

The National Council of the Union of Students in Ireland

Minutes

National Council USI, NC54.5

National College of Ireland

16th October, 2013

Chairperson:

Julian de Spáinn

Deputy Chairperson:

Richard Hammond

NAMES APPEARING ON THE ATTENDANCE LIST:

(No liability accepted for difficulties deciphering manuscript notations)

AITSU

Daniel Coulter

Andrew Slevin

DITSU

Glenn FitzPatrick

Fíachra Duffy

Rebecca Dempsey

GMITSU

Sam O'Neill

Michael Kerrigan

Mark Duffy

IADTSU

Laura McDowall

Sinéad Booth

ITBSU

Jason Aughney

ITCSU

Podge Sheehan

Ian Hannon

Sandy Duane

ITSSU

Paul Smith

ITTDSU

Eoin Dunne

Glenn O'Brien

Karen Campbell

ITTSU

Martina Quirke

Michael Buckley

LITSU

Martin Lynch

Russell Roche

MSU

Ben Finnegan

Louise Morris

NCISU

Greg O'Donoghue

NUIGSU

Seán Kearns

Declan Higgins

STACSSU

Amée Dunne

Kathryn Nea

Sarah Guihen

TCDSU

Jack Leahy

Leanne Byrne

UCCSU

Gavin Lynch-Frahill

Annie Hoey

WITSU

David Walsh

Bord na nOifigeach, AMLÉ

Joe O'Connor, President

Denise McCarthy, Deputy President and Vice President for Welfare

Cat O'Driscoll, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance

Laura Harmon, Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

Paddy Guinan, Vice President for Campaigns

Ciara Guinan, Vice President for the Southern Region

Kevin Donoghue, Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

Rebecca Hall, Vice President for the Northern Region

NAMES FOR WHOM APOLOGIES WERE OFFERED TO THE MEETING:

(CO Presidents/Delegate Leaders/Officer Board Only)

Podge Haughney, UCCSU; Feidhlim Seoighe, Vice President for the Irish Language/Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge, Bord na nOifigeach, AMLÉ.

Preliminary

Karl Brophy and Séamus Conboy of Red Flag were authorised to attend the meeting.

1. Pre-Nominated Any Other Business

- (a) Protest regarding welfare cuts.
- (b) Impact of the Haddington Road Agreement on mid-term breaks.
- (c) Christmas Community Engagement Campaign.
- (d) Potential National Council meeting in November.

2. Budget 2014

The President gave a presentation outlining the main measures in Budget 2014 which affect students. He noted that notwithstanding the obvious negativity of some of the measures announced, much of USI's pre-Budget submissions and campaigning had been successful. In particular he emphasised that retention of the current levels of Higher Education Grant funding was an achievement in the current political and economic climate. The President also noted that USI will be contributing to the design of the Youth Guarantee scheme.

Karl Brophy and Séamus Conboy of Red Flag gave an overview of their impressions of the outcomes from Budget 2014 and gave a presentation outlining the evolution of the campaign from initiation to Budget Day.

DITSU commended the impact of Red Flag and expressed itself proud of the success of the campaign. DITSU opined that while the campaign in and of itself was a clear victory for the student movement, Budget 2014 was a spit in the face to young people as a community. Therefore messaging is important. The President agreed that it is important to acknowledge the success of the campaign while moving quickly to address the negative issues arising from Budget 2014.

Karl Brophy asserted that Budget 2014 shows that USI can get political "wins" which assists in legitimising future campaigns.

GMITSU asked if Red Flag could confirm which people in particular put their necks on the line to retain grant funding levels. LITSU asked if Budget 2014 shows that the Labour Party is already in election mode.

Karl Brophy responded that while political parties are continually in election mode the response to the campaign was not electorally focussed but a response to the quality of the campaign. He noted that certain advisors to the Labour Party and certain people in Fine Gael were helpful. Most importantly, the Minister for Education himself was persuaded by the campaign.

The VPC asked for Red Flag's suggestion regarding maximising the local impact of the campaign. Séamus Conboy noted that it is important to further develop relationships with local T.D.'s outside of the strictures of Budget campaigning in order to foster relations for future campaigns. Local issues provide an opportunity for this contact.

UCCSU expressed its deep concern that the student movement is viewing the outcome of Budget 2014 as a "win" when so much damage has been done and when so much work remains to be done by the student movement. It noted that the statement issued by USI was out of touch with student realities. Moreover the student movement did not obtain anything for students and simply stopped the Government from taking something from students.

The President explained that aside from the statement he had spoken at length about the negative impact of the welfare cuts to various media outlets throughout Budget

Day. He also noted that the Youth Guarantee had been attained and that the campaign goes on in respect of other objectives including the welfare cuts.

DITSU observed that there appears to be a dearth of knowledge on education policy within the Oireachtas and encouraged the commencement of a national conversation about the value of education.

The President then led Officer Board in outlining further campaigns and events planned for the remainder of the students' union year, including *inter alia*:

- ✓ More Talk, More Action ~ USI Mental Health campaign
- ✓ Pink Training
- ✓ Ongoing Student Electoral Registration Database campaign
- ✓ Implementation phase of Youth Guarantee
- ✓ National Student Survey 2014
- ✓ SHAG 2014
- ✓ Exam Preparation (www.usi.ie/exams)
- ✓ Student Achievement Awards Ireland 2014
- ✓ Postgraduate Loan proposal
- ✓ Grant reform paper
- ✓ Long-term Third Level Funding Strategy
- ✓ USI Alcohol Awareness campaign
- ✓ Say Something Survey follow-up campaign
- ✓ Higher Education Authority Equity of Access Conference
- ✓ USI Annual Congress 2014
- ✓ Know Your Rights campaign
- ✓ National Teaching Awards
- ✓ Seachtain na Gaeilge
- ✓ Oireachtas Festival
- ✓ USI Member Services Limited ~ Income Diversification Strategy
- ✓ Deal Effect
- ✓ Gender Equality training & networking event
- ✓ Elect Her campaign
- ✓ Enterprise campaign
- ✓ Employability campaign
- ✓ "Start" initiative
- ✓ Political reform

GMITSU sought details of the campaign to promote women for election. The VPE&C indicated that an email would issue seeking suggestions regarding the manner in which the campaign might proceed.

DITSU expressed its annoyance and confusion that the meeting is not discussing future campaigning relating to the negative announcements in Budget 2014, noting that the foregoing update for the year could have been handled by email. The President clarified that a number of MOs has asked that the body of work for the

remainder of the year be outlined and as the next scheduled meeting is in December, so to do at this meeting was considered useful.

NUIGSU asked that an email be circulated with relevant dates for the various campaigns and events before seeking an update regarding the Focus Group for Student Nurses. The VPC responded that he is working on it.

3. Any Other Business

The President confirmed that a protest will occur outside Leinster House in the afternoon following this meeting regarding the budget cuts targeted at young people. He proposed that USI attend at the protest and issue a statement in support of the protest to the media. This was seconded by UCCSU **and passed unanimously.**

The President mentioned that an ancillary effect of the Haddington Road Agreement's provisions for extra hours to be worked by lecturers is the cancelling or re-scheduling of mid-term breaks. He asked how pervasive an issue this is for MOs. WITSU noted that it is rumoured to be a forthcoming issue at WIT with rearrangement of semesters. The VPAA&QA reminded MOs that if there are proposals to commence Term 1 earlier, then the Leaving Certificate and CAO process needs to be taken into account. ITBSU noted that it has some concerns on this topic also. The President confirmed that USI is happy to assist MOs locally and he will bring issues to the Higher Education Authority where appropriate.

The President proposed that USI in partnership with Saint Vincent de Paul would act as sponsor for the annual Toy Appeal with students' unions acting as collection points and would run a series of local and/or regional events inviting families *exempli gratia* Christmas Dinner, Santa's Grotto, *etcetera*. The proposal was seconded by the VPC who said that it is a good idea allowing a positive focus on students with benefits for MOs and USI.

ITTSU gave examples from local experience regarding how the proposal could be put into good effect locally. UCCSU reminded the meeting that certain MOs may already have their own charity partner(s).

The Chairperson put the proposal to the meeting **which was passed unanimously.**

The President noted his concern that on the basis of the current schedule of National Council meetings, there would be no meeting of Working Groups from September until the weekend of the December meeting. As a consequence he proposed that an additional meeting of National Council occur in Dublin on 9th November, 2013 with ancillary meetings occurring on 8th November, 2013 and 9th November, 2013. This was seconded by the DP&VPW.

MSU expressed its concerns that this meeting has not discussed the response to Budget 2014 sufficiently and noted that fitting an additional National Council into current schedules could cause difficulties at a local level. UCCSU shared these concerns and WITSU opined that there are plenty of meetings scheduled so unless there is a pressing agenda item an additional meeting ought not be necessary.

The Chairperson put the proposal to the meeting **which was passed by majority**.

The Chairperson thanked NCISU for hosting the meeting, thanked all present for their participation, and closed the meeting.