

## Guide to Being a Students' Union Officer

In conjunction with the VP for the Southern Region we are compiling a manual that will assist both returning and new sabbatical Officers. The manual will contain chapters such as a Background to USI, Students' Union Overview to Managing the Students' Union.

## USI Student Achievement Awards Ireland (Formally USI Awards)

Having created the USI Awards last year as Southern Area Officer with my colleague for the BMW Region, we are working on this year's award that will be known as the Student Achievement Awards. This year will see a standalone event and up to 20 categories and an impressive judging panel. The VP for the Southern Region and the Media and Communications Exec are working with us in the preparation for this year's award event.

## MO Class Rep Training Events:

### CLASS REP TRAINING PRESENTATIONS:

I presented to the following Students' Union Training events with the VP for the BMW Region/VP for the Southern Region - GMIT Students' Union, GMIT Castlebar Students' Union, STACS Students' Union, IADT Students' Union, NCI Students' Union, AIT Students' Union, DkIT Students' Union, LYIT Students' Union, IT Tralee Students' Union,

### NUI GALWAY STUDENTS' UNION:

I attended the NUIGSU Executive Committee meeting with the President to discuss the National Campaign and to answer questions or queries the officers had about the USI. We also presented the National Campaign Presentation to their Class Rep Council.

# Media Engagement

MEDIA OUTLET – RADIO/TV	TOPIC
East Coast FM, WLR FM	CAO Offers /Accommodation Guide
TV3 News	CAO System Replacement
CRC FM	Student Life
Newstalk, Inisowen FM, UTV Radio, Northern Sound FM, Shannonside, WLR Fm, FM 104, 98 FM, LMFM	Postgrad Campaign
RTE, Irish Independent, The Examiner	Cork Protest
Beat 102 103	SUSI Interview
Journal.ie	IT Tallaght Protest
LMFM	Dundalk Protest
Today FM, FM 104	Dublin Central Protest
Journal.ie	Tralee Protest
WLR FM, Irish Times, Dungarvan Observer	Waterford Protest
Beat 102 103	Grad Ireland Careers Fair
ITV News and Radio	Local Marches
Feck TV	National Campaign
Beat 102 103, Business Post, DCU FM,	Budget 2013
Journal.ie, The Irish Times, Mid-West Radio	NUIG/GMIT SU - Occupy Enda Kenny's Office
Danish School of Media and Journalism	Budget 2013
4FM	SUSI Debacle/Food Boxes

## Conclusion:

Thank you for taking the time to read my report. I have highlighted the key areas that I have worked on and completed during the past 9 months as being the Southern Area Campaigns Officer. I have loved working with the vibrant, enthusiastic and hard-working sabbatical officers and their teams across the country.

As the Deputy President and Campaigns officer I still have 3 months ahead of me to complete any unfinished work, to welcome the incoming sabbatical teams and to prepare guides and information for next year.



# *VP ACADEMIC AFFAIRS & QUALITY ASSURANCE CAT O'DRISCOLL*

## *Introduction*

When I took up the post of Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance last July I did not expect to have such an eventful year with such a hard working team. It has been a pleasure to work with the dedicated and inspiring individuals making up Officer Board and National Council. My report is a brief over view of the main projects I have worked on this year.

## *Student Union Training*

In the lead up to the training event I contacted and liaised with potential speakers for workshops and modules including Dealing with College Authorities, Education 101 and Quality Assurance. As many speakers pulled out it was a challenge to secure quality facilitators or presenters but I was very pleased with those we did secure. Throughout the week I assisted with logistical tasks such as registration and keeping to the timetable as well as welcoming all the new and returning sabbatical officers.

## *National Student Survey*

Though initially planned to be piloted in semester one the Higher Education Authority and some HEI's attempted to postpone the roll out of this project until 2014. With the support of the President I offered the Plenary Group an ultimatum which would see the survey rolled out one way or another. Our plan (threat) was successful and the project went ahead with concessions. I was asked to chair the Communications and Reporting sub-group as well as sitting on the Plenary and Survey Design Groups. It is difficult to detail all my contributions to this project but my main achievements have been to chair the C&R group which put together all of the promotional materials and supports, communications to colleges and final report structure. As a member of the Survey Design group I contributed to the question design and co-ordinated the student focus groups with the Project Manager and Survey Design Group Chair. As one of the four sponsors I have worked with the IOTI, HEA and IUA to ensure the goals of the project have been completed under the most suitable leadership.

## *Grant Information*

With SUSI, based in the City of Dublin VEC, taking over the grant applications for first time applicants this year I worked with them to design the Grant Information Poster. SUSI co-ordinated and funded the design and distribution costs, unfortunately this led to some delays on the outset.

Though we did not run the co-ordinated information campaign across all counties, due to high costs and low turnout in previous years, I assisted the unions which ran their own information events. These took place in Athlone IT and Letterkenny IT as well as a centralised Grant and Accommodation Evening in Dublin. I also helped the Claddagh Credit Union in Galway to run an event with the support of NUIGSU.

There was a lot of media attention around the roll out of the new centralised grant system and I spoke with a number of radio stations including Spin Southwest and Corks 103 fm.

## *Student Universal Support Ireland*

The student grant delays and repercussions have undoubtedly taken up most of my time this year. In August with the support of the Department we established the SUSI Forum made up of Education and Welfare Officers and head SUSI Staff. I co-ordinated this group along with the Deputy President and as issues began to arise it was our main point of contact with SUSI. Prior to the first meeting I created and circulated a feedback sheet for officers to gather information on the system, as this was before the delays the main criticisms were in relation to technical errors, communication and the support desk. We relayed all of these issues to SUSI with proposed solutions and agreed on initiatives to tackle them.

As the delays began to impact students I worked with MO's to gather specific issues, worked with SUSI to highlight them and propose solutions and responded to the media to counteract the perception being put forward by SUSI of the delays being the students fault. I also dealt with an incredible number of cases which came directly to me or complicated cases which came through MO's, TD offices, citizen's information offices and VECs. As



well as expediting emergency cases through a contact in SUSI I facilitated a member of staff to attend our November National Council.

Throughout the process I have co-ordinated many information campaigns with unions when specific large scale issues were apparent such as the final course acceptance form issue. I have also drawn up and circulated regular 'SUSI updates' to MO's to ensure all the information we get from SUSI is available. Though many students are still without their grant it must be recognised that without the hard work and incredible time commitment from many MO Officers this issue could have taken even longer to resolve and I wish to thank them for their patience, determination and commitment.

## European Students' Union

Though previous relations with ESU have been complicated I have worked with them on a number of projects including National Student Surveys and the 25th European Student Convention. In October I participated in the 24th European Student Convention under the theme "The crisis is getting deeper, is society under threat?" which looked at the effects of austerity measures on Higher Education.

## Undergraduate Student Loans

After the announcement of the Bank of Ireland 'College Finance' scheme in a number of colleges I was tasked with researching the scheme, composing a briefing document and contacting MO's to determine their level of involvement and support for the scheme. As contradictory information was being circulated to different MO's I arranged a meeting with BOI and the President to express our concerns and determine the correct facts. BOI were receptive to our concerns and also informed us about the Postgraduate Loan product they were preparing to launch.

## Postgraduate Student Loans

In preparation for the Bank of Ireland Postgrad Loan launch I worked with the President and the Media & Communications Executive to gather as much information as possible and set up a media stunt. As the official photo shoot had taken place weeks before the media stunt was deemed unsuitable but I gather information on the scheme for the MO briefing document. The first Postgraduate Forum took place in UCD in August. I took minutes of the meeting and finalised the discussion document. The main outcome from the seminar was for a research project to be undertaken. I met with the researcher selected by the President and briefed her on our project goals. In September in a meeting with the Minister we secured his support to investigate an alternative loan scheme. I chaired the second Postgraduate Forum in November upon the completion of the International Loan Scheme Research Report. Following that I drew up a project plan and in consultation with the President attempted to convene a meeting of various experts in the economics and education funding fields. Though many expressed an interest few had the time available to participate. The

ESRI have offered to present their findings on this area to our Postgraduate Forum.

## Part Time Officer Training

This year we separated training for part time officers from activist academy. In July I constructed and circulated a survey to gauge demand and ideal timing. I arranged a venue and worked with the VP for Irish Language and VP for Equality to set out the content. We secured speakers for different key topics and prepared a booklet for the day. The feedback from those who participated was very positive but the number of attendees was lower than expected.

## Entry Mechanisms and Admissions Reform

In response to the IUA proposal published in August I contacted their Academic Affairs Director to determine the details. A taskforce was to be headed by the NUI Maynooth President. I contacted him about including a student representative but though he said it would be considered we did not hear back from him. I spoke about the impact of the report on Entry Mechanisms on RTE Drivetime and Newstalk fm.

In January I was invited by Trinity to speak at their Feasibility Study on Admissions Launch and expressed our support for such initiatives. I remain in contact the Senior Lecturer of TCD as this project is constructed.

25th European Student Convention

In September I met with ESU to begin planning the 25th ESC. This followed with meetings with the HEA and to discuss funding and various potential venues. I worked with the General Manager to secure a venue, visa assistance and financial support from the Department and QQI. I worked with ESU to finalise the agenda, select speakers and set up a site visit in January. Throughout registration I assisted delegates with visa applications and set about recruiting volunteers to help run the event. In the lead up to and throughout the event I co-ordinated logistics with the General Manager and liaised with speakers. Members of Officer Board and National Council were invaluable in the running of the Convention and the delegates expressed their appreciation for the warm welcome and support they received during their stay.

## USI Referendums

I participated in the four affiliation referendums this year in varying capacities. I assisted with planning, preparation and research. I also canvassed students and their residences, supported the social media campaigns and made class addresses.

## Casework

This year I have had an incredible amount of casework. The majority has been in relation to SUSI and student finances. Other topics which I have worked on include placement issues, transferring course, exam appeals, lecturer complaints, disciplinary procedures, international student issues and expulsions.

## Budget 2013 Campaign

I attended a number of public meetings as part of the Fed Up Stand Up campaign and helped with the promotion and running of the Castlebar protest. I lobbied a number of TD's at the Lobby of the Oireachtas and by email and phone. Along with the VP for Welfare and VP for Equality and Citizenship I assisted the President in preparing the Pre-Budget submission with information on student financial supports.

## Exam Campaign

With the VP for Welfare I worked to prepare the December Exam Prep Campaign in consultation with Spunout. We set up the exams page on the USI website and investigated the possibility of exam packs. More elements of this campaign will be rolled out after Congress.

## Student Assistance Fund Harmonisation Study

In September the VP for Welfare and I met with representatives from the Equity of Access office in the HEA to discuss the future of the SAF and our study. To initiate our harmonisation study we drew up a list of questions to gather relevant data from MO's. With the support of the Regional VP's we gathered the information and used it to determine a project outline. After consulting all of the information available we composed a draft report which was presented to the February National Council for consultation. The finalised report is now available for the consideration of USI Congress.

## Other Work

Due to limited space I will not detail the other projects and events I have worked on. Please ask me questions on any of the items below if you would like more information.

- USI Website - Created content on Grants and National Framework
- Conferences - Attended the OECD Conference on Mass Higher Education, HEA Conference on Quality Assurance and International Rankings.
- American Educators - Presented to the group on Irish Higher Education and attended the presentation of their findings.
- National Council Effectiveness Group - Attended, minuted and drew up the report from the first meeting.
- Universities Act Amendment - Chaired a teleconference and consulted with the IUA on potential outcomes and effects.
- Higher Education Funding Taskforce - Participated and assisted with research and record taking.

## Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read my report. In the months ahead I plan to continue work on the Postgraduate Representation structures and loan scheme, the National Student Survey report and the resolution of SUSI issues. I also look forward to rolling out the Exam Campaign with the VP for Welfare, attending the ESU Board Meeting in April and work on facilitating effective crossover preparation with MO Officers.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to work with such an inspiring team on projects that are changing Higher Education in Ireland for the better. Happy Congress!

# VP WELFARE

## DENISE MCCARTHY



### *Introduction*

The following is a report on a range of things I have worked on and completed during my term. It has been a privilege to be the USI Vice President for Welfare this year. I have really enjoyed working with a wide variety of organisations and all the Welfare Officers across the country. All aspects of the role are so interesting and I have pushed myself to cover as many topics as possible. I have loved working with such an enthusiastic and hard-working team and the sabbatical officers across the country. Thank you for taking the time to read my report. Please feel free to ask me any questions.

### *USI Rent Book*

In August, we launched the USI Rent Book & Accommodation Guide. I updated the text and included a new element of the three most important checklists for students renting while in college. The USI Rent Book & Accommodation Guide was launched in NUIG, LIT & IADT. As with all other campaigns I organised this year I wanted to make sure all campaigns, like last year, were launched in various locations across the country. I coordinated the distribution of 15,000 Finance Guides to students across Ireland. I also wanted to ensure the Rent Book & Accommodation Guide was available online and so it was uploaded on to [www.issuu.com](http://www.issuu.com) and has been read over 2500 times. In order to develop the guide, I secured sponsorship of €2500 from PRTB (Private Residential Tenancies Board).

### *Settling into College:*

Waterford radio station, Beat 102103 did a piece on Flying the Nest and going to college which I assisted with and got students to take part in and I did an interview with them in relation to getting accommodation and getting to know your Students' Union. I also assisted Headsup with their 'Life after Secondary School' webcast. I was on the panel with representatives from the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, Irish Association of University and College Counsellors, the National Learning Network and a clinical psychologist. This was a great success and we are hoping to do a similar webcast for students before exams.

### *Campaign support for Welfare officers*

When I first took my post, I began working on the Welfare Campaign Directory for Welfare Officers. This directory was given to welfare officers in August which included information and tips on planning, implementing and promoting a campaign, getting volunteers, and various ideas and samples of previous campaigns from across the country.

I introduced the Welfare Campaign Subgroup which consisted of four welfare officers, one from each region, who gave feedback on and approved welfare campaign materials before they went into production. I also developed campaigns fact sheets on various topics to assist welfare officers in running campaigns and initiatives on campus. All materials were sent out in advance and always on date e.g. SHAG packs, Finance Guides.

### *Road Safety*

I represented Ireland at the fourth European Road Safety Day in Nicosia, Cyprus on July 25th. The 4th European Road Safety Day provided an invaluable platform to discuss and exchange best practices and most importantly, to raise awareness - of the dangers of irresponsible driving and of the importance of wearing seatbelts. In terms of workshops I attended the Education & Training workshop. We focused on peer to peer education and all agreed road safety awareness and education should be lifelong. I really enjoyed the opportunity to attend, as USI were the only organisation in Ireland invited to send a delegate. There was no cost involved for USI.

I worked really closely with RSA to ensure every Students' Union had a copy of the 'Safe Grads' folder to assist Students' Unions in their planning. I also completed a campaign fact sheet for Welfare officers and gave them ideas to include in a Road Safety Day/Week. Previously, USI had worked with RSA to block book the RSA Shuttle, I worked closely with MOs to book the shuttle for their campaigns. In October I organised a Road Safety Campus Tour which was held in UCD (Oct 23rd), IT Sligo

(Oct 24th) & IT Carlow (Oct 25th) in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority. I secured high vis materials from RSA, the RSA Rollover to be present on each campus & involvement from Autoglass & Advance Pitstop on each campus. All organisations that took part were very pleased with the campaign. I am now working with RSA to block book the RSA Shuttle and Roll-over up until 2015.

## National Campaign – Fed Up, Stand Up

I assisted with the National campaign by attending various Town Hall meetings and local protests. I lobbied many TDs in relation to the importance of protecting the Grant and the Student Assistance Fund. I also assisted with co-ordinating the Lobby of the Oireachtas. With the VP for AA&QA and the VP for Equality and Citizenship, I helped with the pre-budget submission by writing the section on student financial support

## Mental Health Campus Tour

I worked closely with See Change in terms of the organising of The Mental Health Campus Tour. It was held in DKIT & UCC. Both days were really well received and highly successful. A large number of students attended both talks and interacted very well. It was great to see different organisations getting involved through See Change. There were workshops/seminars planned for after the 'I see a darkness' talk in each college. See Change provided #MakeARipple wristbands to the host MOs to distribute to students. Overall it proved to be an excellent medium in encouraging people to talk about mental health.

## Mental Health Week

In July, I met with Headsup and Reachout.com to discuss the theme of the campaign and the mental health packs. We decided the theme of the campaign would be positive mental health and would focus on the promotion of supports available to students; the tagline of the week was 'What Makes You Smile'. The campaign's aim was to tackle any negative outlook by asking students to identify and value the smaller things in life that makes us smile and impact positively on our mental health and well being. The packs, which included a Headsup pen, Pleasetalk/Reachout bookmark and postcard were approved by the Welfare Campaign Sub Group. The campaign was launched in NCI, IT Tralee & STACS. We used the hashtag #WhatMakesYouSmile to engage with students on Twitter. We ran two competitions for 'feel good' hampers through Facebook & Twitter, a student from STACS and a student from DIT won them. The hashtag proved popular and TheJournal.ie covered it. I have also compiled a document for Welfare officers in relation to running a Mental Health campaign on campus with information on resources, materials and a list of ideas of activities and events that have been successfully ran in colleges across the country over the last few years.

## PleaseTalk

The 3rd Please Talk Forum took place in DIT, Aungier Street on August 2nd 2012. I worked alongside Aimee o' Callaghan in DITSU & Nigel o' Callaghan in Inspire and other members of PleaseTalk steering committee with planning the forum and on the day I presented with Aimee & Nigel. The forum's Keynote address was from Jerry Buttimer TD. There was also breakout sessions during the day, (I facilitated one) to encourage attendees to plan for the year ahead & answer the following questions; How are you planning to embed the PleaseTalk message in your college? What has worked well in the past and what might work well in the future? Considering the issues affecting students in the current climate, is there a new way we could promote Please Talk? I included PleaseTalk in the exam prep campaign in December. I have been highly active within the PleaseTalk Steering Committee and we are currently planning the next PleaseTalk Forum which will take place in June. All are welcome to attend.

## Exam prep

To provide a source of information and support for students during the exam period, I worked on developing an online resource for students. In December, we launched [www.usi.ie/exams](http://www.usi.ie/exams). I also worked on developing a study planner for students which is available online for students. I was able to secure the cost of design from SpunOut. This was a joint project with the VP for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance. The web page includes tips, advice, and downloadable study planner. Following feedback from officers we included tabs for Study Tips, Exam Tips, Post-Exam and Support. I contacted Royseven singer, Paul Walsh, who is a student in UCD and asked him to get involved. He wrote a piece on his experience of college exams. I included information on PleaseTalk throughout the webpage. I also secured sponsorship of design from SpunOut. We will be rolling out a further exam campaign around April/May.

## USI Referendum Campaign

I participated in USI referenda held in TCD, UCD, NUI Maynooth & DCU. I attended debates, went door-to-door in various student accommodation blocks, informing them of the referendum on their campus and highlighted the benefits of USI. I spent time on campus in TCD, NUI Maynooth and DCU canvassing before and during polling.

## National Charity

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland was chosen as USI's National Charity for 2012/2013. I took the lead on this by meeting with the Communication Executive of Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, Karen O'Boyle to be briefed on all work being done by ABI and how we can get involved. Karen and I organised a presentation for Area Councils at National Council. I worked closely with Acquired Brain Injury to organise a fundraiser at the December National Council. It was important we reached out to people about minding their head over the Christmas period and from there we wanted to make an appeal. At December National Council we held a Bake Sale, with all proceeds going to Acquired Brain Injury. Together we raised €176. We also helped ABI promote Bake for Brain injury in



mid March. I have also organised a fundraiser at USI Congress and information about ABI will be available to all delegates throughout Congress.

## Training

Throughout the year I have organised various training for Welfare Officers and others for all officers.

### AT STUDENT UNION TRAINING I ORGANISED:

- Welfare 101
- Surviving a Sabbatical
- SafeTALK
- Accommodation Issues
- Sexual health
- Understanding and Communicating Mental Health

### WELFARE TOP UP TRAINING:

- Welfare Campaigns - USI VP Welfare, VP Campaigns & VP Equality & Citizenship
- Sexual Health - Siobhan O Higgins
- Active Listening
- Eating Disorders
- Alcohol Awareness- Andy Hargreaves, HSE
- FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centre) - Emma Cassidy, Legal Intern FLAC
- How to run a Welfare Crew
- Welfare Officer Reflective Session

I also organised training for all officers on Data Protection, Money Management and a Cyberbullying module.

## Finance guide

I engaged with the National Consumer Agency and secured €3400 in sponsorship to produce Money Matters: Student Finance Guide. The Finance Guide is full of useful information and tips for saving, budgeting, managing debt and financial supports available to students. In September, we launched Money Matters - USI Student Finance Guide in GMIT, LIT Tipperary & IT Tallaght. I coordinated the distribution of 15,000 Finance Guides to students across Ireland. I also wanted to ensure the Rent Book & Accommodation Guide was available online and so it was uploaded on to [www.issuu.com](http://www.issuu.com) and has been read over 1200 times.

## Sexual Health

### SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION ROADSHOW

The first Sexual Health Education Roadshow was launched in NUI Maynooth and was a huge success. The roadshow also visited WIT (Oct 17th), IT Sligo (November 7th) & IT Blanchardstown (December 5th). Think Contraception, Dublin Aids Alliance, Crisis Pregnancy Programmes and Irish Family Planning Association got involved and supported the roadshow.

### NATIONAL CONDOM WEEK:

I engaged with Durex in relation to National Condom Week and was able to secure condoms for any MO who wanted to get involved. I allocated 7,000 condoms to colleges who were interested in running an activity during National Condom Week. They were sent to QUBSU, UUSU, IT Tallaght SU, NCI SU, UCDSU, IT Tralee SU, STACS SU, Carlow College SU & LITSU. Posters promoting National Condom Week were sent to all Welfare Officers.

### SHAG PACKS

Upon election, I began investigating the possibilities of updating the SHAG packs and to continue to make them all inclusive and attractive to students. I met with many organisations to get ideas, suggestions and feedback on the proposed idea. I engaged with a company in relation to engineering a pack that would fold out, have necessary information printed outside and inside and to hold the contents. This resulted in a new format for the USI SHAG Pack which was put to the Welfare Campaign Sub group. This was also discussed at Welfare Working Group to ensure it was all inclusive in relation to information, design and content. I secured 45,000 condoms and a sachets of 'play feel' lube from Durex. I also secured €3,500 sponsorship from Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD). We received a lot of positive feedbacks from students and various sexual health organisations.

### SHAG FORTNIGHT

This year, I wanted to expand the SHAG campaign. This year the USI SHAG (Sexual Health Awareness & Guidance) campaign was rolled out over a two week period. SHAG Fortnight was launched February 11th and ran until February 22nd. USI's SHAG campaign was launched in UCD, February 11th and the roadshow visited AIT (13th), GMIT (14th), DIT (18th) and LIT (20th). During SHAG Fortnight, we launched [SHAG.usi.ie](http://SHAG.usi.ie) and 45,000 SHAG Packs that have been redesigned for a new approach to SHAG Packs. The roadshow during SHAG Fortnight was supported by; Think Contraception, IFPA, Dublin Aids Alliance, Sexual Health Magician, Dr. Siobhan O Higgins, Crisis Pregnancy Programmes, Aids West, Cura, Treoir and Rape Crisis Network Ireland. I also engaged with a production company; Areaman Productions who were putting together a documentary that was looking into attitudes and experiences of sex and relationships in Ireland today, particularly looking at the younger 16-30 age groups. I organised for them to come to GMIT campus on February 14th to cover the activities on campus that day. USI SHAG packs and elements of the roadshow were covered on Reality Bites: Generation Sex on RTE Two, March 4th. I also assisted a number of welfare officers with their SHAG weeks and helped with ideas for activities on campus.

### WORLD AIDS DAY

I engaged with Dublin Aids Alliance and Durex in relation to World Aids Day to see how USI could get involved and support it. I contacted all officers in relation to promotion through social media outlets. For every share of poster/video and tweet with #Ishare1condom Durex would donate a condom to HIV prevention programmes across the world, including Dublin Aids Alliance. At the end of this campaign, Durex donated over 2,25000 condoms.

## **SHAG.USI.IE**

I worked with the General Manager on the layout and design of SHAG.usi.ie. The sexual health website is a mandate from Congress 2012, and was of no cost to USI. All design was done in house and Think Contraception, Rape Crisis Network and I put together all the content for the site. I also secured the donation of Durex goodies and an iPad for the competition we ran on to the site to celebrate the launch.

## *Student Assistance Fund*

Since November the VP for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance and I have been gathering information from Welfare Officers across the country on the Student Assistance Fund with the help of VP for BMW region, VP for Southern region and the VP for Campaigns. Based on this information, the VP for AA&QA and I met to put structure to the harmonisation study. We examined both the application procedures across MOs and a list of various questions we had requested from each Welfare Officer, relating to application process, promotion, awareness, processing etc. From this we have conclusions from the Harmonisation Study and recommendation for USI, MOs and the HEA. We then developed the SAF: Best Practice Framework report which is up for adoption at Congress.

## *Cyberbullying*

Following a National Council in November, I have been researching various campaigns, strategies and documents relating to Cyber Bullying. Following feedback and suggestions from officers, I put the plans in place to roll out a multifaceted campaign that would include development of policy, raising awareness and engaging grassroots members online. I engaged with various organisations to develop a Partnership against Cyber Bullying and for us to work together to roll out the Cyberbullying campaign. This partnership includes Headstrong, ReachOut.com, Headsup, SpunOut, NUS-USI, and National Youth Council of Ireland. I organised a module on Cyberbullying for MO officers with Reachout.com. Following research I developed a policy guideline document that is up for adoption at Congress.

## *Casework*

Over the last nine months, I have assisted Welfare Officers with a number of cases and I have dealt with students directly on various issues e.g. finance, accommodation, work placement and cyberbullying.

## *Officer guide*

I have been working on content for the 'Guide to being a Student Union Officer' in terms of Welfare training, Casework and Liaising with support services on campus.



# VP EQUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP LAURA HARMON

## Introduction

It has been a privilege to work for students this year and I feel that we have made significant progress in furthering the visibility and goals of the USI Equality and Citizenship campaign. I love the brief and it's an honour to work at something that can really make a difference to students' lives. It's a broad brief and it was essential that I stuck to the selected areas from my plan of work for the year, which was approved by USI National Council. I am very happy with how much we have achieved together over the last 9 months. A wonderful thing about the USI Equality and Citizenship brief is how much the campaign engages with students on the ground via training events and campaigns. Below is an outline of the key areas I have worked on. I am happy to elaborate on anything you have questions on.

## Marriage Equality

I was determined to follow through on the unanimous mandate from USI Congress 2012. I worked a great deal on this campaign to ensure that the voices of students were heard and to showcase the support that the students of Ireland have for this issue. I felt it was vital and timely to highlight this given that the Constitutional Convention was dealing with it and the fact that there is a likely referendum on the horizon. From the very start, I was heartened by the enthusiasm and leadership that students' union officers showed for this issue.

I organised a briefing meeting from the Director of Marriage Equality and a member of LGBT Noise for USI Officer Board in July. I represented USI at Cork Pride to raise awareness of the issue. Six weeks into the role, I organised and mobilised the USI contingent at the March for Marriage. It was wonderful to see students' union leaders from all four regions present at the march and our collective presence on the day was very powerful. USI received congratulatory remarks from many organisations afterwards.

I participated in college and radio debates on this issue and had articles published in the media. I lobbied city councillors on the issue. I engaged with my own TDs in the Cork North-West constituency. I wrote all of the

content for the TellYourTD.com website, when it was amended for the issue of marriage equality. I helped UCD Students' Union with their Rainbow Wedding outside the Department of An Taoiseach in July. I also did a reading at the event on the future we want for LGBT persons in Ireland and this speech was shared widely online afterwards.

## Constitutional Convention

It was always a priority of mine to ensure that USI engaged with the Constitutional Convention. I wrote the USI submission on 'Women in Politics' and addressed the Convention in person on this issue. Members of the Convention were very interested to hear about how under-representation of females also occurs in student politics. I highlighted the need for equal parental leave also, as part of my address. In addition to this, I wrote the detailed USI submission on equal access to civil marriage, which features personal testimonies from students.

## USI 'Say Something' Survey

I feel this project will have a big impact on raising awareness of violence experienced by students in Ireland. It was the first online survey of its kind and scale to be conducted in Ireland. The survey was my idea and was based on the 'Hidden Marks' study conducted in the UK in 2010, which also assessed third-level students' experiences of violence. I obtained 5,000 euro from Cosc to fund this project. I used a portion of this money to pay an independent researcher to design and oversee the 'Say Something' survey. A full scale report is being drawn up by the researcher at the moment and will be launched next month. The remainder of the money we were allocated will go on promoting the findings, launching the report and printing copies of the report. Nearly 3,000 students filled it out, significantly more respondents than the NUS original survey.

## Female Participation

Following on from a mandate to increase female participation, I organised two 'Women in Society' seminars so far this year and I hope to organise two more. The idea behind the seminars is to encourage discussion around gender equality issues on campus. The first took place in UCC in January and the second in UCD in February. Both seminars were successful and there was a mixture of males and females in attendance. Both seminars were hosted by the Gender Equality Officers on campus. I organised all of the speakers, the running order of the events, helped to compile the press releases, promoted the events online and acted as a facilitator for both seminars. I have been engaging with Women for Election also on how we can work together over the next few months.

## International Students

I took up the USI seat on the board of the Irish Council for International Students this year. I coordinated and facilitated a forum for international students on the 14th of November in the Mansion House in Dublin. Points of discussion throughout the evening included integration into the culture in Ireland, integration into academic life and campus life in Ireland. It was a great evening and opportunity for international students to network.

I have been working on a staff training DVD with ICOS also, following funding we received from the Department of Education. The DVD is going through a final editing process at the moment and will be complete within the next month. It will be a great resource for anyone working with international students in Ireland, including Students' Unions.

This year, USI has also lobbied the Minister for Education and Skills for an International Students' Hardship Fund. The Minister was favourable to the issue as were the board of the Irish Council for International Students. I intend to continue highlighting this issue for the rest of my term.

## Pink Training

I coordinated USI Pink Training on its 20th anniversary last November. It was a privilege to organise what is the largest LGBT training event for third-level students in Europe. I could not have been happier with how successful the event was, with 370 delegates attending from all four regions. This year there were also delegates from USI member colleges who had not been to Pink Training previously. After the event, I created a feedback form and send it out to each delegation. The feedback was extremely positive.

In the run-up to the event, I put together a 24-page booklet with the timetable, workshop descriptions, speaker biographies, information on the USI LGBT campaign and explanations of abbreviations used at Pink Training. I hung up posters and left LGBT Ally bands with accommodation staff to ensure delegates felt as welcome as possible. The 20th anniversary celebration went excellently and we were delighted to invite the original organiser from 1992, Shauneen Armstrong, to speak at the dinner on the Saturday evening of the weekend.

This year Pink Training had an increased focus on Transgender issues as well as Queer and LGBT Ally modules. We had high-profile speakers and a speaker from Straight But Not Narrow who travelled all the way from Los Angeles to join us. For the first time, we also used delegate cards that included the option to include a preferred pronoun - this was really welcomed by delegates and created a more inclusive environment. We also asked delegates to sign a code of conduct when they registered.

## Mature Students

I coordinated the Mature Students' Convention in NUI Maynooth in the first semester - as per my mandate. I prepared the timetable and introduced all of the speakers on the day. The event was attended by the USI President who also presented and engaged the students on the USI pre-budget campaign. There was a good mixture of students from different MOs in attendance and the attendees engaged a lot with the speakers and the content of the modules. I also requested feedback from attendees after the event and the overall feedback I received was very positive. During the course of my term I have also engaged with Mature Students' Ireland and I ensured that the Back to Education Allowance was included in our pre-budget campaign. I am currently engaging with the HEA on their new National Access Plan from 2014 and making sure that the voices of mature students are included in this plan will be key.

## Transgender Rights

In October, I was proud to speak at the first public transgender rights rally in Ireland outside Dail Eireann. This rally coincided with International Day for Trans Depathologisation. The Governments' Gender Recognition Advisory Group (GRAG) recommends that applicants must fulfill the medical criteria of a Gender Identity Disorder (GID) diagnosis or present evidence of gender reassignment surgery. GID is classified as a mental illness. Following on from our mandate at Congress 2012 on this issue, USI does not support the recommendation that an individual should be classified as having a mental disorder in order to have their gender recognised.

I also attended the Transgender EU Conference in Dublin last September. During this weekend, I participated in a range on workshops on transgender issues and met activists from all over Europe.



## *Delivering Training*

I delivered training when requested on many campuses and to many students on issues such as 'Coming Out', 'Running Inclusive Events and Campaigns', 'An Overview of the USI Equality and Citizenship Campaign', 'Running a Campaign Week', 'Effective Equality Campaigning' and 'Gender Recognition Legislation.' I contributed to a training module for Welfare Top-Up Training and delivered training at Part-Time Officer Training. I also delivered several presentations to the Equality and Citizenship Working Group throughout the year.

## *LGBT Ally Campaign*

I coordinated and planned the five launches for this campaign in UCD, WIT, STACS, UCC and QUB. I succeeded in getting public representatives to attend and speak at each launch. There were eight public representatives in total including a Lord Mayor, TDs, a Senator and a City Councillor. I worked with USI's Media and Communications Executive on drafting the press release and the regional press releases. I oversaw the design of the posters for each launch. I attended the UCD launch and introduced the speakers on the day. I coordinated the videos that were used for the promotion of this awareness campaign, which were put together by UCC Film Society. I met with Whoopi Goldberg in TCD and got Avan Jogi from the U.S. organisation Straight But Not Narrow to support the campaign. Over 6,000 LGBT Ally bands have been distributed to date and over 10 colleges have held their own LGBT Ally campaigns. There is a lot of potential to expand this campaign in the future.

## *Green Training*

I assisted Young Friends of the Earth with the organisation of Green Training, which took place in TCD in October. I spoke at the opening of the event and prepared and delivered a workshop on how to run a campaign week to the attendees on the day.

## *Students with Disabilities*

When I started my role, I took up the USI seat on the board of AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability. I ensured that training was offered to officers at Students' Union Training this year on this issue. I also created a document at the start of the year which was circulated to all sabbatical officers on how to make sure events and campaigns are inclusive. I have been in discussions with AHEAD about offering an online course they provide at a discounted rate to sabbatical officers for next year. One of the key things I did this year on area of disability was to contribute to a review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities conducted by the National Access Office - Advisory Group on Equity of Access to the Higher Education Authority. One key point I highlighted was the need for the fund to be extended to part-time students. I have been in discussions with AHEAD about conducting a study into the experiences of students with disabilities in third-level education and we are currently seeking funding for this study. I also represented USI at the pre-budget protest in Dublin against disability cuts.

## *Student Volunteering*

I have been collaborating with Volunteer Ireland on a Students' Volunteering Guide. The guide includes a description on volunteering opportunities and benefits of volunteering. It has five personal case studies from students also. It should be complete in April. I wrote a guest blog for Volunteer Ireland also on student volunteering. I have also been liaising with Campus Engage, a network for the promotion of civic engagement activities in Irish higher education. I have expressed that USI would like to become more involved in their working groups and I attended their conference in DCU earlier this year.

## *Equity of Access*

I engaged with the National Access Office's Advisory Group on Equity of Access to the HEA this year. There is a new National Access Plan for 2014 being drawn up by the HEA and I am in discussions with them as to how best USI can feed into this.

Intergenerational Campaigning

In January, I organised a joint event with Older and Bolder - an equality group for older people. The workshop was attended from students and sabbatical officers from many member organisations as well as members of Older and Bolder from around Ireland. The purpose of the event was to compare campaigning methods between both organisations. A presentation was made by USI on the USI pre-budget campaign and a presentation was made also by Older and Bolder on their pre-budget campaign. The groups were then split into small discussion sessions to discuss similarities, differences, approaches to campaigning, results, stereotypes around age and potential collaborations. It was insightful to see the differences and similarities in our campaigns.

## *Affiliation Referendums*

I was involved with USI's affiliation referendums this year in DCU, NUI Maynooth, TCD and UCD. I spent a lot of time canvassing students on the ground in NUI Maynooth, DCU and TCD. We were very happy with the positive results in DCU, NUI Maynooth and TCD. These successes benefited from a great team effort.

## *Abortion Rights Campaign*

I was proud to represent USI at the March for Choice in September behind the USI banner with members of DIT Students' Union. I represented USI at the vigil for Savita Halappanavar on the 21st of November outside Dáil Éireann. I also represented USI at the protest calling for action on the X case outside the Dáil on the 28th of November. I ensured that USI were one of the main organisations behind the 'Rally for X' outside Dublin Castle. In the lead up to this, I participated in a press conference. The Rally received national media coverage and was covered on RTE News. I delivered a speech at the Rally for X itself calling on the Government to legislate before the summer. I have engaged with the new Abortion Rights Campaign and am looking forward to working with them for the remainder of my term to pursue USI's pro-choice mandate.

## *Equality and Citizenship Working Group*

This year I was delighted to see increased participation with the USI Equality and Citizenship Working Group at National Council. I was very happy with the buy-in from Students' Unions across the country for the campaign. We always had a good mixture of sabbatical officers attending, a testament to how the Equality and Citizenship campaign transcends roles and has a relevance to every officer's brief. The working group was used as both a discussion forum and also as a space where officers could receive extra training on equality issues.

## *Equality Policy*

I wrote a new Equality policy for USI which was unanimously passed at National Council in September. This policy was written with guidance from the Equality Authority. I am delighted that this policy has been adopted by some of our member organisations for use in their own Students' Unions. This policy has been brought before USI Congress 2013 for approval.

## *Pre-budget campaign*

I assisted NCI Students' Union mobilise students to attend the USI protest outside the Department of Education on the 22nd of November. On the 5th of November, I helped promote the successful UCC protest and I carried the USI banner during the protest. On the 29th of November, I helped with the successful WIT protest and I acted as a steward on the day. I also lobbied target TDs on the issue of the Student Assistance Fund and I had several TDs put down parliamentary questions for us on this issue. I worked with the rest of Officer Board to compile a briefing document following the announcement of Budget 2013 measures. I had parliamentary questions put down following the changes to the Back to Education Allowance. I also participated in USI's pre-budget Lobby of the Oireachtas.

## *Conclusion*

Thanks for taking the time to read my report. There are still 3 months left in my term and I'm looking forward to continuing working on the mandates you've set me. It has been a great experience working with sabbatical officers and part-time officers from around the country this year. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the members of the USI Equality and Citizenship Working Group. I would also like to thank my colleagues on USI Officer Board - it has been a real privilege to work with such a hardworking and dedicated team of individuals.



# VP BORDER, MIDLANDS AND WESTERN REGION BREFFNI GORMAN

## Introduction

The following report details the work I have completed to date in USI in the role of Vice President for the BMW region. As word count is limited it is impossible for me to detail all the work since the beginning of the year so I have included a brief outline of all the main issues that were dealt with. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with my different MOs this year and I believe as a region we have had a successful year together, so thank you to all who helped that be possible. The main headings will now be discussed;

## Officer training and bonding

Once we started into the year I went on officer bonding and attended a week long annual planning event with the other members of officer board. In that week we planned the year ahead and I outlined my priorities for the position. I then compiled a comprehensive action plan, which has acted as the back bone for my work this year.

## Annual plan

Before the students came back I tried to sit down with each sabbatical officer in each college and talk to them about my role and ascertain how I could best help them out. Following on from this I had officers submit their plans for the year ahead giving me a rough idea of the individual MOs plans for the year. The areas covered in the plan included: supporting and engaging with each MO in the region, increasing USI engagement with students on the ground, profiling and lobbying of TDs in the region and the delivery of national launches on campuses.

## Project initiation groups

Officer board was a very tight knit unit this year and whenever there was a major event coming up we would meet in project teams to brain storm about the event and give constructive feedback. Some of the projects teams I was part included; The European Student Convention, SHAG week, The Women in Society conferences, Student Achievement Awards Ireland, and the cyber bullying

campaign. I also attended Monday morning planning meetings and monthly officer board meetings. We also had feedback sessions during the year which were really helpful in making the team work effectively.  
Pre-budget campaign;

## Public meetings

In preparation for every meeting I met with the individual MOs and planned the event. I attended and chaired seven public meetings; Sligo, Galway, Maynooth, Letterkenny, Castlebar, Dundalk and Athlone. For all the meetings I compiled the guest lists, helped arrange venue and spent significant time tweeting, emailing and texting the guest list to ensure they came. I also made a huge effort to pressurise TDs into coming on the night. The efforts were successful with the lowest turnout at fifty people and the highest at over one hundred and fifty. When the meetings were over I compiled a database of all those who had attended and emailed them thanking them and alerting them to the next course of action. I contacted them again just before the local protest and invited them to attend.

**DUNDALK;** on the day of the DKIT meeting I rang all the confirmed guest list to make sure people would attend. I tweeted everyone who hadn't responded to put pressure on them to acknowledge the event. On the night of the event I met people as they came in and greeted them. I got them to sign up to the newsletter and when the meeting was underway I tweeted constant updates and took notes. This was the first public meeting and we had Gerry Adams in attendance as well as the president of the college. Two councillors took forward the motion to the council to oppose further grant cuts.

**SLIGO;** On the day of the Sligo meeting I did a leaflet drop across the town with the STACS SU President. We were in town at lunchtime so we went up and spoke to as many secondary school students that we could and told them about the meeting. I also spent a significant amount of time tweeting local businesses on the day about the press release and the figure that would be lost to the local economy. I addressed the canteen in STACS about the meeting and I also addressed their common area. On the night I was the mc and I kept notes of questions asked and points made. one hundred people attended on the

night and there was good interaction from the crowd. Sinn Fein took the motion from the meeting and it was passed at their council to oppose any further cuts to the grant. The student accommodation got involved and the owners of the apartments sent letters to the minister opposing cuts.

**CASTLEBAR;** there was a very good turnout for this meeting and the student accommodations and businesses were very outspoken and proactive in becoming involved in the campaign. Lots of ideas were generated from the group including running an education candidate in the next election.

**LETTERKENNY;** there was a good councillor turn out for this meeting and the councillors agreed to submit a motion to the County Council and also to write to all the councils across the country to ask them to do the same.

**GALWAY;** there was a huge turnout for this meeting and the two local Labour TDs Derek Nolan and Colm Keaveney came to the debate. They accepted questions from students on the night and while things were very heated the audience had the opportunity to stand up and get involved.

**ATHLONE;** another huge turnout of students, parents, councillors and TDs. Ming Flannagan, James Bannon and Robert Troy were all in attendance. The meeting became quite heated but it was clear to see there was pressure on the Fine Gael TD.

**MAYNOOTH;** this meeting took place after the Lobby of the Oireachtas in the Glenroyal hotel. There were approximately fifty people in attendance on the night. By the end of the meeting there was good buy in from students to work with the campaign.

## Protests

ST Angela's protests; St. Angela's had a protest outside John Perrys' office as he refused to meet them to discuss the budget cuts to education. I organised the sound system and set up the area prior to people arriving. I also contacted people from the public meeting and asked them to come along to the protest. We had a number of local councillors who came along to support the protest. Alongside STACS SU, a STACS lecturer, John, Kate and I all spoke to the crowd. A follow up protest was arranged on the day.

John Perry continued to ignore requests from STACS for a meeting. After the USI President was arrested in the Dail Deputy Perry retweeted a comment giving out about those who were in the gallery and how they were a disgrace to the overall student body. As Deputy Perry continued to ignore STACS I retweeted a screen shot of his tweet and posted it to every local newspaper and radio station saying I was disgusted my local TD would engage in such mocking behaviour. On the day of the Lobby I expressed my disgust to his party colleague Tony Mc Loughlin and explained to him what had happened. Deputy Perry was on Twitter within the hour responding to myself and STACS. Deputy Perry attempted to lie and say that no contact had been made with his office and a meeting was arranged.

The meeting took place after another protest outside his office. I arranged the sound again for this. We had good media coverage at this meeting and Senator Marc Mc Sharry turned up to support the college. He also released

a statement expressing the same. I attended the meeting with STACS and it directly followed a meeting with ITSSU with the Minister. The meeting went as expected with Minister Perry and he expressed his sympathy to our issues and agreed to write a letter to the Minister expressing his support for the USI campaign. This letter still hasn't been sent on. Minister Perry also agreed to meet the students of Saint Angela's. Since the meeting he has met with the reps of IT Sligo and walked out of the meeting. He was quite interested in the ideas in the ideas for entrepreneurship in colleges and he agreed to look at this further. I followed up the meeting with an email summarising the meeting and pointing out the actions he had committed to.

**GALWAY/ATHLONE PROTEST;** the Galway protest was a huge success with up on three thousand students in attendance. The Deputy President and I represented USI at the march. I was in GMIT to help GMIT and AIT get ready. The event was a huge success and the TDs who were targeted were extremely annoyed at the lobby that had been targeted. The media stunt outside Derek Nolans' office was also a great success and the event passed off peacefully.

**LYIT PROTEST;** Unfortunately the LYIT and GMIT CB protest were on the same day so I was unable to be with LYIT on the day. Instead Peadar and Kate travelled up. I was on campus two days prior to the march helping to organise and promote the march. I arranged the high vis jackets and sound systems for the march. When we were promoting the march I did class addresses and I manned their stand writing letters to Joe Mc Hugh. The march was a huge success on the day.

**CASTLEBAR PROTEST;** I was on campus two days prior to the march helping the SU to organise and promote the march. On one of the days the local SU president and I lobbied John O Mahony about the pre-budget submission. He agreed to write a letter to the Minister on the issues. He agreed that SUSI was a major issue and he was busy dealing with complaints regarding the issue. On the day of the protest I travelled down with IT Sligo and helped to steward at the march which had a crowd of over two hundred people.

**DKIT PROTEST;** the DKIT protest took place on the same day as the Sligo protest so the Deputy President attended in my absence. I want to apologise to DKIT for not being able to attend on the day. They had an excellent turn out and put huge effort into organising the event.

## Lobby of the Oireachtas

I attended the Lobby of the Oireachtas in Dublin along with the other members of officer board and representatives from the BMW region from GMIT, NUIG, STACS, DKIT, AIT and LYIT. I lobbied ten people over the course of the day which included; Joe Mc Hugh, Senator Kathryn Reilly, Willie Penrose, Sean Kyne, Tony Mc Loughlin, Charlie Mc Conalogue, Denis Naughten, Dominic Hannigan, Anthony Lawlor and Noel Grealish. I had a number of action points to follow up with after the lobby including; emailing a condensed version of the USI solutions to Joe Mc Hugh, and I organised follow up meetings with a number of TDs including Anthony Lawlor as Maynooth could not make it on the day. I have been in contact with Joe Mc Hugh since the lobby and he has sent a letter to the Minister asking him to look at the USI pre-budget submission. He also encouraged the Minister to look at cost savings in colleges as a means of



raising extra capital. I have also met with John Perry and John O Mahony since the lobby. I have been in contact with Michelle Mulherin, Dara Calleary, Michael Ring and I intend on keeping up the pressure right up until I finish in USI.

## Post budget campaign

As a member of the campaigns subcommittee I fed into the meeting on the post budget strategy. On the day of the budget my role was to ensure people were aware of what effects there were on students. I had a lot of students ringing me on the day with questions about how they were affected. The day following the budget the Deputy President assigned me TDs to call and lobby.

Following the budget NUIG and GMIT occupied the office of Enda Kenny. I spent the time they were in the office tweeting about the incident and letting all media outlets know what was happening.

## National implementation teams

As part of the post budget campaign it was agreed at National Council to compile national implementation campaign teams. I have been in contact with all of my colleges encouraging them to do so.

## Regional launches

Rent book launch; I attended the rent book launch of the BMW region in NUIG. We had a speaker along on the day from Threshold in Galway and SU President Paul spoke to the students.

**MENTAL HEALTH;** St. Angela's were the regional host for the mental health campaign in conjunction with USI. I was on site on the morning to help the Students' Union to set up. The speaker on the day was a project manager from Heads Up, Collette Ryan. I spoke to the crowd about the campaign and along with the SU officers we went round giving out the packs and encouraging people to tweet what makes them smile. St. Angela's had a great crowd there and they had great ideas on the day for raising money for Acquired Brain Injury Ireland.

USI finance guide; the regional launch for the USI finance guide took place on the GMIT Galway campus. The event was a success and we had Aine O Connell from the National Consumer agency there as a guest speaker.

Ally week; the regional launch for the USI Ally week took place in Saint Angela's College. The event was a huge success with over fifty people in attendance on the day. TD Micheal Colreavy was there and spoke to the crowd. The union had food sponsored from Supermacs for the event. Jack Wise was on campus for Freshers week doing a comedy gig and he wore the wristband and mentioned the campaign to the crowd.

**SHAG ROAD SHOW;** the SHAG road show was on IT Sligo campus and I attended to help the local and national welfare officers out on the day.

## MO engagement

Cross over training; A number of officers did not receive a cross over from their predecessor so I have compiled a general cross over document that has been distributed to all my colleges. I have also conducted day training sessions with some officers who requested it.

Report on the benefits of USI; at the beginning of the year I was requested by NUIG to write a report on the advantages of being a member of USI. At this stage NUIG were unsure if they were going to hold a disaffiliation referendum but thankfully they decided not to.

**REPORT ON SU STRUCTURES;** I was asked by one of my colleges to do up a report on the structures of the SU around the BMW region to help resolve an issue they are having. I did this and sent it on.

**REPORT ON SPONSORSHIP;** a large number of incoming officers asked me to provide a list of guidelines for an MO on the best way to go about getting sponsorship. Tralee IT created a brilliant marketing pack for distribution to businesses, so I drew up a guideline document for my region and I also distributed IT Tralee's marketing pack.

**BULK BUYING REPORT;** at the start of the year I gathered the details of the different products and services that the MOs used. I compiled this into a comparative document which outlined where people could get better deals. This was then distributed to all the MOs in the BMW region.

**CLASS REP ELECTIONS;** I was on campus for a full day in LYIT running class rep elections. I spoke to large number of classes on the day about USI and the national campaign, as well as recruiting over fifty reps and establishing a rep database for LYIT Students' Union. I found the day quite successful in terms of engagement and I had numerous new followers on twitters after I asked them to follow USI. I have made a significant effort to increase my online Twitter presence to promote the work I do so there is more transparency to my jobs.

**CLASS REP TRAINING;** I attended the AIT, IT Sligo, STACS, NUI Maynooth, LYIT, GMIT Galway, GMIT Castlebar. Due to the rep trainings clashing I was unable to attend the DKIT event. I delivered the national campaign presentation at each of the events and answered any questions that people had. I also helped to organise two rep training days.

**MATURE STUDENT CONFERENCE;** in preparation for the mature student conference I worked with the VP for Equality and Citizenship in compiling a list of potential modules and speakers. I compiled a list of ideas for the event that I thought may be of use having dealt with mature students a lot in my region. I also contacted one person in every union including the equality officers in the Students' Unions and made them aware of the event and encouraged them to promote it. I attended the event and helped to run it.

**FRESHERS WEEK;** I attended some MO fresher weeks and spoke to first years. I set up a stand and asked people to like the USI Facebook page and I gave out rent books and USI bangles.

**VOTER REGISTRATION;** I carried out a voter registration campaign on a number of campuses in time for the children's referendum. The VP of Equality and Citizenship put me in touch with someone in Spunout who gave me 400 packs for the registration drive. Two hundred packs went to my region and two hundred went to the South.

**LOCAL LOBBYING;** There were different opportunities throughout the year to lobby TDs with the local SU. Some of these included, lobbying Robert Troy with AIT, lobbying John O Mahony with GMIT and lobbying John Perry with STACS.

**TRINITY COLLEGE REFERENDUM;** I was on site in Trinity to help with the "No to disaffiliation" campaign. I spoke to lots of students throughout the days and it was great to get to engage students in a college outside my region.

**DKIT PLEBISCITE;** DKIT held a plebiscite for students to vote on whether or not to buy JJB sports in Dundalk. I spent the day helping the executive promote the fact the vote was taking place and explaining to students about it. The end result was in favour of buying the sports centre.

**NUI MAYNOOTH REFERENDUM;** I spent a significant amount of time working on the NUI Maynooth referendum. I attended meetings with the executive and I organised and ran the "Yes to USI" campaign on the campus. I spoke to hundreds of students over the two weeks of the polling and had a stand for a number of days in their arts block. A big thank you to everyone who travelled to help me on site.

**AIT WELFARE CREW TRAINING;** AIT put a welfare crew in place a welfare crew to assist the union with their work on campus. The group were established in association with some staff in the college and I was asked to give a presentation to the students on their roles. I met with the students and spoke to them about USI and their role on AIT campus as part of the new crew. European student convention; I attended the first two days of the ESC and helped the Vice President of Academic Affairs to register and welcome delegates.

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS IRELAND;** after the success of last year's pilot I worked alongside the project team this year to make the awards a standalone event. This attempt has been a success and the awards will now take place on April 18th in Dublin. I have been promoting the event with the other regional officers and I am looking forward to seeing students being acknowledged for their hard work across the categories. Congress preparation; a number of MOs asked for my help with writing motions. I also took a number of delegates through how congress worked so they were prepared for the event.

**GRANTS CASE WORK;** as with everyone involved in Students' Unions this year I had numerous cases to deal with this year in relation to SUSI enquiries. The Vice President for Academic Affairs was a great help to me in sorting out things throughout the year so I would like to thank her for all her help.

**EDUCATION CASE WORK;** I had two cases this year which took up considerable amounts of my time. In both cases the staff of the college did not cooperate so it was difficult to get it sorted.

**RETURNING OFFICER;** I had the honour of being returning officer for AIT and it was great to be asked back again after last year. Well done to Dan and Michaela on their results, and best of luck to Andrew who is joining them next year as deputy.

**ATHLONE RADIO;** AIT welfare officer asked me to be a guest on his radio show and I went along and spoke about USI and my position.

**WOMEN IN SOCIETY;** along with some of the other female members of officer board I went to the women in society seminar in UCD. The meeting was extremely successful with a student there calling for more similar events in the future. The meeting lasted for about three hours and there were five guest speakers and a discussion forum at the end.

## External engagement

Being young in Ireland; I travelled to Dublin with the other SU Presidents from around the country to the reception by Michael D. Higgins in the Aras. It was a great event and I was really proud to be a student leader on the day and grateful for the opportunity to attend.

## Conclusion

This year has been a challenging year for the students of Ireland and ultimately in USI. A lot of work has happened but there is still a significant amount of work to be done. I have been honoured to serve a year on officer board for two terms and I would like to thank all of my colleges for electing me and being such fun to work with during the year. I am extremely proud of the BMW region and the passion that is there to fight on behalf of students. I hope that next year's officer board serves the area well and I want to wish all those starting in to new positions the best of luck and I also want to wish those moving on all the best. I particularly want to thank every member of officer board who will be my friends for life.



# VP GAEILGE PEADAR DE BLÚIT

## Seachtain na bhFreisir

Prior to the beginning of the academic year, in co-operation with an Comhordaitheoir na Mac Léinn of Conradh na Gaeilge, we sourced different materials from Irish language organisations to aid cumainn Gaelaigh in different MO's during the different fresher's weeks. I sourced a number of different materials for Cumainn Gaelaigh including discount cards, stickers, notepads and other things. Thanks must go to Conradh na Gaeilge, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Foras na Gaeilge and others for supplying these materials to Cumainn around the country free of charge.

The numbers in Cumainn around the country increased dramatically this year. As well as that we now have more cumainn around the country than ever before. I would like also to thank MO teams around the country for their help and support on the ground, aiding and developing cumainn, especially in the case of new ones.

## Ábhar AMLÉ

A very popular material that has been disseminated in the last number of years were the 'Tá Gaeilge agam' bands which I also sourced prior to beginning of the year. 10,000 of these bands were ordered specifically for Fresher's weeks, so that new members could wear them from the beginning of the year. They continue to be very popular with students and I hope will be continue to be produced.

## Traenáil na gCumann

One of my priorities at the beginning of the year was improving an Deireadh seachtaine traenála na gCumann. The event occurred during the second weekend of October and was attended by Oifigigh na Gaeilge and cumainn from more than 20 MO's. This year for the first time it was held over two days rather than one. This added to networking opportunities for those in attendance and as a result improved co-operation between the cumainn during the year.

The purpose of the weekend is two-fold. Firstly the clearer and more direct aim is to offer advice and guidance to cumainn and Oifigigh regarding how to go about their new roles. This requires a number of workshops on Friday and Saturday relating to the different ways in which to have a successful Irish Language presence on campus.

The second aim is to give representatives from the different Irish language communities in MO's a chance to network and bounce ideas off each other at the very beginning of the year. As a result there is an atmosphere of co-operation established rather than one of rivalry, which has proven to be detrimental in times past. This year's event was the best attended that has ever been held. I believe based on the work that has been done this year it can continue to augmented.

## Oireachtas na Gaeilge

Shortly after the deireadh seachtaine traenála another central part of the Irish Language calendar occurred. Oireachtas na Gaeilge is a festival for Irish speakers held every year. Every year a large number of students make the trip to wherever the festival is taking place, this year was no different with in excess of 500 students travelling - an unexpected improvement on last year's number. Travelling students occupied a number of different residences during the weekend. The weekend was a great success and saw the attendance of a number of MO's who had previously not attended. Also as a result of our continued part in the festival Oireachtas na Gaeilge are due to give us a seat on their National Committee from next year. I hope that this will help Leas-Uactaráin na Gaeilge in the future to have an increased input into the planning of the festival.

## Díospóireacht na Mac Léinn

Also this year at the Oireachtas, the second Díospóireacht na mac léinn took place. This event was co-organised by ourselves, Gael-linn, and Conradh na

Gaeilge. The event was a huge success and it is hoped that the event will continue in the future. Travelling students also showed a huge interest in it as they showed up in numbers to support their MO, as such it is my hope that the event will continue this year and into the future with the full support of USI.

## Conradh na Gaeilge

I have spent time with an Conradh working with them on their campaigns and ensure that students are getting involved. They are currently working on a campaign to get the government to establish a forum whereby the public can have an input into Irish Language policy. I would hope that if such a forum were to be established that USI and an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge would play an active role. For this reason I have been offering as much help as I can to the Conradh in the campaign.

## Club Chonradh na Gaeilge

I have spent the entirety of the year working with Club Chonradh na Gaeilge in Dublin to encourage the promotion of their student night with a view to giving Irish speaking students in Dublin and the environs a chance to come and practice their Irish in a enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere. In the course of the last year students from TCD, UCD, DIT, DCU, Froebel, Marino, NUIM, and others, have made full use of an Club to offer a central point to congregate in Irish and encouraged all to use what they have.

## Foras na Gaeilge / Maoiniú Chumainn Gaelaigh

Last year Foras na Gaeilge agreed to establish a central fund to help cumainn Gaelaigh with their events during the year. This year following discussions with ourselves, Conradh na Gaeilge, and the Foras, it was decided that cumainn would make applications. There has been issues regarding the processing of the money, but I believe that in the future this will lead to a clear and defined fund for 3rd level similar to that available for 1st and 2nd level.

This funding model is a positive step forward for USI and cumainn around the country based on the ad hoc basis, and uncertainty previously in place. The hope is that the money the cumann receive can go towards development of cumainn on campus and MO Irish Language communities nationally.

## Seachtainí / Laethanta na Gaeilge

It was my privilege this year to be part of Irish Language weeks and days during the year. These events were very well organised, and in one instance contributed to that cumann winning the national award for best Cumann Gaelach. Irish weeks like these have in the past years helped to focus an MO's attention on the Irish Language if only for a week, or a day. Their potential should be realised, and even SU's in MO's

without an OnaG or functioning Cumann should where possible enlist the help of the USI OnaG to aid in the organisation of events to highlight the Irish Language on campus. In the past number of years cumainn have been established, and succeeded in place where there has been little Irish presence among the wider student populous. As such no MO should shy away from such events.

## Feachtas Náisiúnta

During the National campaign I spent a good deal of time working on it with USI. As well as encouraging cumainn to come out and support local events, rallies and marches, I was on Raidió na Gaeltachta, Raidió na Life and TG4, almost every day ahead of the budget detailing the campaign, and encouraging people to come out and support local events. I also spent a number of days going to MO's to encourage their students to come out and support the campaign.

## Polasaí Gaeilge AMLÉ

I have been working for the last number of months on a Irish Language policy for USI. For years we have had a bi-lingual policy, however what this entails or mandates our Union to do in terms of the Irish language is not clear. As such I have spent the last while working on this policy so there is no ambiguity as what is expected of USI, notably an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge in the future.

## Raidió Rí-Rá

I attended a number of meetings of Raidió Rí-Rá throughout the year, and it is fair to say the station has seen great growth in that time. In the coming months it is hoped Raidió Rí-Rá will go live on DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) for a twelve-month-period. Raidió Rí-Rá was also live online again this year during Seachtain na Gaeilge, broadcasting live shows to it's listeners via the website [www.rrr.ie](http://www.rrr.ie).

Another exciting step forward that has occurred for Raidió Rí-Rá is the invitation we have received to go live on Saorview. The outworking of this has yet to be decided but there is no doubt this is a great step forward for the station and a great recognition of the work being done by those working in the station on a day-to-day basis.

## Rith na Gaeilge 2014

I have continued to work with Rith this year ahead of next year's festival. I have also travelled to Wales as part of Rith to help the Welsh language community there in their efforts to organize their own one later this year, and ensure the participation of students in the festival. The aim of Rith is to visit as many communities as possible over the week and a half and bring our national language to the people, raising awareness for the language. Last year in excess of 35,000 people took part in Rith 2012. Rith is a great festival for many reasons among them it's ability to bring communities together, encourage those taking part to get out and get active, and most importantly encouraging people to use the Irish Language.



I hope in future USI will support Rith na Gaeilge to our fullest extent. It is only to our benefit that this support would be. We work very well with other Irish Language organisations currently, as such official endorsement of Rith in future only makes sense.

ways of promoting our national language. Ahead of the event this year I hope to work with my successor and hold a workshop for Cumainn and Oifigigh na Gaeilge from all MO's in order to review the work of the year gone by and offer suggestions for the coming year. The idea is, it will act as reflection of traenáil na gCumann which I have already alluded to.

## *Seachtain na Gaeilge 2013*

This festival of celebration of the Irish Language has been a chance for speakers and supporters of the Irish Language to celebrate our national language. I have attended meetings all year in preparation for the festival, and in spite of ever increasing pressure on the sector, the festival itself this year proved to be among the most successful in recent times. Students right across the country undertook organising events to promote the language and indeed encourage others to get out and give their support. Seachtain na Gaeilge faces an uncertain future and I hope that USI and an t-Oifigeach Gaeilge will give our full support to ensure this festival continues to promote and encourage the Irish language. Like the USI motto says; 'Ní neart go cur le chéile'. Seachtain na Gaeilge and USI can only benefit from enhanced co-operation something which I hope will happen in the coming year.

## *Árd Fheis*

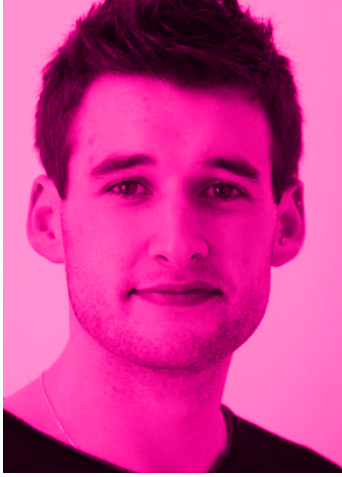
In the past month I have been busy working with cumainn and Oifigigh na Gaeilge to ensure a strong turnout at Árd Fheis Conradh na Gaeilge. The Árd Fheis is the National Congress of Conradh na Gaeilge, the people's forum on the Irish Language. I have been encouraging students to attend the Árd Fheis so they may take part, and have the voices of Ireland's youth heard in relation to their national language. Our language needs the input of young energetic people to continue to drive the language through the 21st century. The Árd Fheis is a vessel for discussion and debate about how best to continue to build our language and as such it is important the strong participation of young people seen in recent years continues, and the views of Ireland's youth in this forum are heard.

## *Comhdháil na Mac Léinn*

Again this year Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge AMLÉ, was invited to organise a student conference at Árd Fheis Conradh na Gaeilge. The conference has been a great success in the last number of years and I hope that it will continue to attract attendees in the future. It is my hope the Irish Language standing conference will again be introduced with a view to giving a platform to the opinions of the students who most likely utilise the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge. USI is an all-inclusive Union for all our members and as such we should be happy to encourage the ideas of students who would not usually take part in our activities.

## *Tionól na Gaeltachta*

Tionól na Gaeltachta is an annual event bringing together Irish language activists from across the country to look forward and consider new, productive



# VP SOUTHERN REGION MICHAEL THOMPSON

Since July 2012 I have had the pleasure of assisting the eight southern region colleges and their elected S.U representatives; WITSU, ITTSU, ITCSU, CCSU, UCCSU and LITSU (Limerick-Clare-Tipperary).

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working amongst the various teams and have had the opportunity to work on a diverse range of campaigns, projects and activities.

The following is a brief account of my work since taking up office.

## *Outlining my goals:*

At our first Officer Board 12/13 meeting, we were asked to outline our main aims and objectives for the year ahead. Mine were as follows:

- Act as an affective liaison officer between MO's and USI.
- Successfully advise, guide and support MO's whenever called upon.
- Maintain a strong working relationship with my region throughout the year.
- Assist MO's with both their local and national campaigns.
- Increase USI awareness among the grass-root students in the south.
- Develop the southern region council meetings.
- Provide an increased level of entertainment support for MO's.
- Introduce a USI officer guide as a guideline for MO's throughout their term.
- Affiliate CITSU

## *USI/MO Crossover:*

Throughout the summer months I travelled extensively across the south of Ireland to begin my work with the southern region Member Organisations (MO's). Having met all of the sabbatical officers during my campaign for election, I was now more conscious to introduce myself to the S.U teams in their entirety. My intent was to cover, what I felt, was imperative to know and act upon before

the students returned to study. The primary areas we covered were as follows:

- USI. Who we are and what we do. A brief history on the organisation, USI's current aims and objectives, introduction to officer board and the benefits of membership.
- How to get the most from USI throughout your term.
- Selecting your campaigns for the academic year.
- Devising your annual plan of work.
- Team bonding.

I found these introductory meetings greatly benefited the first time sabbaticals in particular and ensured that the MO's and I got off to a strong start.

## *Southern Region Bonding Event:*

Throughout my previous roles in the student movement, I found it extremely beneficial to liaise with my counterparts across the country. The southern region bonding event takes place so as our members gain immediate allies with similar interests. This year, the southern region bonding event took place in Tralee, County Kerry.

After meeting for tea and coffee in the morning, the southern region MO's and I went paint-balling until late in the afternoon. This was followed by lunch and an evening surf at the beach. To top the day off we ate in a local Italian and hit the town for a few sociable drinks. The event seemed to be a success and formed lasting relationships for the year ahead.

## *Southern Region Council:*

The southern region sabbaticals have remained a tight group throughout the year which has ensured southern region council was an ongoing success. Numbers in attendance were always high and everyone seemed happy to engage in the groups discussions. I was very impressed with the level of contact the southern regional sabbaticals kept amongst each other in between national councils and they continue to assist each other with

various campaigns, issues and case-work. Every 4-6 weeks, southern region council and I met for approximately an hour. As chair, I chose agenda items that I felt were of particular importance. Council was also free to submit agenda items the week before if they wished to do so. The agenda items would then be discussed until a solution was found or until the proposer was satisfied. I found the group extremely beneficial for both MO's and I, and was consistently impressed with their level of input. Some of the organisations key decisions in 12/13 came from southern region council suggestions which they should be extremely proud of.

## *Entertainments Working Group:*

Having recognised the lack of support for MO entertainment co-ordinators in the past few years, I was anxious to make a considerable amount of progress within this sector. As with southern region council, entertainments working group and I would meet every 4-6 weeks. The aim of the group was to provide support and guidance for each other before upcoming entertainment events. I am confident the groups discussions benefited it's attendees R.A.G weeks, freshers' weeks, theme nights etc. who were able to exchange contacts and ideas, block book and bulk buy within the group throughout the year. I also organised for external organisations to speak to the group on a number of occasions to acquire cheaper deals for Students' Unions. These organisations included KDG Travel and Sonix Entertainment, both of which came with impressive price lists.

## *ents.usi.ie:*

ents.usi.ie is certainly one of my proudest achievements this year. Thanks to months of work with entertainments working group, external organisations and USI's general manager, we were able to launch USI's first entertainment database for Students' Unions. Acts are able to list themselves completely free of charge and are then categorised depending on type, price, location etc. There is also a private forum for USI affiliated members, a highly recommended list of acts and a black list. In it's first few months, the website proudly lists over 60 acts and has received sponsorship from 'Sol Republic', one of the worlds leading headphone distributors. I will be working hard to develop the website until the end of my term and hope that it continues to be a success for years to come.

## *Communication through social media:*

In between national councils, both facebook groups of which I am administrator of, remained highly active. Due to the vast amount of e-mails that Students' Unions receive, it was often a lot easier to communicate and receive feedback via. facebook. As with southern region council and entertainments working group, members would often seek advice, share ideas and offer opinions to help benefit their counterparts across the country. I feel that both groups were a success throughout the year and proved to be a fantastic resource for our affiliated members.

Alongside these groups, I kept my region informed of my work via. my USI\_South twitter account. This was particularly useful throughout the 'Fed Up? Stand Up!'

campaign when trying to raise awareness, contacting TD's and informing my region of the campaigns successes as they happened.

## *Class Representative training events:*

Starting from early September, a member of officer board and I would travel around the south to meet with the various class representative councils. By now, we had made a substantial start on the national campaign and were able to liaise this back to the incoming reps'. We also discussed USI in depth and held a lengthy questions and answers session in the end. The presentations were a fantastic start to the academic year and certainly raised USI's profile among some of the countries leading student activists. Following the presentations, many of the reps' became directly involved with USI, and in particular the 'Fed Up? Stand Up!' campaign. I have no doubt that the allies we gained from the class representative presentations had a positive reflection on our results in the months that followed.

## *Officer Board communication:*

I felt the need to list Officer Board (OB) communication as it's something that has been of great benefit to me since taking up office. Every Monday morning, OB would meet to discuss the week ahead, outline our plan of work, educate ourselves on the work of our team-mates and converse about the main student issues at present. Teleconference meetings were also a regular occurrence across the team and constant feedback was always present through the OB text group. On a number of occasions we were required to take part in officer evaluation which proved extremely beneficial and ensured a high level of transparency. Various training days were also provided for us throughout the year which proved extremely advantageous.

## *Launching USI's 'Money Matters' Student Finance Guide:*

I had the pleasure of launching USI's 'Money Matters' Student Finance guide with LITSU Tipperary. While the national Welfare Officer launched the overall campaign, my fellow regional officers and I rolled it out in our respective colleges. This year, the primary launch in the south took place in Tipperary. The day was a huge success and the students in Tipperary seemed very receptive to the information at hand. The guide is a fantastic asset for all students and another highly beneficial piece of material for our affiliated members.

## *Fed Up? Stand Up! National Campaign:*

The 'Fed Up? Stand Up' campaign was undoubtedly our most substantial campaign of the year. Work began early to ensure a difference was made in 'Budget 2013' with a solid plan being put in place before the students returned to study. We began to gain support via class rep' councils and expressing the importance of the campaign to our grass-root members. With the inclusion of our new Media and Publications Officer, we were now in the spotlight more than ever and were rapidly gaining support from the general public. Students, parents and business owners alike joined the campaign in their thousands as we lobbied the government for the result we deserved.

My specific role in the campaign was to organise and implement a number of actions across the south such as:

- TD Interviews - I worked closely with a number of students in the south to arrange interviews with their local TD's. The aim of these interviews was to meet the TD's face to face, outline the financial obstacles students face on a daily basis and attempt to gain as much support from each TD as possible.
- Consistent lobbying of TD's - Throughout the campaign I consistently lobbied TD's in the southern region. I remained in regular contact with all of our target TD's in the south and ensured they remained under pressure to support students in the upcoming budget.
- Public Meetings - I worked closely with MO's to promote and roll out a number of public meetings in the south. These meetings could be attended by any member of the general public and received huge media attention nationwide. Along with our core supporters of students, parents and business owners, TD's, Senators, Mayors and County Councillors also showed up across the south to offer their support.
- Parents Guide to Budget 2013 - I promoted and distributed the USI Parents Guide to Budget 2013 across the south.
- Local Protests - I assisted with the organisation and implementation of numerous local protests in the southern region. A number of provisions needed to be carried out before the protests such as route planning, acquiring permits, production of materials and raising awareness on campus to name a few. As with the public meetings, these were also heavily attended by TD's, Senators, Mayors and County Councillors.
- I also attended USI's 'Lobby of the Oireachtas' 2012, attended campaigns sub-committee and was present for a number of the public meetings outside of the southern region.

## *Work with non-affiliates:*

I have dealt with CITSU on a constant basis throughout the year and recently spoke to their AGM regarding a possible referendum. It frustrated me to learn that their Students' Union had decided to withdraw the motion to call for a referendum the day before my arrival. Having joined us for a portion of Students' Union Training, two national councils, a public meeting and a local protest, I was extremely disappointed with their decision. I will continue to work with CITSU throughout the remainder of my term in an effort to portray the many benefits of USI membership. I believe there is still a small possibility of CITSU affiliating to USI by the end of my term.

## *Team building and Re-focusing exercises:*

On returning from the Christmas break, I travelled across the south to engage in a number of team building and re-focusing exercises with the southern area sabbatical officers. Many of the SU's chose to run these in conjunction with their class rep' refresher days which proved to be very successful.

## *Referenda:*

I worked for a number of months on the various referenda that arose throughout the year. I lobbied students, lecture addressed and promoted the many benefits of USI membership in TCD, UCD, NUIM and DCU. Along with re-affiliating TCDSU, MSU and affiliating DCUSU for the first time in a decade, it was a fantastic opportunity for officer board to be on the ground with USI's grass-root members. I have no doubt that USI's profile was raised significantly throughout this time.

## *USI Student Achievement Awards:*

I worked as part of a project team to launch the 'Student Achievement Awards Ireland', USI's first stand alone awards ceremony. A substantial amount of work has gone in to the preparation stages of event and we have no doubt that it will be a huge success.

## *MO Elections and Hustings:*

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

## *Capitation:*

I assisted a number of MO's across the country with their capitation budgets and advised them on how to acquire additional funding. Having worked on this area in my previous I was able to supply MO's with a number of examples and relevant documents.

## *LITSU Merger:*

I assisted the now LITSU in the early stages of their multi-campus merger. I was a member of their advisory panel and worked closely with each of their sabbatical officers, the Deputy President and LITSU's Solicitor to ensure a smooth and transparent process.

## *Voter Registration:*

I worked with a small number of MO's in the south to register students to vote for the first time.



## *USI Officer Guide:*

I am currently acting as project manager of the 'USI Students' Union Officer Guide', a >150 page publication and diary that will act as a guideline to future Students' Unions. The publication will consist of submissions from past and current sabbatical officers who will offer their expertise in a variety of fields.

## *Conclusion:*

As many of you may know, I did not originally run for the position of VPSR. My round the world flights and travel plans were well and truly booked and I felt that a national position was very much out of my reach. After the position reopened at congress 2012, and having witnessed the strong candidates who had been deemed elected, I decided to launch my campaign for a seat on Officer Board 12/13. A year later, I could not be happier with my decision and have enjoyed an amazing year working with the Union of Students in Ireland. The eight colleges in the south have been a pleasure to work with and host some of the brightest young minds in the country. I have no doubt, that many of the sabbaticals I have worked with this year will go on to be highly successful individuals.

I was also blessed with a fantastic team to work among and have the utmost admiration for what they have achieved in their respective areas this year. Each officer and staff brought something unique to the table and helped make 12/13 one of USI's most productive years in it's history. Although the work often got a little crazy during the major campaigns, we remained a tight group and accomplished our goals as a unit. I have made many friends here that I will take with me for life and will leave with an endless amount of fond memories.

***OFFICER  
BOARD  
ELECTIONS***

# *PRESIDENT* *JOE* *O'CONNOR*



A candidate for USI President, Joe O'Connor is in his second term serving as President of GMIT Students' Union, having previously spent a year as the Vice-President and Welfare Officer for GMITSU.

During this time Joe has gained the relevant skills, knowledge and experience of how local Unions operate and work, and how to best lead an effective team, whilst also being extremely active and engaged at a national level, to equip him for the role of USI President.

The nature of Joe's broad brief in GMIT, taking in education and entertainment as well as an active role in equality, and having come from a welfare background, has seen Joe participate and engage in almost every aspect of USI over the past three years. Having also taken a hands-on approach to dealing with student issues across a wide range of areas during this time, Joe feels he is now in a position to be a strong President and an effective leader for the Union as a whole.

Joe has a strong familiarity and understanding of the governance & financing of USI, it's Constitution and structures, and also the main issues facing the organisation, having been a member of USI Finance Committee, the Constitutional Review Group, and several policy Taskforces during his time in GMIT.

Joe has participated in a huge amount of USI campaigns, and has a proven track record in this regard, developing strong political lobbying skills, extensive media experience and expertise, and also an ability to engage and mobilise students.

An unwavering believer in the importance of a strong national Union, Joe has long committed himself to facing USI's many challenges with vigour and enthusiasm, and hopes to get the opportunity to lead USI in facing the great challenges which currently face our Union at present.

For a candidate with strong experience and a passion to change and reform USI, please support Joe O'Connor for USI President.

# *VP ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE* **DAVID KEOGAN**



Hi Congress Delegates.

I am running for the position of USI VP Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance. In my time as DITSU President and Vice President, Education and Welfare, I have brought solutions to the college authorities that have been implemented. Student feedback to their course and standard student handbooks are just some of the positive changes I have influenced in DIT. I have also been an active member of National Council, attending all working groups, an active member of the Campaigns Sub Group, Postgraduate Forum and elected as National Council Rep on USI Finance Committee.

My manifesto outlines some of my aims for next year, but my main objective will be to offer solutions, in consultation with Students' Union Officers from every Member Organisation, to the massive amount of changes coming down the line for Higher Education in Ireland. Solutions that will make the student voice paramount, both locally and nationally. Solutions that will prevent situations like SUSI happening again.

I call on you to vote for relevant experience. Experience in pre-emptive action, not reactionary. If we continue to fail to provide solutions in the form of policy and position papers then we will have more 'SUSIs'; Work-placement SUSIs, Higher Education Sector Rationalisation SUSIs, Postgraduate Loan Scheme SUSIs.

Please stop me and ask any questions you may have.

Cheers and Vote David Keogan, number 1 for VP Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance.'



# *VP ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE*

## *CAT O'DRISCOLL*



As Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance this year I have had the pleasure to work with a committed team constantly facing new and demanding challenges. I am very proud of our achievements so far but it must be accepted that many more challenges lie in the months and years ahead. With the successful roll out of the first ever National Student Survey pilot and the nightmare that is the new centralised grant awarding authority, the student experience is changing dramatically.

I am running for a second term as I am the strong voice needed in this time of great change. I have built the strong relationships and alliances needed to protect and enhance the student experience. I have ensured the students voice is heard at all levels, from undergraduate to doctorate. In facing the many issues affecting students this year I have developed the skills, knowledge and experience needed to fulfil this role effectively for another term. Now more than ever I am acutely aware of the hardship many of our members are facing as well as the frustration and fear of many completing college with limited options.

I am passionate about students having their say on their college and educational experience. I want to protect all levels of higher education ensuring access routes are available for those facing financial or social barriers. I have the energy to continue to support students' union officers across the country as they assist their students with academic and financial issues. Vote for experience and passion, vote for Cat O'Driscoll.

# VP CAMPAIGNS PAUL CURLEY



Hi there, my name is Paul Curley, I am a 22 year old recently graduated commerce and marketing student from Galway. I am the current NUI Galway Students' Union President and I am running to be your VP for Campaigns as I have the energy, strategy and people management skills to co-ordinate a team of sabbatical officers across the country to excel in their roles in the coming year which would then lead to campaigns excelling across the country.

Through my time in NUI Galway, I've seen student life through my lack of engagement early on and later through my engagement in clubs, societies, volunteering and the Students' Union. During my time, I've learned many new skills and how to deal with many different situations that can crop up. If elected to represent you on a national level, I will work to prove value in what USI does to each Students' Union and sabbatical officer both in the south and north. With a proposed October budget this year due to new EU financial measures, we will have to move faster to produce lobbying documents and engage our students from the minute they enter back into their studies. It is critical that the 'Towards Budget 2014' document is applied over the months leading to crossover for Sabbatical Officers but also that Students' Unions across the country take this opportunity to stop making the mistakes we previously made and lobby well before the month of the Budget. I believe I am the candidate to help every Students' Union adjust to this change and increase our productivity when it comes to lobbying for effective results.

The time is now for us to deliver results; our backs are against the wall but in times of difficulty great opportunities arise. Nobody thinks we can succeed so what have we got to lose? If elected VP for Campaigns, I can promise you that I will bring my passion, experience and work ethic to USI and work with you all tirelessly so that at the end of the year there would be no regrets from any member. USI is not just officer board, we all have to deliver.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.

# VP CAMPAIGNS PADDY GUINEY



Welcome to Ballinasloe!

My name is Paddy Guiney, and I'm running to be the Vice-President for Campaigns that takes our organisation to the next level. I'm running to be the Vice-President for Campaigns that takes the engagement we see at Congress every year, and channels it into meaningful 52 week a year campaigns. I'm running to be the Vice-President for Campaigns that takes the "National Movement" out of boardrooms in Dublin, and onto the campuses across this island. I'm running to be the Vice-President for Campaigns that can stand up at next year's Congress and say "Together, we have made a difference."

I'm standing here to further the cause of marriage equality, to ensure the most equitable form of funding for the most vulnerable of our members, to represent our growing postgraduate population, and to show all around us that students are not passive members of society, they are the driving force of the knowledge economy and of Irish recovery. Show me a politician who doesn't believe in the value of public education, and I'll show them 100 entrepreneurial students, all ready to create jobs, pay taxes and drag this country back from the abyss.

I can't do this alone. Yes, I need your vote, but more than that, I need your arms, legs, voices and mandates. I need strong debate on Congress floor that once and for all dispels the media myth that "USI has no input from its members". Unity is OUR strength, let's play to it.

In my time as Vice-President for Campaigns & Communications in UCD I've campaigned for Students' Rights, Welfare, Equality, Funding, the Irish Language, and grassroots engagement. If my experience tells me anything, it's that I can't go it alone.

Stand with me, run this marathon, ní neart go cur le chéile.  
Paddy

# VP CAMPAIGNS FIACH O'NEILL



My name is Fiach O'Neill and I am seeking your vote for the position of Vice President for Campaigns of USI for the academic year 2013/2014.

I have been actively involved in the Union of Students in Ireland since Maynooth Students' Union re-affiliated in 2010. I am currently the Deputy President / Welfare & Equality Vice President and have been a strong, focused campaign leader for my Students' Union for the last 2 years. This focus resulted in the USI Campaign of the Year Award (Large Students' Union) 2012. Having gained invaluable experience during my two terms in office as the campaigns officer for my union, I now wish to extend my communication, design and leadership abilities to a national level.

My intention is to use my energy, creativity and inclusiveness to serve each college attentively and efficiently on both a national and a local level.

#### My Priorities:

- Local Campaign Harmonisation Studies - to empower and equip Member Organisations with the skills and the tools they need for local campaigns to reach their maximum effectiveness.
- USI Connect - to best support our student activists in terms of communication, interaction, resources, campaign tool kits etc.
- National Campaign Development - to ensure we fully understand the campaign, that everyone has his or her input to influence and lead the campaign with a sense of ownership.
- Prospective Students - to engage our First Year students with our movement before they arrive on campus in September.
- Voter Registration - to ensure that our power at the ballot box is fully realised and translated to the voter register by 2014 and 2016.
- Effective Lobbying & Social Media Lobbying - to ensure all of our student activists feel confident in lobbying for the needs of students.



**VP EQUALITY  
AND  
CITIZENSHIP  
LAURA  
HARMON**



It has been an absolute privilege to work for you this year and I would be honoured if you would vote to re-elect me for a second term.

As students and as members of society, I believe that you all deserve equality and the prospect of a bright future. USI's Equality and Citizenship campaign has a key role to play if we are to realise this vision.

I have relished the challenges of working in the role this year and I am proud of our many achievements. This year, we have worked together to raise the profile of this brief nationally.

I have lived and breathed this role every day for the last 9 months and I know the brief inside out. I have gained a wealth of experience from working on the mandates that you have set me. I have seen how the campaign can directly affect students on the ground. My commitment and passion for the role is unwavering. I am persistent when pursuing our goals and I have a tried and tested work ethic. I am the best person to represent you as Vice- President for Equality and Citizenship.

A second term is about expansion and implementation. It's about building on our successes so far. We've achieved so much already but there is so much more work to be done.

I want to work hard to continue making equality and active citizenship a reality for students.  
Vote Laura Harmon #1

# **VICE PRESIDENT FOR WELFARE**

## **DENISE MCCARTHY**



Representing students' welfare on a national level has been an honour this year. After serving as a local welfare officer for two years and the current USI VP for Welfare I believe I am the best person for the job! USI needs a Welfare Officer who is dedicated to the role, experienced and passionate about welfare, I am that person!

I am re-running for USI Vice President for Welfare as I have worked diligently in my first term; fulfilling mandates and achieving goals I set out this time last year. I have a lot more to give and would like to further the work I have done for continuity within USI.

I am fully aware of what is involved in the role and I have represented students' welfare to the best of my ability on committees and advisory panels and in all campaigns I have co-ordinated. I have been a support for Welfare Officers across the country on a wide range on topics and have assisted students with personal casework. I have built connections and strengthened relationships with various organisations that are central to the role of USI VP for Welfare.

All my aims and goals are believable and achievable.

As I have proven this year no job is too big or too small.

Please have a read of my manifesto and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to come talk to me during USI Congress.

Denise

Vote Denise McCarthy #1 for USI VP for Welfare

# *VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE IRISH LANGUAGE*

## *EOIN Ó MURCHÚ COBÁC (UCD)*



Iarrthóir d'Oifigeach na Gaeilge le hAMLÉ

Candidate for Irish Language Officer with USI

1. Tá taithí fhada, ilghnéitheach agam bheith ag plé le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge agus imeachtaí trí Ghaeilge ar an trú leibhéal.
2. Bheinn sásta bheith mar ghlór láidir ar son na teanga, agus ní ghéillfinn do phlámás is béal bán an stáit maidir lena bpolasaithe teanga, agus an teip leanúnach seirbhísí as Gaeilge a chur ar fáil, sa Ghaeltacht ach go háirithe, áit a bhfuil an teanga á creimeadh faoi lathair. Níor leor caint riamh.
3. Is minic gur ionann cur chun cinn na teanga ar an trú leibhéal agus spreagadh 'chúpla focal' na ndaoine, agus cé gur gné an-tábhachtach é seo, ba chóir freastal ar chainteoirí líofa mar thosaíocht.

Tá fáilte mhór roimh thuairimí daoine. Déan teagmháil le hEoin ag [Eoin.o-murchu@ucdconnect.ie](mailto:Eoin.o-murchu@ucdconnect.ie)

1. I have much experience promoting the language in many different ways at third level.
2. I would be a strong voice, and will not shy away from castigating the state in its failure to promote the language properly and failing miserably to provide state services through Irish, even in the Gaeltachtaí where Irish is under great pressure. Platitudes have never been enough.
3. The focus in promotion of the language at third level is often just on getting people to use their 'cúpla focal' and while this is a very important part, fluent speakers should be catered for as a priority.

I am more than willing to accept any ideas or plans people have. Contact Eoin at [eoin.o-murchu@ucdconnect.ie](mailto:eoin.o-murchu@ucdconnect.ie)

# VP IRISH LANGUAGE FEIDHLIM SEOIGHE



A chairde,  
Feidhlim Seoighe is ainm dom, agus táim ag lorg do vóta ag Comhdháil Náisiúnta AMLÉ do post an Léas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge.

My name is Feidhlim Seoighe, and I am running for the position of the Vice- President for the Irish Language. I am the current Oifigeach na Gaeilge in the NUI Galway Students' Union, and a final year Law student.

My full manifesto is available at [seoighe-gaeilge.info](http://seoighe-gaeilge.info), both as Gaeilge and in English. I we have also distributed a short synopsis of my manifesto throughout the congress floor.

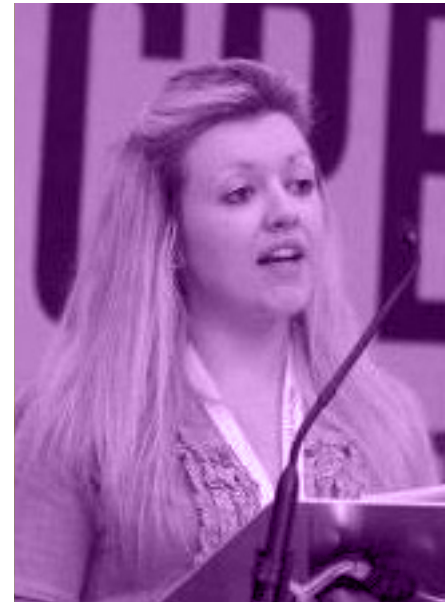
I have thoroughly enjoyed my year as Oifigeach na Gaeilge in the Students' Union. My major achievements of the year include launching a Campaign for the re-introduction of an Irish Language Living Scheme, being one of the first Oifigáí na Gaeilge to attend National Council (something I will develop upon if elected), organising Seachtain na Gaeilge in NUI Galway for the past two years, and being on the ground, campaigning for USI in the Maynooth Students' Union referendum, in which an overwhelming 87% of students decided it was in their best interests that their SU was affiliated with USI.

I would love it if you could take a minute to read my manifesto and if you have any questions regarding anything outlined in it, please do not hesitate to come over and ask me.

Twitter: @fseoighe.

# *VP FOR THE BORDER, MIDLANDS AND WEST REGION*

# *HELEN O'REILLY*



My name is Helen O'Reilly and I am running for the position of Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region.

I got involved with St Angela's Students' Union in 2007 as a Class Representative. I went on to be Entertainments Officer and have been SU President for two years. In 2012 I became the first sabbatical officer in St Angela's College, I believe this has allowed our SU to better support our students. During my time involved in the SU I have co-ordinated campaigns on a wide range of issues, mobilised 25% of our student body to protests, actively lobbied local representatives, sat on Academic Council and numerous other college committees and been a member of the Board of Directors.

I have also actively engaged with USI as a member of National Council for 3 years. I was part of USI's Constitution Review Group; I am a member of their working group on the effectiveness of National Council and participate in the USI Postgraduate Forum. These are roles which require a desire for reform to ensure that USI best serves its members and an ability to represent students' views on a national platform. I feel that this will be a challenging role with the numerous issues affecting students in Higher Education but I will thrive on this. I will work to ensure that each student and SU in the BMW Region feels they are getting benefits and value from USI irrespective of the size of their institution.

Please have a read of my manifesto for more details on my priorities and ideas for next year. If elected I will serve the students of this region diligently, drawing on the experience and expertise I have already gained.



# ***VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE SOUTHERN AREA***

# ***CIARA GUINAN***



My name is Ciara Guinan and I am running for the position of USI Vice President for the Southern Region for the academic year 2013/2014. I am currently the Deputy President for Welfare and Education of I.T Carlow Students' Union.

As Deputy President for Welfare and Education I have been a strong voice for I.T Carlow Students on many committees and boards including and not limited to; Governing Body, Academic Council, Health and Safety committee, Quality Assurance and improvement committee and Student Assistance Fund Committee.

Within USI I have been an active member of working groups and National Council and have been a delegate at congress on behalf of IT Carlow Students' Union since 2011.

My Priorities include but are not limited to the following;

1. Communication and Guidance

If elected I will improve on communication between Officer board and S.U Teams. I aim to do this by sending a weekly email outlining all works which will be carried during that week.

2. Class Rep Involvement / USI Awareness

I plan on carrying out a class rep feasibility study on how to involve class reps in USI.

3. SUSI Information Evenings

SUSI has caused headaches for sabbatical teams nationwide since its establishment in 2012. Grant information evenings are needed now more than ever.

4. Support

It is of high importance to me that each MO is and feels fully supported throughout their sabbatical year.

The above is a brief outline of my priorities if elected VP for the southern Region. For more information please read my full manifesto.

Vote #1 Ciara Guinan for VP of the Southern Region

# *VP BMW REGION*

# *KEVIN DONOGHUE*



My name is Kevin Donoghue and I am a 22 year old student In NUI Galway. I am the current postgraduate officer in NUI Galway after having served a year as the Convenor of Arts, Social Science and Celtic Studies. I have also been a committed class rep for three years and have been heavily involved with the Students' Union and the Student movement since then.

I feel the experience gained over the last few years make me a suitable candidate for Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region.

In the last two years the work of the current BMW officer has raised the bar for the requirements of any incoming officers. Any new candidate must be able to bring something new to the table in addition to fulfilling their current duties. I feel that I am the candidate to do that.

I see the regional officers as, in effect, regional campaigns officers. They must help direct national campaigns at a local level. I feel I am the right person for this job as I have the work ethic, drive and commitment to help expand this position in the next year.

# ***MOTIONS & POLICIES***

# ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE MOTIONS

## A&F 1

### *Motion to introduce increased USI Finance Committee Transparency*

Proposed By TCDSU

#### **Congress Notes**

The significant responsibility that USI Finance Committee has towards the organisation and the powers it holds under the constitution including:

- The drafting of the USI Annual Budget
- Regulation of Officerboard's terms and conditions of employment
- The setting of expense rates

#### **Congress Further Notes**

The inadequacy of a brief annual update on USI Finances to Member Organisations.

#### **Congress Also Notes**

The responsible decisions made by USI Finance Committee and the need to maintain confidentiality in relation to certain decisions.

#### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The President a quarterly update to National Council and to provide members of National Council with Agenda and Minutes of its meetings. Congress recognises that certain Agenda items and Minutes may be withheld due to being sensitive in nature.

## A&F 2

### *Motion on Cost of USI Affiliation*

Proposed by UCDSU

#### **Congress Notes:**

That USI currently costs each Students' Union €5 per student.

#### **Congress further notes:**

The dependence of USI on affiliation fees, amounting to 99.8% of the organisation's income in 11/12.

#### **Congress believes:**

It is prudent for the organisation and a duty to its Member Organisations to regularly conduct a comprehensive review of affiliation fees and financial strategy.

#### **Congress believes:**

It is equally important that students feel USI represents value for their money.

#### **Congress Mandates:**

The USI President commence a financial review of the organisation and the production of a five year financial plan to be presented to Congress 2014. This review must at a minimum:

Review the system of charging Member Organisations a charge per student regardless of size, student numbers and other criteria taken into account by other National Student Unions.

Seek to reduce the affiliation fees charged by USI to Students' Unions/student members.  
Aim to reduce dependence on affiliation fees through increasing other income sources

## A&F 3

### *Motion to Establish Working Group to investigate Cost of Congress*

Proposed by TCDSU

#### **Congress Notes**

The significant cost of Congress to Member Organisations and the economic limitations facing Students' Unions.

#### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The President to establish a working group to investigate the costs of Congress and identify areas or actions which may result in savings for MOs.

The taskforce will invite the following individuals to participate:

- USI President
- USI General Manager
- 1 Member of Finance Committee
- 2 Members of National Council
- 1 Representative of Universities
- 1 Representative of Institutes of Technology

# CITIZENSHIP MOTIONS

## CS 1

### *Working with Volunteer Ireland*

Proposed by St Angela's College Students' Union

#### **Congress notes:**

That the Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship has built a relationship and worked with Volunteer Ireland this year.

#### **Congress believes:**

That both USI and Volunteer Ireland have a lot to benefit from working together to promote and encourage student volunteering.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship to continue engaging and working with Volunteer Ireland to promote and encourage student volunteering in higher education institutions.

## CS 2

### *Young People, Citizenship and Engagement*

Submitted by AITSU

#### **Congress Welcomes:**

President Michael D. Higgins' 'Being Young and Irish' seminar and recognises the importance and positive impact that can result from programs that involve citizen engagement.

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

The low level of voter turnout in Ireland, particularly amongst young people, and the importance of ensuring that we have a population that is engaged with and participating in our democracy.





# UNION ORGANISATION MOTIONS

## UO 1

### *On-campus Training & Engagement*

Proposed by GMITSU

#### **Congress recognises:**

The importance of engaging with class representatives and part-time officers across the country in order to broaden USI's scope with its membership.

#### **Congress notes:**

That despite the high quality of speakers and modules at recent Part-Time Officer Training and Activist Academy events held centrally by USI, and well-regarded feedback from those who did attend, the disappointing attendances at these events in recent years.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The VP for Campaigns and all Regional VP's to organise and deliver ongoing training modules, events, seminars, and debates focused at class reps and part-time officers to be held regionally and on campus in MO's throughout the year.

## UO 2

### *Motion to Solidify Transparency for Members of USI*

Proposed by TCDSU

#### **Congress Notes**

The importance of transparency to the principles of the organisation

#### **Congress Mandates**

The President to set up a 'transparency' section of the USI website and ensure timely updates

#### **Congress Further Mandates**

The section to contain all National Council Agenda and Minutes and the minutes of USI Committees where relevant and possible. This would not include the minutes of Finance Committee.

#### **Congress Further Mandates**

The President to ensure the provision of a monthly PDF update including concise progress updates from USI officers for distribution to USI members via individual MOs. These updates may appear alongside videos as previously mandated (12/ UO 14).

## UO 3

### *Motion to Establish Sectoral and Regional Working Groups at National Council*

Proposed By TCDSU

#### **Congress Notes**

The benefit of close communication to MOs on issues which specifically relate to an individual sector.

#### **Congress Also Notes**

Imminent discussions regarding regional clustering and the need for closer communications between MOs regarding these developments.

The usefulness of discussions between MOs that opposed the Universities (Amendment) Act.

#### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The President to arrange for the establishment of sectoral or regional Working Groups at National Council as required. These working groups would elect a Chair and Secretary at their first meeting.

## UO 4

### *Motion on Data Protection Policy for USI Officer Board and all Member Organisations*

Proposed by TCDSU

#### **Congress Notes**

The delicate and sensitive nature of the information USI Officers and MO Officers receive and are in possession of on a daily basis including but not limited to casework details, documents held in confidence and documents of a commercially sensitive nature.

#### **Congress Further Notes**

The need for proper guidelines so that Union officers act in accordance with various statutory obligations.

#### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The USI President, in consultation with other USI Officers, to manage the development of a template USI 'Data Protection Policy' which can be adopted by all MOs.

#### **Congress Further Mandates**

The USI President to issue the MOs the guidelines on the registration process with the Data Protection Commissioner and how best to relate the work of an SU to the same.

## UO 5

### *USI National Charity*

Proposed by USI VP Welfare

#### **Congress notes:**

The existence of the 2012/2013 USI National Charity as Acquired Brain Injury which was chosen at the second National Council of the academic year.

#### **Congress Believes:**

It is important for USI and Member Organisations to support a charity each year and give back to the wider community.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to coordinate all efforts in fundraising and raising

awareness for the chosen charity, nationally and with Member Organisations.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to compile a briefing document for Member Organisations on the National Charity, which would include details on how to propose a charity, when the voting will take place and how the voting will happen. This is to be distributed at Students' Union Training, annually from July 2013.

## UO 6

### *Institutional Memory of USI*

Submitted by the President, USI

**Congress notes:**

The high turnover of officers on the Officer Board of the Union of Students in Ireland each year.

**Congress Further Notes**

Theat much of the knowledge, skills and experience accrued by officers over the period of their officership leaves with officers at the end of their term to the detriment of the Union.

**Congress Acknowledges**

The turnover of students in higher and further education means that frequent turnover of officers in the Union is inevitable but the loss of their knowledge, skills and experience is detrimental to the pursuit of the Union's objectives.

**Congress Mandates**

The President to form and chair a group to investigate methods of improving the institutional memory of the Union. This group would consist of the President, the General Manager of the Union, the Chair of Steering Committee, two representatives of National Council, an independent expert in the development of institutional memory and any other person(s) as the President deems necessary from time to time.

**Congress Further Mandates**

The President, as Chairperson of the group, to produce a strategy on improving the institutional memory of the Union within three months of the group's first meeting and for the first meeting to take place not later than July 31st 2013.

**Congress Mandates**

The President, as Chairperson of the group, to include in the report findings and recommendations on, but not limited to:

- (i) Staffing of the Union
- (ii) Effective knowledge transfer between outgoing and incoming officers
- (iii) Acquisition of necessary skills for officers of the Union
- (iv) Creation of a database on previous campaigns and policy documents

**Congress Further Mandates**

The President to include the progress of the group and subsequent implement the report's recommendations as a standing item at each National Council until National Council is satisfied that the recommendations of the report have been implemented

## UO 7

### *Communication with students*

Proposed by the President, USI

**Congress notes**

that the Union traditionally communicates to students through the union's Member Organisations.





## UO 9 USI Engagement with Events & Marketing

Proposed by Entertainments Working Group

### **Congress acknowledges:**

That many Students' Unions undertake events and marketing functions in many ways, such as running nights out and seeking discounts and complimentary goods and services for their members.

### **Congress also acknowledges:**

The need to establish a value on what the collective body of students is and observe the working calendars of the students and commercial markets to ensure that there is ample time to seize opportunities.

### **Congress notes with concern:**

The lack of an adequate support structure for Sabbatical Officers with this type of brief.

### **Congress mandates:**

The President to investigate the best way for USI to provide such a support structure and to report back to National Council in September 2013.

### **Congress also mandates:**

The President to ensure that USI gain an understanding of the student market and the potential that exists for Students' Unions and their members to benefit from it.

## UO 10 USI Part-Time Employment Webpage

Proposed by BMW Regional Council

### **Congress notes with concern:**

The difficulties currently facing students in finding part-time employment in order to supplement their income whilst in college, given the present economic climate.

### **Congress recognises:**

That many Students' Unions already have a direct link or contact to providers of once-off, short-term or part-time work, through college Inductions and Open Days, SU activities such as Student Patrol, on-campus services ran by SU's, promotional staff vacancies in local pubs and clubs, on campus promotions, etc.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to arrange for the creation of a part-time employment webpage through the main USI website, which Students' Unions can use to advertise available part-time work to potential and current students in financial need. This is to be completed before September 2013.

### **Congress further mandates:**

All Regional VP's to work with local MO's and local businesses in their region on an ongoing basis to source suitable part-time employment opportunities for inclusion on the webpage.

## UO 11

### USI Campus Crossover Tour

Proposed by BMW Regional Council

#### **Congress recognises:**

The importance of providing extensive training to sabbatical officers across the country, and the vital role which USI plays and should continue to play in providing this to MO's.

#### **Congress notes:**

The challenges faced by many incoming sabbatical officers in MO's in adjusting to their new roles, particularly where a lack of direct crossover has been provided by their predecessor.

#### **Congress mandates:**

USI Officerboard to offer comprehensive one-to-one crossover training to MO's. This should be carried out in the most efficient means possible in terms of cost and resources as determined by the USI President, by the relevant members of USI Officerboard. This is to be completed before August 2013.

## UO 12

### Affiliate and Non-affiliate Feedback

Proposed by: IT Sligo Students' Union

#### **Congress recognises:**

The central importance to USI as a national organisation to work to ensure the satisfaction of current affiliate MO's and also towards the affiliation of currently non-member Students' Unions.

#### **Congress also recognises:**

That providing value for money to our membership, now more than ever, continues to be the central concern of current affiliates and non-affiliates alike, and plays a central part in any referendum campaigns engaged in by USI.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The USI President to include 'The Value of USI Membership' as a rolling agenda item at all future Officerboard and Finance Committee meetings.

#### **Congress further mandates:**

All Regional VP's to engage on an ongoing basis with both affiliate and non-affiliate Students' Unions in their region as to their ideas and proposals regarding potential benefits and current negatives to the value of USI membership, and for these items to be brought to the attention of the USI President.

## UO 13

### Part time Officer Training

Proposed by VP Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance

#### **Congress notes**

The increasing diversity of part time roles in Students' Unions, Clubs and Societies and the importance of training for individuals taking up leadership roles within these organisations. The opportunity for many Part Time Officers to share ideas and initiatives with others fulfilling similar roles is extremely limited.

#### **Congress believes**

There are many core training topics which would be of value to all student officer roles including public speaking, time and resource management, campaign planning and event management and great value in providing networking opportunities for the sharing of ideas and experience.

#### **Congress mandates the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance, Equality & Citizenship, Campaigns and the Irish Language**

To determine the most suitable time and location for a Part Time Officer Training Event in consultation with National Council and to co-ordinate a two day training event before

October 31st each year. This mandate shall expire after three years.

## UO 14

### *Affiliations against Austerity*

Proposed by MSU

#### **Congress Mandates**

Officerboard to set up a committee whose function it is to establish ties and affiliations with other groups in our society who oppose austerity.

## UO 15

### *Engaging with the Abortion Rights Campaign*

Proposed by UCCSU

#### **Congress notes:**

The recent escalation in the level of debate regarding the issue of abortion rights in Ireland.

#### **Congress welcomes:**

The establishment of the Abortion Rights Campaign, launched on the 19th of January 2013.

#### **Congress supports:**

The expressed aims of the Abortion Rights Campaign. Firstly, campaigning for the immediate introduction of legislation for the right to safe, legal abortion when a woman's life is at risk, including from suicide. Secondly, campaigning for the repeal of the 8th amendment of the Irish Constitution, allowing for legislation to be made to allow for accessible abortion rights for women in Ireland.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship and the rest of Officer Board to engage actively with the Abortion Rights Campaign.

## UO 16

### *Student Grant & Accommodation Resource Packs*

Proposed by: Education Working Group

#### **Congress notes**

The value of informing students and their parents about applying for grants and finding accommodation before the academic year begins.

#### **Congress observes**

The poor attendance at many of the Grant and Accommodation information events hosted across the country in recent years.

#### **Congress believes**

Member Organisations can run successful information events if provided with the necessary materials and given the opportunity to host them at their own convenience with support from USI Officerboard and the relevant agencies.

#### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance and the Vice President for Welfare to complete a comprehensive Grant and Accommodation resource pack for Member Organisations with all of the information and materials needed to run such events.

## UO 17

### USI Support for Turn off the Red Light Campaign

Proposed by President, NUS-USI

#### **Congress does not perceive:**

prostitution as a 'service'. Sex with another human being cannot be reduced to a service. The act of 'purchase' in prostitution is an act of buying access to, and control over, another person's body for a certain duration of time and for a certain amount of money.

#### **Congress notes that:**

The Turn off the Red Light (TORL) campaign in Ireland is run by an alliance of 56 networks, umbrellas, unions and non-governmental bodies, who represent among themselves 1.6 million supporters for the TORL cause.

#### **Congress believes:**

It is the sex buyer who fuels the profits of the criminals who organize the sex trade in Ireland and perpetuates the exploitation of vulnerable women and girls, as well as men. Criminalising the purchase of sex makes punters take responsibility for their actions and sends out a clear message that it is not acceptable for people to be treated as commodities, to be bought and sold for sexual use.

#### **Congress recognises that:**

9 out of 10 prostitutes wish to exit the industry but feel unable to do so (Farley et al, 2003). Prostitution has a devastating impact on both physical and mental well being for those prostituted. It erodes self-esteem, self-confidence, can cause depression and symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. It can result in infertility, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and many other physical consequences. Those in prostitution face beatings, rape, sexual assault and degrading treatment. They are usually individuals who are isolated from potential supports.

#### **Congress also recognises that:**

In Sweden there has been legislation to criminalise the sex buyer while decriminalizing those prostituted (as vulnerable parties) since 1999. 70% of Swedes support this law on the basis that prostitution is exploitative and incompatible with equality. Street prostitution in Sweden has halved since the introduction of the ban. The Swedes have seen a change in attitude to the purchase of sexual services; strong support for the ban on purchasing sexual services (70%-80%). Furthermore, the ban has proved to be an effective deterrent to sex purchasers as surveys show decrease from 13.6% in 1996 to 7.9% in 2008.

#### **Congress fully supports:**

the Turn off the Red Light campaign in Ireland that is working towards criminalisation of the purchaser of sex in Ireland.

#### **Congress mandates:**

the Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship to work with the Turn off the Red Light campaign to further the goals of the campaign.

## UO 18

### Student Finances

Proposed by VP Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance

#### **Congress Applauds**

The incredible work undertaken by MO Officers to assist students affected by the serious issues with the roll out of the centralised grant awarding authority 'Student Universal Support Ireland' (SUSI).

#### **Congress notes with concern**

The increasing financial hardship being experienced by students and vast amount of information needed to guide students through grant and finance applications.

***Congress therefore mandates the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance and Welfare***

To coordinate a full day of training for MO Officers on student financial assistance and funding including financial support available to postgraduate students. This mandate should be completed before August 31st each year and shall expire after three years.

**UO 19**  
***Student Engagement with Quality Assurance Practices***

Proposed by VP Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance

***Congress notes***

That student engagement is vital in effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

***Congress notes with concern***

That many students do not value current evaluation surveys and procedures leading to poor participation levels. Many student representatives are not aware of the quality assurance practices in place in their institution and their outcomes.

***Congress therefore mandates the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance***

To include training on student involvement in quality assurance at Student Union Training and to compose a template module for class rep training events for MOs including information on the National Student Survey. This mandate should be complete by September 30th.





That many children may be left with no option but to attend a religious school that does not cater for their own religious beliefs or ethos and may be forced to attend an alternate religious ethos second level institution.

**Congress Also Notes That**

Often private schools are necessary for children for whom ethos or religious beliefs are not catered for.

**Congress Therefore Suspends:**

The mandate calling for the revocation of private school funding by public sources until such a time of the successfully fulfillment previous mandate for the secularisation of secondary schools.

**NA 3**  
**Motion to Investigate the Impact of Decriminalisation of Drugs**

(Requires a 2/3 majority vote to pass)  
Proposed by UCDSU

**Congress Notes**

That Ireland is experiencing an increase in certain social problems such as gangland violence and the relationship between the gang culture and the illegal drug trade.

**Congress further notes:**

That countries such as Portugal, Czech Republic, Australia, the Netherlands and Norway have implemented laws which have decriminalized certain narcotics in recent years and have reported a positive social impact. Reports carried out by the 'Global Commission on Drug Policy' support this method with Commissioner Richard Branson stating the need for "drugs to be seen as a medical problem, rather than a criminal problem"

**Congress believes:**

The law governing this issue stems mainly from the 1977 and 1984 Misuse of Drugs Acts and that attitudes, implications and availability have all progressed since their implementation.

**Congress further believes:**

That we need to take progressive steps to help address the issue, educate the students of today and be the generation who will tackle drug problems once and for all for the benefit of society as a whole.

**Congress Therefore Mandates:**

That Officerboard should research all possible positive and negative effects of decriminalization of narcotics in Ireland and as part of this perform a feasibility study on income it could possibly raise through taxes and fines.

**NA 4**  
**Motion on Gun Violence in Ireland**

(Requires a 2/3 majority vote to pass)  
Proposed by UCDSU

**Congress notes:**

The increase in shootings and gangland violence in Ireland in the last five years. The number of gangland shootings in Ireland increased by more than 50% in 2012 over 2011. This mirrors an international increase in gun deaths.

**Congress notes:**

The tragic and abhorrent death of a member of the Gardaí, an organisation that students





# WELFARE MOTIONS

## W 1

### *The effect of the Budget on Mental Health*

Submitted by NCI SU

#### **Congress notes:**

Budget 2013 (announced on Wednesday the 5th of December 2012) has put adverse financial pressure on students with the increase in student contribution charge and the 3% cut to the maintenance grant threshold which will come into effect from academic year 2013/2014.

#### **Congress notes with concern:**

The rate of suicide in Ireland and feels that increased financial pressure may add to the issue.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to lobby the Minister for Disability, Equality, Mental Health & Older People to challenge the Minister for Education on the effects that the rising student contribution charge and 3% cut to the maintenance grant has on the mental health of students in Ireland.

## W 2

### *Campaign to Raise Awareness of Eating Disorders*

Proposed by DITSU

#### **Congress Commends:**

The work of USI Welfare campaigns in the past, and their role in raising awareness of mental health issues such as depression.

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

That according to The Department of Health, up to 200,000 people in Ireland suffer from eating disorders, with numbers growing every year, and that many of those affected are teens and young people.

#### **Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President, Welfare to roll out Healthy Eating Campaigns every year, which include a drive to raise awareness of the various forms of eating disorders.

This mandate to expire after a period of 3 years, if not re-approved by Congress.

## W 3

### *Sexual Health Campaign in First Semester*

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

#### **Congress notes**

Fifty five per cent of Irish 18-year-olds will leave secondary school without any formal sexual health education, according to The Durex Sexual Wellbeing Global Survey, 2012.

#### **Congress further notes**

The need to educate students on all aspects of sexual health when they first entry third level.

#### **Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to coordinate a campaign focused on sexual health in first



semester, focusing on engaging first year students.

## W 4 New USI Alcohol Campaign

Proposed by UCCSU

### **Congress notes:**

The USI has a responsibility to its members in relation to alcohol consumption and the manner in which drinks companies market towards students.

### **Congress further notes:**

Drinkaware.ie has previously been used as the primary distributor of alcohol awareness materials despite receiving their funding from the drinks industries.

### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to implement a USI Alcohol campaign geared specifically towards 3rd level students that does not include drinkaware.ie materials.

## W 5 Condom Wednesday

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

The success of NUI Galway Students' Union's "Condom Wednesday".

### **Congress further notes**

The cost of condoms is a factor in some Students' Unions operating similar campaigns.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI Welfare Officer to coordinate a national Condom Wednesday campaign.

## W 6 Sexual Health Campaign in first semester

Proposed by USI VP Welfare

### **Congress notes:**

Fifty five per cent of Irish 18-year-olds will leave secondary school without any formal sexual health education, according to The Durex Sexual Wellbeing Global Survey, 2012.

### **Congress further notes:**

The need to educate students on all aspects of sexual health when they first entry third level and throughout their college years.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to coordinate a campaign focused on sexual health in first semester, focusing on engaging first year students to promote positive attitudes towards sex in addition to SHAG Week each February.



## W 9

### Student Assistance Fund

Proposed by USI VP Welfare

#### **Congress notes:**

12/ WEL 1 Student Assistance Fund Harmonisation Study

#### **Congress Further Notes:**

'SAF: Best Practice Framework 2013'. This document contains an in depth explanation into the Student Assistance Fund, results from the study completed, an analysis of various practises in place and best practise framework.

#### **Congress therefore mandates:**

Vice President of Welfare of Vice President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to bring this document to the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education and to lobby the HEA to redraft the guidelines of the Student Assistance Fund for the academic year 2014/2015 to include recommendations to increase the efficiency of systems.

#### **Congress further mandates:**

Vice President for Welfare of Vice President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to provide briefing to Member Organisations on all aspects of SAF and to provide Member Organisations with relevant information and support to seek representation on all committees relating to the SAF on their campus.

## W 10

### International Students Tenancy disputes

Submitted by AITSU

#### **Congress notes:**

The increased amount of issues and dispute between landlords and tenants and the duration of time that elapses between cases being put forward for hearing, to the actual date of hearing.

#### **Congress further notes:**

Many international students come to study for just one academic year but that there is a means of having representation there in place of the applicant/defendant.

#### **Congress further notes:**

There is an informal recourse for such students that they can ask for an emergency hearing but 'Emergency hearings' are not always granted.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to engage The Private Residency Tenancy Board to negotiate a specific channel for such emergency cases for International Students and/or students that will be emigrating.

## W 11 Study on Counselling

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

### **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:**

There is no equivalent study on this issue relating to third level counselling which needs to be addressed following reports from Welfare Officers that students often wait two weeks for an appointment.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to conduct a study on the affects of budget cuts on counselling services and in turn the danger which could leave young people at further risk. The results from the study carried out can be used to lobby Minister for Disability, Equality, Mental Health & Older People prior to Budget 2014.

## W 12 Cyberbullying Policy

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

### **Congress notes:**

The lack of policy in the area of Cyberbullying.

### **Congress Further notes:**

With the increased use of social media there are more risks for young people to become targets or victims and even aggressors of Cyberbullying. There is a lack of awareness and understanding on the topic on Cyberbullying.

Congress therefore adopts the proposed:  
USI Cyberbullying Policy

### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to both follow the USI Cyberbullying Policy and assist local officers in the following through with it's recommendations and action points.

## W 13 Mental Health Strategy

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

### **Congress notes**

o8/WEL 5 mandating the creation of a USI Mental Health Strategy.

### **Congress applauds**

The creation of Student Lives, Minds and Wellbeing - The USI Mental Health Strategy 2010-2013.

### **Congress notes:**

The importance of having a Mental Health Strategy and the need to update existing strategies due to expire.

### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to create a new USI Mental Health Strategy with specific reference to reducing stigma, to be completed by January 2014.

# W 14

## Sexual Violence

Proposed by Equality and Citizenship Working Group

### **Congress notes:**

that the Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship has worked closely with the Centre for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (Cosc). This relationship was instrumental in the compilation and promotion of the 2012/2013 USI 'Say Something' survey into students' experiences of violence.

### **Congress highly commends:**

the initiatives taken and work being conducted on sexual assault prevention and awareness-raising around issues of consent in a number of Member Organisations, specifically in the form of the 'Don't be that Guy' campaign.

### **Congress believes that:**

The victim is never to blame in incidences of sexual assault and/or rape. The 'Don't be that Guy' campaign is particularly powerful and effective because it uses language that is directed at potential perpetrators rather than language that contributes to victim blaming and rape culture.

### **Congress mandates:**

the Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship to work with Member Organisations to coordinate a national campaign on sexual assault prevention and awareness-raising around issues of consent. This campaign should be informed by the results of the USI 'Say Something' survey and would preferably have an element that would coincide with induction and orientation periods in higher education institutions. This campaign should also be as inclusive as possible of all genders and sexualities.

### **Congress further mandates:**

the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and all members of USI Officer Board to ensure that any campaigns conducted by USI on area of sexual violence use the appropriate language and never contribute to culture of victim blaming or rape culture.





in the public sector; women need more healthcare services, care facilities and family supports which are all being reduced; women may leave their jobs to take on a care giving role in their family if state supports are withdrawn or reduced. If measures are not put in place to maintain a gender balance in youth employment levels the gap between males and females may widen as they grow older.

**Congress believes**

That austerity measures are affecting those in lower socio-economics groups in society and that they should be reduced & more equally dispersed.

**Congress mandates**

The VP for Equality and Citizenship in conjunction with the VP for Campaigns to highlight how women are affected more by austerity measures being implemented.

**Congress further mandates**

The VP for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for a more equal balance in implementing any austerity measures which may be introduced and to campaign for the reversal of those which are already in place. This lobbying and campaigning will occur over the next three years as it is envisaged that austerity measures will continue for this duration.

**EQ 3**  
**Equity of access to USI National Council**

Proposed by IT Sligo Students' Union

**Congress commends:**

The Vice President of Equality and Citizenship on the creation of an equality policy for National Council.

**Congress notes:**

There have been issues raised this year regarding the equity of access of officers to National Council based on the scheduling of council dates.

**Congress further notes:**

The equality policy was voted on and passed unanimously at National Council but there has been no implementation by National Council of this policy since it was passed.

**Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President of Equality and Citizenship to review the equality policy when they first enter office. This review should take into consideration what measurements need to be in place to ensure the equality policy is put into action. The review also needs to ensure that USI National Council is accessible as possible to the officers elected nationally to represent their students.

The Vice President of Equality and Citizenship should then compile recommendations for National Council based on their review and present these recommendations to National Council before the schedule for the 2013/2014 national councils are voted on.

**EQ 4**  
**Women in USI**

Proposed by: St Angela's College Sligo Students' Union

**Congress notes**

That there exists policy (09 / EQ9) which recognises that there is an unequal balance of females holding positions at decision making level of Students' Unions, particularly sabbatical officer level. This policy mandates for a campaign to be run to promote female involvement at decision making level.

**Congress recognises**

That within the USI structures there are additional opportunities to be involved in decision making as well as those which occur at National Council.



## EQ 5

### Negotiation of Mature Student/Estranged Student financial account(s)

Submitted by AITSU

#### **Congress notes:**

The growing financial difficulties across the board for all students.

#### **Congress further notes:**

The difficulties facing many mature students, and students that have been estranged from their parents/guardians, in gaining an indemnifier for the purposes of loan guarantor.

This would also incorporate students that are returning to education to help better themselves but have existing bad credit due to numerous extenuating circumstances. For example bad credit, mortgage arrears, job loss etc.

#### **Congress stresses:**

The USI is mandated to be a free fees organisation and should not change stance on this.

The motion proposed will serve to ensure equal access to financial loans for students that need such to fund their Higher Level education.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The President and other relevant officers to engage with an appropriate lending institution(s) to negotiate an account which will ensure equal access to banking facilities regardless of age and/or domestic situations for all students.

## EQ 6

### Section 37 Employment Equality Act

Proposed by UCCSU

#### **Congress notes:**

Under current Irish legislation - Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act allows school managements to discriminate against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender employees by taking 'reasonably necessary' action either by firing or refusing to hire them on the basis that they 'undermine' the religious ethos of the denominational school.

#### **Congress further notes:**

Union of Students in Ireland is a representative body of over 275,000 students - many of whom are LGBT and many of whom feel negatively affected by this legislation.

#### **Congress believes:**

This legislation is outdated and discriminatory by nature.

#### **Congress further believes:**

Thousands of LGBT students are aspiring teachers who may feel they cannot have a fulfilling career due to this legislation. Section 37 serves as a way of making LGBT students feel uncomfortable in the workplace and deters many LGBT students from pursuing careers in the teaching sector of Ireland.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The USI Campaigns Officer and USI VP for Equality and Citizenship to actively campaign for the repeal of Section 37, raising awareness among students, and contacting the relevant bodies such as Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland and other organisations to seek and show support for the campaign.

## EQ 7

### Equality campaigns for single fathers in Ireland

Proposed by AITSU

#### **Congress commends**

The good work completed by the Vice President of equality and citizenship on raising equality and citizenship issues in the public domain.

#### **Congress notes;**

The work of USI in this area sees a very positive impact on different vulnerable stakeholders nationally and internationally by highlighting the facts while fighting their cause.

#### **Congress further notes;**

Single fathers make up a segment of the students represented by USI and the voice of these students is often overlooked politically.

#### **Congress mandates;**

The Vice President of Equality and Citizenship to meet with representatives of these students and to work on a campaign to highlight their issues. This should take place in the first semester of the year.

## EQ 8

### Equal Marriage Rights

Proposed by DITSU

#### **Congress Notes:**

The constitution convention was set up in 2012 to consider a number of changes to the Constitution of Ireland. The convention will look at many issues which include the provision for same-sex marriage.

#### **Congress Further Notes:**

Last year Congress passed a motion that mandates: "The President, the Vice-President for Campaigns and the Vice-President for Equality & Citizenship to vehemently campaign on the full equalisation of rights regardless of sexual orientation, for full and equal marriage rights, full and equal adoption rights and for this union to recognise LGBT members as full and equal members of society in recognition of the rights laid out above."

#### **Congress Mandates:**

The President and the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to submit a document on behalf of USI to the Constitutional Convention by the 1st National Council of 2013/2014, which includes the full equalisation of rights regardless of sexual orientation and for full and equal marriage rights, full and equal adoption rights.

## EQ 9

### USI Equality Policy

Proposed by USI VP Equality and Citizenship

#### **Congress Notes:**

that USI National Council adopted an interim Equality policy for the organisation in September 2012. This policy was drawn up by the Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship with advice from the Equality Authority.

#### **Congress Believes**

that it is important that the Union of Students in Ireland has an Equality Policy in place which states its commitment to equality and diversity and outlines the measures that USI Officer Board will take to ensure that principles of equality pervade the work of the organisation.

#### **Congress therefore adopts**

the USI Equality Policy as adopted by the USI National Council in the 2012-2013 session. (put this into the Congress Pack as a policy to be adopted, not in the Clár)



## USI Equality Policy

The Union of Students in Ireland is an inclusive organisation that values equality and diversity.

Services provided by the Union of Students in Ireland are available to all areas of the membership who will be supported to be equally able to access them.

As an employer, the Union of Students in Ireland will not tolerate any form of direct and indirect discrimination.

This policy is developed in line with the Equality Acts (Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2011 & Employment Equality Acts 1998 - 2011) prohibiting discrimination, including sexual harassment and harassment, victimisation and reasonable accommodation for customers with disabilities.

### 2. Equalities Statement:

The Union of Students in Ireland adopts the following Equalities Statement which Officers and staff and any person working with the Union of Students in Ireland is expected to support and uphold:

The Union of Students in Ireland recognises that discrimination can and does occur and that it can be direct, indirect or institutional. The Union of Students in Ireland is committed to adopting equal opportunities policies and procedures as an employer and service provider in order to combat discrimination and value diversity. The Union of Students in Ireland will not tolerate discrimination based on gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, membership of the Traveller community, gender expression, gender identity, country of origin, socio-economic background. The first nine grounds are those specifically mentioned by the Equality Acts but discrimination can occur also on other characteristics.

The Union of Students in Ireland reserves the right to add to these groups at any time.

The Union of Students in Ireland will seek to ensure that other companies from whom it has contracted to receive goods and services are aware that this policy is in place and that these companies are expected to comply with it or add equality clauses to the contract of service. Contracts for goods and services will be suspended if the contractor engages in sexual harassment, harassment or discrimination against customers or employees of this organisation.

The Union of Students in Ireland will take measures to combat inequality where necessary based on the characteristics identified in the Equalities statement. The organisation will strive to eliminate barriers that prevent members accessing the Union's services and will ensure that reasonable accommodation is made for students with disabilities.

The Union of Students in Ireland encourages active participation from students in relation to the characteristics outlined in the Equalities Statement.

The Union of Students in Ireland is committed to the effective communication of this policy to:

- All staff and elected officers of USI Officer Board,
- Member Organisations,
- Students,
- Business contacts

This will be done through:

- Publication and dissemination of the policy,
- Display of this policy on the USI website and in public areas of the organisation,
- Reference to the policy in business contracts,
- Reference to the policy in information and training materials

All staff employed should cooperate with the development and implementation of policies, procedures and practices to eliminate discrimination, accommodate diversity and promote equality for students. This requirement will be included in contracts of employment for all staff.

Training will be made available to all of USI Officer Board and staff in relation to the Equality Acts (Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2011 & Employment Equality Acts 1998 - 2011).

The President of the Union of Students in Ireland and all of USI Officer Board has responsibility for upholding and implementing this policy.

This policy will be reviewed at the end of each academic year by USI Officer Board and any changes will be subject to approval by USI Congress

## EQ 10

### *Motion: Collective Bargaining Legislation*

Proposed by USI VP for Equality and Citizenship

#### **Congress notes:**

the commitment to legislating for collective bargaining agreed in the Programme for Government and the lack of movement on this.

#### **Congress notes with concern:**

the Campus.ie survey which claims that 35% of students in part time jobs feel it has negatively impacted on their studies.

#### **Congress further notes with concern:**

The United Nations' Human Rights Council's condemnation of the absence of collective bargaining legislation in Ireland.

#### **Congress believes:**

That every worker should have the option to join and be represented by a trade union without victimisation and that Ireland's failure to enact such legislation is a violation of the Right to Freedom of Association and the Right to Organise.

#### **Congress acknowledges:**

That by being a member of a unionized workforce, students in part time employment are more likely to be aware of their rights as workers and therefore, less likely to be exploited. Furthermore, students are mostly employed in areas where exploitation is most common.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to lobby for the introduction of collective bargaining legislation that will lead to better working conditions for students and for this to be completed the end of 2013.

## EQ 11

### *USI to campaign for Equality Budgeting in Ireland*

Proposed by USI VP for Equality and Citizenship

#### **Congress notes:**

that a large body of recent research, both Irish and international, suggests that more equal societies fare better across a range of social outcomes, including education, health, crime and almost every conceivable area of human life.

#### **Congress acknowledges**

that Equality Budgeting is an approach to economic policy-making that places equality at the centre of decisions concerning public expenditure and income. Through equality audits and impact assessments, Equality Budgeting provides information on how different sections of society are impacted by specific economic policy measures. The objective of Equality Budgeting is to ensure this information is used to reduce inequalities and to achieve the best equality outcomes for specific disadvantaged groups, but also for society at large. Over 60 countries have implemented or worked towards Equality Budgeting.

#### **Congress notes**

with concern that while some progress was made in Ireland toward Equality Budgeting, particularly with a focus on gender, much of this was subsequently reversed with the

weakening of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit in the Department of Justice since 2008, inaction on the implementation of the National Women's Strategy, and the more general dismantling of the equality infrastructure in Ireland that has been on-going since the beginning of the economic crisis.

**Congress recognises**

the 2011 TASC Report Eliminating Health Inequalities – A Matter of Life and Death, which suggests that inequality in Ireland is endemic, with 2009 figures suggesting that the top decile of Irish Society had incomes which were 11 times those of the bottom decile. The report also found a strong correlation between income levels and education levels, with those in the bottom decile most educationally disadvantaged.

**Congress affirms**

its commitment to the defense and promotion of all human rights as per the USI Constitution. The endemic inequality experienced by the citizens of this country mitigates against the achievement and realisation of the type of Ireland that the Union of Students in Ireland's principles could lead to.

**Congress believes**

that it is vitally important that the Government is always acutely aware of the long-term impact of the policies they enact.

**Congress mandates**

the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and all of USI Officer Board to lend their full support to the Equality Budgeting campaign in Ireland and to lobby the Irish Government to introduce Equality Budgeting for Budget 2014.

**EQ 12**  
**USI LGBT Ally Campaign**

Proposed by Equality and Citizenship Working Group

**Congress notes:**

the high level of student engagement with the USI LGBT Ally initiative and the effectiveness of this initiative at raising awareness of student support for LGBT rights and also of LGBT issues in Ireland.

**Congress believes:**

that this initiative should be continued and expanded by working with other organisations and by seeking funding for the campaign.

**Congress also believes:**

that there is potential to extend this campaign into wider society, outside of higher education institutions and that USI could look to engage businesses and service providers in this campaign. The expansion of this campaign could also be extended to secondary schools.

**Congress mandates:**

the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to seek sponsorship and funding for USI's LGBT Ally campaign.

**Congress also mandates**

the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to engage with and seek endorsement and/or support from the following list, but not limited to this list, in relation to the campaign:

- An Garda Síochána;
- Association of Secondary School Teachers, Ireland;
- all members of the Oireachtas;
- the Irish Medical Organisation;
- Irish National Teachers' Organisation;
- Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy;
- Gay Doctors Ireland;
- Transgender Equality Network Ireland;
- BeLonGTo;



**Congress Further Notes:**

The benefits of the SUSI forum established this year in order to keep MOs informed on the ongoing

**Congress Notes With Concern:**

The complete lack of student representation and input into the operational management of the primary source of financial assistance for students in third level education and future students of third level.

**Congress Therefore Mandates:**

The Vice-President of Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to lobby the Department of Education and City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) for a seat on the main governing body of SUSI in order to ensure the highest levels of quality assurance in the operations of SUSI in the years ahead.

**AAQA 3**  
**Student Contribution Payment Scheme**

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

**Congress notes**

The increasingly difficult financial challenges being faced by students.

**Congress further notes**

The Student Contribution falls due at a time when students have other large financial commitments such as accommodation deposits and course materials.

**Congress recognises**

The successful scheme in NUI Galway which allows students to pay the Student Contribution in instalments.

**Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Campaigns to lobby the Irish Universities Association and the Institutes of Technology Ireland to implement similar schemes in all universities and Institutes of technology.

**AAQA 4**  
**Migrant Education Access**

Proposed by UCCSU

**Congress Notes:**

that in the absence of a standardised residency test Irish third-level institutions apply an 'EU' fees' category which often means migrant students pay two or three times more than typical fees charged. Young people who have grown up in Ireland (gone to secondary school here) are denied access to financial assistance and the free fee scheme upon entry to third level.

**Congress also notes:**

that young people who have secured citizenship during their time in third level are often unable to 'reverse' their fee status and have no choice but to continue to pay these high tuition fees for the remainder of their third level education. These young people are also often unable to secure higher education grants.

**Congress believes:**

that the Union of Students in Ireland needs to advocate for accessible education for all students and should lend support to the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland's Migrant Education Access Campaign, including that children of non EU migrants who have come to Ireland to join their families and are here a minimum of 3 years should enjoy equality of access to third level education.

**Congress Mandates:**

the Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship to work with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland on their Migrant Education Access (MEA) campaign.

**Congress also mandates:**

the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Education

and Skills to take effective action to address the situation of young people who have secured Irish citizenship but are currently unable to reverse their fee status. This may require a re-examination of the criteria of access to the Free Tuition Fee Scheme currently administered by the Higher Education Authority and should result in a code of practice or a revised set of criteria being outlined to all third level institutes in Ireland to ensure a coordinated, equitable and consistent response.

## AAQA 5 *Collaborations within Alliances and Regional Clusters*

Proposed by GMITSU

### **Congress notes:**

The importance of input, engagement and involvement by Students' Unions in the process of the future development of the Higher Education Landscape.

### **Congress recognises:**

The considerable opportunities which exist for MO's in delivering tangible outcomes from the process for their members by identifying best practice which exists in areas relevant to students within alliances and clusters, and lobbying for the implementation of such in all HEI's within the alliance or cluster.

### **Congress mandates:**

The USI President, VP for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance and all Regional VP's to assist MO's in ensuring student representation is present and student input is sought in collaborative discussions taking place between HEI's across the country, and also to assist MO's in the identification and implementation of these best practice opportunities.

## AAQA 6 *Graduate Employability*

Proposed by UCCSU

### **Congress notes:**

that seeking employment after Third Level Education is becoming increasingly difficult for students due to economical factors and that the job hunt is becoming more competitive.

### **Congress further notes:**

that employers across Ireland and the UK are ranking 'general employability skills' as one of the most important attributes they are seeking in graduates.

### **Congress Mandates:**

that the VP AAQA to develop a strategy for MO's to promote graduate employability and the acquisition of generic and transferable employability skills amongst their students and to offer support and materials to education officers to do so.

## AAQA 7 *Student Retention*

Proposed by: IT Sligo Students' Union

### **Congress observes:**

Recent findings which suggest that the single biggest cause of students dropping out of college in first year is selection of the wrong course.

### **Congress believes:**

That the current delivery of Open Days and provision of information by colleges to potential students is stale and insufficient, and in need of reform.

### **Congress notes:**

Developments in online learning and technologies in recent years and the considerable and growing engagement of secondary school students with these new technologies.

### **Congress mandates:**

The USI VP for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance to lobby the HEA to call on HEI's to offer online campus tours, sample lectures, and taster videos of modules and programmes for inclusion on their own individual websites and the CAO website.



## AAQA 8

### *Student Rights and Entitlements*

Proposed by DITSU

#### ***Congress Acknowledges:***

Every student's right to a quality experience and their involvement in established quality assurance procedures as an essential element of this experience.

#### ***Congress also Acknowledges:***

The integral role of Students' Unions in informing students of their rights and safeguarding them.

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

The effect that the Employment Control Framework places on HEIs and their ability to comply with local, national and European legislation.

#### ***Congress Mandates:***

The Vice President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to research best practice and put together a national perspective on student rights and entitlements by Congress 2014.

#### ***Congress also Mandates:***

The Vice President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to include a briefing on 'student involvement in quality assurance' and the rights of students that are enshrined by legislation in the overall training plan for the SUT.

This mandate is to expire after a period of 3 years, if not re-approved by Congress.

## AAQA 9

### *Structure of Work Placement Elements of HEI programs and their use in Labour Activation Schemes*

Proposed by DITSU

#### ***Congress Applauds:***

The initiative in many Higher Educational Institutes, which embeds work placements in many of their degrees, to give students real-world application of their course content.

#### ***Congress Notes:***

That a correctly structured and relevant work placement can truly enhance the learning experience of the student.

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

That many work placement programs are not correctly structured, are not linked to the learning outcomes associated with the academic course and ultimately do not deliver in the benefits to the students that they were designed to provide.

#### ***Congress Therefore Mandates:***

The Vice President, Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance to work with Member Organisations to accumulate current policies and practices relating to work placement programmes with a view to drafting a best practice policy that Member Organisations could use as a starting point for implementing a similar policy in their own Higher Education Institute.

This Mandate shall be fulfilled by December 2013

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

The inadequacies of some labour activation schemes such as internships and work placements that exist in the wider community, which result in the exploitation of workers and placements that don't offer appropriate supervision and learning opportunities.

**Congress Further Notes:**

That best practice and structures that would be developed and designed in the Higher Education Sector, could be mirrored in labour activation schemes like Job Bridge or the proposed Youth Guarantee.

**Congress Further Mandates:**

The President and relevant Vice Presidents to engage with relevant organisations and government departments to design and develop schemes, which are beneficial to workers and builds upon best practise in the Higher Education Sector.

This mandate shall be fulfilled by December 2014.

## AAQA 10 *Review of Criteria for TU Designation Proposed by BMW Regional Council*

**Congress notes:**

That current USI policy mandates Officerboard to lobby Government to maintain the current criteria for the re-designation of an Institute of Technology as a Technological University, while also protecting the individual nature of Institutions as part of this process.

**Congress recognises:**

The considerable developments which have taken place over the past year with respect to the ever-changing nature of the HE landscape.

**Congress observes:**

Recent discussion documentation released by the HEA suggests that the following areas require attention following the HEA's 'gap analysis':

- Maintenance of L6/7 provision
- Excessive/unfocussed increases in post graduate provision and research
- Testing the validity of international student numbers

**Congress notes with concern:**

That the criteria for TU designation as currently set out may incentivise HEI's to steer their focus in a direction that is not necessarily in keeping with their own Institutional ethos or strengths, or in the best interests of student needs and requirements.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

USI Officerboard to call for the criteria for designation to be reviewed taking the findings of the 'gap analysis' into account, and on an ongoing basis as the future HE landscape continues to shape and evolve over the next three years.

## AAQA 11 *Student Complaints Procedures*

Proposed by: Education Working Group

**Congress observes**

Recent comments by the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform issuing a warning that the government is looking to remove underperforming teachers, and the potential appetite for change in this area.

**Congress recognises**

The difficulties faced in the current environment by colleges and Students' Unions in dealing effectively with student complaints.

**Congress acknowledges**

That best practice does exist nationally within some Higher Education Institutions in developing complaints' procedures which are more timely and efficient, afford greater student protections and offer tangible outcomes to complaints or issues which are raised than many current practices.

**Congress notes**

The re-negotiation of the Croke Park Agreement, which is taking place in 2013.

**Congress therefore mandates**

Appropriate members of USI Officerboard to lobby for the development and implementation of a common national Student Complaints' Procedure, which takes into account the importance of protecting the complainant, speedy and efficient resolution of complaints, and the principles of transparency and accountability. This motion shall

**AAQA 12**  
**Unpaid internships**

Proposed by the President, USI

**Congress notes:**

The variance of opinions and evidence on the success or lack thereof of unpaid internship schemes.

**Congress further notes:**

Incidences have arisen of unpaid internship schemes whereby the unpaid intern was required to do work which could not be said to improve the knowledge or skill so fth eintern with a view to adding valuable experience to their future career prospects

**Congress acknowledges:**

That finding employment is proving difficult for many graduates given the prevailing economic conditions and that internships may be a valuable method of gaining experience while protecting oneself from the harmful effects of longterm unemployment

**Congress further notes:**

The increased role that internships are likely to play in the future development of Irish graduates, particularly as proposals to develop specific internship programmes in stem subjects are being developed at national level.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance to develop a framework of good practice for internships in conjunction with various stakeholders including, but not limited to:  
The Department of Social Protection and the Higher Education Authority

# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MOTIONS

## IA 1

### *Highlighting of Continued Discrimination against Arab-Palestinian Students*

(Requires a 2/3 majority vote to pass)

Proposed by IT Tralee Students' Union

#### **Congress notes with concern:**

The continued discrimination towards students of an Arab-Palestinian background by Israel.

#### **Congress believes:**

That an injustice to students in any place is an injustice to students worldwide.

#### **Congress also believes:**

That some form of pressure is needed against Israel that can bring about its compliance with international law and ensure equality of standing for these students.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to raise this issue with ESU so that it can stand up for these students who are not in a position to stand up for themselves.

# IRISH LANGUAGE MOTIONS

## G 1

### *Coiste na Gaeilge ag Comhairle Náisiúnta / Irish Language Committee at National Council*

Molta ag: Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge/ Proposed by USI VP for the Irish Language

#### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

an buntáiste a sholáthar cruinnithe de Choiste na Gaeilge a tionóladh ag an gComhairle Náisiúnta do Oifigigh na Gaeilge ónar thosaigh siad i mbliana.

#### **Congress notes**

the benefit meetings of the Irish Committee at National Council have afforded Irish Language Officers since its introduction.

#### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil ar lean**

go dtugann na cruinnithe céanna deis gréasánaíochta do na hOifigigh na Gaeilge mar aon le deis chun ceisteanna a chur go díreach ar an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge ag an gComhairle Náisiúnta.

#### **Congress further notes**

that meeting at National Council has given Irish Language Officers a chance to network with each other, as well as a chance to directly question the VP for the Irish Language at National Council.

#### **Creideann an Chomhdháil**

go leanfaidh ar an gcleachtas seo ag cabhrú le obair Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge mar aon le Oifigigh na Gaeilge go náisiúnta má cheadaítear do leanúint ar aghaidh.

### **Congress believes**

that this practice will continue to benefit the work of the VP for the Irish Language and Irish Language Officers nationally if it is allowed to continue.

### **Sainordáíonn an Chomhdháil**

Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge le leanúint ar aghaidh ag tionól Coiste na Gaeilge, ag an gComhairle Náisiúnta, ar bhonn gach dhá mhí ar a laghad sa bhliain acadúil amach romhainn.

### **Congress mandates**

the VP for the Irish Language to continue to convene Irish Language Committee, at National Council, on at least a bi-monthly basis, in the coming academic year.

## **G2**

### **Polasaí Gaeilge AMLÉ / USI Irish Language Policy**

Molta ag: Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge/ Proposed by USI VP for the Irish Language

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

go bhfuil polasaí dátheangach ag AMLÉ le fada an lá, le úsáid na Gaeilge san Aontas a mhéadú.

### **Congress notes**

the long-standing existence of a bilingual policy within USI, introduced in an effort to increase the use of Irish within the Union.

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil ar lean**

go bhfuil athruithe agus forbairt tar éis teacht ar an Aontas féin ónar cuireadh tús leis an bpolasaí sin.

### **Congress further notes**

the transition, and development of the Union itself since the introduction of that policy.

### **Glacann an Chomhdháil mar sin**

An Polasaí Ghaeilge formhuinthe ag Comhairle Náisiúnta AMLÉ ar 23/05/12 mar polasaí oifigiúil AMLÉ

### **As such Congress adopts**

'The Irish Language Policy endorsed by USI National Council on 23/05/12' as official policy of the USI.

## **G3**

### **Oifigeach na Gaeilge ag gach Aontas / Irish Language Officer in every Union**

Molta ag: Coiste na Gaeilge / Proposed by the Irish Language Working Group

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

go bhfuil difrí faoi leith idir na Baill-Eagraíochtaí le Oifigigh na Gaeilge agus iadsan gan Oifigeach ó thaobh gníomhaíocht Gaeilge de.

### **Congress notes**

the differing levels of Irish Language activity between MO's where there is an Irish Language Officer on the ground, and those where there is not.

Aithníonn an Chomhdháil ar lean

go bhfuil an líon feachtais Gaeilge atá eagraithe ag Oifigigh na Gaeilge méadaithe le roinnt blianta anuas, agus an forbairt ginearálta den Ghaeilge in AMLÉ.

### **Congress further notes**

the increased number of Irish Language campaigns rolled out by Irish Language Officers in recent years, and the overall development of the Irish Language within USI.

### **Molann an Chomhdháil**

obair na hOifigigh Gaeilge sna champais, Tuigtear gur iadsan atá mar chúis leis an athrú atá tagtha ar an nGaeilge san Aontas.

### **Congress applauds**

the work of Irish Language Officers on campuses, and lauds them as the key to the changing fortunes of the Irish Language within the Union.

### **Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil**

Leas Uachtarán don Gaeilge le obair leis na Bail Eagraíochtaí nach bhfuil Oifigeach na Gaeilge acu agus scrúdú a dhéanamh ar an bhféidearthacht níos mó Oifigigh na Gaeilge a chruthú i dteannta le Bail Eagraíochtaí áitiúla.

### **Therefore Congress mandates**

the VP for Irish Language to work with MO's where an Irish Language Officer does not exist and examine the feasibility of introducing more Irish Language Officers in partnership with local MO's.

## **G 4**

### **Fóram na Gaeilge / Irish Language Forum**

Molta ag: Coiste na Gaeilge / Proposed by the Irish Language Working Group

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

go n-eagraíonn an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge Fóram deireadh na bliana de na Cumainn Gaelaigh atá mar chuid de AMLÉ.

### **Congress notes**

that the VP for the Irish Language annually convenes an end-of-year meeting of USI-affiliated Irish Language Societies.

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil ar lean**

go bhfuil obair na grúpaí seo seo mar croí-lár an ualach oibre atá ag an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge i gcaitheamh na bliana.

### **Congress further notes**

that contributions made in this forum make up a significant part of the work of an the VP for the Irish Language during the year.

### **Mar sin Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil**

Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge ceisteanna tábhachtacha nó ábhair buartha do Phobail na Gaeilge a thagann chun cinn le linn an Fóram seo a thabhairt chuig an Comhairle Náisiúnta nó/ agus an Comhdháil Náisiúnta le bheith faobhaithe.

### **As such Congress mandates**

the VP for the Irish Language to submit issues of concern and/ or importance to the Irish Language Community where they arise in the course of this forum to national council/ and or congress for consideration/ approval

## **G5**

### **Coiste na Gaeilge ag comhairle náisiúnta**

Proposed by MSU

Congress recognises the good work done by Coiste na Gaeilge in co-ordinating the efforts of Irish Language Officers in member organisations.



### **Congress notes**

that the continued presence of Coiste na Gaeilge at the different national councils is to the benefit of both USI, Member organisations and the national Irish Language community.

### **Congress mandates**

that going forward Coiste na Gaeilge be assembled at each National Council.

## **G6**

### ***Oifigeach na Gaeilge ag gach Aontas / Irish Language Officer in each Union***

Proposed by MSU

### **Congress recognises**

the central importance played by Irish Language officers in those member organisations with an Irish Language Officer.

### **Congress notes**

the need for an Irish Language Officer in each member union to enhance the image of the language in the Union and ensure an Irish Language element to each aspect of the work done by the Student Union.

### **Congress mandates**

that the Vice President for Irish Language in USI will work towards ensuring the presence of an Irish Language Officer at the officer board of each member union.

## **G7**

### ***Gaelscolaíocht in Éirinn.***

Proposed by MSU

### **Congress recognises**

the increase in the demand for Irish Language medium education at Primary and Secondary level.

### **Congress notes**

that the amount of Irish language medium schools currently in existence and in the plan for new schools by the department of Education and Skills does not accurately reflect the demand for Irish Language Education in Ireland.

### **Congress mandates**

the Vice President for Irish Language and USI officer to lobby the department of Education and Skills for recognition of the increased demand for Irish Language Medium Education in all future plans for the development of new schools in Ireland.

## **G8**

### ***Gaeilge as a requirement for entry into 3rd Level Education***

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

The importance of an Gaeilge as our National language, and its significance to our cultural Identity.

### **Congress also notes:**

A reform of the Leaving Certificate points system as being the primary method of entry



# CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

## CA 1

### *Presidents' Advisory Panel*

*Proposed by GMITSU*

*Insert as 7.2.3 and renumber accordingly*

Not later than the second National Council each year the President shall present National Council, for their ratification, with a list of nominations of people they deem appropriate to advise them in relation to their role. These nominations, once ratified, shall constitute an Advisory Panel that the President may convene, in whole or in part, to assist them in their work during their term of office. Further nominations may be made and ratified at subsequent National Councils. The President may, at any stage, dismiss a member of their Advisory Panel as they see fit, but shall advise National Council of their decision.

## CA 2

### *Vice President for Equality and Citizenship*

Proposed by : IT Tralee Students' Union

*Delete:*

Article 5.7.2 as currently appears: "The VP/Equality shall assist the VP/Campaigns in relation to campaigns for the defence and promotion of students' rights in the 12 areas of equality and citizenship with special focus on LGBT rights including carrying out the Union's policy on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students in the Union and working to eliminate prejudice against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community."

*And replace with:*

"The VP/Equality shall assist the VP/Campaigns in relation to campaigns for the defence and promotion of students rights in the 12 areas of equality and citizenship."

## CA 3

### *Implementation of Part-time Mature Student Officer to Officerboard*

Proposed by AITSU

In Article 5: The Officerboard

*Insert*

-5.1.10 The Vice President for Mature Students

*Replace*

5.12 (Conditions) with Definition of Vice President for Mature Students (Henceforth 5.12 becomes Vice President for Mature Students, therefore 'Conditions' become s 5.13, 'Impeachment and discipline' becomes 5.14, 'Vacancy' becomes 5.15)

5.12 The Vice President for Mature Students

5.12.1 The Vice President for Mature Student shall have the responsibility for the implementation and development of all Union policy in relation to issues of mature students.

5.12.2 The Vice President for Mature Students shall assist the VP/Campaigns in relation

to campaigns for the defence and promotions of mature students' rights in areas of equality.

5.12.3 The Vice President for Mature Students shall sit on the Equality and Citizenship Committee.

5.12.4 The Vice President for Mature Students shall assist the VP/Equality and VP/Campaigns in relation to campaigns on areas specific to mature students.

In new 5.13.1 add after 'VP / Irish Language' the following:

Vice President for Mature Students

## CA 4

### *The Work of the VP for the Irish Language in the Constitution*

*Proposed by: VP for the Irish Language*

#### *5.1.8 After*

"The Vice President for the Irish Language"

#### *insert*

", Who shall be presented as An Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge (LU/Gaeilge) in the daily conduct of their office"

#### *5.10.1 After*

"encouraging the use of Irish within the Union with the aim of..."

#### *Delete:*

"developing a bilingual policy"

#### *And replace with:*

"implementing an Irish Language Policy for USI"













# ***POLICY DUE TO EXPIRE***

## 09/ED 1 TUITION FEES

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress recognises**

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

### **Congress strongly believes**

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

### **Congress further notes**

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

### **Congress further notes**

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

### **Congress believes**

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

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress condemns**

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

### **Congress hereby reaffirms**

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

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress mandates**

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

### **Congress calls for**

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

### **Congress urges**

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

## 09/ED 2 STUDENT LOANS/GRADUATE TAX

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress strongly believes**

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

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress also notes**

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

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress notes**

That the cost of going to college in Ireland is, according to bank of Ireland's cost of college survey, €38,000 for a four year degree. This cost will rise significantly if a loans system is brought in, placing third level education out of reach for many.

### **Congress also notes**

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

### **Congress condemns**

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

### **Congress also opposes**

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

### **Congress mandates**

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

### **Congress calls for**

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

## 09/ED 6 MAINTENANCE GRANT

### **Congress notes**

That the maintenance grant is one of the most important issues for students in further and higher education as it is the primary source of financial support available.

### **Congress recognises**

That since the introduction of the maintenance grant in 1973, USI has been at the forefront in campaigning for changes to the maintenance grant to ensure that it assists as many students as possible, provides a decent level of financial support and that the administration of the maintenance grant is flexible, efficient and student-friendly.

### **Congress recognises**

That these priorities have been consistently re-affirmed at numerous congresses through different mandates, highlighting the commitment of USI and constituent organisations to reforming the maintenance grant system so that it serves those who need it.

### **Congress regrets**

That while each of these mandates is laudable it has created a patchwork of twelve motions that, in parts, contradict each other and make the creation of a co-ordinated and effective maintenance grants campaign more difficult than necessary.

### **Congress recognises**

That in order for a campaign to be effective it requires clear, concise goals and a defined, unitary policy

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The repealing and deletion from the USI policy manual of 08 / ED 3, 08 / ED 13, 08 / ED 18, 07 / ED 1, 06 / ED 1, 06 / ED 4, 06 / ED 20, 05 / ED 4, 04 / ED 1, 04 / ED 7, 08 / UO 28, 07 / EQ 3, 05 / WEL 10.



## ***Congress further mandates the education officer and deputy president***

To conduct the maintenance grant campaign, under the auspices of the education officer, in accordance with the following policies:

### ***Grant payment levels & reckonable income limits***

Maintenance grant payment levels to be raised to that of unemployment assistance and to parallel any and all increases in it. Income limits to be increased in line with average annual growth in income as determined by the central statistics grant office and, if annual incomes decline, for the limits not to be decreased.

All payments to be made the same day to all recipients of the maintenance grant via electronic payment every month with a bonus payment in September to allow students to meet deposits for rented accommodation.

### ***Family status***

The recognition of the circumstances of single parents and students with dependents

A new category of 'independent learner under 23' to be created which will allow students under the age of 23 who are estranged from their parents and/or living independently to be assessed on their own personal income.

### ***Approved courses & institutions***

The distinction between full-time and part-time courses to be removed and the term replaced with approved courses in order to allow students on part-time courses to apply for the maintenance grant.

Students in private colleges to be allowed apply for the maintenance grant

### ***Nationality status***

Dependents of refugees to be eligible to apply for the maintenance grant

A change in the regulations to allow the non-national parents of Irish born children apply.

### ***Residency requirement***

The 'residency requirement' for the maintenance grant to be abolished for all applicants with EU nationality

The 'residency requirement' for the maintenance grant to be abolished for all applicants who is a spouse of an EU or Irish national and is or has been employed in the state

The 'residency requirement' for the maintenance grant to be abolished for all applicants who is a child of an EU or Irish national and does not have emu nationality

The 'residency requirement' for the maintenance grant to be abolished for all applicants who are nationals of the EEA or Switzerland

### ***Application process & awarding authorities***

The creation of a single agency to handle all aspects of the maintenance grant and for this agency to be under the auspices of the department of social & family affairs

The application form to be revised, streamlined and simplified in consultation with USI

Method for means testing eligibility for the maintenance grant to be reformed

A simplified process of re-applying for students in receipt of the maintenance grant should be devised and they should be informed of a decision before the start of the academic year.

Applications for the maintenance grant should be opened immediately after the CAO closing date in February 1st and all applicants should be notified of a decision before the start of the academic year.

Official application forms should be made available online and an online application process offered.

### ***Maintenance grant regulations.***

The four schemes within the maintenance grant to be merged into a single scheme with the 'best practice' elements of each preserved.

Abolish the 'continuous stream of education' regulation and permit the status of a candidate to change once they meet the criteria for the new status.

### ***Information for constituent organisations.***

Provide a module on the maintenance grant/student support bill at UOS for education and welfare officers

Update the USI education handbook annually with information on the maintenance grant and/or produce a short guide for CO's

### ***Information for students***

Produce the USI grants poster and distribute to all third-level institutions

Produce a USI guide to applying for the maintenance grant and distribute to second-level students through (where possible) ISSU, guidance counsellors, principals, teachers' unions and the department of education & science.

### ***Campaigning for change***

USI to lobby TDs, ministers and councillors to reform the maintenance grant in line with the above policies.

All awarding bodies that are late paying the maintenance grant to be publicly named and shamed.

Build alliances with relevant stakeholders to create momentum for the campaign to reform the maintenance grant.

The deputy president/campaigns officer shall, with the assistance of the education officer, be responsible for the public aspect of the campaign including any and all public demonstrations, protests, poster campaigns, letter-writing campaigns etc.

## 09/ED 7 CAPITATION TAX DEDUCTIBILITY

### **Congress notes**

That traditional tuition fees are tax deductible whilst the capitation fee is not tax deductible

### **Congress further notes**

That the recent increases in the capitation fee, and planned future increases, have brought it on a par with traditional tuition fees

### **Congress strongly opposes**

The consistent increase in the capitation fee which has been done in such a manner as to bring no additional benefit or funding to higher education institutes in Ireland and is a severe financial burden on students

### **Congress criticises**

The government for continuing to increase the capitation fee, which was introduced only as a temporary measure, and for not improving the grants scheme or changing the means tested level to assist those students who currently find the capitation fee a significant financial restriction

### **Congress mandates**

The officer board to lobby the government that the capitation fee should be made tax deductible

## 09/ED 10 REINTRODUCTION OF FEES

### **Congress believes**

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

### **Congress therefore mandates**

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

### **Congress further mandates**

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

## 09/ED 11 BOLOGNA PROCESS

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress further notes**

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

### **Congress recognises**

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

### **Congress welcomes**

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

### **Congress regrets**

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

### **Congress believes**

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

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The immediate repealing and deletion from the policy manual of 08 / ED 6, 07 / ED 12, 06 / ED 7, 06 / 21, 05 / ED 9, 04 / ED 8 And 04 / ED 13.

### ***Congress further mandates:***

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

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

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

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

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

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

Social dimension.

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

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

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

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

All obstacles to participation further and higher education should be removed and

USI will campaign strongly on this.

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

### ***Mobility***

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

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

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

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

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

### ***Qualifications frameworks and recognition.***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ***USI Bologna Process Campaign***

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ***Congress notes***

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

### ***Congress recognises***

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

### ***Congress welcomes***

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

### ***Congress reaffirms***

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

### ***Congress believes***

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

### ***Congress therefore mandates***

The immediate repealing and deletion from the policy manual of 05 / ED 22, 04 / ED 12, 04 / ED 14 and 08 / EQ 15.

### ***Congress further mandates***

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

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

USI shall campaign for an education and training system open and accessible to all

All sectors of society should have equal opportunity to participate in further and higher education

Further and higher education institutions should take all steps necessary to encourage and broaden participation

USI shall build links and work with all relevant stakeholders and organisations to widen the participation rate and address all obstacles that may prevent individuals from accessing further and higher education

The USI education officer shall develop and regularly update a USI strategy for equity of access to further and higher education

Targeted access funding and programmes must be expanded to ensure that all students who come from traditionally under-represented backgrounds are able to access further and higher education

USI fully endorses, supports and shall campaign to ensure the meeting of the targets as outlined in the national plan for equity of access to higher education 2008 - 2013

All cuts to the student assistance fund, access offices or strategic innovation funded access projects shall be vigorously opposed by USI

All constituent organisations shall be supported by USI in promoting access within their own institution and in supporting the proper representation of access students through policy development, practice, promotion and partnership

the USI education officer and the USI deputy president/campaigns officer shall develop a public campaign promoting access to further and higher education, highlighting the current obstacles and building momentum to have these issues addressed.

## 09/ED 14 Lifelong Learning

### **Congress notes**

That in recent years, the demographics of further and higher education has undergone rapid change with increased participation from mature students and adult learners.

### **Congress welcomes**

This development as it has opened up the opportunities afforded by further and higher education to whole sections of the population who previously did not have this option.

### **Congress regrets**

That despite this progress and the publication of the national access plan for equity of access to higher education 2008 – 2013, there are many obstacles that prevent adult learners from accessing further and higher education.

### **Congress recognises**

That there has been much work in the area of lifelong learning (ll) and the recognition of prior learning which allows adult learners to re-enter education at any stage and to receive certification for the knowledge, skills and competencies that they have acquired outside of the sphere of formal education.

### **Congress reaffirms**

That further and higher education should be open to all, irrespective of age and socio-economic status. Furthermore, students should be able to benefit from flexible method of delivery for education.

### **Congress believes**

That those who avail of flexible methods of education, such as distance or part-time education, should not be required to pay fees and that any such fees should be abolished.

### **Congress regrets**

That at present, USI does not have a coherent policy on the issue of lifelong learning.

### **Congress believes**

That as the sole national representative body for students, USI needs to develop a coherent and strong approach on this issue. Doing this will aligns with the fundamental principles of USI as laid down in the constitution.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The immediate repealing and deletion from the policy manual of 08 / ED 8, 07 / ED 4, 07 / ED 10, 06 / ED 5 And 04 / ED 10.

### **Congress further mandates**

The adoption of the following principles as the USI policy on lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning to be implemented by education officer:

### **Lifelong learning**

All individuals should have the opportunity to enter further and higher education at any stage of their life post-secondary level USI recognises that the process of learning and education does not stop in the classroom or at a certain age – it is a lifelong, enriching process

As an organisation, USI is committed to opening up the opportunities that further and higher education offer to all individuals and shall campaign for an education system built on this principle

There should be no tuition fees for those seeking to avail of lifelong learning through part-time or distance education and USI will lobby and campaign to have all such fees abolished

USI supports the target of mature students representing 20% of full-time students by 2013 and 27% of full and part-time students by 2013

USI will campaign for a national lifelong learning strategy and to ensure the development of 'programme for access to higher education' (path) meets the needs of lifelong learners

USI will campaign for adequate provision and funding of back to education programmes for lifelong learners and for adequate social welfare payments to ensure that those benefiting from ll are not placed in financial hardship by doing so

Recognising that those from a minority background get particular benefit from ll, the USI education officer shall work with the USI equality officer to develop a campaign to ensure that they can benefit from the opportunities ll offers

USI will work with all relevant stakeholders and organisations to progress lifelong learning and open further and higher education to all

USI will work to increase its representation amongst the lifelong learning community and the USI education officer shall draw up a strategy to achieve this, in consultation with the area officers

## ***Recognition of Prior Learning***

USI believes in the concept of recognition of prior learning whereby individuals can receive credit and/or a supplementary, minor or major award within the national framework of qualifications for knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in a non-formal education environment

USI shall lobby to ensure that the department of education & science introduces a national RPL policy

A national RPL policy should focus on the creation of an environment in which individuals are empowered to have their learning recognised and where this recognition is embedded into employment culture

USI will work with all relevant stakeholders and organisation to embed the culture of RPL in both the further and higher education sectors and the employment sphere.

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

### ***Congress notes***

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

### ***Congress also notes***

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

### ***Congress recognises***

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

### ***Congress also recognises***

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

### ***Congress therefore mandates***

The repealing and deletion from the USI policy manual of 08 / ED 11, 07 / ED 8, 07 / ED 9, 07 / ED 17, 06 / ED 3, 06 / ED 19, 05 / ED 20 and 05 / ED 24 with immediate effect.

### ***Congress further mandates***

That USI adopts the following guidelines as its policy on quality assurance to be implemented by the education officer:  
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### ***Quality Assurance of Modules, Programmes and Academic Units (General Principles)***

Institutions should have policy, procedures and formal mechanisms for the quality assurance of their programmes and awards

Institutions should have a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work

Each institution should have a central quality assurance office and/or committee that oversees the implementation of QA; this body shall have student representation

All panels formed to conduct a QA review should have student representation

All panels formed to conduct a QA review should have expert external representation

The quality of teaching staff shall be periodically reviewed as part of any programme, academic unit or institutional review and shall be commented on in the final report

The quality of education provided should be the central element in a review and each module and programme shall be assessed as to whether it is meeting its stated learning outcomes

The appropriateness of the stated learning outcomes as they support a high quality education should also be reviewed

Any and all QA reviews should also examine the quality of resources to support student learning including information systems, library resources and any and all other relevant services

Modules should be assessed annually with programmes and academic units reviewed on a cyclical basis with programmes reviewed at least once every three years and academic units at least once every five years

All quality assurance evaluations (module, programme, academic unit) should be made available online and all module and programme reviews be distributed to the students affected

Following each assessment an action plan and timeline to implement the recommendations should be produced and communicated to students

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

All institutions should be subject to review at least once every seven years

Panels should be chosen and overseen by the accreditation and/or awarding body

All panels should have student representation from a different institution with the pool of student representatives drawn up in consultation with USI

All panels formed to conduct an institutional review should have expert external representation

All panels should be fully independent and free of any influence or conflict of interest

Guidelines for institutional reviews should be drawn up by the accreditation agency based on standardised best practice, such as ENQA's 'standards and guidelines'

As part of the review process the institution should produce a self-assessment report which should include progress on the recommendations of the previous report



The effectiveness and suitability of the institution's internal QA policies, procedures and mechanisms should be assessed  
The review should also examine the overall quality of the student experience, learning resources, information systems, institutional culture (academic and professional) and academic structure  
All institutional review reports should be made available online and all module and programme reviews be distributed to the students affected  
Following each assessment an action plan and timeline to implement the recommendations should be produced and communicated to students and the institution

### ***National Quality Assurance Agency***

USI will lobby for the establishment of one quality assurance and accreditation body for the further and higher education sectors  
There should be at least one USI representative on its main committee, and USI representation on all relevant sub-committees  
The body should have statutory powers with regards to quality assurance in the whole third-level sector and accreditation and delegation of authority in the IOT sector  
The body should be responsible for commissioning and carrying out all institutional reviews  
It should draw up a series of best practice guidelines for assessment and QA mechanisms and these should form the basis of QA policies and procedures in the third-level sector  
This body should seek membership and accreditation through the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)  
It shall be subject to review once every 7 years and this shall involve consultation with USI

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

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

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

USI will campaign to ensure high quality teaching and QA standards throughout the further and higher education sectors in accordance with the policies above  
USI will engage with the department of education & science, FETAC, HETAC, HEA and the NQAI and all other relevant stakeholders to ensure the above  
A survey regarding the different forms of QA used and level of implementation throughout further and higher education in Ireland will be conducted and the results distributed to CO's  
USI shall produce, or work with any sectoral body producing, a handbook for students on quality assurance detailing the rights of students and the importance of student involvement in QA  
The USI education officer shall assist constituent organisations in developing and implementing QA policies in accordance with the above principles  
The USI education officer shall assist constituent organisations in designing and producing materials to inform students about QA procedures and their right to a high quality education

## **09/ED 18 POST GRADUATE WORKING GROUP**

### ***Congress notes***

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

### ***Congress further notes***

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

### ***Congress therefore mandates***

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

### ***Congress also mandates***

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

### ***Congress further mandates***

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

## 09/ED 22 FUNDING FOR HEI'S

### **Congress notes**

That education and an educated workforce is one of the prime drivers of a successful knowledge based economy

### **Congress further notes**

That higher education institutes (HEI) require adequate resourcing in order to deliver the quality of education required to allow Ireland to compete in the modern global economy

### **Congress notes with concern**

That for a number of year's higher education institutes in Ireland have been under-resourced in comparison with their European counter-parts

### **Congress further notes with concern**

- That the recent economic downturn will likely maintain, and potentially intensify,
- the under-resourcing of HEI's and has led to discussions regarding student contributions to 3rd level education

### **Congress mandates**

The president, in conjunction with officer board and any relevant 3rd party organisations where appropriate, to investigate HEI funding across Europe and the world and to draw up a detailed proposal for presentation to the national press and government outlining alternate strategies for the funding of 3rd level education in Ireland.

## 09/ED 23 IREL INITIATIVE

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress further notes**

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

### **Congress believes**

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

### **Congress mandates**

The education officer to lobby to ensure that the initiative as a whole continues as it is very cost effective through economies of scale and ensures that all university students have access to the same key resources.

### **Congress further mandates**

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

## 09/ED 25 POSTGRADUATE WORK PLACEMENTS

### **Congress notes**

The cost incurred by students entering into work placement positions. Often these placements take on the form of free labour for employers.

### **Congress believes**

That all students entering into work placements should receive payment for the duration of the placement.

### **Congress mandates the officer board**

To campaign for payment for these types of placement.

## 09/ED 26

### *Student Assistance Fund*

#### ***Congress notes***

This year saw a significant decrease in funding to the student assistance fund with a cut of €1.2 million.

#### ***Congress further notes***

Now more than ever, we need to be supporting our students who fall into financial difficulties and require financial assistance.

#### ***Congress learns***

That this academic year has seen a significant increase in the number of students seeking financial assistance and we should be investing in students in difficulty.

#### ***Congress mandates***

The president to lobby the government through all relevant departments and semi-state agencies to reverse the cut in the student assistance fund and no to reduce the allocation to SAF any further.

#### ***Congress recognises***

The considerable knowledge held by the both the welfare officer and education officer in relation to finances, grants, student supports and cost of living etc

#### ***Congress believes***

That with the assistance of the welfare officer and education officer, constituent organisations can organise an effective campaign to ensure that institutions contribute to both the student assistance fund and to maintain financial supports for students in difficulties

#### ***Congress therefore mandates***

The welfare officer and education officer to support co's in pressing their institutions to support and contribute to student assistance fund and to maintain and increase their contribution to their own financial supports for students.

## 09/ED 28

### *POSTGRADUATE CAMPAIGN*

#### ***Congress notes***

The growing population of postgraduate students within USI

#### ***Congress regrets***

That many postgraduate students feel disconnected from USI

#### ***Congress therefore mandates***

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

# WELFARE

## 09/WEL 1 EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

### **Congress notes**

The continuing lack of Emergency Contraceptives available 'over-the-counter' in pharmacies in Ireland, and the continuing need for a doctors appointment for a prescription for the ECP which comes at an extra cost to the student.

### **Congress further notes**

Dependant on location, time of week, travel plans, unforeseen circumstances (i.e. sex without consent or awareness) etc that availing of a doctors appointment for aforesaid prescription may not be possible, and that the efficacy of EC decreases significantly over a 72-hour period.

### **Congress believes**

That people are entitled to complete control over their sexual reproduction and fertility, and that freer availability of ECs in Ireland is essential to this intrinsic right.

### **Congress welcomes**

Research carried out on the effects of the ECP introduction in Britain by the British Journal of Medicine that reported:

- a 10% decrease in the amount of teenage pregnancies with only a 2% increase in those using the ECP following its over-the-counter introduction
- no reduction in the usage of other contraceptive methods

And the research document prepared for this debate on the myths, realities and physiological & health impacts of the different ECPs by UCC's Welfare Officer, Keith O' Brien.

### **Congress Mandate**

The USI Welfare Officer to co-ordinate with relevant groups to provide more comprehensive information on the different forms of EC

USI Officer Board to campaign for the introduction of 'over-the-counter' emergency contraception for people over the age of 17, as this is the age of consent.

## 09/WEL 2 ABORTION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress further notes**

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

### **Congress recognises**

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

### **Congress further recognises**

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

### **Congress is disappointed**

By the silence of USI on this issue for the past number of years.

### **Congress acknowledges**

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

### **Congress mandates**

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

### **Congress further mandates**

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

## 09/WEL 4 MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION

### **Congress notes**

That there is a stigma surrounding the issue of mental health amongst the student body, and in Irish society generally.

### **Congress believes**

Welfare Officers of COs are very effective means of dispersing information to students regarding various issues, notwithstanding mental health issues; however issues around mental health still require coverage by Cos, mainly to provide factual information on various mental illnesses and to remove the stigmas associated with said.

### **Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer**

- to provide supports to individual Students' Unions by way of centralised sourcing materials and information, targeting the stigma surrounding mental health issues
- To further engage with relevant groups and NGOs to publicise the various means of dealing with mental illness to the wider student population
- To run a campaign on the issues raised above

## 09/WEL 5 COUNSELLING SERVICES

### **Congress notes**

The severe problem Ireland faces with a large population of alcoholic and drug addicts, some of whom are/will be parents.

### **Congress further notes with concern**

The lack of supports put in place for the children of such parents, who in turn may be faced with mental health problems (such as depression etc.) that may affect them for the rest of their lives.

### **Congress acknowledges**

The availability of AL-anon, AT-Teen, Barnardos etc services in Ireland for these children. However the lack of supports from the HSE itself on a psychiatric & counselling basis along with an average 2 year waiting list for psychiatric evaluation, and how these psychological problems will affect the life of a student at 3rd level, must be realised and changed.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

Officer Board to lobby the relevant bodies to put in place funding for the introduction of counselling services for the children of alcoholic and drug addicted parents.

## 09/WEL 6 MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

### **Congress Notes**

The huge increase in numbers of international students now studying a 3rd level here in Ireland and how diverse the student population has become

### **Congress also notes**

The huge impact studying abroad can have on a person and that adapting to a new culture, language, society and surroundings can have a significant effect on a students well being

### **Congress recognises**

The strength and accomplishments of this year's Mental Health Campaign

### **Congress Mandates**

The Welfare Officer to work in conjunction with the Equality Officer to design campaign materials for the Mental Health Campaign which are specifically aimed at International students and the Welfare Officer in conjunction with the Equality Officer to highlight the specific issues surrounding the specific stresses placed on international students.

## 09/WEL 7 HEADSUP

### **Congress notes:**

The inclusion of student services on the HEADSUP text service which is run by Rehab.

### **Congress further notes**

That ease of access to information is important for students in difficulty. This services offers information on resources that are available when students services are closed.

### **Congress mandates the Welfare Officer**

To continue to work with and promote the HEADSUP service as part of the mental health awareness campaign.

## 09/WEL 9 SHAG WEEK

### **Congress notes**

06 / WEL 6

### **Congress recognises**

That throughout the year, and particularly during SHAG week, material is distributed by USI to students that contains contact information for crisis pregnancy agencies that only provide two choice information.

### **Congress mandates the Welfare Officer**

To only provide information from three choice agencies.

## 09/WEL 10 'FREE PACK'

### **Congress notes**

The collaboration between 'free' and USI over the past three years in pushing to have the 'free' pack distributed in colleges nationwide.

### **Congress applauds**

The dedicated hard work put in by Rachael Prendiville who designed the 'free' pack and notes that all the work and effort she has put into it was done entirely voluntarily with all money raised for 'free' going into the packs only.

### **Congress recognises**

The positive feedback received from Mental Health Organisations around the country as well as student services as well as students themselves

### **Congress mandates**

The Welfare Officer to continue to work closely with 'free' and use the 'free' pack as the mental health awareness pack.

## 09/WEL 11 CRISIS PREGNANCY AGENCIES

### **Congress notes**

That there is no legislation controlling crisis pregnancy agencies in Ireland.

### **Congress notes with concern**

That as a result a number of rogue crisis pregnancy agencies have started up

### **Congress recognizes**

That a rogue crisis pregnancy agency is one where the sole purpose of the agency is to prevent a pregnant woman from having an abortion. They misinform and intimidate women to achieve their aim, using methods such as harassment, bullying and been given blatantly false information. [Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)]

### **Congress acknowledges**

The work done this year by Choice Ireland in campaigning against rogue crisis pregnancy agencies

### **Congress mandates the Welfare Officer**

To work with Choice Ireland, and other relevant agencies, to protest against these rogue crisis pregnancy agencies

### **Congress further mandates the Welfare Officer**

To lobby for the introduction of legislation in this area



## 09/WEL 12 VIOLENCE IN YOUTH RELATIONSHIPS

### **Congress notes with concern**

That violence within youth relationships is not part of any current campaign within USI

### **Congress also notes**

That statistics surrounding the prevalence of violence in youth relationships is scarce

### **Congress believes**

That this issue needs to be highlighted among students

### **Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer**

- to work with various agencies to run a campaign on the issue of violence in youth relationships
- to investigate, with other relevant organisations and statutory agencies, sources of funding for research in this area
- to be involved at all levels of research carried out, if funding is acquired.
- 

## 09/WEL 13 ALCOHOL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

### **Congress notes**

08/ WEL 7 (Students and Alcohol) which mandates the prioritisation of the alcohol awareness/reduction campaign.

### **Congress also notes**

The persistent difficulty in designing a campaign around alcohol awareness which is not patronising to or judgemental of students.

### **Congress recognises**

That alcohol consumption and over consumption remains a key issue for students.

### **Congress also recognises**

That students are best placed to assist the Welfare Officer in designing a campaign on this issue.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The Welfare Officer to hold 4 regional forums at the beginning of the academic year 09/10 to gather student feedback, opinions and ideas on how best to approach this issue and to present a campaign idea to Welfare Working Group before the end of the calendar year 2009 when the feedback from the forums is collated.

# EQUALITY

## 09 / EQ 1 DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

### **Congress notes**

The budget cutbacks that are occurring across most 3rd level institutions.

### **Congress regrets**

That a lot of these cutbacks are disproportionately affecting vital frontline student services.

### **Congress recognises**

The effectiveness and importance of disability support services for students suffering from both physical and intellectual disabilities.

### **Congress opposes**

Any and all cutbacks in these disability support services across the country.

### **Congress mandates**

The Equality, Disabilities and Education Officers to actively campaign to ensure the rights of support to these students by lobbying the appropriate national bodies to provide ring-fenced funding for these services.

## 09 / EQ 2 AHEAD

### **Congress notes**

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

### **Congress further notes**

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

### **Congress acknowledges**

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

### **Congress further acknowledges**

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

### **Congress recognises**

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

### **Congress mandates**

The Equality and Disability Rights Officers to:

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

## 09 / EQ 3 FRIENDS OF THE ELDERLY

### **Congress notes**

That Friends' of the Elderly is a voluntary, non-denominational organisation that brings friendship and social opportunities to the elderly, especially those who live alone.

### **Congress also notes**

That many student members in the Eastern Area volunteer with Friends of the Elderly.

### **Congress further notes**

That this year a pilot campaign entitled 'Open to the Elderly Week' took place in USI member colleges. The campaign consisted of organising one afternoon of entertainment for the elderly who lived near each college and was developed following the success of similar afternoons in UCD.

### **Congress recognises**

That such a campaign helps to combat ageism in our society.

### **Congress mandates**

The Equality Officer to continue to work with Friends of the Elderly.

## 09 / EQ 4 USI RAINBOW WEEK

### **Conference Notes**

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

### **Conference Further Notes**

That the USI does not hold a "Rainbow Week" of its own, unlike themed weeks such as Road Safety Week and Shag Week etc.

### **Conference Believes**

That "Rainbow Week" is a much needed awareness campaign to promote LGBT awareness and acceptance within all affiliated colleges.

### **Conference Mandates**

The USI Officer Board to introduce an official designated "Rainbow Week" on the campaigns calendar to raise awareness for the event and promote inclusion and integration of the LGBT community.

### **Conference Also Mandates**

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

## 09 / EQ 5 WORKING WITH DISABILITY

### **Congress Notes**

The excellent practices employed by the disability services in some higher education institutes

### **Congress Further Notes**

The disparity that exists in disability services available to students in different higher education institutes

### **Congress Mandates**

The Equality Officer and the Disability Rights Officer to investigate the various practices employed in by the disability services of institutes and, based on this, to construct a code of best practice for such services which shall be distributed to all COs and their relevant college authorities

## 09 / EQ 8 IRISH TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

### **Congress notes**

That there exists policy (08/EQ2) mandating the Equality Officer 'to lobby the government for the full and speedy implementation of the recommendations and conclusions laid out in the Department of Education & Science Survey of Traveller Education Provision.'

### **Congress also notes**

That while this motion is well intentioned, it does not provide the Equality Officer with a realistic mandate to address the issues facing members of the Traveller Community in third level education.

### **Congress recognises**

The work of this year's Equality Officer in building links with the Education Worker of the Irish Traveller Movement.

### **Congress notes**

That the Irish Traveller Movement is a national network of organisations and individuals working within the Traveller community.

### **Congress mandates**

That the Equality Officer continues to build links with ITM and to formulate a realistic strategy for addressing the issues faced by Travellers in third level education.

## 09 / EQ 9 FEMALE PARTICIPATION

### **Congress notes**

That there is a long-standing disparity between the number of female members of Students' Unions and the number of females holding positions at decision making levels of Students' Unions, particularly sabbatical officer level.

### **Congress notes**

That in the final report of the USI Participation Working Group it was noted that statistical evidence indicated that Union members were more likely to vote for a male candidate than a female candidate in cases where at least one of each are present.

### **Congress further notes**

That since the abolition of the Women's Rights Officer there has been little in the way of gender equality campaigns run by USI.

### **Congress recognises**

That the issue of female participation is not one unique to USI. It is an issue which is prevalent in many areas of Irish society.

### **Congress further recognises**

That there are many organisations and government initiatives which are involved in the promotion of gender equality in all aspects of life and some which are specifically involved in increasing female representation at decision making level.

### **Congress mandates the Equality Officer**

- To run a campaign highlighting the persistent inequalities between men and women in Irish Society;
- To run a campaign to promote female involvement at decision making level;
- To work with organisations who share our aim of working for an equal society.

## 09 / EQ 10 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

### **Congress notes**

That the numbers of EU and non EU students in the Irish Higher Education have increased steadily over the past number of years

### **Congress further notes**

That while these students share the same concerns as their Irish counterparts, they also need specific support in certain areas

### **Congress recognises**

That these students receive a lot of support from both international education offices and international student societies

### **Congress is aware**

That very few structures exist within both local students union and USI to cater for the specific needs of both EU and non EU students and that this has led to very poor participation by international students at all levels of student representation (see USI Participation Working Group Final Report)

### **Congress believes**

That Students Unions must cater for the needs of all their membership and that USI has a responsibility to support local unions in this and to lead by example

### **Congress further believes**

That the current structures employed by students unions, both local and national, may need to be reviewed in order to serve the needs of these students more effectively

### **Congress therefore mandates the Equality Officer**

To continue to sit on the board of the Irish Council of International Students (ICOS);

To work with ICOS to create support structures for EU and non EU students within local unions and within USI;

To compile best practice guidelines for local unions on how to make their union accessible for EU and non EU students;

To continue to monitor changes in governmental & HEI stipulations for EU and non EU students; to publicise these changes to the membership; to lobby against changes which will have a negative effect on students and to be proactive in seeking changes which will have a positive impact.

## 09 / EQ 11 FORUM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

### **Congress Notes**

That participation in third level education among students with disabilities has grown in the last number of years.

### **Congress Believes**

That it is difficult to provide adequate support and representation for these students without their input into highlighting their specific needs.

### **Congress Mandates**

The Equality Officer and Disability Rights Officer to setup a forum in which students with disabilities can advise USI on the Disability Rights Campaign.

# LGBT

## 09/LGBT 5 DIGNITY AND RESPECT

### **Conference recognises**

the work done by COs to ensure that everybody feels equal.

### **Conference notes**

that some COs have policies that are open to misinterpretation and this may lead to unintended discrimination.

### **Conference believes**

that situations like this should never happen in any CO.

### **Conference further believes**

that since it is against the law to discriminate, college officials should not be allowed to get away with doing so.

### **Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to Draft up a generic policy on Dignity and Respect for use in CO's that don't have any.

### **Conference further mandates**

the LGBT RO and WG to ensure that every CO's Union is aware of the existence of such policies and to ensure that such policies are being applied to everyone.

## 09/LGBT 6 FINANCING OF PINK TRAINING

### **Conference Notes**

That in previous years, many students who book places at pink training, never show up and as a result, never pay for the place they booked.

### **Conference further notes**

That in most years, the LGBT Campaign and USI have lost money as a result of this non payment.

### **Conference Believes**

That the LGBT campaign should not financially suffer due to a non payment.

### **Conference recognises**

That it is a standard business practice that most costs allow a margin of error, onto the cost price, to allow for hidden costs and last minute dropouts.

### **Therefore Conference Mandates**

The LGBTRO and the LGBT Working Group to include as part of the initial payment, a margin of error fee of no more than 5 euro, to allow for some non payment.

### **Conference Further Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that any money raised is returned directly into the LGBT Campaign Budget and is used for the printing of materials, attendance at a conference or any other event or training requiring financial assistance from the USI LGBT Campaign.

### **Conference Also Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that, if the cost for pink training should ever exceed 90 euro, that the five euro margin of error is not included as the cost would be too excessive for students.

### **Conference Additionally Mandates**

That anyone who has not paid for more than two years or whose collective debts exceed 3000 EUR shall be refused entry to pink training until at least half of the money is paid off with a guarantee that the rest will be paid no more than one month after the event

## 09/LGBT 7 STRUCTURE OF PINK TRAINING

### **Conference Notes**

That pink training is the perfect venue to provide support to LGBT people, sabbatical Officers and part time officers on LGBT Issues.

### **Conference Further Notes**

That this year a high number of sabbatical and part time officers attended

### **Conference Believes**

That there should be an introduction module on LGBT issues as well as other modules aimed at supporting someone coming out to parents.

### **Conference Further Believes**

That Pink Training should be longer on the Saturday, but starting later and that no module should be run on the Sunday other than feedback sessions.

### **Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO and the LGBT Working group to:

Ensure, where possible, that an Introduction to LGBT module is run at pink training

Ensure, where possible, a breakdown of the legal, medical and social rights of LGBT people in Ireland

Ensure, where possible, that a module on LGBT and Parenting is run at Pink Training

### **Congress Also Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that a booklet on pink training is produced on a yearly basis and that the booklet for Pink Training contains information on each module, includes an explanatory note on each module, speaker and WG member and that maps/timetables/etc. are included in the booklet.

## 09/LGBT 9 ADOPTION POLICY

### **Conference notes**

The controversial nature of the issue of gay adoption within Ireland.

### **Conference Applauds**

The work done in relation to this issue by organisations by way of debates and seminars.

### **Conference Notes with concern**

the lack of protection to children offered by the civil partnership bill.

### **Conference believes**

That policy needs to be clarified regarding USIs stance on adoption rights.

### **Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to ensure that USI lobby for better protections for children within the Civil Partnership Bill in the form of a Guardianship Rights Bill

### **Congress Further Mandates**

The LGBTRO and the LGBT WG to form a campaign seeking to introduce full Adoption Rights and to only accept guardianship rights as a stepping stone towards full adoption rights

### **Congress Also Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that a brief synopsis of guardianship rights versus adoption rights are drawn up and distributed to the LGBT Societies and SUs to inform them of both the pros and cons of each system.

## 09/LGBT 13 MSM BLOOD BAN

### **Conference Notes**

That the IBTS still has not reviewed its policies on Blood donation

### **Conference Further Notes**

That the NAT test has reduced the window of detection of the HIV virus down to 12 days.

### **Conference Notes with Concern**

The IBTS has passed obligation over to the Department of Health and the World Health Organisation. The IBTS will refuse to



review the deferral criteria until the WHO and the Dept. require them to.

### **Conference Believes**

That the IBTS should set up a working group to investigate the viability of reducing the deferral period from an indefinite deferral down to a more reasonable timeframe

### **Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO and the LGBT Working group to:

- Continue to letter lobby the Minister of Health, asking for a working group to be set up.
- Write a submission to the Dept. Of Health, outlining current trends on HIV infection and HIV statistics and use this to seek a reduction.
- Outline a deferral period of one year instead of a lifetime deferral

### **Conference further mandates**

The LGBTRO to keep the information accurate and up to date with current statistics

### **Conference Also Mandates**

The LGBT RO to lobby both the department and WHO for the setting up of a working group to review their own policies regarding blood donations from the MSM community.

## 09/LGBT 14 COMMUNICATION FROM LGBTRO

### **Conference Notes**

That there is little communication between the LGBTRO and LGBT societies in various CO's.

### **Conference Believes**

That it is important that LGBT societies are aware of important issues to the LGBT community and also of work carried by the LGBTRO and the LGBT Working Group.

### **Conference Further Believes**

That communication is essential to ensuring participation in USI's LGBT campaign at local level.

### **Therefore Conference Mandates**

The LGBTRO to send out at least a quarterly email to LGBT societies, CO Executive Officers and other relevant parties to update them on the progress of the campaign and the work carried out by the LGBT Working Group.

## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

## 09 / NA 3 ORGAN DONOR STATUS

### **Congress notes**

08/ NA 1 (Organ Donors) which mandates the area officers to promote the distribution of organ donor cards and organ donor information leaflets to each student member of USI.

### **Congress also notes**

The successful implementation of this mandate by the Eastern Area Officer this year

### **Congress believes**

That organ donor status should be included on student identity cards

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The President and Welfare Officer to lobby HEI's and any other relevant agencies for the inclusion of organ donor status on student identity cards.

## 09 / NA 4 ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN

### **Congress applauds**

The current USI policy on increasing the student vote

### **Congress notes**

That a general election in the near future is very likely

### ***Congress therefore mandates***

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

### ***Congress further mandates***

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

### ***Congress also mandates***

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

## **UNION ORGANISATION**

### **09 / UO 8** **REPORTING ON NATIONAL MEETINGS**

#### ***Congress notes***

The importance of student representation on national committees.

#### ***Congress believes***

That COs should be better informed as to the business of these meetings and its relevance to the membership.

#### ***Congress mandates***

USI Officer Board to inform COs of upcoming meetings and where possible to convene working group and sectoral meetings to canvas opinion on upcoming agenda items.

#### ***Congress further mandates***

USI Officer Board to circulate brief reports on these meetings to COs within a fortnight of the meeting, taking due notice of any and all potential confidentiality issues associated with disclosing the business of a meeting.

### **09 / UO 11** **PART TIME OFFICER NETWORKS**

#### ***Congress Notes***

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

#### ***Congress acknowledges***

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

#### ***Congress thus mandates***

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

### **09 / UO 17**    ***Increasing CO Participation***

#### ***Congress notes***

The USI Participation Working Group investigated the participation of CO's within the structures of USI.

#### ***Congress recognises***

That for many officers USI represented creating links with officers in other unions and that the creation of such links was hugely beneficial as officers could brainstorm and problem solve together.

#### ***Congress also recognises***

That the geographical location of some student unions creates a barrier to their participation within the democratic structures of USI.

#### ***Congress is also aware***

That in order to ensure participation from student unions in Northern Ireland, USI Campaigns, particularly Welfare & Equality, must be more relevant to students in Northern Ireland.

#### ***Congress therefore mandates***

- The President to ensure a specific team bonding event, inclusive of all CO Officers and Officer Board, is organised to take place at UOS;

- Area officers to organise area specific team bonding events before September of each year;
- Officer Board to receive an induction training on NUSUSI before UOS takes place;
- Officer Board to consult the Northern Area Officer on modules being organised at UOS, in particular modules related to Welfare & Equality, to ensure that UOS remains relevant to our members from Northern Ireland;
- The Welfare & Equality Officer to consult NUSUSI when compiling materials for their respective campaigns;
- The Deputy President to gather feedback from CO's once per year on the barriers and incentives to participating in USI and to bring any recommendations coming from this feedback to Congress.

## 09 / UO 20 COMMUNICATION SUCCESSES

### ***Congress believes***

SU officers are the best placed to communicate the successes and strengths of USI to its members

### ***Congress notes***

That it can sometimes be difficult for SU officers to list off successes and on going work within USI for various reasons.

### ***Congress mandates***

The President to compile a brief list of achievements for distribution to all COs before the end of January in the second semester

## 09 / UO 26 PROMOTING USI

### ***Congress Notes***

The good work done by the Officer Board of Union of Students in Ireland in promoting student rights and views and in advancing the student movement

### ***Congress notes with concern***

That many ordinary members of Union of Students in Ireland are unaware of much of the work done by their national union and in many cases are unaware of whom their national elected representatives are

### ***Congress mandates***

The Officer Board to run a comprehensive USI awareness campaign for ordinary students detailing the structures, purpose and functions of USI and including information on the members of Officer Board

### ***Congress further mandates***

The Officer Board to produce a short monthly report which shall detail the current achievements, objectives and the month ahead in the Union of Students in Ireland to be provided to all Constituent Organisations for optional inclusion on their website or in their union publications



**USI**

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

*NAME/AINM*