

Michael Kerrigan *for* USI President

Experienced
Reliable
Passionate



Higher Education Funding

With the decision on the future funding of higher education likely to be made in the coming months we are entering a defining moment in the history of education in Ireland. The huge increases in Student Contribution fees and accommodation costs over the past 10 years have had a devastating impact on students and families across the country.

The possibility of an income contingent loan scheme would add further to this burden for all students, especially those from lower socio economic backgrounds, lone parents, students on grants, mature students and students from farming backgrounds.

The fight against the introduction of income contingent loans is one we simply cannot afford to lose.

As President, I will:

- Ensure USI are prepared for every possible recommendation from the Oireachtas committee on Education and Skills.
- Appose an income contingent loan scheme or any hybrid recommendation that involves loan schemes.
- Continue to mobilise society behind our campaign for publicly funded higher education.

Autonomy of Students' Union

A lack of autonomy can severely impact the running of a Students' Union and has resulted in Unions being denied funding, prevented from running certain campaigns or events and has even resulted in Unions not making complaints on internal issues due to a fear of having their budget cut.

As President, I will:

- Outline best practices for models of accountability and funding from Students' Unions nationally and internationally.
- Outline existing Legislation on autonomy Students' Unions internationally.
- Re-establish the USI legislation working group which will be tasked with drafting a bill on the autonomy and accountability of Students' Unions.

Communication

Over the past number of years USI have made significant improvements on media engagement and social media reach, however many members still do not know what USI is or the work that it does.

As President, I will:

- Develop a communication strategy with the objective of reaching every member of USI.
- Create a database of contact details so that all students can receive regular newsletters, updates on the work of USI and upcoming events.
- Ensure that USI's Policy Book is made available online with a clear indication of mandates complete, mandates ongoing and mandates not complete.
- Run a USI awareness campaign in every member organisation early in the first semester, promoting the work of USI and signing students up to our newsletter.

Finance

Inflation, increased staff numbers and an ever increasing policy book have resulted in USI no longer being able to rely solely on affiliation fees. To ensure we continue to serve our members at the expected level we must increase our income from grants and commercial activity.

As President, I will:

- Develop a commercial development strategy with the long term objective of Students' Unions benefiting financially for being members of USI.
- Continue to increase the number of applications submitted for state grants to complete research and run campaigns.

Accommodation

The past number of years have seen a lot of talk, but very little action when it comes to solving the student accommodation crises. We must ensure that student accommodation is a priority area throughout the year, not just for a couple of months in the Summer.

As USI President, I will:

- Lobby the government to complete and implement the Student accommodation strategy.
- Work with the Student Housing Officer to ensure that short-term solutions are available to students in September and to provide advice and support to Students' Union officers in helping students find appropriate accommodation.
- Continue to lobby the Minister for Housing to develop a student housing trust similar to the Dutch Student Housing Cooperation.

Part-time Officers

From my experience working with a large executive, I understand the importance of Part-time Officers for communicating with students, receiving feedback and rolling out campaigns and events. We need to ensure that USI's engagement with Part-Time officers extends further than Part-time officer training and Congress.

As USI President, I will:

- Ensure Part-time Officers have multiple opportunities to receive training that is not limited to just their region.
- Ensure regional Officers are available to attend and give updates at executive meetings when requested.
- Support Students' Unions who do not have part-time officers in getting Part-time executives established.

An Gaeilge/Irish Language

Leis an bhféidearthacht ann anois go mbeidh an ról mar Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge mar ról lánaimseartha agus íochta,, tá an deis ag AMLÉ a bheith ar thús cadhnaíochta ag cur na Gaeilge chun cinn agus ag feachtasaíocht ar son cearta teanga.

Mar Uachtarán:

- Déanfaidh mé comhoibriú leis an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge le tógáil ar an gcaidreamh atá ann idir AMLÉ agus na Cumainn Ghaelach, tacóidh mé leis na hAontais Mac Léinn le bunú agus forbairt na gCumann seo chomh maith.
- Leanfaidh mé ar aghaidh ag déanamh stocaireachta ar an rialtas ag lorg maoiniú d'ábhar oidí ag tabhairt faoi cúrsaí Gaeltachta éigeantach.
- Déanfaidh mé feachtasaíocht le NUS-USI agus le grúpaí ar nós, an Dream Dearg go mbeidh Acht Gaeilge ann ó Thuaidh. Agus leanfaidh mé ar aghaidh ag déanamh feachtasaíochta go dtí go gcuirfear an tAcht nua i bhfeidhm.

With the possibility of an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge becoming a full-time paid position, USI have an opportunity to become a leading organisation in promoting the Irish Language and campaigning for Irish Language rights.

As President, I will:

- Work with VP Irish to improve the relationships between USI and Irish Language societies and to assist Students' Unions in establishing and developing these societies.
- Continue to lobby the Government to restore grants for student teachers' attendance at mandatory Gaeltacht courses.
- Campaign alongside NUS-USI and groups such as Dream Dearg in getting an Irish language act passed in Northern Ireland.
- Ensure that the new Irish language policy is implemented.

Repeal the 8th

Ireland's abortion laws are among the most restrictive in the world, they are cruel, inhumane and violate women's human rights.

As USI President, I will:

- Continue to lobby the government to call a referendum on repealing the 8th.
- Ensure USI continues to inform, educate and mobilise students on the 8th amendment.
- Support NUS-USI in their campaign to change abortion legislation in Northern Ireland.

Additional areas:

As President, I will:

- Work closely with political parties and their manifesto writers to ensure more focus on student issues leading up to a possible general election.
- Continue to lobby government to increase the funding for postgraduate grants.
- Work with NUS-USI and NUS UK to assess and reduce the impact of Brexit on Students.
- Continue to work on USI's Teachers campaign aimed at securing a wage or stipend for student teachers on placement.
- Continue to work alongside SIPTU and other partners in their "Big Start" Campaign looking to increase pay and recognition for the early childhood sector.
- Work alongside THEA in lobbying the government to set up a borrowing framework for the IoT sector similar to that of Universities.
- Re-establish the Technological University/Merger's Working Group with the aim of assisting Students' Unions that may be amalgamating and lobbying the Department of Education to get a suitable Technological Universities bill passed.
- Lobby government to enact the gambling control bill and to run a campaign informing students of the potential effects of gambling.
- Support the VP AA in the continued development and expansion of the NStEP programme.
- Support the VP Welfare in expanding the training and supports available to Sabbatical Officers.

Experience

- GMITSU Vice President for Welfare 13/14.
- Co-Author of the USI Mental Health Strategy 2014-2017.
- GMITSU Deputy President for Education 14/15.
- Resolved over 400 SUSI cases.
- GMITSU President 15/16.
- CEO and chief spokesperson for 6,000 students across 5 campuses.
- Sat on all institute boards including Governing Body and Academic Council.
- Accountable for all finances, budgets and day to day running costs of the Union.
- Management of 3 full-time sabbatical officers, 15 part-time officers and 8 staff members.
- Elected to USI Finance Committee by National Council.
- Elected USI Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region 16/17 with 100% of the votes.
- Leading a team of 23 full-time officers from 8 Students' Union with varying sizes and structures.

Achievements

- Introduced Mental Health Tuesdays and Condom Wednesdays to GMITSU.
- Introduced the first Disability awareness campaigns to GMITSU.
- Nominated for USI Welfare Campaign of the year 13/14.
- Completed ASIST, SafeTalk and Occupational First Aid Training.
- Trained over 60 Part-time officers and Class Reps in SafeTalk.
- Record number of class reps elected and trained.
- Secured student representation on the exam appeals committee
- Secured earlier release of exam timetables.
- Secured late night reading rooms during exam time.
- Ensured the removal of and unjustified "Materials fee" from the GMIT fee policy saving students €140,000 per year.
- Introduction of a disability officer to the GMITSU Executive.
- Reformed the GMITSU Class Rep Council.
- Introduced Officer reports for Sabbatical Officers in GMITSU.
- Selected as a moderator at the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) conference on student employability.
- Nominated for USI Student Leader of the year 15/16.
- Only member of the USI Campaigns Subcommittee since the beginning of the #EducationIs campaign in 2014.

Why I'm running for USI President

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

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

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

Le Meas

