



## **Policies Due to Expire at Congress 2018**

Errors and Omissions Excepted. If you spot any errors, please immediately inform the Congress Director at [congress@usi.ie](mailto:congress@usi.ie)

Does not contain interim policies adopted at USI National Council during the 2017-2018 Academic Year. These will be automatically added to the Clár.

USI Policy is passed at USI Congress each year. Policy has a life of three years at which time it may be extended for a further three years. Policies adopted at legacy conferences and congresses before 2012 had a five year policy life.

Whilst we are engaged in a process of standardisation, policies with novel formatting are preserved with that formatting in order to retain the integrity of the policy as considered at Congress.

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## Emergency Motions from prior to 2015.

Emergency motions prior to 2015 were not simply absorbed into their policy categories, but kept in a separate category. They will all come up for renewal or deletion in 2018.

### 14 EM 1    DEMONSTRATION AGAINST FORCED LABOUR SCHEMES

#### **Congress welcomes:**

The passing of motion UO 16 Job Bridge.

#### **Congress has been made aware:**

That a demonstration has been organised by youths wings of the trade union movement to take place on 12<sup>th</sup> April in Dublin against sanctions individuals who refuse to take a placement on Job Bridge and Gateway.

#### **Congress mandates:**

Officer board to support this demonstration.

### 14 EM 2    THE CENTRE

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

The recent airing of a comedic programme by RTE called ‘The Centre’ that takes aim at a number of social minorities.

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

The protest registered by the Irish trans\* advocacy body TENI about the programmes highly negative, stereotyping and mocking attitude towards trans\* people.

**Congress recognises:**

The USI has been a key voice in the fight for LGBT rights over the past number of decades and in particular its activism on trans\* issues in recent years.

**Congress believes:**

That we must stand in solidarity with TENI against this transphobic programme aired by the national broadcaster.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The USI President to make a formal complaint in line with Section 3.4.2 of the BCI Code of Programme Standards to RTE about this programme.

## 14 EM 3 WELFARE CAMPAIGN ON SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-CONFIDENCE & BODY IMAGE

**Congress notes:**

In the second week of March this year, TCDSU ran their first ever welfare campaign in relation to self-esteem, self-confidence and body image, Body & Soul week. Given the positive feedback about the campaign since the deadline for submissions of motions to congress has passed and the overall success of the campaign and the engagement of students in Trinity, this is a worthwhile campaign that should be rolled out on a national level.

**Congress further notes:**

That in a recent Council in TCD, class reps passed a motion to encourage incoming Welfare Officers in Trinity to organise a campaign raising awareness about self-esteem, self-confidence and body image.

**Congress regrets:**

That the Department of Health estimates that up to 200,000 people in Ireland may be affected by eating disorders and an estimated 400 new cases emerge each year, representing 80 deaths annually.

Further, there is overwhelming evidence, that body image is intrinsically linked with self-esteem. Our society's emphasis on how we look also affects the way people feel about themselves.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

USI VP Welfare to run a campaign specifically in relation to self-esteem, self-confidence and body image.

**Congress further mandates:**

USI VP Welfare to support and encourage MOs to implement similar campaigns in their own colleges.

## 14 EM 4 THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN- EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD

### **Congress notes:**

The motion passed at this year's Congress (AAQA1) which adopts the NERI Discussion Paper on Higher Education as USI policy on third-level funding.

### **Congress recognises:**

The importance of mobilising the student body to support the achievement of our desired policy and political aims for a publicly-funded Higher Education system, and the significant ideological crossroads we are now at regarding how we view Higher Education in Ireland.

### **Congress further notes:**

That a National March or Demonstration has not been held by USI since 2011.

### **Congress adopts;**

The Campaign 2014 strategy already passed by National Council, which sets out desired campaigning actions to enable us to achieve our political goals.

### **Congress mandates:**

The USI President and Vice-President for Campaigns to organise a significant national event as part of this campaign which espouse, promote and celebrate the value and benefits of Higher Education to our economy and our society. This should take place no later than 9<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

### **Congress also mandates:**

USI Officer Board to collaborate with like-minded organisations who support our funding position and see Higher Education as a public good, to include but not be exclusive to SIPTU, IMPACT, IFUT and the TUI.

## 14 EM 5 EQUAL MARRIAGE

### **Congress notes:**

That [on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April](#) the Northern Ireland Assembly will debate a motion calling for equal marriage in Northern Ireland.

### **Congress believes:**

That this motion is very closely aligned to USI policy and beliefs.

### **Congress mandates:**

That the USI officer board actively lobbies members of the Northern Ireland Assembly in conjunction with their partners in the trilateral agreement, NUS and NUS-USI, in order to secure support for the motion.

### **Congress further mandates:**

USI to have representation in addition to the President of NUS-USI in the Northern Ireland Assembly on the day of the vote.

## 14 EM 6 HUMAN RIGHTS

### **Congress asserts:**

That USI has a responsibility to protect human rights internationally.

### **Congress notes:**

That currently homosexuality is illegal in 86 countries.

### **Congress notes:**

That Uganda's parliament has criminalised homosexuality as of February 24th and that internationally there are countries where the Q movement is regressing.

### **Congress believes:**

That there are countries where the Q community do not receive as much media attention as high profile developments in Russia.

### **Congress mandates:**

The president and VP of Equality & Citizenship to draw attention to this issue in a campaign and to support and actively campaign for the decriminalisation of homosexuality internationally.

## 14 EM 8 POSTGRADUATE LOANS

### **Congress notes:**

11/ ED 21 which called on USI to tackle the prohibitive cost of postgraduate study via a loan scheme.

### **Congress recognises:**

The near-removal of all postgraduate grants and maintenance in 2012, which has made accessing postgraduate education even more difficult for many students.

### **Congress reaffirms:**

USI's commitment to a fully public-funded Higher Education system at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

### **Congress acknowledges:**

The current situation is completely unsustainable, and requires immediate action now to make postgraduate study more affordable and accessible in the short-term.

### **Congress applauds:**

USI's negotiations with credit institutions in relation to this area this year in conjunction with the Department and the HEA, which has recently led to a much more affordable product being negotiated with Bank of Ireland.

**Congress mandates:**

USI Officer Board to endorse and promote this product in partnership with Bank of Ireland in order to ensure that it is available to students considering postgraduate education, as it vastly improves the current situation facing students who are forced to take out a loan in order to fund their postgraduate study.

**Congress further mandates:**

The USI President to review the postgraduate funding situation on an annual basis, and seek to improve affordability and access to postgraduate study on an ongoing basis.

This should involve in the first instance lobbying for additional public funding for postgraduate education including the reintroduction of all postgraduate grants and maintenance, and in the second instance seeking to improve the terms and conditions of loan offerings with Bank of Ireland or another provider.

## 14 EM 9 UKRAINIAN CRISIS

**Congress notes:**

On 20 March, Ielyzaveta Shchepetylnykova, President of the Ukrainian Association of Student Self-governments, briefed the 27<sup>th</sup> European Students' Convention on the current state of affairs in the Ukraine. Following this briefing, the USI delegation joined a candlelight vigil to honour the victims of the Maidan in Ukraine.

**Congress understands:**

Demonstrations in Ukraine started in late November 2013 when the Ukrainian government refused to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union and accepted to join the Russian customs union instead. Many of the students, academics and young people in Ukraine have been significantly impacted by the unrest and violence resulting in injuries and deaths on both sides.

**Congress believes:**

That Ukraine's democratic development must be under the control of Ukrainians, with the support only upon request of the entire international community.

**Congress mandates:**

The USI President to communicate to the leaders of Russia, Europe and the wider international community, that we stand in solidarity with our fellow students in Ukraine and demand an immediate end to all interference in Ukraine.

**Congress further mandates:**

The USI President to call for young people and students in the Ukraine to be protected and supported as the country continues to develop democratically and economically.

## 14 EM 10 IRISH JUSTICE SYSTEM

### **Congress notes:**

The recent revelations regarding illicit Garda surveillance, including misuse of the Pulse system.

### **Congress further notes:**

The apparent inaction on this issue from the Government.

### **Congress applauds:**

The actions of Garda whistleblowers Maurice McCabe and John Wilson, which have led to the uncovering of widespread corruption within An Garda Síochána.

### **Congress affirms:**

The purpose of the justice system in any free democracy is to fairly protect the rights of citizens, including the right to privacy.

### **Congress believes:**

The Irish Justice system has clearly failed in this regard, and action must be taken to rectify this.

### **Congress mandates:**

The USI President to call for an Independent Garda Commission to be established as expediently as possible, which has appropriate regulatory powers and oversight so as to ensure this situation is not allowed to occur in the future.

### **Congress further mandates:**

The USI President to send correspondence to the Department of an Taoiseach and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform outlining the concerns of USI Congress, and to the whistleblowers communicating our support.

## 14 EM 11 SOCIAL WORK GRADUATE PLACEMENT SCHEME

### **Congress notes:**

The proposed introduction of a Social Work Graduate Placement Scheme, similar to the one currently in place for nurses, by the new Child and Family Agency.

### **Congress is deeply concerned:**

That these graduate will be placed on a salary below that of starting salaries negotiated by trade union with the government.

### **Congress fears:**

That the scheme will drive down salaries within the social work sector and would install a new layer of cheap labour within the profession.

**Congress mandates:**

USI Officer Board to support the call to withdraw this proposal and actively engage with SWAN (Social Work Action Network) Ireland to campaign on this issue.

14 EM 12 INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE BRIEF

**Congress notes:**

That the USI delegation that attended ESU 27 on March 21st reported that USI is significantly underperforming on the international platform.

**Congress recognises:**

The importance of educating national council on International and European affairs and to perform better internationally.

**Congress further recognises:**

The importance of National Council members being made aware of developments on an international level.

**Congress notes:**

That National Council should have direct input into international policy and decision making

**Congress further notes:**

That Press Releases and Reports on European developments should be circulated after any meeting of the European Student Union

**Congress believes:**

That motivational letters from any European Student Union candidates should be circulated in advance of Board Meetings

**Congress further believes:**

That national council should select the candidates they wish to represent them on a ESU executive committee.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to facilitate National Council in selecting their ESU representatives.

**Congress further mandates:**

The international representative to circulate regular reports and press releases to members of national council at least after every meeting of ESU.



## 14 EM 13 Board Meeting Mandate in advance of BM66

### **Congress notes:**

That the USI delegation that attended ESU 27 on March 21st reported that USI is significantly underperforming on the international platform.

### **Congress recognises:**

The value of information and supporting evidence when pushing a student centric agenda through the democratic institutions where we represent our students.

### **Congress also recognises:**

An opportunity at a European level for a comparative study that would determine best practice in terms of what is the most effective student representational system.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

That the President & Vice President AAQA convene a working group in advance of the 66th Bard Meeting of the European Student Union for the purpose of preparing a motion that would mandate ESU to carry out such a study.

### **Congress further mandates:**

That such working groups with a general focus are convened in advance of any Board Meeting as long as we are members of ESU.

## 13 EM 1 PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

### **Congress notes:**

The recent publication of the list of properties eligible for exemption from the property tax as described by the Finance (Local Property Tax) Bill 2012.

### **Congress further notes:**

While Part 30f the Act makes the individual or institution liable for payment of the tax, it is inevitable that the charge will be passed on to students

### **Congress mandates:**

The President and Welfare Officer to lobby the Minister for Education & Skills and the Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government for the inclusion of student residences as an eligible exemption

## 13 EM 2 SHOULD WOMEN BE OUTSIDE THE HOME

### **Congress notes:**

That the front page of the Irish Examiner on the first day of the USI Congress (25th March 2013) led with the headline "Banks to demand mothers sacrifice their jobs"

In the article it tells us Personal Insolvency Service guidelines state that "where a person is working and paying for childcare as a consequence of his or her employment, the cost of childcare should not exceed the income from the employment"

### **Congress also notes:**

That the day after Congress rejected all motions dealing with female participation in politics that The Irish Independent (27th March 2013) had a front page article

"Working mums could be asked to give up their jobs in debt deal- Varadkar" attributed to one of the youngest Cabinet Ministers and widely tipped future leader of Fine Gael.

### **Congress further notes:**

That the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship had a submission supported by USI National Council for 15-16th of February 2013 from which she made a paper submission and was an invited speaker to the Constitutional Convention on the issue of Women in Politics and Article 41.2.1 on the 17th of February.

### **Congress understands:**

That Article 41:2.1 states

*"In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.*

**Congress supports:**

The submission made to the Constitutional Convention by the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship which stated that

*"The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) believes that symbolism is powerful. We believe that article 41 symbolically excludes women from life outside of the home. The current article places a symbolic limitation on women and implies that there is no life for women outside of the home. US/ strongly rejects the implications that this article has in terms of implied gender roles and its contribution to gender stereotyping in Ireland. Gender stereotyping is restrictive for all members of society. USI believes that this article is not reflective or in touch with 21<sup>st</sup> century life in Ireland. The Union of Students in Ireland is an inclusive organisation that values equality and diversity. One of our visions is an Ireland where there is equality between all genders."*

**Congress further notes:**

In the same submission a number of facts were highlighted under the section entitled "Underrepresentation of females in public life in Ireland — the Facts

In 2012, a research piece was conducted by the USI Gender Equality Officer "UCC Students' Union had 21 sabbatical officers between the years of 2007-2012, 18 of which were male and just 3 were female. (just 14%). This issue of under—representation is often replicated across Students' Unions in Ireland.

Currently there are just 5 female Students' Union Presidents in USI (21%)

- Only 15% of the 166 Dáil seats are held by women
- Women account for just 16% of the members of local authorities
- The Republic of Ireland ranks 23rd place amongst 27 EU member states
- Men comprise 8 out of 10 Boardroom positions (OECD) (20% female)
- Women earn on average 17% less than men in Ireland

**Congress accepts:**

That there is a clear correlation between representative figures in student politics and national politics. That from these figures it is evident that in general there is a glass ceiling for women and minorities, which needs to be addressed.

**Congress recognises:**

There are exceptions to every case, but that when there are so few exceptions, the exception proves the rule.

**Congress believes:**

It is unacceptable that government ministers and financial institutions are making such statements and policy at the very time the Convention has recommended the amendment of this outdated article.

**Congress further believes:**

That Fianna Fail are correct when they say "it is particularly short-sighted that banks will be

given the power to demand working mothers give up their jobs"

And that Dublin West Labour TD Patrick Nulty is also correct in demanding that "Mr. Varadkar should immediately withdraw his insensitive remarks".

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to continue to promote the submission she made to the Constitutional Convention as USI policy, in absence of enough equality policy in this area.

The whole of USI officer board to completely reject the argument that a woman should be forced to stay at home, in any public fora where this issue raises its head. Women can rightfully choose to stay at home, as a man should be able, but it must be a choice and not coerced.

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to engage in more research and compilation of statistics of under-representation by various groups in USI and across all MOs, to help with institutional memory and further understanding of the reasons why.

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to explore various options to help increase participation in elections by all students — as voters, activists and candidates, but in particular by groups underrepresented in Students' Unions (including but not limited to female students, LGBT students, international students, immigrants/migrants and disability students).

### 13 EM3 GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH PROJECT

**Congress notes:**

The constructive and wide ranging outcomes of the workshop on graduate employment.

**Congress welcomes:**

The initiative of a joint research project between USI & ICTU, with the objective of combatting graduate unemployment.

**Congress mandates:**

The President to further efforts to engage Member Organisations and grassroots members in the consultation process and to report back to each national council on the progress of the project until its conclusion.

### 13 EM 4 SPUNOUT

**Congress is appalled by:**

The article in the Sunday Independent, entitled, 'Mulherin outrage at state sponsored orgy tips', printed Sunday March 23rd 2013. This article shows how our public representatives are out of touch with the young people of Ireland.

**Congress welcomes:**

The response from SpunOut 'Arm Young People with facts not fear' available at SpunOut.ie

**Congress is deeply concerned:**

Of the possible negative light that SpunOut has been brought into as a result of the Sunday Independent article.

**Congress supports:**

SpunOut's evidence based approach to reaching out and educating young people on various aspects of life.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

- USI to condemn the article which has possible negative effects on SpunOut as an organisation and the work they do.
- USI to continue to work with SpunOut and to support the work they do in reaching out and educating the youth of Ireland.
- USI to reaffirm the importance of and its commitment to running sexual health campaigns and educating students on all aspects of sexual health.
- USI to call on the Minister of Health to recognise the invaluable service SpunOut provides and continue to support them.

**12 EM 1 VOTING DAYS****Congress notes:**

The Fine Gael and Labour parties condemning of the Government of the day for holding voting on weekdays during the term.

**Congress further notes:**

That student unfriendly voting days severely reduce turnout among students.

**Congress condemns:**

The decision to hold the upcoming referendum on the EU fiscal treaty on Thursday, May 31st 2012.

**Congress notes with concern:**

That the turnout among students will be hampered as a result.

**Congress mandates:**

The VP for Campaigns and President to lobby the Government for student friendly voting days for all elections and referenda so students can exercise their democratic right to vote.

## 12 EM 3 POLLING DATES

**Congress notes:**

That prior to the last General Election both Fine Gael and Labour called on the Government to hold polling dates on a weekend in order to facilitate students and other to exercise their democratic rights and vote.

**Congress further notes:**

The success of USI's 'Your Future, Your Vote' campaign.

**Congress is outraged:**

That in a blatantly cynical and hypocritical move, the parties now in Government have deliberately disenfranchised the very same voters they courted for support in advance of General Election 2012.

**Congress mandates:**

The President and Officerboard to run a register to vote campaign in advance of the Fiscal Treaty Referendum.

## 12 EM 4 CAPITAL ASSET TEST

**Congress notes with alarm:**

The recent statements of the Minister for Education of his intention to introduce a form of capital assets test for the Higher Education Maintenance Grant Scheme.

**Congress notes:**

That while the value of a family owned asset may be high, it is not an indication of income or ability to pay for Higher Education.

**Congress mandates:**

The President and USI Officerboard to do all in their power to campaign against the introduction of any form of a capital assets test.

## 12 EM 5 CAP ON NUMBERS OF STUDENTS

**Congress notes:**

The recent statements of the Minister for Education in relation to the possibility of placing a cap on the numbers of students in Higher and Further Education in order to control costs.

**Congress notes with alarm:**

The immense damage that such a cap could cause to access to education especially given the continuing internationalisation of Higher Education.

**Congress mandates:**

The President and USI Officerboard to do all in their power to campaign against the introduction of any cap on the numbers of students in Higher and Further Education.

## 12 EM 6 MINISTERIAL ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

**Congress notes:**

That Minister Ruairi Quinn, as the then Labour Party Spokesperson for Education, signed a pledge that his party, in government, would not increase fees. However since entering into Government he has broken that pledge and issued warning that he intends to increase the Student Contribution to €3,000 by 2015.

**Congress notes:**

That the President of USI issued an invitation to Minister Ruairi Quinn in advance of Annual Congress 2012 and that invitation was accepted, and then reneged upon.

**Congress notes:**

That the President did everything possible to facilitate Minister Quinn addressing Congress including rescheduling the date and time, and offering to arrange teleconference facilities, however Minister Quinn failed to accept any of these alternatives and come before USI Congress and explain his actions.

**Congress mandates:**

The President to convey to the Minister, at the next available opportunity, our condemnation of his failure to come before USI Congress and explain his actions.

## 11 EM 1 JAPANESE DISASTER

### **Congress notes:**

The disaster that struck Japan recently

### **Congress regrets:**

The pain and suffering that has been inflicted upon the people of Japan

### **Congress mandates officerboard:**

To support any measures by the government to provide relief to these people.

## 11 EM 2 TRAGEDY IN JAPAN

### **Congress notes:**

The recent tragedy in Japan

### **Congress is saddened:**

By the loss of life and devastation

### **Congress mandates:**

The area officers to organise a charity event in each region, with the benefits to be donated to victims of the tragedy.



## 11 EM 3 NORTHERN IRELAND FEES CAMPAIGN

### **Congress notes:**

The fight against fees that is being led by NUS-USI and the COs in Northern Ireland

### **Congress further notes:**

The statement by the minister responsible for higher education that he would freeze the fees level if sufficient funding is released from the NI executive

### **Congress therefore mandates the USI president:**

To work alongside the NAO/NUS-USI president to bring about as much support as possible for the release of this funding to Higher Education.

## 10 EM 1 THE NATIONAL MATHEMATICS SYMPOSIUM

### **Congress notes:**

The appalling state of the teaching of maths in the Republic of Ireland, as noted in a report and at the National Mathematics Symposium on the 16th of March 2010, and that over half of maths teachers in the Republic of Ireland only have one year of third level maths.

### **Congress believes:**

That without proper focus on a vital skill such as maths graduates will be unable to compete internationally and domestically for jobs and opportunities.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The Education Officer to lobby the new Minister of Education and Skills to ensure that adequate resources are put into the teaching of maths at second and third level.

## 10 EM 2 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

### **Congress notes:**

The recent reshuffle of Government ministers and the reorganisation of the Departments of state.

### **Congress notes with alarm and concern:**

The breaking up of the Department of Education and Science resulting in the move of responsibility for research and educational innovation to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to release a statement opposing this change and asking that it be reversed.

10 EM 3 NEW FUNDING MODEL

**Congress notes:**

That three of the primary source of revenue for 3<sup>rd</sup> level institutes in the Republic of Ireland are: undergraduate numbers, research funding and international students.

**Congress further notes:**

That none of these sources bear a direct relation to the quality of teaching and learning at undergraduate or post-graduate level.

**Congress notes with alarm:**

That because of this situation institutions are actually encouraged to treat taught students as revenue generators to subsidise research.

**Congress also notes:**

This situation is resulting in a decline in the quality of teaching and learning in supports and facilities for taught students.

**Congress also further notes:**

That this competition for funding will worsen significantly given the recent division of funding responsibilities in the cabinet reshuffle.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Education Officer to lobby to bring in a new funding model which will be cognisant of the quality of teaching and learning as a factor in awarding funds to third level institutions.

10 EM 4 STUDENT HOUSING

**Congress notes:**

The motion passed at the 2010 Sinn Fein *Ard* Fheis which calls for compulsory university regulated accommodation for first year students living away from home.

**Congress further notes:**

That the complete text of Sinn Féin Ard Fheis motion 149 (Education) reads:

*This Ard Fheis:*

- Recognises the contribution of universities to the educational and academic life of the country.

- Acknowledges the negative experiences of communities such as the Holyland in South Belfast.
- is mindful of the potential for communities in North Belfast to suffer the same erosion with the relocation of the University of Ulster.

The Ard Fheis therefore adopts a framework policy for the protection of residential communities which neighbour universities, which contains the following components:

- Provision of sufficient university accommodation to meet demand, with compulsory university regulated accommodation for first year students living away from home.
- Compulsory landlord registration.
- Tighter control and regulation of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs).

**Conference recognises:**

That as Sinn Féin are members of the government in the North and have the potential to be part of a future coalition in the south that this poses an immediate threat to students across the island of Ireland.

**Congress mandates:**

The USI President and Officerboard to actively oppose this policy by demonstrating that it is unfair, unworkable and unreasonably restricts a young person freedom of choice.

**Congress further mandates:**

The USI President and Officerboard to lobby Sinn Féin elected representatives, both North and South, to secure a reversal this policy.

## 10 EM 5 DOMESTIC & SEXUAL ABUSE

**Congress notes:**

That many students are, have been, and will become victims of sexual abuse in Ireland.

**Congress mandates:**

The Equality Officer to actively lobby for the increased awareness of the above issue, and of the supports available as well as the legal options for victims of abuse.

## 2015 Emergency Motions

### 15 EM (AAQA) 1 NCAD

**Congress extends:**

Profound feelings of solidarity to the students currently engaged in protest in NCAD.

Congress welcomes:

The activism of NCAD students to fight against the financialisation of their education.

Congress reiterates:

Its belief in an education system that is meaningful, accessible and publicly funded.

Congress mandates the USI President and the USI VP Campaigns officer:

To give support to these NCAD students in their campaign.

## 15 EM (AAQA) 2 ST. ANGELA'S DEVELOPMENT

Congress notes with grave concern:

The recent developments in relation to the proposed incorporation of St. Angela's into NUI Galway.

Congress further notes:

The action taken by staff unions and the concerns they have raised against the management of both institutions.

Congress acknowledges:

That students have not been sufficiently engaged with in relation to the proposed incorporation and there is a need for absolute clarity of the implications of the incorporation for students.

Congress therefore mandates:

The USI President to engage with the HEA and the Minister of Education and Skills to voice concerns regarding the incorporation from the perspective of students and to report back to the next National Council.

## 15 AAQA 1 Academic Teaching Staff Annual Leave and the Examination and Examination Appeals Process.

Congress recognises

That the current academic teaching staff annual leave agreement has significant repercussions for the examination and examination appeals process and that furthermore that the current situation in some institutions where students who appeal their summer examination results will not receive the outcome of this appeal until after the Autumn examinations take place is grossly unfair to students and almost defeats the purpose of appealing an examination result.

Congress further recognises

That this agreement has led, in several institutions, to Christmas examinations being scheduled before as well as after the festive period in turn delaying the examination results and appeals process, as well as many academics in third level institutions being on annual leave during the summer from the 20th June to 1st September similarly delaying the examination results and appeals process.

### Congress believes

That this current system in regards to academic teaching staff annual leave affects the academic quality of service delivered to students in terms of students having to wait for up to four months to receive the outcome of an examination result appeal and in many cases having no other choice than to sit Autumn exams in failed modules to secure their chances of progressing to the next year of study or in order to be conferred at the next available sitting.

### Congress further believes

The adjustment of bringing forward the start of the academic calendar by one week will alleviate the pressures on the examination correction period and the processing of appeals and that the current length of lecturing staffs' summer break should be looked at and compared to other members of the public sector's holiday entitlements.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance and the President to negotiate with the relevant bodies to adjust the academic teaching staffs working calendar.

## 15 AAQA 2 Investment in Education

### Congress notes

**The Brazilian method for corporate investment in education, i.e. 1.5% of corporate profits are re-invested into research and development.**

### Congress further notes

**That this decision was reached collaboratively between Government, business and universities and has produced beneficial results.**

### Congress mandates

**All members of Officer Board to lobby for a similar system for investment in third level in Ireland.**

## 15 AAQA 4 Students outside the grant threshold: Carried

### Congress notes:

**The valuable work undertaken by USI and MOs in relation to preserving the student grant and fighting for its retention**

### Congress further notes:

**The importance of the student grant in allowing students from challenging socio-economic backgrounds to attend third level education in Ireland, but also must acknowledge the difficulty for students and families who are not in receipt of the grant or any other financial bursaries from the state.**

Congress therefore mandates:

**The VP AAQA to undertake campaigns and strategies to increase awareness about the financial difficulties facing students not in receipt of the grant, and to campaign for the means testing of the grant to take place after tax has been deducted from the gross household income.**

## 15 AAQA 5 Universal fee payment dates

Congress notes

**That there are a number of different ways in which students are expected to pay their Student Contribution Charge, depending on the institution.**

Congress further notes

**This may create confusion among students. Furthermore some systems are more sympathetic to students than others.**

Congress mandates

**VP AAQA and VP Welfare to work with Students' Unions and the relevant groups to establish universal payment dates in institutions.**

Congress further mandates

**VP AAQA and VP Welfare to work with Students' Unions and the relevant groups to set a universal payment method in institutions.**

## 15 AAQA 6 Irish water & the grant

Congress notes

**The introduction of a household charge for water on foot of the creation of Irish Water.**

Congress further notes

**The revised charging system introduced through the Water Services Act 2014. This includes a 'Water Conservation Grant' of €100 which Irish Water applicants can obtain through the Department of Social Protection, administered on behalf of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.**

Congress is concerned that

**This payment may be taken into account in Income assessments of student grants and that this could affect applicants who are on the border of eligibility.**

Congress therefore mandates

**The Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to lobby the relevant authority to see that the 'Water Conservation Grant' is not assessed as a source of Income and that it is put on the list of Disregarded Sources of Income.**

## 15 AAQA 7 Technological university supports

Congress acknowledges:

**The work, which has been done to date with MO's going through the Technological University (TU) process.**

Congress also acknowledges:

**The integral role of Students' Unions in these MO's to informing students of their rights and safeguarding them in the TU process.**

Congress mandates:

**The Vice President for the South, BMW and Dublin to engage with Students' Unions in MO's currently going through the TU process.**

Congress also mandates:

**The Vice President for the South, BMW and Dublin to work actively with Students' Unions in MO's who in the future may be involved in a TU process.**

## 15 AAQA 8 Student Governance

Congress notes with concern:

**The importance of participation in all levels of governance of higher education institutions.**

Congress further notes:

**Some bureaucratic management practices in higher education institutions can lead to a lack of openness and which can impede the efforts of student representatives.**

Congress therefore mandates:

**The President and Vice-President for Academic affairs and Quality Assurance to encourage all HEIs to examine governance structures at all levels, and to ensure students are represented.**

## 15 AAQA 9 Lateral Violence

Congress notes

**That the issue of lateral violence in Health Sciences, particularly nursing and midwifery is well recognised in many countries including the USA and Australia.**

Congress further notes

**That similar recognition does not exist in Ireland in spite of the detrimental effect on those training or employed in these areas.**

Congress therefore mandates

**The Vice President for AAQA and Vice President for Welfare to investigate the extent of the problem in Ireland and the subsequent consequences for those effected with a view to informing Member Organisations on the issue.**

## 15 AAQA 10 Cross-border student mobility

### Congress believes:

- **Currently there is very low cross-border student mobility between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland**
- **That education should be free and fairly funded- this also goes for the students who chose to travel over the border for their education**
- **Every student should be able to access support for travel, course costs, maintenance support and studying cross-border should not be a barrier to support.**

### Congress notes:

- **In 1996/97, almost one in 10 students in the NI colleges were from the Republic - 9.3%, but in 2012/13, this fell to just 5.5%.**
- **The number of RoI domiciled students enrolled in NI Higher Education Institutions in 2012/13 was 2,835 and the number of RoI students studying in FE institutions in 2012/13 was 3,324.**
- **In 2012/13 only 980 students from NI travelled over the border to study in Irish institutions.**
- **RoI students in NI often have trouble accessing the right information about the SUSI grant which is available to them, which can then lead to financial hardship.**

### Congress mandates:

- **VPAAQA to work with the NUS-USI President to explore ways we can increase cross-border student mobility**
- **VPAAQA to work with NUS-USI to lobby the respective governments to provide adequate financial support for students studying over the border**



## 12 AA 1 TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY STATUS

### Congress notes:

Section 8.7 of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (The Hunt Report), which relates to the evolution of the Institutes of Technology in Ireland. The strategy makes the case for a new type of University, known as a Technological University, which would have a different focus to those Universities established under the Universities Act 1997.

### Congress further notes:

That this development would help to bring about a parity of esteem between both the sectors, whilst recognising that they are different in nature.

### Congress notes with concern:

The risk of the Higher Education Sector becoming divided over this proposal.

### Congress further notes with concern:

The impact of this potential for division on the education sector, and the reputation of the education of our members.

### Congress acknowledges:

A move by a number of Institutes of Technology to work together to establish Technological Universities on a regional basis.

### Congress welcomes:

Efforts by the Department of Education and Skills to plan for Higher Education provision in Ireland over the next two decades.

### Congress stresses:

The importance of engagement with appropriate student representative organizations throughout the implementation process.

### Congress mandates:

All appropriate members of Officer Board to meet and discuss the impact of Technological University status with the Member Organisations involved in each potential Technological University on a case by case basis and to make representations on their behalf, at a national level. This mandate shall be fulfilled as required, and shall be presented for review on its expiration.

## 12 AA 2 ESTABLISHMENT OF AGENCY FOR STUDENT TRAINING IN QA

### Congress notes:

That SPARQS was created in 2003 to support the greater engagement of students in the management of quality assurance and enhancement in Scotland's Colleges and Higher Education Institutions. SPARQS is hosted by NUS Scotland and is funded by the Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education.

### Congress further notes:

The advancement of student participation in the QA process in Scotland since the establishment of SPARQS.

### Congress notes with regret:

That little training is provided to students who are involved in the QA process in Ireland.

### Congress welcomes:

The amalgamation of HETAC, FETAC, NQAI and IUQB into QQAI.

### Congress mandates:

The President and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and QA to attempt to secure funding and lobby for the establishment of an agency similar to SPARQS to be managed by USI.

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

## 12 AA 3 GRANT CAMPAIGN

### Congress notes:

That for the past several years USI's officers have carried out a campaign of information evenings across the country in the months of late summer for those applying for the student grant.

### Congress also notes:

That this has been a valuable service to society generally and to our members.

### Congress also notes:

That a single governmental agency would be able to commit significantly more human and financial resources to such a campaign than this Union, and that with the creation of the single national grants awarding agency that such an agency now exists.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, Vice President for the Southern Region and the Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region to work with the above named agency toward jointly provisioning the grant awareness and information campaign in the future. The first of these recurring campaigns shall be completed by October 2012.

## 12 AA 4 TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

### Congress recognises:

That many Institutes of Technology are aiming to become Technological Universities (TU) in coming years.

### Congress further recognises:

That should the number of Institutes of Technology which have currently declared their intention to seek TU status actually achieve that status, this would create a situation where almost every major provider of third-level education in Ireland would be some form of university.

### Congress notes:

That the international recognition of all of our qualifications is vital in ensuring our graduates have a decent chance of employment, regardless of whether those qualifications are from a University, an Institute of Technology, or any other provider of third-level education.

### Congress mandates the USI Officerboard:

To ensure that the National Council and the Member Organisations in general are kept fully informed of developments regarding the possible re-designation of Institutes of Technology as Technological Universities over the next three years

To lobby the Government over the next three years to maintain the current criteria for the re-designation of an Institute of Technology as a Technological University, and to include this issue in future Lobby of the Oireachtas documents.

## 12 AA 5 CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LECTURING STANDARDS IN HEI'S

### Congress notes:

The importance of continued monitoring of the teaching standards of 3rd level courses, which contribute to the degree awarding abilities of all HEIs.

### Congress further notes:

The importance of lectures and tutors/mentors in students' time in 3rd and 4th level education.

#### Congress notes with concern:

That any short comings in lecturers' attempts to continually develop their teaching methodology and knowledge in their chosen area will have seriously detrimental effects on their ability to assist their students' learning.

#### Congress further notes with concern:

That, currently, no legislation exists which governs the need for lecturers to develop their teaching methodology and knowledge in their chosen area.

#### Congress mandates:

The USI President, following consultation with any representative union with 3rd level lecturing staff among their membership, to lobby the HEA to introduce and implement criteria based, Peer led Performance Review scheme to monitor the performances of lectures on an annual or biennial basis. Independent student feedback is to be an integral element of these criteria. This mandate should be fulfilled by June 2013.

#### Congress further mandates:

That the President lobby the HEA to establish a working group to form the framework and criteria for this performance review scheme, which includes, but is not limited to, representatives for students, lecturing staff and a national 3rd level Quality Assurance organisation. This mandate should be fulfilled by June 2013.

## 12 AA 6 RE-INSTITUTION OF GAELTACHT GRANT FOR TEACHERS

#### Congress notes:

The benefit that time in the Gaeltacht affords trainee teachers

#### Congress notes with concern:

Steps taken by government to remove the grant for teaching students to go to the Gaeltacht as part of their course.

#### Congress mandates:

The Vice-President for Academic affairs and Quality Assurance and the Vice-President for the Irish Language to lobby the department, and minister for education to reverse the decision to remove the grant, in order to ensure that trainee teachers may continue to attend the Gaeltacht during their course.

## 12 AA 7 GRANT REFORM (ESTRANGED PARENTS)

#### Congress applauds:

That the Student Support Act 2011 has come in to effect and that from summer 2012 the administration of the student grant scheme will be significantly more streamlined, and the application process more clear and user friendly for those applying.

#### Congress notes:

That for those whose parents are informally separated, or who have no tangible connection to one or both parents for whatever reason, and who are under the age of 23 applying for a grant remains impossibly burdensome due to the onerous documentary evidence obligation on the applicant.

#### Congress mandates:

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance to propose an alternative method of proving independence for adoption by National Council before the end of December 2012.

*And*

That a detailed submission be made by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance and the President to government on this subject before April 2013.

## 12 AA 8 MERGING OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

#### Congress notes:

That discussions for regional clustering and merging of Higher Education institutions are currently on going.

#### Congress recognises:

The positive developments these institutions will bring to research, teaching & learning and provision of facilities and services.

#### Congress notes with concern:

That the individual nature of an institution's ethos, identity and traditions may be lost in the creation of mergers and amalgamation of institutions.

#### Congress mandates:

Officer Board to keep an institution's ethos in mind when in discussion with the HEA and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that that they are protected and to report back to National Council and the MOs who will be affected. The mandate shall lapse after three years from being passed at congress as discussions will be on going with regard to the future of Higher Education in Ireland.

## 12 AA 9 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HEA REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT CONTRIBUTION

#### Congress commends:

The work done by the group and the report it has compiled.

**Congress notes:**

The financial strain that student services are facing across the country, even with the increased contribution charge by students.

**Congress notes with concern:**

Varying practices between HEIs, which directly contradict the General Principles outlined in the report, much to the detriment of student services and students' unions alike.

**Congress mandates:**

That all USI Vice Presidents and President, where relevant, lobby the HEA to ensure that all HEIs adopt the general principles and recommendations of the report. By arranging meetings with the relevant senior HEA officials before the end of December 2012.

## 11 ED 2 THE HUNT REPORT

REAPPROVED 2015

### **Congress notes:**

The publication of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 known as the Hunt Report.

### **Congress believes:**

That all stakeholders, particularly students, will benefit from having clear, defined long term goals for the sector.

### **Congress recognises:**

The impact that this Report may have on the education sector as a whole.

### **Congress mandates the President and the Education Officer:**

To ensure that there is student representation at all levels of where authority to implement recommendations of the Hunt Report lies.

## 11 ED 3 STUDENT CONTRIBUTION CHARGE

REAPPROVED 2015

### **Congress notes:**

The scrapping of the Registration Fee and its replacement with the Student Contribution Charge.

### **Congress further notes:**

That these increases will make attending Higher Education even more difficult than was previously the case.

### **Congress recognises:**

That front loading of the Student Contribution Charge and other associated costs with attending Higher Education into the first half of the first semester further strains the budgets of students and their families.

### **Congress mandates the Education Officer:**

To campaign to ensure that all colleges operate an instalment plan whereby students can pay the Student Contribution Charge in smaller lump sums spread throughout the Academic Year.

## 11 ED 4 SUPPORT FUNDS FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That a number of support funds including the Fund for Student with Disabilities, the Student Assistance Fund and the Maintenance Grant are only available for students studying on a full-time basis in recognised Higher Education Institutes.

### Congress further notes:

That part-time students are not able to avail of the “free-fees” scheme.

### Congress mandates the Education Officer, Welfare Officer and Equality Officer:

To campaign and lobby for support funds and the free fees scheme to be extended to include part-time students.

## 11 ED 5 ECTS HARMONISATION

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

Ireland's increasing compliance with the Bologna Process.

### Congress further notes:

That the Bologna process has improved the level of transferability and comparability of awards across the European Higher Education Area.

### Congress recognises:

That much work remains to be done to implement harmonisation of hours on work required to earn an ECTS credit.

### Congress mandates the Education Officer:

To investigate the situation on a national and local level and ascertain trends in compliance by college and by broad subject area and then to lobby institutions to correct shortfalls and excesses that are present.

## 11 ED 6 EXAM REGULATIONS

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That the regulations concerning progression, transfer and quality of awards subsequent to students having failed an exam in an award year differ between institutions.

### Congress believes:

That this situation creates inequalities given that students who get the same results in different institutions will achieve different outcome which is contrary to national and international guidelines.



### **Congress mandates the Education Officer:**

To investigate each institution, prepare and submit a report to National Council detailing which Colleges are deviating from national and international guidelines.

## 11 ED 8 PUBLIC SECTOR MORATORIUM

REAPPROVED 2015

### **Congress believes:**

That the Public Sector Moratorium was a blunt tool used to reduce public sector staffing numbers that has ended up impacting frontline education and health services unnecessarily.

### **Congress also believes:**

That the Moratorium is forcing many Irish graduates, that would normally be streamed into public service, to emigrate to countries like Australia, Canada and the UK.

### **Congress notes:**

USI's policies on graduate unemployment, and the consistent campaign to create jobs for graduates in Ireland

### **Congress mandates the President and Officer board:**

To call for and work towards a re-negotiation of the Public Sector Moratorium to improve prospects for employment for Irish graduates with the newly formed Government.

## 11 ED 9 GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT

REAPPROVED 2015

### **Congress notes:**

That Ireland is facing a major jobs and competitiveness crisis.

### **Congress further notes:**

That over 150,000 people will emigrate from Ireland by 2015, a vast majority of which will be graduates. This figure is the equivalent of every graduate Ireland produces over the next five years leaving the country.

### **Congress believes:**

That with almost 100,000 Irish people under the age of 25 on the live register it is imperative that all political parties recognise the severity of the jobs crisis among younger people and make the issue of graduate unemployment a main priority going forward.

### **Congress mandates the Deputy President, Education Officer and Area Officers:**

To continue working on tackling graduate unemployment by lobbying for the implementation of measures recommended in USI's 'Reigniting the Smart Economy'.

### **Congress therefore adopts:**

The measures proposed in 'Reigniting the Smart Economy' as USI policy.

### Congress further mandates:

The Deputy President, Education Officer and Area Officers to put pressure on the government to produce a comprehensive long-term strategy to tackle graduate unemployment.

## 11 ED 10 EFFECT OF RECESSION

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

There is a large, if relatively unknown body, of economic and social research statistics on the effects of the recession on businesses, families etc.

### Congress also notes:

That in talking about how students, and the families that they are increasingly reliant on, have been affected, it is difficult to show comprehensively how the recession has impacted students' finances along with their family finances.

### Congress mandates Officer Board:

To commission/compile an impact assessment report on how the recession has affect student finances, and also how it has affected families supporting students.

### Congress recommends:

That this report should take into consideration: public sector/private sector representation in supporting families and the recessionary impact on them, personal and national debt analysis and how over indebtedness affects people/families, geographic analysis of recessionary impact to aid regional COs, drop in student employment, and if possible the significant drop in student/family expenditure.

## 11 ED 12 CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRANGEGORMAN CAMPUS

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That the development of the Grangegorman Campus is an essential cornerstone of Higher Education Strategy in Ireland, and that it will be of immeasurable benefit to the local community, and Ireland.

### Congress further notes:

That DIT caters for approximately eleven percent of all Higher Education activity nationally.

### Congress applauds:

The Government's decision to approve the development, and the support that is currently present across the political parties.

### Congress mandates the President, and Officer Board:

To lobby the Government and the HEA to continue to support the project, in conjunction with the DIT Students' Union.

## 11 ED 17 FUNDING FOR MATURE STUDENTS

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That in the past two years, there have been significant changes in rates and eligibility for mature students in relation to the Maintenance Grant, which have resulted in some students suffering a significant drop in funding.

### Congress notes:

That the automatic entitlement of mature students to the non-adjacent rate of the Maintenance Grant had been based on higher than average living costs, and this has now been removed.

### Congress mandates the Equality Officer and the Education Officer:

To compose a policy document outlining a new method of support funding for mature students and non-mature students which will be assessed on a more individual basis to account for matters such as, but not limited to, the number and age of dependents and travel costs associated with dependents in pre-school, first-level or second level education etc.

## 11 ED 18 MATHEMATICS BONUS POINTS

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress condemns:

The decision by many higher education institutions in the past year to agree to a re-introduction of bonus points for higher level mathematics in the leaving certificate regardless of course of entry to higher education.

### Congress notes:

The historical legacy of failure of the third-level sector in solving second-level problems by imposing admissions requirements on second-level students without engaging in wide-ranging consultations on curriculum reform.

### Congress mandates the Education Officer:

To prepare a policy document in accordance with this and previous national council motions on the subject and to lobby for the reversal of the decision to offer bonus points by the institutions concerned.

## 11 ED 19 MAINTENANCE GRANTS 2

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

The current situation of higher education maintenance grants criteria is firstly based on what education institution they attend.

### Congress believes:

That third level education should be an open playing field for students and grants should be made available to students based on each individual circumstance on meeting the required criteria rather than on what education institution they attend.

### Congress further notes:

That there should be equality and accessibility to education to everyone, for further progressing the opportunities available to students and that that the current grants system is inequitable, significantly unfair and is a barrier to those trying to attend third-level education.

### Congress also believes:

That USI should be in a position to fight for equitable access to education grants in every circumstance.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The President, Deputy President, Education Officer and the rest of Officer Board

To take action in lobbying the Minister for Education and Skills, pursuant to Section 8 of the Student Support Act 2011, to provide that private colleges such as Griffith College are included in the Higher Education Grant Scheme.

## 11 ED 20 PRIVATE SCHOOLS

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress recognises:

That we as a student movement must strive for real equality and equal opportunities at all levels in the Irish education system. We also recognise that whether or not a child will make it to third-level education is often determined many years before that child sits the Leaving Certificate.

### Congress further recognises:

That many potential college students have not made it to third-level because they come from areas of socio-economic disadvantage, and thus cannot afford private schooling, or because the public schools in their areas are not adequate.

### Congress notes:

The growth of grind schools and private secondary schools in Ireland in the past two decades, and that this growth of the private school sector has led to elitism among students at second-level and beyond, and has also resulted in many good public schools struggling to fill places and stay open.

### Congress further notes:

That students attending private schools have access to an education that is partly publicly-funded, but which is only accessible to those who can afford it. This gives them a significant advantage over public school students in the CAO race for places in third-level courses.

### Congress mandates USI Officer Board:

To campaign for the removing of state funding for private primary and secondary schools, and for any monies saved to be re-invested in the wider, publicly-funded and publicly-accessible education system including primary, secondary and third level education.

## 10 ED 4 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That every year a substantial number of International Students travel to Ireland to study within our higher education system.

### Congress recognizes:

That these International students can pay large sums of money, on average €12,000 per year to study in our 3<sup>rd</sup> level institutions.

### Congress further recognises:

That there have been a number of issues with regards to these students arriving in Ireland with regards to Irish Customs.

### Congress mandates:

The President to work on behalf of the International students to put in place an International Student Charter detailing student rights and responsibilities in the third level CO's where they

are studying. By the development of the framework each IoT and University would become responsible for the treatment of International Students when travelling to Ireland.

## 10 ED 5 LEGAL PROFESSION

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That to enter the legal profession in Ireland, one must overcome many financial and social obstacles.

### Congress further notes:

That these obstacles mean that the majority undertaking a career in law are those who can afford it and who have pre-existing ties to the legal profession

### Congress notes with concern:

That such obstacles include

Exceptionally high costs for postgraduate study in the King's Inns, with a one year degree course costing €12,000. This course is also run during the day (as opposed to the evening diploma course) so people cannot work full time simultaneously.

Barristers in their first year of practice must be able to afford to work for free during their year's apprenticeship, also known as 'devilling'. The apprenticeship must also take place in Dublin, thus increasing costs for candidates even further if forced to live away from home.

### Congress believes:

That while the abolition of third level fees has delivered good progress in increasing access to education for people of all social backgrounds, more must be done to ensure that these artificial barriers to real educational equality of opportunity in certain professions are removed.

### Congress affirms its belief that:

No profession should be the sole preserve of the wealthy and socially connected.

### Congress mandates:

The President and the Education officer to give a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas committee on Education and Science on access to the legal system

The President and Deputy to campaign and lobby for the extension of the higher education grants scheme to those taking barrister and solicitor courses.

## 10 ED 7 STUDENT FUNDING

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That with the economy struggling, students need all the help they can get in securing funding in the form of grants, scholarships and other non-traditional forms of supports for college degrees.

### Congress believes:

That USI needs to lobby the Department of Education to compile a list of all forms of funding for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees that is available to students in every third-level institute in the country.

### Congress notes:

That the studentfinance.ie website is a great resource for students and prospective students, and that it should be utilised more to help people looking for financial information before going to college.

### Congress mandates:

The Education Officer to lobby the Department of Education to publicise the aforementioned list of funding available on the studentfinance.ie website.

## 10 ED 8 BTEA CAMPAIGN

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That the removal of the entitlement of Back to Education students to a maintenance grant will cost unemployed mature students in the region of €7,000 a year in expected income.

### Congress firmly believes:

That the decision to bring in this measure was wrong, unfair, and is not in the interests of this country, either financially or socially.

### Congress notes:

That for many people trying to go back to education, the Budget cuts represent a loss of over 25% in expected income  
Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail  
Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 24 - - 24 -

### Congress mandates:

The Education Officer to organise a sustained campaign to reverse this decision before the Department of Education & Science finalises its implementation over the summer.

## 10 ED 9 MEETING FEEDBACK

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That USI, as the National Union representing most students studying at third-level colleges in Ireland, holds seats on all the bodies charged with policy, funding quality assurance and regulation of the third level sector, such as the HEA and NQAI and others.

### Congress notes with concern:

The lack of institutional memory in USI with regard to issues discussed at these meeting.

### Congress further notes:

The importance of this high-level involvement for the constituent members of USI who pay an annual affiliation fee to USI.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The President and Education Officer to create effective briefing and reporting communication channels, pre and post these meetings which USI attends (Pre meeting to consist of a notification of agenda items, and what stance USI plans to take on each, and an aide memoir post meeting of the discussion of each topic, what USI represented to the meeting and what the outcomes was.) on behalf of CO"s, and where matters relevant to the COs are decided upon.

## 10 ED 11 APPRENTICES

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That over the past number of years the increase within the trades industry with regards to Ireland.

### Congress further notes:

That with the economic downturn many of these apprentices have been left with no job and in some cases incomplete qualifications.

### Congress recognises:

The need to provide further education opportunities in the face of the ever-changing employment landscape of Ireland.

### Congress mandates:

The President and the Education Officer to lobby the Department of Education and the Higher Education Authority to clearly state, in a national framework, the eligibility of qualified apprentices to progress into relevant degree courses.



## 10 ED 12 BUDGETS

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That the current volatile economic climate, each Budget is likely to have significant impact on students.

### Congress further notes:

That the fear and worry caused by budgets may cause avoidable harm to the welfare to Students.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The USI Education Officer, as soon as possible subsequent to the delivery each budget, to the write an explanatory memorandum of the impacts of the budget on student and communicate it to all CO's.

## 09 ED 1 TUITION FEES

REAPPROVED 2015

### 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 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 REAPPROVED 2015

### 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 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 11 BOLOGNA PROCESS

### REAPPROVED 2015

#### 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 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 NFQ.

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 NFQ 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**

REAPPROVED 2015

### **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 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
- 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 15 QUALITY ASSURANCE

### REAPPROVED WITH DELETIONS 2015

#### 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 further mandates:

That USI adopts the following guidelines as its policy on quality assurance to be implemented by the education officer:

#### ***Aims and principles:***

'Quality assurance' includes processes such as evaluation, accreditation and audit.

Students have a right to a high quality of education and to have that education reviewed and assessed regularly

The interests of students as well as employers and wider society are served through good quality higher education

Institutional autonomy, tempered by a recognition that this brings with it heavy responsibilities

The need for external quality assurance to be fit for its purpose and to place only an appropriate and necessary burden on institutions for the achievement of its objectives



Centrality of student involvement and representation at all levels of the quality assurance process

QA mechanisms should result in demonstrative improvements and that these improvements should be communicated back to students

All elements of the QA process shall be transparent and accountable

### ***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

### ***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 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

REAPPROVED 2015

### 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 25 POSTGRADUATE WORK PLACEMENTS

REAPPROVED 2015

### 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 28 POSTGRADUATE CAMPAIGN

REAPPROVED 2015

### 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

### 2015 EMERGENCY MOTIONS

#### 15 EM WEL 1 Drinks Campaign

##### Congress notes:

The recent events surrounding the Diageo funded body 'Role Models'.

##### Congress declares:

That Congress has no confidence in public bodies advocating on the issue of alcohol misuse and abuse which are funded by the drinks industry.

##### Congress calls:

On all public health and education bodies who sit on this board to resign from this board and to no longer support this model.

##### Congress mandates the USI President:

To campaign against this body 'Role Models' and the continuation of such bodies based on this model.

#### 15 WE2 Student assistance fund

##### USI Congress notes:

**The importance of the Student Assistance Fund (SAF), the role it plays in supporting students across the country, and how quickly it runs out in many HEI's around the country.**

##### USI Congress further notes:

**The SAF "Best Practice Framework Document 2013" written by USI.**

USI Congress notes with concern:

**The high volume of SAF motions currently on the policy manual.**

USI Congress hereby deletes:

**14 / Wel 7, 13 / Wel 8, 13 / Wel 9, 12 / Wel 1, 11 / Wel 13**

USI Congress therefore mandates:

**That the President and Vice President for Welfare campaign for increased funding for the SAF scheme, and lobby against any cutbacks to the fund.**

USI Congress further mandates:

**The Vice President for Welfare to provide briefing to all MO's on all aspects of the SAF, and seek representation on all committees relating to SAF on their campuses, and to also continually lobby the HEA to redraft the guidelines for the SAF and to include recommendations to increase efficiency of systems.**

## 15 WE 3 Consent

Congress applauds the success of sexual health and empowerment campaigns such as SHAG week, which promotes a healthy attitude towards sex with a holistic approach.

Congress agrees that while sexual consent is included as a part of SHAG week, it is time that the USI rolled out a comprehensive national student consent campaign separately.

Congress mandates that the Vice President for Welfare, Campaigns and Equalities and Citizenship create a national consent campaign. That is gender neutral in approach and separate to SHAG week.

Congress further mandates the USI President and Vice President for Welfare to actively lobby and campaign for mandatory consent classes or workshops to be delivered to every single class within the third level education system in their first semester of college.

## 15 WE 4 Anti-Bullying Policy

Congress notes

**The lack of policy and awareness in the area of bullying in Third Level.**

Congress further notes

**That bullying can present in many different ways and in various aspects of student life including, but not limited to in class, accommodation and through social media.**

Congress affirms

**USI Cyberbullying Policy as passed by Congress in 2013**

#### Congress mandates

**The Vice President for Welfare develop an Anti- Bullying Policy that would take into consideration USI Cyberbullying policy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations and action points.**

### 15 WE 9 Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance Week

#### Congress notes

**That five percent 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 enter third level.**

#### Congress mandates

**The Vice President Welfare to endeavour to hold Sexual Health Awareness week in the first semester.**

### 15 WE 10 Update USI Physical Health Strategy

#### Congress notes

**The USI Physical Health strategy is due to expire in 2015.**

#### Congress further notes

**The importance on USI having a Physical Health Strategy and need to update strategies that are due to expire.**

#### Congress mandates

**The Vice President Welfare to work with various bodies like Student Sport Ireland to create a new Physical Health strategy.**

### 15 WE 12 Motion to provide training and contacts to deal with issues regarding BTEA

Congress notes

The number of mature students who rely on the back to education allowance.

Congress further notes

That SU officers may be ill-equipped to deal with the problems arising in applying for and receiving BTEA.

Congress mandates

The VP Welfare to organise training for SU Officers on dealing with casework relating to BTEA.

Congress further mandates

The VP Welfare to set up a contact within the Department of Social Protection that can be used by SU officers' when resolving issue with BTEA

## 15 WE 13 Mental Health Awareness

Congress acknowledges

**The success of mental health awareness through the 'Chats for Change' and 'See Change' campaigns which have a significant focus on talking to someone about mental health and an individual's well-being.**

Congress notes

**That although talking is a crucial message to the campaigns, some individuals require the use of Anti-depressants or Anti-Anxiety medication etc.**

Congress further notes

**That the lack of information around the use of medication can lead to stigmatisation of individuals who use medication for mental health issues and can cause a great deal of distress for individuals who have the use of medication suggested to them upon presenting to a GP on a mental health issue.**

Congress therefore mandates

**The Vice-President for Welfare to include information on the use of medication in relation to mental health issues as part of their on-going mental health campaigns.**

## 15 WE 14 Barrier Free Access to Support Services

Congress notes:

**The importance of supports services for students of our institutions which provide support in the areas of physical and mental health.**

Congress further notes:

**That these support services are of vital importance to students in the context of the prevalence of mental health and emotional difficulties among our members.**

Congress therefore mandates:

**That the VP Welfare would lobby for the provision of, as far as is possible, barrier free access to support services (e.g. health centres, counselling, etc.) on campus and would invest appropriately therein.**

## 15 WEL 15 Sexual Consent Awareness and Training

Congress notes

**There are many incidences of sexual harassment or assault that occur on campuses right across the country. Sexual harassment is behaviour that is “unwanted, persistent and of a sexual nature”. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:**

- (a) Unwanted sexual comments (including comments about your body or private life);**
- (b) Unwelcome sexual invitations, innuendoes and offensive gestures;**
- (c) Wolf whistling, catcalling or offensive sexual noises;**
- (d) Groping, pinching or smacking of your body;**
- (e) Having your skirt or top lifted without consent;**
- (f) Someone exposing their sexual organs to you without consent.**

Congress is aware

**That there is no current form of consent training being provided to students in Ireland. As a consequence, there is a culture in third-level institutions where unwanted sexual contact and harassment has become normalised and is seen as an acceptable part of the college experience for many students.**

Congress believes

- 1. That all students have the right to be, and feel, safe on campus.**
- 2. That sexual harassment can cause serious distress and have a seriously detrimental effect on people’s well-being.**
- 3. That Students’ Unions need to educate its members about what sexual harassment is and the effects it has on people, in order to change people’s attitudes so that sexual harassment is no longer seen as acceptable.**

Congress notes

**That a form of consent training was provided to Freshers on a trial basis in Oxford University, Cambridge University, and a number of other institutions in the UK, and that USI should learn from this.**

Congress mandates

**The VP Equality and Citizenship, in consultation with VP Welfare, to endeavour to run consent training for SUs, so that all sabbatical officers are educated about sexual harassment and assault, and are trained to deal with reports of sexual harassment and assault more effectively and sensitively.**



Congress further mandates

**VP Equality and Citizenship, in consultation with VP Welfare, Cosc and any other relevant bodies, to design and implement a programme of consent training to be delivered during orientation/Freshers Week.**

## 15 WE 16 Students with Learning Disabilities

USI Congress notes:

**The excellent work done by USI in the area of representation for students with disabilities.**

USI Congress further notes:

**That, in the past, campaigns regarding students with disabilities have tended to focus primarily on students with physical disabilities.**

USI Congress notes with Regret:

**The lack of attention which has been paid during this campaigning to students with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, autism, etc.**

USI Congress further notes with Concern:

**That, for students with learning disabilities, services in third level institutes can be sorely lacking in some cases, thus placing a great barrier between such students and their access to education.**

USI Congress Reaffirms:

**That every student has a right to access to third-level education.**

USI Congress mandates:

**The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and The Vice President for Welfare to run a campaign before the end of October in each academic year to inform students with any disability what support services should be available to them.**

## 15 WE 18 OPPOSITION TO THE PRIVITISATION OF BUS ROUTES

Congress notes with concern:

**Government plans to open up a number of bus routes in Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann to private providers.**

Congress also notes:

**That longer commutes have a seriously negative impact on one's mental health, as well as one's student experience.**

Congress affirms:

**That public transport is a service that students depend upon and that its' primary aim should not be 'for profit'.**

Congress notes with concern:

**That USI's pre-budget submission seriously highlighted that Ireland's approach to students and public transport is lacking in comparison to most of the rest of Europe.**

Congress mandates:

**USI to express its opposition to further privatisation of public transport routes and that rather, the VP Welfare should arrange for a policy position and campaign that seeks to increase state-run, student-oriented transport services.**

**An update should be provided for the August 2015 National Council.**

## 15 WE 19 Student Bereavement

Congress notes

**Many Students who suffer from bereavement during their time in college can have effect on their mental health, finances and academic performance.**

Congress therefore mandates

**The VP for Welfare to co-ordinate a campaign with literature that provides support, advice and support services to students who are suffering from bereavement.**

Congress also mandates

**The USI VP for Welfare to provide training to Welfare Officers to support students in this position as well as providing links to organisations who work in the area of bereavement.**

## 15 WE 20 USI Grant Reform Policy

Congress Approves:

**The adoption of the USI Grant Reform Policy. (See [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie))**

## 15 WE 21 Higher Education Authority Core Access Grant

Congress notes

**That the Access Grant, used for the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) and Student Disabilities Fund (SDF), is awarded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), and that there are no strict guidelines as to how this funding is used.**

Congress further notes

**The lack of guidelines from the HEA, has led to a lack of transparency as to how the Access Fund is divided between the SAF and SDF, and also in relation to how the funding is spent.**

Congress believes

**That there should be specific guidelines set in place by the HEA, as to how Institutes allocate funding from the Access Grant to the SAF and to the services supported by the SDF.**

### Congress mandates

**The President through their Chair on the HEA, to seek a full review of the Access Grant.**

### Congress further mandates

**The President through their chair on the HEA, to seek the implementation of stricter guidelines surrounding the spending of the Core Access Grant and report their findings to National Council.**

## 15 WE 25 Gambling

### Congress notes

**The addictive nature of gambling and how easily accessible gambling can be with development of apps such as Paddy Power and close proximity of betting outlets to third level campuses.**

### Congress notes with concern

**Evidence of gambling that is frequently appearing on bank statements through Student Assistance Fund Applications and the number of students who are faced with growing debt problems due to gambling.**

### Congress further notes

**In an article on the Irish Examiner last March, Paul Mullins of Aiseiri, warns that among under-25s, as many as 90% start gambling on a handheld device. The alarming aspect of online gambling is that it reverses the trend of normal gambling given that it is overwhelmingly dominated by those under 25.**

**The Institute of Public Health said its studies indicated that gambling among young people was thought to be three times more prevalent than those aged over 21 years – a trend entirely attributed to online sites.**

### Congress mandates

**The Vice President for Welfare to work with the relevant organisations to develop a campaign to inform students of the effects of gambling and recognising an addiction.**

## 12 WEL 3 SEXUAL HEALTH WEB SITE

### Congress notes:

There is large amount of paper material distributed in conjunction with sexual health campaigns.

### Congress recognizes:

The lack of a one-stop shop for sexual health information and support services on line.

### **Congress mandates the Welfare Vice President:**

To develop an all-inclusive web site which will contain relevant information about sexual health that can be used in conjunction with sexual health campaigns.

Motion shall apply for 3 years.

## 12 WEL 4 ALCOHOL ABUSE

### **Congress notes:**

That alcohol consumption in Ireland doubled between 1970 and 2003, one the largest increases in the world during that period (Byrne, 2010).

### **Congress recognises:**

Though consumption has fallen slightly since 2003, Irish consumption at 13.4 litres of pure alcohol per person is the second highest in the OECD (Mongan, 2007).

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

That the increase in alcohol consumption has caused a corresponding increase in alcohol related harms in Irish society, including alcohol related accidents and illnesses, alcohol related crime, alcohol related domestic abuse and alcohol related absences from work (Hope, 2008).

### **Congress understands:**

That the Department of Health (RoI) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI) have held a North South conference on alcohol misuse in January to explore some of the common issues in relation to the alcohol culture on both sides of the border. Both Departments recognizing the scope for sharing information and evidence based material, on an all-island basis, in a number of areas including the tackling of alcohol abuse.

### **Congress believes:**

That the issue of alcohol abuse significantly impacts on the welfare of our members. Furthermore, that we as representatives; entrusted with protecting the interests our members, should be proactive in addressing the issue of alcohol abuse.

### **Congress mandates the President, the Vice President for Welfare:**

To engage with the Department of Health (RoI), the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI), before July 2013 in addressing the issue of alcohol abuse.

## 12 WEL 5 EXAM STRESS PACKS

### **Congress notes:**

That many students experience, incidences of elevated stress and anxiety around the examination period.

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

The affects of increased stress and anxiety on students' physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, and the subsequent impact on their examination performance.

#### Congress congratulates:

The Welfare Officer and members of Officerboard for their hard work in tackling issues surrounding students' physical, mental, and emotional welfare.

#### Congress believes:

That students should be provided with adequate support and guidance around the issue of stress and anxiety, including how to diagnose the condition, what affects it has on students, what self help techniques are recommended, and general management advice.

#### Congress mandates the Vice President for Welfare:

To develop and source a stress pack and booklet to be distributed to MO's before the winter and summer exams. These should be available for December 2012.

## 12 WEL 6 DRINK RESPONSIBLY CAMPAIGN

#### Congress notes:

That alcohol consumption has increased substantially in the past number of years and Ireland now consumes more alcohol per adult than most of its European counterparts.

#### Congress is saddened:

By the linkages drawn between alcohol and related harm, with reference to a report by the HSE in 2008, including; injuries, hospital admissions, mortality, driving, street violence, domestic violence, and road injuries.

#### Congress applauds:

The Welfare Officer for engaging with Drink Aware, and other related groups in creating awareness about excessive alcohol consumption, and promoting the responsible consumption of alcohol.

#### Congress believes:

That the issue of alcohol abuse significantly impacts on the welfare of our members.

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

That as student representatives we should be proactive in creating awareness around the issue of excessive alcohol consumption, and campaign for responsibility in this area.

#### Congress mandates the Vice President for Welfare:

To develop and implement a USI National Drink Responsibly Campaign before July 2013, and to carry out same on an annual basis thereafter in order to create awareness around alcohol consumption rates, and encourage its responsible consumption.

## 12 WEL 7 SUICIDE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

### Congress notes:

The level of work the previous Welfare Officer has put into the Mental Health Campaign for the student population.

### Congress also notes:

The difficulty in designing a campaign or highlighting the issue of suicide prevention/awareness which is not threatening to students.

### Congress recognises:

That suicide remains a key issue for students.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The Welfare Officer to organise, design and run a National Suicide Prevention Campaign that would be rolled out right across the Country on a Specific Day.

## 12 WEL 9 PHYSICAL HEALTH STRATEGY FOR USI

### Congress notes:

11/WEL 02 mandating the creation of a USI Physical Health Strategy.

### Congress therefore adopts the proposed:

USI Physical Health Strategy 2012-2015

### Congress mandates:

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

This motion should apply for three years.

## 12 WEL 10 ALCOHOL POLICY FOR USI

### Congress notes:

11/ Wel 4 mandates the creation of strategy documents in the main areas of work for the welfare officer, including sexual health, finance, physical health, accommodation, alcohol awareness, substance abuse and any others that are appropriate.

### Congress therefore adopts the proposed:

USI Alcohol Policy 2012-2015

### Congress therefore deletes:

11/ Wel 11 Anti Social Behavior Campaign

10/ Wel 3 Student and Alcohol

10/ Wel 8 Anti-Social Behavior

09/ Wel 8 Drug Awareness

09/ 13 Alcohol Awareness Campaign

**Congress mandates the Welfare Vice President:**

To both follow the USI Alcohol Policy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations and action points by disseminating the policy at the start of the year as well as providing support and training throughout the year.

This motion should apply for three years.

## 12 WEL 13 SUBSTANCE ABUSE

**Congress notes:**

That substance abuse is a growing problem in Irish society.

**Congress further notes:**

09/Wel 5 – Counselling Service and 09/Wel 8 – Drug awareness mandates as these demonstrate the need for a formulated strategy document to be created in the area of substance abuse.

**Congress mandates the Welfare Vice President:**

To create a Substance abuse strategy document that would contain information in relation to drug awareness, campaigns, how to combat addictions and other items deemed essential to be included by welfare working group. Appropriate training should be provided for Welfare Officers over the summer period so they can handle cases in this area.

This motion shall apply till December 2012.

## 12 WEL 14 EXAM STRESS CAMPAIGN

**Congress notes:**

The work that MOs put into Exam Stress Campaigns across the Country in the run up to Exams.

**Congress further notes:**

The lack of support on a National Level to the roll out of these Campaigns and the lack of an overall Exam Stress Campaign.

**Congress mandates the VP/South, VP/BMW and the Welfare Officer:**

To investigate the possibility of sourcing the materials, supplying and distributing 'Exam Stress Packs' to the MOs along with a resource pack that contains information on support services for the students.

## 11 WEL 1 LEGAL ISSUES

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

The regularity with which local welfare officers encounter situations with legal ambiguity e.g. cases involving sexual, physical abuse, accommodation issues etc

### Congress further notes:

Often welfare officers feel underequipped to deal with or are unaware of their legal responsibilities in these situations.

### Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer:

To liaise with relevant organisations to produce a legal factsheet on the situations that frequently arise throughout a typical Academic year. The Welfare Officer should also provide training if necessary on certain legal aspects as requested by welfare working group.

### Congress notes:

It is not possible for this factsheet to be exhaustive or to be equivalent to legal advice, but all efforts should be made to be as comprehensive as possible.

## 11 WEL 2 PHYSICAL HEALTH

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

The lack of mandates and policy on the issue of students and physical health.

### Congress notes with concern:

The tendency of young people to sacrifice physical health for academic achievement through lack of sleep, lack of exercise and poor diet.

### Congress further notes:

The diet, exercise and lifestyle play a vital role in a students' ability to engage productively with their education.

### Congress therefore mandates the welfare officer:

To design a strategy document on physical health, making reference to the following:-

- Stress Management
- Access to healthcare
- Awareness of prevalent illnesses
- Cost and value for money of student gyms
- Availability of non-competitive sport
- Diet and nutrition



- Sports Clubs
- Training at UOS for welfare officers
- Relevance of physical health to mental health.
- Body image and eating disorders

This document should incorporate relevant mandates from the USI Policy Manual.

## 11 WEL 4 WELFARE STRATEGY DOCUMENTS

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

The usefulness of a coherent, streamlined strategy in areas such as mental health, sexual health, finance etc

### Congress further notes:

The lack of coherent, streamlined USI policy in these areas bar mental health.

### Congress therefore mandates the Welfare officer:

To create strategy documents in the main areas of work for the welfare officer, including sexual health, finance, physical health, accommodation, alcohol awareness, substance abuse and any others that are appropriate. This work should be done in conjunction with welfare working group and any other appropriate outside organisations.

These strategies should incorporate relevant mandates from the USI Policy Manual. These documents should be brought for preliminary approval to National Council.

### Congress further mandates the Welfare Officer:

To bring these documents forward to the nearest Congress for ratification.

## 11 WEL 5 USI MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

08/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 therefore deletes:

09-WEL 10 – Free Pack

09/ WEL 7 – Headsup

09/WEL 6- Mental Health Campaign

09/WEL 5 – Counselling Services

09/WEL 4 – Mental Health Information

**Congress mandates the Welfare Officer:**

To both follow the USI Mental Health Strategy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations by disseminating the strategy at the start of the year as well as providing support and training throughout the year.

**11 WEL 6 MORNING AFTER PILL**

REAPPROVED 2015

**Congress notes:**

09/ WEL 1 Congress mandates:

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.

Congress emphasises:

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 therefore welcomes:

The recent decision by a leading pharmacy chain to sell the morning after pill over the counter.

Congress also welcomes:

Moves by the Irish Pharmacy Union to emulate this initiative in 1800 of their member pharmacies.

**Congress therefore mandates the USI Welfare Officer:**

To continue to work with relevant organisations to ensure that the mandate from 09/WEL 1 is fulfilled.

The USI Welfare Officer to work to make EC affordable and accessible to all who need it.

**11 WEL 7 EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL INFORMATION CAMPAIGN**

REAPPROVED 2015

**Congress welcomes:**

The introduction of the Morning After Pill (MAP) over the counter by Boots Pharmacies in the Republic of Ireland from January 12th 2011.

#### Congress notes:

That the Morning After Pill does play a role in the decrease of the amount of pregnancies among female students.

#### Congress further notes:

That many students are unaware of how the MAP works, when the best time is to take it and the issues involved in taking it.

#### Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer:

To run an information campaign about the Morning After Pill and to make it an integral part in future S.H.A.G campaigns.

### 11 WEL 9 MEN'S HEALTH

#### Congress notes:

The good work that the USI Welfare Officer and local Welfare Officers do in promoting positive mental, physical and sexual health amongst all students.

#### Congress mandates the USI Welfare Officer:

To form a link with MHFI (Men's Health Forum Ireland) and other groups associated with promoting better awareness of men's health issues.

#### Congress further mandates the USI Welfare Officer:

To then use these links to provide campaign material, training and advice to welfare officers on how best to improve awareness of these issues to male students.

### 11 WEL 10 DON'T WALK HOME ALONE CAMPAIGN

#### Congress notes:

The success of the "Don't walk home alone" campaign that has been run on a number of colleges throughout the county but most notably GMIT.

#### Congress acknowledges:

The importance in educating our student to be safe when on nights out and they should take precautions to protect themselves

#### Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer and the Area Officers:

To bring this campaign to a national level and to investigate if the "cab now, pay later" initiative can be implemented across all local CO's.

## 11 WEL 12 MONEY MANAGEMENT AWARENESS

### Congress notes:

The continuing financial strain that is being placed on families and students at this difficult time.

### Congress further notes:

With these hard times, many students are withdrawing from third level college due to financial difficulties.

### Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer:

To run a Money management awareness week and to also publish a financial guide to aid students with their budgeting problems.

## 11 WEL 13 STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

### Congress notes:

The importance of the Student Assistance Fund and the role it plays to support students across the Country.

### Congress acknowledges:

That the Student Assistance Fund may be targeted in Government cutbacks.

### Congress therefore mandates the President and Deputy President:

To lobby against any cuts to the Student Assistance Fund and to campaign for increased funding for the fund.

## 10 WEL 2 STUDENT PREGNANCY

### Congress notes:

The lack of policy and support in the area of student parenting, both for student mothers and students Fathers.

### Congress further notes:

That while staff who fall pregnant are recognised under equality law, students exist within a grey area of legislation in this sector and subject to discrimination as the college chooses in terms of concessions and special accommodations.

### Congress applauds:

The efforts of institutions such as Mary Immaculate College in the formation of a student parent liaison officer.

### Congress mandates:

The Welfare and Equality Officers to research best practice policies on student parents both within Ireland, the UK and beyond with a view to formulate a template for local COs to negotiate with their institutions.

The Welfare and Equality Officers to meet and work with relevant organisations with a view to formulating a policy document for Welfare officers and other relevant CO officers as to how best to support student parents and what supports are needed. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 14 - - 14 –

The Welfare and Equality Officers to HEI authorities for better provisions and rights for student parents.

## 10 WEL 7 SEXUAL HEALTH

### Congress notes with concern:

The worrying lack of information and knowledge among Student Health Services and other college supports about issues pertaining to lesbian sexual health.

### Congress further notes:

That oftentimes, women who identify as lesbian, bisexual or queer are unaware of lesbian sexual health issues.

### Congress mandates:

The Welfare Officer to work with the LGBT RO to ensure that the sexual health module at UOS also covers lesbian sexual health issues; so that the welfare officers can be equipped with the knowledge to deal with these issues.

## 10 WEL 11 NON- ACADEMIC SERVICES

### Congress notes:

The current lack of quality assurance systems with regards to an Irish National Policy Framework for non-academic students services provided by the third level institution, such as health centres, counselling services etc.

### Congress further notes:

The importance of quality assurance with regard to non-academic aspects of student services.

### Congress recognizes:

The value of the overall student experience within the higher education system in Ireland.

### Congress mandates:

The President and the Welfare Officer to lobby the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education for the formation of a non-academic student services policy relating to quality assurance.

EQUALITY

## 15 EQ 1 Women in Leadership

### Congress notes

**that motion 14/EQ9 stated: “That women are still significantly under-represented in Student Union politics, as well as politics nationally. Only 20% of Presidents are women in USI member colleges are women. Only 33% of UK Students Union Presidents are women. In the Dáil Éireann the representation of women is even worse. Only 15% of TDs are women. In local councils across Ireland the representation of women is below 20%. In Northern Ireland, only 19% of MLAs in Stormont are women Ireland ranks 23rd out of 27 EU countries for their percentage of women in parliament.**

### Congress acknowledges

**that significant work has been undertaken by MOs in empowering women to run for leadership positions in the past year.**

### Congress applauds

**the fantastic job USI Pink Training does in empowering members of the student LGBT community to run for SU leadership and also the grassroots engagement that exposes USI to a new generation of Student Leaders.**

### Congress calls for

**the USI to expand the Women In Leadership campaign.**

### Congress mandates

**the USI Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to take the template provided by USI Pink Training and adapt it to create a weekend training event with the aim of empowering Women not only in their SU’s but in their college, community and careers.**

## 15 EQ2 Dignity and Respect

**That Sabbatical teams can be diverse in their constitution.**

### Congress further notes

**That Sabbatical Officers may not be immediately cognisant of potential issues that might affect their colleagues in the workplace, e.g. sexism and homophobia.**

### Congress believes

**That all Sabbatical Officers should feel safe and respected in their working environments.**

### Congress theref

### ore mandates

**The VP Equality & Citizenship to provide Dignity and Respect Training for all Sabbatical Officer during SUT /SUT+**

## 15 EQ3 MSM Blood Ban in Northern Ireland

### Congress notes:

**In September 2011 the NHS in England, Scotland and Wales announced that regulations banning the donation of blood by Gay and Bisexual men would be lifted, and allow for implementing a one-year deferral period instead. This decision comes after the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SABTO) carried out a review and found it could no longer support the permanent exclusion of men who have had sex with men from blood donation.**

### Congress further notes:

**That this change in regulation did not extend to Northern Ireland, despite it being part of the UK, and that despite multiple court cases where it was ruled that the Northern Ireland Minister for Health was unjustified in their refusal to alter the MSM Blood Ban and was "infected by apparent bias" the lifetime blood ban still remains for MSM, while a 12 month blood ban is in place for WSMSM**

### Congress believes that:

**The Northern Irish MSM Blood Ban is discriminatory against members of the LGBT+ Community and is founded on nothing more than inherent bias and bigotry.**

### Congress mandates:

**The VP Equality & Citizenship to actively campaign to call for an end to this discriminatory ban in Northern Ireland.**

### Congress also mandates:

**The VP Equality & Citizenship to offer their unconditional support and resource to collaborate with the NUS-USI LGBT Officer regarding the ongoing campaign to remove the ban on MSM Blood Donation in the North.**

## 15 EQ4 Reproductive rights and gender identity

### Congress notes

**It is not only those who identify as women who require full reproductive autonomy. Members of the trans\* community and those who do not identify with binary genders also require access to reproductive healthcare.**

### Congress mandates

**The VP Equality and Citizenship to ensure this is acknowledged in campaigning for abortion rights.**

## 15 EQ6 Campaigning for an Island of equals

### Congress believes:

- **That across the island of Ireland there are still a number of barriers to a truly egalitarian society**



- In the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, our governments have been slow to address serious issues of inequality, many of which are still written into our legislation.
- The fight for an island of equals is the responsibility of every citizen.

Congress further believes:

- Students across the island are at the forefront of campaigning on issues of equality such as abortion rights and reproductive justice, equal marriage and against the MSM blood ban.
- Women students, LGBT students, Disabled students and Black students in our institutions all face discrimination both in their time at college and in wider society.
- Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism have no place in the Ireland that we envision.
- Cross-border solidarity between students is a cornerstone of the student movement on across the island and that our power as a campaigning voice comes from our unity.

Congress mandates:

- The USI officer board to ensure equality issues are at the heart of a campaign influencing candidates and voters before the general election
- The VP Equality and Citizenship and VP Campaigns to work with the NUS-USI President and the relevant liberation officers in Northern Ireland to support campaigns in the struggle for equality.
- The USI officer board to support NUS-USI and students' unions in the north in the campaigns before the General Election 2015 and Assembly election 2016.

## 12 EQ 1 USI SEAT ON THE BOARD OF MATURE STUDENTS IRELAND

Congress notes:

That this year the Equality officer has obtained a seat on the board of Mature Students Ireland.

Congress further notes:

The importance of this seat for maintaining good links with Mature Student Support Staff in all our Higher education institutions.

Congress therefore mandates:

The Equality Citizenship Officer to seek re-election to this board on a yearly basis.

## 12 EQ 2 LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Congress notes:

The 2010 Survey of Students with disabilities which was facilitated by USI and Ahead.

### Congress further notes:

The importance of continuing a similar survey on yearly basis. This will allow us to evaluate how services are changing for students with disabilities across the country on a yearly basis. This will allow us to campaign and lobby more effectively.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The Equality and Citizenship Vice president to work with ahead to conduct this survey on a yearly basis.

## 12 EQ 3 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TRAINING DVD

### Congress notes:

That this year USI has begun an extensive project in conjunction with ICOS, Irish Council for International Students and the Department of Education and Skills.

### Congress further notes:

How important this project is for training staff working with international students in the HEI sector.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The Equality and citizenship Vice president to continue to work on this project as a major aspect of their work over the coming year.

## 12 EQ 4 LGBT

### Congress notes with grave concern:

That despite our claims to be a progressive nation we do not recognise the rights of LGBT members of the community as being fully and unequivocally equal to those of heterosexual orientation.

### Congress further notes:

The failure to recognise equality in our legislation undeniably leads to a failure to see people as equals in our classrooms, our lecture theatres, our campuses and our workplaces.

### Congress believes:

This failure to lead both directly and indirectly to a lesser standard of living for members of the LGBT community. That it leads to the denial of rights to children raised by same sex parents and to gross negligence on the part of the state by indirectly condoning bullying and torment for people who identify as LGBT.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The President and the Campaigns officer 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 as laid out above.

**Proposed amendment:**

Under the sub heading 'Congress therefore mandates', remove 'The President & the Campaigns Officer' and replace with 'The President, the Vice-President for Campaigns and the Vice-President for Equality & Citizenship'.

## 12 EQ 5 STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

### Congress notes:

The excellent work done by USI in the area of representation for students with disabilities.

### Congress further notes:

That, in the past, campaigns re students with disabilities have tended to focus primarily on students with physical disabilities.

### Congress notes with regret:

The lack of attention which has been paid during this campaigning to students with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, autism, etc.

### Congress further notes with concern:

That, for students with learning disabilities, services in universities and institutes of technology can be sorely lacking in some cases, thus placing a great barrier between such students and their access to education.

### Congress reaffirms the notion:

That every student has a right to access to third-level education.

### Congress mandates:

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to co-ordinate campaigns before March in each academic year on support services for students with learning disabilities and to lobby the Minister for Education to improve support services for students in these areas.

## 12 EQ 6 GENDER RECOGNITION LEGISLATION

### Congress notes:

That the Government's commitment to introducing Gender Recognition Legislation is overdue and an important step in improving the lives of many Transgender people in Ireland.

#### Congress believes:

That the recommendations presented to the Minister for Social Protection by the Gender Recognition Advisory Group (GRAG) do not contain many of the concerns and issues raised by USI and other groups such as Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) and are not in line with the Yogyakarta Principles.

#### Congress further believes:

That the Irish Government has an opportunity to introduce Gender Recognition Legislation that is fair and reflects the real life lived experiences of many Transgender people in Ireland.

#### Congress mandates:

The VP for Equality and Citizenship and the VP for Campaigns to campaign for Gender Recognition Legislation that will reflect the real life lived experiences of Transgender people in Ireland and is line with the Yogyakarta Principles.

## 12 EQ 7 LGBT MENTAL HEALTH

#### Congress notes:

That the results of the Supporting LGBT Lives Study of 2009 showed serious issues for LGBT people in Ireland with regards to mental health and bullying.

#### Congress notes with concern:

That these results showed that “Almost 20 per cent of gay, lesbian, bisexual and Transgender people have attempted suicide and almost all saw this as related to their sexual identity and the experiences of being abused and feeling isolated”

#### Congress further notes:

The high levels of self harming within the young LGBT community and the levels of homophobia that still exist in many areas of Irish society.

#### Congress mandates:

That the VP for Equality and Citizenship and the VP Welfare engage with various LGBT organisations like BeLoNG To, TENI and GLEN and develop policies for LGBT mental health and best practice for promotion of positive mental health for LGBT people.

## 12 EQ 8 DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH STUDENTS ON LGBT CAMPAIGNS

#### Congress notes:

The important role the LGBT Campaign within USI has played in the on-going fight for equal rights for all LGBT people in Ireland and the world.

### Congress further notes:

That through events such as USI Pink Training the LGBT Campaign has always been effective with engaging with students on grassroots level.

### Congress notes in particular:

Campaigns focusing on Civil Marriage, the MSM Blood Ban, anti-homophobia and Gender Recognition Legislation campaigning have been successful but are still active and must remain so.

### Congress believes:

That following the changes to the USI constitution and the merger of the LGBT Rights Officer Position into VP Equality and Citizenship role in order to continue the impact the course of LGBT rights in this country it is vital that forward planning takes place for the future LGBT Campaigns in consultation with students on a grassroots level.

### Congress mandates:

The VP Equality and Citizenship and VP Campaigns to write a campaign plan for the LGBT Campaign year at the beginning of every term.

### Congress further mandates:

The VP Equality and Citizenship to hold consultation days in early July with LGBT students to access what the relevant campaign issues are for that year and to devise the year plan in conjunction with the rest of the consultation.

## 12 EQ 9 GENDER NEUTRAL WELFARE CAMPAIGNS

### Congress notes:

That gender and sexuality norms can have significant negative effects on some students particularly in the LGBT community.

### Congress also notes:

That these norms can be reinforced and propagated unintentionally by USI publications such as the illustrations on the SHAG Week Packs for 2012

### Congress believes:

That USI should lead by example in getting society to treat all students equally

### Congress therefore mandates:

That Vice President for Welfare seek the advice of The Vice President for Equality &

Citizenship to ensure that USI welfare campaign materials are gender neutral, in advance of 5th February 2013.

## 10 EQ 1 CIVIL PARTNERSHIP BILL

### Congress notes:

That the proposed Civil Partnership Bill falls short of offering members of the LGBT community many of the same rights and responsibilities offered by Civil Marriage to the heterosexual community.

### Congress further notes:

That as it currently stands the Bill is unacceptable to the LGBT community.

### Congress recognizes:

That the LGBT campaign is an integral part of USI and many LGBT students would like to see a national campaign on this issue.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The Deputy President, the Equality Officer and the LGBT Rights Officer to work together to roll out a national campaign highlighting the issue and to lobby the government on this issue.

### Congress further mandates:

That the Deputy President, Equality Officer and LGBT RO work with other LGBT interest groups on the Civil Marriage campaign, for example LGBT NOISE and Marriage Equality.

## 10 EQ 2 MIGRANT STUDENTS

### Congress notes:

That Erasmus, EU and non EEA (European Economic Area) students have access to dedicated support services in third level colleges.

### Congress further notes:

That there are clear policy guidelines on issues affecting Erasmus, EU and non EEA students with regard student fees, leave to remain in Ireland and the right to work while studying.

### Congress recognizes:

That the same level of service and policy does not exist for migrants, children of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and/or children of same, some of whom are now completing primary and secondary education in Ireland.

### Congress believes:

That these groups are entitled to receive a third level education in Ireland.

### Congress mandates:

The Equality Officer to investigate what government and HEI policies exist in this area and to collate the responses in a position paper accompanied by suggestions for future actions. Such a position paper should be presented to National Council prior to Congress 2011.

## 10 EQ 3 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

REAPPROVED 2015

### Congress notes:

That in order to communicate with students with disabilities, the USI Equality Campaign is reliant on Disability Support Services and Access Offices in each third level campus. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 51 - - 51 –

### Congress further notes:

That this year there have been significant difficulties in reaching out to students with disabilities in third level colleges.

### Congress also notes:

That these difficulties are not specific to USI and are also experienced by other organisations working in this area.

### Congress mandates:

The Equality Officer to make it a priority of 2010/2011 to design a system whereby USI Equality can connect directly with students with disabilities in third level and to seek assistance from members of Officer Board, USI staff and external organisations on how best to achieve this.

## 10 EQ 4 Communicating with Part Time Officers

### Conference notes:

That part time officers exist in each CO who work in the area of equality

### Conference also notes:

That these officers are elected at different times in different colleges and so it is difficult to organise a networking event at the beginning of the year

### Conference believes:

Part time officers stand to gain a lot from being involved with the USI Equality Campaign

### Conference mandates:

The Equality Officer to meet individually with relevant part time officers once they are elected and outline the positive benefits getting involved in USI Equality can have.

**Conference also mandates:**

The Equality Officer to maintain contact with part time officers by circulating a campaign update email once per fortnight

**Conference further mandates:**

The Equality Officer to compile a contact list for part time officers and to circulate this to Equality Working Group as early as possible in the year.

## 10 EQ 5 Negative Stereotypes in Irish Media

**Conference notes:**

That often minority groups are represented poorly in both national and local print media in Ireland.

**Conference regrets:**

That over the past 12 months there has been an increase in the number of such articles, in particular on the issue of access of third level education

**Conference mandates:**

The Equality Officer and all members of Equality Working to respond and counteract negative images and stereotypes of minority students in the media through letters to the editor of the publication involved.

## 10 EQ 6 Students Attitude to Equality

**Conference notes:**

The recent research by the Equality & Rights Alliance into Irish attitudes on equality.

**Conference also notes:**

The research is not specific to student attitudes

**Conference believes:**

That the Equality Campaign cannot be effective in campaigning on equality until it establishes what students think about the issues involved.

**Conference mandates:**



The Equality Officer to commission a nationwide student survey on attitudes to equality in third level education and to use the results of this survey to inform the equality campaign going forward.

## 10 EQ 7 Online Campaigning

### **Conference notes:**

The necessity for USI Equality to campaign through various online media, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Blogging.

### **Conference also notes:**

The increasing success of the current online activities of the USI Equality Campaign.

### **Conference mandates:**

Equality Working Group to continue utilising online media to further the aims of the campaign.

### **Conference further mandates:**

All members of Equality Working Group to write a blog on an issue relevant to the campaign at least once a month.

### **Conference mandates:**

The Equality Officer to run competitions through online media in order to encourage students to be more interactive with the campaign.

## 10 EQ 8 Branding USI Equality

### **Conference notes**

The success of the rebranding of the USI Equality Campaign in rejuvenating the image of the campaign among students, COs and NGOs

### **Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and Equality Working Group to continue to use the new logos and colour coding in all aspects of the Equality Campaign.

## 10 EQ 9 NUS-USI Collaboration

### **Conference notes:**

That NUSUSI coordinates an equality campaign for the Northern Area

### **Conference notes:**

That the structure of the NUSUSI campaign is similar to the structure of the USI Equality Campaign

**Conference believes:**

That it would be beneficial to both NUSUSI and USI if officers involved in both campaigns communicated regularly and shared ideas and experiences

**Conference mandates:**

The Equality Officer to organise one meeting per semester between the two campaigns to discuss possible collaborations and to provide support, if requested, to the NUSUSI Equality Campaign

**Conference further mandates:**

All members of Equality Working Group to keep in regular contact with counterparts working in the NUSUSI Equality Campaign

## Gender Equality

### 10 GE 1 Reclaim the Night

**Conference notes:**

The success of the 'Reclaim the Night Marches' organised in the UK between the London Feminist Network and the National Union of Students in the UK (NUSUK) to highlight the issue of sexual violence against women.

**Conference is disappointed:**

By recent research from the Rape Crisis Network Ireland (December 2009) which outlined a poor conviction rate for crimes of rape and sexual violence in Ireland, inaccurate stereotypes of rape as well as poor treatment of victims by members of An Garda Siochana.

**Conference mandates:**

The Equality Officer and the Gender Equality Officer to organise an annual 'reclaim the night march' for students to raise awareness of sexual violence against women in Ireland.

**Conference further mandates:**

The Equality Officer and the Gender Equality Officer to contact the Rape Crisis Network Ireland to explore possible collaborations on the issue of sexual violence against women.

### 10 GE 3 Childcare Facilities

**Conference notes:**

That access to affordable childcare is difficult in Ireland

**Conference also notes:**

That access to flexible and affordable childcare is difficult for students

**Conference is aware:**

That some third level institutions have crèches on or close to campus and that a number of places in said crèches are reserved for students

**Conference is also aware:**

That childcare/crèche subsidy schemes exist in different colleges

**Conference believes:**

That all third level institutions should provide a childcare facility for students

**Conference mandates:**

The Equality Officer, Gender Equality Office and Mature Student Officer to lobby all relevant authorities to establish childcare facilities on all third level campuses. Such childcare facilities should include both crèche and after school care facilities and should be affordable for students. Furthermore a majority of places in these facilities should be reserved for registered students of the institution.

## 10 GE 6      Campaigning for Women

**Conference notes:**

That USI had a successful Women's Rights Campaign in the past

**Conference also notes:**

That in recent years there has been very little policy on Women's issues

**Conference believes:**

That there is a problem with female participation in USI

**Conferences further believes:**

That current officers could learn a lot from the experience of past female officers, particularly those who were involved in the women's rights campaign

**Conference mandates:**

The Equality Officer to convene a roundtable with interested ex officers to discuss how to progress womens involvement in the union.

# International Students

## 10 IS 4 Finance for International Students

### **Conference notes:**

That International Students face hefty fees for studying in Ireland

### **Conference also notes:**

That there is a lack of transparency surrounding these fees and how they are costed

### **Conference believes:**

That financial stress, caused by such large fees and the expense of living in Ireland, has a negative impact on the student experience for international students

### **Conference mandates:**

The Equality Officer & International Students Officer to always lobby for transparent costings of all fees charged to international students and that these fees are advertised well in advance of a student arriving in Ireland. Where possible, officers should lobby for a decrease in the amount charged to international students.

# LGBT

## 10 LGBT 2 Homophobic Bullying

### **Conference notes:**

That the results of the “LGBT Lives” survey (2009) show that 12 years old is the most common time for an LGBT person to come out to themselves, with 17 being the age most of them start to come out. This means most LGBT people are in secondary school while beginning their coming out process, or just starting college.

### **Conference further notes:**

That over 58% of LGBT people reported homophobic bullying in their schools, and that 80% of LGBT people currently experience verbal abuse due to their LGBT identity in their day to day lives

### **Conference believes:**

That LGBT students can be victims of homophobic abuse in college

### **Conference mandates:**

The LGBTRO to work alongside the ISSU on a joint anti homophobic bullying campaign, covering both secondary school and college students to raise awareness of this issue

### **Conference further mandates:**

The LGBTRO to work with BeLonG To on this campaign, as they have established points of contact for the area of homophobic bullying.

## 10 LGBT 4 Anti-homophobia Campaign

### **Conference believes:**

It should be obvious to all students in USI colleges that homophobia will not be tolerated in any form on campus.

### **Conference mandates:**

The LGBT RO to prepare information leaflets or pack for a campus-wide anti-homophobia campaign in all USI campuses on a certain day and to encourage all SUs to get involved.

## Mature Students

### 10 MS 2 Mature Students Officer

**Conference notes:**

The high increase in the number of mature students attending third level education

**Conference also notes:**

That increasing access to lifelong learning and creating diverse student populations is to be welcomed

**Conference is aware:**

That mature students have additional needs and that these are often not represented at local level in colleges

**Conference believes that:**

In order to represent the needs of mature students, each student union should have a part time mature student representative

**Conference therefore mandates:**

The Mature Students Officer to lobby local COs to create part time mature student officer positions and to assist all unions in the development of this position.

### 10 MS 3 Peer Support for Mature Students

**Conference notes:**

The success of peer support networks across Irish Third Level Institutions

**Conference also notes:**

The difficulties faced by mature students returning to education

Conference believes:

That other mature students are best placed to understand these issues and support mature students in first year

**Conference mandates:**

The Mature Students Officer to lobby each college to establish a mature student's peer support network.

## National Affairs

## 15 NA 2 Review of Best Practice with Regard to MSM Blood Donation

USI Congress notes:

**The growing support for the change of blood donation criteria, with particular reference to MSM criteria.**

USI Congress recognises:

- **3,000 donations are needed every week**
- **Over 1,000 people receive transfusions every week in Ireland**
- **Only 3% of the Irish population give blood, providing blood for a population of over 4 million**
- **Only 5% of the Irish population eligible to give blood do so**

USI Congress further notes:

**That many other countries and states, such as recently the United States of America, have changed their policy regarding the donation of blood by MSM donors. Sexual orientation screening negates the possibility of many potential blood donors based on outdated evidence and research.**

USI Congress affirms:

**Where possible it is best to use existing evidence and research to inform decisions and stances upon issues.**

## 15 NA 3 Relationships with Trades Unions

Congress commends

**the alliance building with education trade unions by USI Officerboard the past year.**

Congress believes

**that these relationships will be invaluable not only in the context of solidarity within the education sector but also in the context of the next General Election.**

Congress believes

**that the Education system as a whole deserves protection and that it is incumbent on stakeholder unions to fight against the egregious attack that has occurred during the austerity period.**

*Congress therefore mandates*

**the USI President to enter into negotiations with stakeholder trade unions in the primary, secondary and third level education system towards building a common platform on Education for the next General Election. Proposed USI Motions**

## 15 NA 4 Student Supports for Prisoners

### Congress notes

**That prisoners in the Irish prison system can find it difficult to qualify for student supports when applying to further or higher education.**

### Congress further notes

**Improved access to education in the prison system means an increasing number of people are applying to go to college while incarcerated or upon release and a lack of access to supports is acting as a barrier to this.**

### Congress mandates

**The VP AAQA to work with the relevant bodies to alleviate and remove these restrictions.**

## 15 NA 5 Traveller ethnicity

### Congress notes

**That Ireland's statutory human rights and equality bodies including the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Equality Authority have concluded that Travellers fulfill the relevant sociological and anthropological criteria for recognition as a distinct ethnic group.**

### Congress also notes

**That Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic minority in Britain, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and as separate from non-traveller Irish people.**

### Congress further notes

**The recommendations and findings emanating from the Council of Europe and the United Nations calling on the State to recognise travellers' ethnic status.**

### Congress believes

**That the State cannot continue to deny Travellers their right to self-identify as members of an ethnic group.**

### Congress therefore mandates

**The VP Equality and Citizenship to engage in a campaign calling on the Irish government to recognise the ethnic status of Irish Travellers.**

## 15 NA 6 Debt write-down for Ireland

### Congress acknowledges:

**That the Union's core principles of education as a public good, equity of access and equality of opportunity, among the funding of other essential public services require a significant investment on the part of the state.**



Congress notes with grave concern:

**The extent to which the Irish state and its people have been saddled with EU-wide debt, accounting for €64bn in total.**

Congress also notes with concern:

**The lack of progress within government on this level of debt and the impact in particular that this has on the ability of the state to address the funding deficit in higher education.**

Congress affirms:

**Its opposition to the way in which Ireland has been disproportionately hindered by the total debt of the European Union.**

Congress supports:

**calls for an EU-wide conference on debt relief, akin to the one that spurred on the Marshall Plan after the Second World War and provided debt relief for Germany.**

Congress mandates:

**The VP Campaigns and President to lobby and campaign in opposition to the grossly unfair debt imposed on Ireland by the ECB, the EU and the IMF, with a view to working alongside like-minded organisations to achieving a debt-write down.**

## 15 NA 7 Alcohol Advertising in Sport

Congress notes

**The influence alcohol advertising in sport has on young people.**

Congress notes with concern

**In January 2015, plans to allow a legislative clause which would eventually allow for the banning of alcohol sponsorship of sports have been dropped.**

Congress mandates

**The Vice President Welfare to campaign with Alcohol Action Ireland for such a ban to be introduced.**

## 15 NA9 Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions) Bill

*Congress notes:*

**The Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions) Bill 2012 has seemed to have fallen by the way side since the resignation of the former Minister for Justice. The proposed Bill would allow certain convictions to become “Spent” after a period of between 3 and 7 years. Simply put the Bill would allow people convicted of crimes that carry non-custodial sentences to act as if their convictions had not existed.**

*Congress further notes:*

**The limitations placed upon people that received convictions’ for minor offences. Even with a minor offence people can be impeded in gaining Visas for certain countries and can also detrimentally affect their employment prospects throughout their lifetime.**

In Ireland we currently punish people for life no matter how minor the offence committed. This legislation is of enormous importance to the thousands of people in Ireland who have difficulty accessing work, education/training and even home insurance for one stupid mistake, usually made when they were younger (aged 18-21), for which they received a conviction such as a fine or probation, and for which they continue to be punished for the rest of their lives.

This legislation is not about letting people off; it is about giving people a second chance, after they have served their punishment (whether a fine, probation, community service or custodial sentence) and after they have desisted from offending behaviour for a period of 3-7 years. It is in everybody's interest that society encourages people to move on from offending behaviour.

#### *Congress mandates*

the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the current Minister for Justice to put this Bill to the Dáil so that it may be passed and written into legislation.  
introduced.

#### Congress mandates:

Both the VP AAQA and the VP Equality and citizenship to investigate the experiences of international students on Irish campuses and prepare a document outlining best practices (nationally and/or internationally) of encouraging international student engagement in the Irish Student Movement and in the student experience in general. The documents recommendations should be submitted for discussion and agreement from MOs within the first two national councils in the academic year

## 12 NA 1 CHILDRENS' RIGHTS

#### Congress notes:

The absence of legislation in Ireland in relation to the protection of children.

#### Congress further notes:

The contents of the Cloyne, Ryan and Murphy Reports.

#### Congress recognises:

That we, as a society, fail to protect vulnerable children.

#### Congress therefore mandates:

USI Officerboard to actively support the proposed referendum on children's' rights, to work with Campaign for Children and other organisations in favour of the referendum, and to actively encourage and facilitate MOs to get involved in the campaign. This motion shall continue to be in force for the next three years or until such time as the referendum has passed.

## 12 NA 2 CROKE PARK AGREEMENT

### Congress notes:

The Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) imposes a moratorium on public sector recruitment and guarantees no compulsory pay cuts to public sector staff until at least 2014.

### Congress notes with concern:

The lack of employment for graduates resulting from the recruitment freeze stipulated by the Croke Park agreement and that the public sector pay freezes have resulted in less money being available in the budgets of Educational Institutions for non-pay expenditure such as student services.

### Congress believes:

That the Croke Park agreement has had a negative effect on students' education and employment prospects.

### Congress mandates:

That USI calls for the renegotiation of the Croke Park Agreement.

### Congress further mandates:

The President to pursue a renegotiation of the Croke Park agreement at the Lobby of the Oireachtas & to propose a more student-friendly alternative which will still endeavour to respect the rights of public sector employees.

## 12 NA 3 PRIVATE SCHOOLS

### Congress recognises:

That we as a student movement we must strive for true equality of opportunity at all levels in the Irish education system. We also recognise that whether or not a child will make it to third-level education is very often determined by the quality of their secondary education.

### Congress further recognises:

That many potential students have not made it to third-level because they come from areas of socio-economic disadvantage, and thus cannot afford private schooling, or because the public schools in their areas are not adequate.

### Congress notes:

The growth of grind schools and private secondary schools in Ireland in the past two decades, and that this growth of the private school sector has led to a divided student body at second-level and beyond, and has also resulted in many good public schools struggling to fill places and stay open.

### Congress further notes:

That students attending private schools have access to an education that is to a large extent publicly-funded, but which is only accessible to those who can pay the private fees which run into the thousands each year. This means that all taxpayers are being asked to subsidise an

education system that is only accessible to those children lucky enough to be born into relatively well-off families, and that this private education puts them at a great advantage in attaining higher CAO points and thus places on third-level courses.

#### **Congress mandates Officer Board:**

To campaign for the removing of state funding for private primary and secondary schools, and for any monies saved in this process to be ring fenced and re-invested in the wider, publicly-funded and publicly-accessible education system including primary, secondary and third level education. This should be completed within the next year.

## 12 NA 5 REFORM OF THE IRISH CONSTITUTION

#### **Congress notes:**

The inherently Catholic ethos of the Irish Constitution/Bunreacht na hÉireann.

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

USI policy in the areas of marriage equality and abortion.

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

That the Catholic nature of the Constitution prohibits any legislation which may seek positive, fair and just advancement in these areas, areas in which USI has campaigned tirelessly for decades.

#### **Congress believes:**

That the Constitution of Ireland should be wholly secular in nature, and that no one religion deserves constitutional supremacy over all others, nor should any one religion influence the laws of the State.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Campaigns and the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to lobby for a seat for USI on the soon-to-be established National Constitutional Review Committee and to make known USI's desire for a secular Constitution, lobbying to ensure that areas such as the definition of marriage etc. are in line with USI policies. This mandate must be fulfilled prior to the national Constitutional review taking place.

## 12 NA 7 ANTI-COUNTERFEIT TRADE AGREEMENT (ACTA)

#### **Congress notes:**

The importance of copyright law and the protection of intellectual property rights and the need of the Irish government to act on this.

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

The lack of public discussion on the ACTA Treaty and how it would be implemented in Ireland.

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

The potential impact of any legislation around ACTA on students' work, freedom of speech and civil liberties.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The VP/Campaigns to campaign and lobby on behalf of the students of Ireland to prevent the ratification of the Anti-Counterfeit Trade Agreement and the introduction of legislation to enforce it in Ireland.

### Congress further mandates:

The VP/Campaigns to lobby and campaign for the next three years for a wider discussion on the issue of copyright infringement and counterfeit trade prior to the Irish government putting in place any legislation in this area.

## 12 NA 8 PUBLIC & CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITMENT EMBARGO

### Congress notes:

The difficulties caused by the current Public & Civil Service Recruitment Embargo and the employment control framework in operation in the Higher Education Sector.

### Congress further notes:

That Ireland has a huge problem with Graduate Unemployment and that many of our best and brightest are being forced to emigrate.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The President and VP/Campaigns to lobby for a root and branch review of all areas of the public and civil service. This review would enable the Government to create a public and civil service that is appropriate for a modern Ireland. By creating a modern civil and public service the Government would be in a position to lift the embargo and recruit graduates into frontline services and other areas appropriate for a modern Ireland.

## 12 / NA 9 GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT & EMIGRATION

### Congress welcomes:

The progress made to the date on the implementation of the USI Reigniting the Smart Economy Policy adopted at Congress 2011.

### Congress also welcomes:

The announcement of the Job Bridge, National Internship Scheme in June 2011.

### Congress notes with grave concern:

Recent figures that over 100 Irish people are emigrating every day. Large scale emigration has hugely negative social and economic consequences for communities across the country.

### Congress mandates:

The President and VP Campaigns to launch a large scale campaign to force Government to tackle the problems of Graduate Unemployment & Emigration and to create the appropriate environment for job creation.

### Congress further mandates:

- The President and VP Campaigns to lobby for the following amendments to the Job Bridge Scheme.
- A reduction in the Job Bridge criteria from 12 weeks to 4 weeks.
- The modification of the Social Welfare Code to enable employers to give a modest stipend to interns.
- That Job Bridge interns under the age of 25 qualify for the maximum rate of Job Seekers Benefit.
- Vetting of Internships on Job Bridge site.

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

## 12 NA 10 NATIONAL PROPERTY SERVICES REGULATORY AUTHORITY

### Congress notes:

The findings of the Auctioneering/Estate Agency Review Group established by the Minister for Justice and Law Reform, that the existing statutory framework for the property sector in the Republic of Ireland is outdated, inappropriate and inadequate for the present day market and does not provide any ongoing official supervisory, disciplinary or consumer redress system.

### Congress further notes:

That to address these shortcomings, the Review Group recommended the establishment of a Regulatory Authority to achieve uniformity and transparency in licensing, regulation and provision of information to the public in relation to the property sector.

### Congress understands:

That the Minister for Justice and Law Reform has established the National Property Services Regulatory Authority (NPSRA) as the agency to carry out this function.

### Congress believes:

That this is a hugely positive step by Government to regulate the property sector. At a time where many businesses are facing liquidation, receivership, and other financial difficulties, adequate governance is required more than ever. Furthermore, the enactment of this legislation to empower this regulatory authority would provide a significant support to our members along with all tenants nationwide.

### Congress mandates the President and Vice President for Welfare:

To voice the support of the USI; before the end of the calendar year 2012, for the establishment of the National Property Services Regulatory Authority (NPSRA).

### Congress further mandates the President and Vice President for Welfare:

To lobby the Minister for Justice and Law Reform; before the end of the calendar year 2012, to ensure the swift and secure enactment of this legislation.

## 12 NA 10 MORTGAGE REPAYMENTS

### Congress notes with concern:

Recent figures that 1 in 7 householders are struggling to repay mortgages due to the economic crisis.

### Congress further notes:

That many students and families across the country have to make stark choices as to whether to pay the mortgages, pay colleges fees or simply put food on the table to provide for their families.

### Congress also notes:

That many families are not in a position to meet mortgage repayments because they have been made redundant or have had to close their business due to the economic crisis.

At present, families are bearing the full responsibility, that is losing their homes, for what can now be described as excessive lending by financial institutions. It is estimated that 36,000 mortgages are in arrears of three months or more and that 17,000 households are receiving mortgage interest supplement.

### Congress is concerned:

That the financial crisis being experienced by students and families across the country is resulting increased levels of stress, anxiety and mental health issues.

### Congress mandates:

The President, VP Equality and VP Campaigns to work with external organisations to campaign and lobby the Government to introduce measures that support families in situations where they are unable to repay their mortgage and to ensure that families do not lose their homes.

## 12 NA 12 EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS CAMPAIGN

### Congress notes:

The focus being put on producing work-ready, world-ready graduates by the 3rd Level sector.

### Congress further notes:

The lack of clarity for many students around what graduate recruiters and employers are actively seeking in graduates

### Congress mandates:

The Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance Officer and the Campaigns Officer to roll out a nationwide campaign before June 1st 2013 with the aim to inform students on what skills make them more employable and opportunities they have to develop them.

### Congress further mandates:

The Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance Officer to investigate the feasibility of a national career guidance database/website for 3rd and 4th level students.

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

### 15 IA1 Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

Congress notes with concern:

the on-going negotiations between the European Union and the United States in relation to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and the potential impact that it could have on Irish higher education, democracy and wider society.

Congress does not support:

**the lowering of any EU standards in regards to the environment, food safety, animal welfare and workers' rights.**

**In addition, Congress is especially concerned that under TTIP, the US would be allowed to export shale gas to Europe thus increasing fracking in the US and allowing US companies to challenge fracking bans in Europe under the Investor-State Dispute Settlement clause.**

**While Congress supports the EU's efforts in job creation we believe that TTIP jeopardises the health and wellbeing of those living in the EU and therefore call on the EU to use these negotiations to encourage the US to raise its standards rather than lowering its own.**

**Congress affirms**

**that while it does not oppose free trade in principle, TTIP does not amount to a traditional free trade agreement but rather threatens to constitute an historic infringement upon democratic governance.**

**Conference mandates:**

**Officer Board to campaign against TTIP and to engage with like-minded organisations in Ireland and across Europe on the matter.**



# UNION ORGANISATION

## 15 UO1 Comparative Research

Congress recognises

**There are certain areas of similarity between MO organisations in relation to facilities, student issues and other practices.**

Congress further recognises

**There are often challenges associated with addressing these issues, without comparative research to illustrate best practice in other Higher Education Institutions.**

Congress believes

**That the area of conducting and presenting research between MOs is a lengthy, challenging process requires fine-tuning to be most effective**

Congress further believes

**Comparative Research will be conducted and presented more efficient manner if this task is assigned to a designated member of Officer Board**

Congress therefore mandates

**That the President assigns the area of Comparative Research to a member of Officer Board, who shall coordinate Comparative Research on behalf of USI and MO's regarding best practice in key aspects of union operations.**

## 15 UO2 Part time officer training

USI Congress notes:

**Part time officers play an important role in every Student Union. These Officers are essential to the growth and development of the student movement.**

USI Congress further notes:

**That there are numerous, similar, motions mandating USI to conduct various Part Time Officer training.**

USI Congress believes:

**Training is key to the standard of work done by the Part Time Officers. Both the Union and campaigns run by USI and individual SU's are strongest with unity and training.**

USI Congress therefore Deletes the Motions:

**14 /Uo 14, 13/ Uo 13, 09/Uo 11**

USI Congress mandates:

**All members of the USI Officer Board to provide appropriate training relevant to their area for all Part Time Officers throughout the country. To create unity, the Officer Board shall also create an online network for Part Time Officers throughout the country. Both mandates are to be completed by the end of the first semester each year.**

## 15 UO3 Students' union staff training

Congress notes:

**The unique work that is done by Student Union staff on a daily basis in each Students' Union in Ireland.**

Congress further notes:

**The high standard of training provided by USI for Students' Union elected officers.**

Congress mandates:

**Officer Board provide a two day training programme for MO staff. The aim being to strive for best practice; enable networking; champion equality and inclusion; and create a platform for the staff to understand thus communicate the benefits and supports provided by USI.**

## 15 UO6 Regional Events to National Campaigns

Congress notes

**Many USI Campaigns and their launches are located in Dublin due to its accessibility for MOs, Media and Politicians.**

Congress also notes

**This can remove a regional and local focus from national campaigns**

Congress therefore mandates

**The USI VP Campaigns, VP BMW and VP for Southern Region to co-ordinate local and regional campaigns events to compliment national campaigns, where appropriate.**

**Amendment submitted by the VP BMW:**

**Replace clause 'Congress therefore mandates' with:**

Congress therefore mandates

**The USI VP Campaigns, VP for Welfare, VP BMW and VP for Southern Region to co-ordinate local and regional campaigns events to compliment national campaigns, where appropriate.**

## 15 UO7 USI Election Process

### Congress notes

**That information in relation to procedures around running for a position on Officer Board is not readily available to Member Organisations and that ambiguity around the regulations and election procedure could discourage potential candidates from running.**

### Congress further notes

**That currently there is no limitation on spending for Officer Board campaigns. This may create uncertainty around the financial implications of running for an Officer Board position and work to further discourage potential candidates.**

### Congress therefore mandates

**USI Officer Board to make regulations and procedures relating to Officer Board elections readily available to Member Organisations before commencement of the 2015/2016 Academic Year.**

### Congress further mandates

**All of Officer Board to introduce a spending limit of €350 for all campaign materials**

## 15 UO8 Supporting Student Media

### Congress recognises

**The fantastic work being done by student journalists and student media in Ireland.**

### Congress notes

**That USI brought back one edition of The Voice magazine which was distributed in Freshers' packs in 2014.**

### Congress believes

**That USI could do more to support student journalism and student media.**

### Congress mandates

**The USI President to organise a meeting in a central location and invite all USI members working in student media and all USI members who are editors of student publications to attend. This meeting will serve as a networking event for student media and will allow USI officers to flag the timeline of national events for the year with student media. This meeting should take place before September 30th each year.**

### Congress also mandates

**The USI President to develop an online version of 'The Voice'. This will act as a centralised hub and showcase for student media and will allow student journalists to share articles, blogs,**

videos, and podcasts. The website will be maintained and updated by USI. The website will also contain information on media awards and media grants that students can apply for.

## 15 UO9 Promotional Packs

Congress notes:

**That the USI distribute thousands of promotional packs for campaigns including and not limited to SHAG Week , Mental Health Week , Fresher Packs etc.**

Congress further notes:

**That MO's have no knowledge of the cost involved and the unit pricing of such packs.**

Congress believes:

**That communication is vital in the deliverance and pricing of such packs onto MO campuses**

Congress mandates:

**The USI President and related Officer board members to release itemised cost analysis of all materials distributed to MOs for Campaigns/SHAG Week/Mental Health Week etc .**

## 15 UO10 DUBLIN STUDENT BALL

Congress notes:

**That when done effectively, Students' Union events can be a great social window for students and an introduction into the wider SU identity.**

Congress also notes:

**That there is great scope for collaboration among SUs that are in close proximity to one another, and that a common identity among students in Dublin could be useful.**

Congress also notes:

**The saturation of event promoters in Dublin and other built up areas can often make it tough for SUs to run cost-effective events.**

Congress mandates:

**The Officer Board member with responsibility for the Dublin Region to investigate the feasibility of arranging a USI student ball in support of the national charity in the Dublin region, making use of MO Events officers, event management students and student acts.**

## 15 UO11 Legislation working group

### Congress notes

**That a large number of mandates in the USI Policy manual require officer board to lobby on various issues, particularly in relation to government. These mandates can often require a change in legislation in order to be completed.**

### Congress further notes

**Many organisations engage consistently with the legislative process to achieve their stated aims. USI has done this on an infrequent basis. Engaging with this process more frequently will allow USI to be more effective for its members.**

### Congress recognises

**That capacity of USI to engage with this may be limited without relevant expertise or training.**

### Congress mandates

**The USI President, or their nominee, to establish and chair a legislation working group with responsibility to provide training to interested members. Furthermore to provide information to national council on the process and direct them towards relevant legislation where appropriate.**

### Congress further mandates

**The working group to update national council on the initiatives and activities it undertakes and to take instruction from national council.**

## 15 UO13 Mature student supports

### Congress notes:

**The high increase in the numbers of mature students attending third level education and the difficulties they face.**

### Congress also notes:

**The success of peer supports such as Mature Student Convention provided by the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship across Irish Third Level Institutions Students' Unions.**

### Congress further notes:

**The benefits of having a mature student officer be it fulltime or part-time in each MO**

### Congress is aware:

**The benefits to mature students in holding a Mature Student Conference and the development of mature student officer be it fulltime or part-time in each MO, with support provided by the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship.**

Congress mandates:

**The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to continue their work in the development of a mature student officer be it fulltime or part-time in each MO.**

Congress further mandates:

**The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to hold a Mature Student convention to take place annually in the first semester of each academic year.**

## 15 UO13 International Students participation:

Congress notes:

**The importance of international students and the broad and diverse communities they bring to Irish Institutions.**

Congress further notes with concern:

**That international students may at times feel isolated from the Irish students and this issue needs to be addressed.**

Congress Understands:

**That international students face different issues and interact with institutions in different ways to Irish residence students.**

Congress Identifies:

**Our membership to European Students Union contains a wealth of information on issues pertaining to the needs of visiting and international students.**

Congress mandates:

**Both the VP AAQA and the VP Equality and citizenship to investigate the experiences of international students on Irish campuses and prepare a document outlining best practices (nationally and/or internationally) of encouraging international student engagement in the Irish Student Movement and in the student experience in general. The documents recommendations should be submitted for discussion and agreement from MOs within the first two national councils in the academic year**

## 15 UO18 Student manifesto ahead of the next general election

Congress notes:

**That there will be a General Election no later than April 2016.**

Congress affirms:

**That USI must seek to make solutions to core student issues part of the next Programme for Government.**

Congress notes:

**The process by which NUS and NUS-USI's '#GenerationVote' campaign sought to a) highlight the upcoming elections and the importance of students voting and b) gather student feedback on what a student general election manifesto should include.**

Congress mandates:

**The VP Campaigns to arrange for an Irish student manifesto ahead of the next general elections, as part of the wider national campaign. The rollout of this should be a priority for the Campaigns Working Group and Campaigns Sub-Committee.**

## 15 UO19 Casework Recording Best Practice Policy

Congress notes:

The vital need for a "Casework Recording Best Practice Policy" for MO's. Taking into extreme consideration data protection legislation and HEI data protection policies.

Congress further notes:

The invaluable information provided by casework recording for data analysis in each academic year and the dire need for MO's to have a guideline to data recording and safe keeping.

Congress also notes:

The benefit of liaising with support services in each HEI so that we may gain a greater insight into the issues students face each academic year.

Congress mandates:

The VP for Welfare to produce a Best Practice Guideline/policy for MO's regarding the recording of issues faced by students. Taking into extreme consideration data protection legislation and HEI data protection policies.

Congress further mandates:

The VP welfare to investigate the feasibility for MO's to liaise with support services in each HEI to gather necessary data to analyse key student issues in each academic year.

**in key aspects of union operations.**

## 15 UO21 National Council Decentralisation

### Congress notes

**that National Council was concerned at the level of disaffection felt by some MO's in regards to the centralisation of national council, and believed that this issue could have a negative effect constituting an emergency on the overall membership of USI.**

### Congress recognises

**that the model of centralisation proposed at last year's congress was meant to solve issues around MO's travel time to and from remote areas.**

### Congress realises

**that although a good idea, the practicalities and cost of hosting USI national councils in hotels in a truly centralised location is not a feasible option.**

### Congress notes

**that the previous model of national council hosting was unfair to some colleges some of the time, whereas the new centralised structure was unfair to some colleges all of the time.**

### Congress acknowledges

**that although we cannot return to the previous system, we must have an adequate solution that serves the interests of all members.**

### Congress mandates

**The President to ask MO's to apply to host each individual National Council, with fair operation, ensuring that a full cycle of the four regions must be concluded before an MO from a previous host region may reapply.**

### Congress further mandates

**that these applications to host must be circulated by the USI President to all MO Presidents. The USI President should then facilitate a binding vote on the applications.**

## 15 UO23 Regional Issues

### Congress notes:

**That there is too few opportunities to discuss Regional Issues at National Council besides within a Working Group.**

### Congress believes:

**That regions can feel isolated due to USI being centered in Dublin, and regional Issues are not dealt with in time**

### Congress Further Believes:

**That Regional Councils will promote and engage MOs further and be less costly for MOs.**

### Congress mandates

**The Regional Officer to host regional councils within the region with the aim of submitting a report to council.**



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## 15 UO28 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Providers

*Congress notes:*

**The 11 Member Unions of NUS-USI from Further Education and Higher Education Institutions in the North.**

*Congress further notes:*

**That by virtue of the Tri-Lateral agreement that these members are also members of USI**

*Congress believes that:*

**While the majority of MOs and Officer Board are based in The South, no member should be disadvantaged because of the jurisdiction in which they are based.**

*Congress mandates:*

**USI Officer Board to ensure that wherever 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Services, Materials or Contact Information is provided to any MO that does not operate both North and South of the Boarder that a viable alternative is provided for whichever part of the island that the organisation does not operate in.**

## 15 UO29 Campaign to encourage participation in full time Students' Union elections

*Congress notes*

**The difficulty in getting students to engage with full time SU elections**

*Congress further notes*

**The work already being done by MOs trying to increase participation**

*Congress applauds*

**The work being done with the 'Women for Election' campaign**

*Congress mandates*

**The VP for Campaigns to work with MOs in running a 'ready-made' campaign to encourage overall participation nationally but also be able be interpreted locally for individual MOs in full time elections and to equip them with the skills necessary to do so but also, to provide the support, aid and advice to MOs in preparing their own local election campaigns.**

## 15 UO 30 USI Transparency and Engagement:

### Congress notes:

The work of Officerboard goes mostly unnoticed by the wider student population.

### Congress applauds:

Efforts made by Officerboard to increase transparency in its work over the past two years.

### Congress mandates:

Officerboard to implement a weekly round-up of the work carried out during that week, which is to

include policy and Manifesto updates, be distributed to Officers, and their Class Representatives.

## 15 UO 31 Utilising Student Expertise within the Union

### Congress notes:

As an organisation representing over 356,000 students, USI has much considerable specialised work outsourced to external contractors, for example design and translations, ect.

### Congress further notes:

That Ireland has one of the highest youth unemployment figures in the EU.

### *Congress mandates:*

Officerboard to seek to have this specialised work, particularly design and translation work, where practicable, contracted to members of the union to undertake.

## 15 UO 32 National Charity

### Congress notes

The importance of USI and Member Organisations engaging with charities each year by contributing, and giving back to the wider community.

### Congress commends

The efforts made by students to raise money, volunteer and raise awareness by means of RAG appeals and other campaigns.

### *Congress also notes*

That the charity selection process for appeals varies across Member Organisations.

### *Congress further notes*

That due to USI being an overall body with no exclusive members separate to those within

Member Organisations it can be difficult to raise money for the National Charity as the onus is left on the full time USI officers.

#### *Congress mandates*

That the Vice President for Welfare identify a number of charity themes to be presented with example charities at Congress each year to be voted on by congress with the intention that Member Organisations encourage their student body to nominate charities which fit within this theme so that an overall total can easily be compiled of monies raised across the country.

#### *Congress further mandates*

The Vice President for Welfare, to compile a briefing document for Member Organisations on best practices to propose a charity in their own Unions which would include details on; how to propose a charity, how the voting will happen and who gets to vote so as to achieve as fair and transparent result each year. This is to be distributed not latter than the second National Council of the year.

## 15 UO 33 1916 Commemoration

#### *Congress notes:*

The importance of the 1916 commemorations to the people of Ireland, and in particular, young people.

#### *Congress further notes:*

That the celebrations ought to be a celebration of our shared heritage

#### *Congress mandates:*

Officerboard to work with various stakeholders, to ensure that the members of the union are represented in any commemorations, due to take place. And to aid any MO's as regard to any local events planned to take place.

## 12 UO 1 CODES OF CONDUCT

### **Congress recognizes:**

That there can often be disagreement and conflict within Students' Unions, and that there should ideally be a system in place to deal with such situations.

### Congress notes:

That the behavior of elected Students' Union officers can be seen to reflect the behavior of the student body of that college as a whole.

### Congress mandates:

The USI Officerboard to compile a proposed Code of Conduct for both the USI Officerboard and the Member Organisations, which the Member Organisations would have the option of adopting within their own organisation. This Code should be completed and presented to National Council by 31st December 2012.

## 12 UO 2 PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL SENT OUT TO MO'S

### Congress notes:

Throughout the year a number of campaigns will require promotional material to be sent out to MO's.

### Congress recognises:

In the past there have been a significant proportion of materials wasted unnecessarily.

### Congress mandates the Vice President for Campaigns:

To review in the first three months of their term the amount of materials each MO will need per campaign and ensure they adhere to this during the year.

## 12 UO 5 SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

### Congress notes:

Employers are seeking graduates with skills and experience gained outside of the classroom. The National Strategy for Higher Education states repeatedly that generic and transferable skills are essential for our future workforce and must be developed by the student alongside their academic learning.

### Congress also notes:

The skills available in the collective student body are vast and impressive. USI undertakes and runs a huge number of campaigns covering a wide variety of topics each year which requires research and preparation. USI Officers are expected to keep up to date with legislation affecting students.

### Congress further notes:

That successful summer internship programmes have been run in local MO's in July and August 2011. This programme elevated the workload of the sabbatical officers, allowed the students involved to gain valuable insights into the running of an organisation and development of essential generic skills and the cost to run the programme was very low. Work included website development, national policy reviews, campaign planning and class representative system review.

### Congress mandates:

The President to co-ordinate a summer internship programme to be completed by September 30th 2012 in consultation with MO's who have successfully run programmes.

## 12 UO 7 FURTHER EDUCATION STUDENT REPRESENTATION

### Congress notes:

That the provisions in the proposed Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill 2011 would create a single agency from the functions previously assigned to HETAC, FETAC, NQAI and IUQB. This consolidation impacts on student representation as USI should be recognised as the sole national student representative body for students at all levels and in each sector of further and higher education.

### Congress notes:

That work has progressing by recent Education Officers and Area Officer in the field of Further Education Student Representation, but that this Union currently is ill-equipped to deal with the significant demands that this places on the Union.

### Congress asserts and acknowledges:

Its moral obligation to provide the means for students in Further Education to represent themselves to their own institutions, to national agencies, and to this Union to the same extent as students in higher education.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The VP for AA & QA to organise the creation of a Further Education Student Representative Sub-group of USI, made up of officers of Students' Unions, Representative Committees and Guilds in colleges of further education nationally. This Sub-group will be responsible for the promotion of, affiliation of, training, development and liaison between the Union and students in Further Education.

### Congress further mandates:

The Education Officer and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance Elect to develop a five year implementation strategy for USI's FE sub-group, leading towards a fully autonomous FE campaign within USI, if appropriate at the end of that five year period.

### Congress acknowledges:

Its own dearth of experience or expertise in this field, and

### Congress additionally mandates:

The President to allocate staff resources, as resources permit, to professionally manage this strategy, implement its recommendations and deliver its aims until such a time as the Union may elect a person to perform this role.

## 12 UO 10 PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS FOR THE USI

### Congress notes:

The importance of producing promotional goods to promote the USI in each Member Organisation.

### Congress further notes:

The importance of producing these goods in a timely fashion to coincide with Freshers Weeks across the country.

### Congress mandates:

The Vice President for Campaigns, the Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region and the Vice President for the Southern Region to produce such goods by the end of July for the next 3 years.

## 12 UO 11 ACCESS & INCLUSIVITY

### Congress notes:

That this year USI has made a conscious effort to create an inclusive working environment to all Officers.

### Congress further notes:

How important it is to be at the forefront of an access and inclusivity for all officers.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The President to ensure that USI continues to ensure that it achieves appropriate and reasonable accommodations for all.

## 12 UO 12 MATURE STUDENTS CONFERENCE

### Congress notes:

The increase in the number of mature students returning to 3rd level education, and welcomes the national mature student conference held this year.

### Congress further notes:

The national mature student conference will have less of an impact on mature students if it is held near the end of semester 2.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The VP Equality and Citizenship Officer to hold the mature student conference in Semester 1.

## 12 UO 13 VIDEO DEBATES

### Congress notes:

The increased level of interest amongst our grass root members in USI and the election process for new Officerboard candidates.

### Congress further notes:

Trinity College Dublin Students' Union hold a very open and public Election Process that is well documented and welcomes interaction from all members along with a debate between candidates held.

### Congress therefore mandates:

USI Elections Subcommittee to organise video debates between Officerboard candidates at least 2 weeks prior to the Election at Annual Congress.

## 12 UO 15 ESTABLISHMENT OF A USI WORKING GROUP FOR MEMBER ORGANISATION ADMINISTRATORS

### Congress notes:

That USI provides many opportunities for Students' Unions to learn from one another, and share experiences, leading to a stronger student movement nationally.

### Congress further notes:

That staff provide invaluable support and continuity to Students' Unions throughout the country, often with a breadth of knowledge, which stretches over many years.

### Congress notes with regret:

That at present, there is no USI forum by which staff of Students' Unions can share information and experiences, for the benefit of Students' Unions and the student body.

### Congress mandates:

The President to establish a working group of USI, which shall have membership consisting of the staff of each Member Organisation. The working group shall be chaired by a member of USI staff and shall regulate its own affairs, but shall operate within the policies and procedures of USI.

## 12 UO 19 LGBT SOCIETIES

### Congress notes:

That the LGBT societies are the main source of contact and support for LGBT students.

### Congress also notes:

The great work done by USI in providing Pink Training which supports the LGBT community.



### Congress believes;

That this training is a great advert for USI reaching out to students across the country.

### Congress also believes:

That all LGBT students (and indeed many non LGBT students) could benefit from attending Pink Training.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to make contact with all LGBT societies about Pink Training at least 4 weeks prior to the date for the event, and offer non-affiliate rates directly to the society where relevant.

## 12 UO 20 EQUALITY CAMPAIGN LAUNCH & HANDBOOK

### Congress welcomes:

The creation of the new role of the Equality and Citizenship Officer.

### Congress believes;

That the creation of this new role will provide USI with the opportunity to reshape and rebrand the USI Equality campaign.

### Congress believes:

It is vitally important to raise awareness of the Equality campaign within USI and among the organisations and community groups that the Equality and Citizenship Officer will be liaising and working with.

### Congress mandates:

The Equality and Citizenship Officer to organise an official re-launch event for the USI Equality campaign this autumn no later than November 1st.

### Congress mandates:

The Equality and Citizenship Officer to fulfil the previous mandate of creating an Equality Handbook (09/UO 29) and to have this handbook ready to distribute at this launch.

### Congress mandates:

The Equality and Citizenship Officer to ensure that representatives from all relevant organisations are invited to attend this launch.

## 12 UO 22 ÓGRA CONFERENCE

### Congress notes:

The diverse range of political parties that exist in Ireland and acknowledges that many of these parties have Ógra branches operating in our members organisations.

### Congress acknowledges:

That such a diverse organisation as USI represents members with a wide variety of political opinions and beliefs.

### Congress mandates:

The President or Vice President Campaign of USI to attend all Ógra Conferences for the next three years when invited to do so for the next three years.

## 10 UO 10 AREA OFFICER ROLE

### Congress recognizes:

The difficulty for both COs and Area Officers in defining the role of the Area Officer and utilizing it to its full potential.

### Congress believes:

That in order for the role to be successful, the onus should be on both the Officer themselves and on COs. However, this is difficult as there are no definite guidelines as to what an Area Officer's role is.

The following should be the minimum expected from an Area Officer:

- A minimum of one visit to each CO in between National Councils.
- A minimum of one week's notice to COs about this visit (unless CO requests Area Officer in a shorter period of time).
- Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 30 - - 30 -

- To organise a number of bonding events throughout the year. This should be approved by all COs and ensure that all are available to attend. And if all COs cannot attend, that those not available are happy the event takes place without them.
- To assist COs whenever requested in the run up to or during campaigns.
- To organise a number of regional councils during the year - the calendar of these should be agreed on at the first Regional Council of the year.
- That when requested, the Area Officer will attend Class Councils to update class reps on what USI has been doing and what the future plans of the USI are. COs are asked to invite the Area Officers to at least two Class Councils in the year.
- To speak to the media on behalf of the region and act as the main spokesperson on issues effecting students of their relevant area.
- To provide a detailed weekly report on their activities, both to COs and the President and Deputy President.
- To assist the Deputy President in organizing any protests or rallies, which COs have requested.
- To keep Officers based in HQ informed of the issues and activities happening in their area.
- To give an adequate cross over consisting of any further advice gained from holding office to their successor outlining issues which may be ongoing in certain COs, the main issues they face as an officer that year and how best to interact with their COs.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Area Officer to outline their role to their COs at the first regional council of the year.

## 10 UO 19 MANIFESTO UPDATES

**Congress notes:**

Important issues highlighted in the manifestos of elected members of officer board can be neglected as the year progresses.

**Congress also notes:**

The importance USI members place on the strength of the leadership of USI officer board and much of their confidence in an individual stems from the issues they pledge to attack/defend/promote in their manifestos.

**Congress mandates:**

Each member of officer board to outline the progress they have made on their manifesto issues at national council twice annually.

## 10 UO 21 CAMPAIGN HISTORY

### **Congress notes:**

USI has a long and proud tradition when it comes to running effective campaigns which gather media attention and brings our issues to national attention.

### **Congress also notes:**

We rely on anecdotal memory of what photo stunts/campaign strategies have been used in the past. Often the issues are the same for example, fees, equal rights etc.

### **Congress mandates:**

The Deputy President to compile a database of previous campaigns under relevant headings. By doing this, we are building on our knowledge of what USI has achieved to date. Also, we can learn from what media campaigns have worked in the past and why.

## 10 UO 26 UNION ORGANISATION

### **Congress notes:**

That it is essential that each constituent organisation of USI can hold USI Officer Board to account.

### **Congress further notes:**

That the current system of accountability is not adequate in ensuring that each member of Officer Board is meeting their mandates.

### **Congress believes:**

That in the same way that Higher Education Institutes should offer a quality assurance scheme to its students; USI should provide its own quality assurance scheme as part of this effort for greater accountability.

### **Congress mandates:**

Officer Board to establish a system of accountability, as detailed below, as part of an effort to improve accountability and quality assurance across the organisation.

Once elected, each member of Officer Board should present the first sitting of National Council with a plan of work for the year ahead, complete with key milestones and targets and displayed on a Gantt Chart, as is the industry standard for project management. This plan of work should reflect the policies laid down in the USI Policy Manual together with the tasks implied in the officer's job description and these should be prioritised accordingly.

The National Council have the option to accept the proposed plan of work , or reject it in which case the officer must return to the next National Council with a new proposal.

Progress on each item against the original plan of work must then be made known to all Constituent Organisations by means of a newsletter from each member of Officer Board on a fortnightly basis.

Failure to meet these targets, within 20 percent of the overall time allocation of each item, should then result in the Officer being held to account at the next sitting of National Council, The Officer will be fully entitled to due process in line with Article 5.8 of the USI Constitution and the law of the land.

**Article 5.8 USI Constitution**

The right of the students, through their Constituent Organisation, to call to account and instruct those charge with office, within the Union, to discipline and ultimately dismiss those who fail to carry out their responsibilities.

## ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

# IRISH LANGUAGE

## 15 GA 1 Seimineár Gaeilge/ Irish Language Seminar

Aithníonn an Chomhdháil:

**An tábhacht a bhaineann le Cumainn Ghaelacha ar dul chun cinn na Gaeilge, agus in úsáid na Gaeilge i gColáistí tríú leibhéal ar fud na tíre.**

Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

**Leas-Uachtarán Ghaeilge seimineár bhliantúil a heagrú, i bpáirt le heagraíochtaí eile, agus Roinn na dTeangacha in Institiúidí Oideachais, agus béim speisialta a chuir in earnáil na Gaeilge, Meáin na Gaeilge, agus gníomhaíocht i saol na Gaeilge.**

Congress notes:

***The importance that Cumann Gaelacha have in the usage, and promotion of Irish in 3rd level institutions across the country.***

Congress mandates:

***The LU Gaeilge to organise an annual seminar, in conjunction with other organisations, and Language Departments in Educational Institutions, 3rd Level Students, with special emphasis on the Irish Language sector, Irish Language Media, and Irish Language Activism.***

## 15 GA 2 Comhdháil na Mic Léinn Ceilteach/ Celtic Students Conference

Aithníonn an Chomhdháil:

**An tábhacht a bhaineann le comhoibriú le grúpaí seachtrach ach go háirithe NUS Alba agus NUS Cyrmu, i gcur chun cinn na teanga**

Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

**Leas-Uachtarán na Gaeilge, obair leis na grúpaí seachtrach seo, chun smaointe a roinnt, chun comhdháil na Mic Léinn Ceilteach a thabhairt go hÉireann don chéad uair, agus chun na Cumann Gaelacha a bheidh lárnach san obair seo ar fad.**

Congress notes:

**The importance that collaborations with external organisations, in particular NUS Alba and NUS Cyrmu, in the development of the Irish Language.**

Congress mandates:

**The LU Gaeilge to work with these external organisations, to share ideas, to bring the Celtic Language Conference to Ireland for the first time ever, and to ensure that Irish Language societies are central in all this work.**

## 15 GA 3 Gaeltacht Fees

Congress notes

**The publication of An Chomairle Mhúintoireachta's report of the Gaeltacht Placement Working Group, and the consistent focus on the importance of Gaeltacht placement to Student Teacher's experience.**

Congress further notes

**The reports recommendations as regard to the funding of this aspect of a student teachers training, and the Socio-economic barrier that has been created as a result of the decision to withdraw Government funding, and as a result students must incur upwards of €1,500 in fees to partake in Gaeltacht placements.**

Congress mandates

**The Vice-President for AAQA and Leas-Uachtarán Gaeilge to lobby the department of Education and Skills to implement the recommendations of this report.**

## 15 GA 4 Seachtain na Gaeilge

Congress notes

**The importance social events have on the ability for student to practice, and use whatever Irish they have.**



Congress mandates:

**The LU Gaeilge to organise an annual Seachtain na Gaeilge festival, in conjunction with Conradh na Gaeilge, in the last week of February, as a special stand alone event prior to the National Seachtain na Gaeilge.**

## CITIZENSHIP

### 15 CZN 1 Lobby for 3rd Level Education Centre Polling Stations - Carried

Congress notes:

**That access for students to vote is limited during term time.**

Congress believes:

**That providing on campus access to voting in all third level institutions would enable and empower students and all members of the educative community to have access to participating within the voting system by the governing authority.**

Congress mandates:

**All of Officer Board to lobby for the inclusion of third level institutions as polling stations in Ireland.**

### 15 CZN 3 General election hustings

Congress notes

**That there is the belief that students are not engaged in the political process.**

Congress believes

**That students are very often left out the political process around election time and thus are not incentivised to be engaged.**

Congress therefore mandates

**The VP Equality and Citizenship and VP Campaigns, in consultation with MOs, to coordinate local hustings in advance of the General Election.**

## 15 CZN 4 Automatic voter registration

### Congress notes

**The difficulties voter registration creates for the democratic process.**

### Congress applauds

**The success USI has had with voter registration drives in the past.**

### Congress further notes

**The success automatic voter registration has brought to many democracies by making voting more accessible.**

### Congress acknowledges

**The option of an “opt-out scheme” in relation to organ donation in some countries, and believes that a similar set-up could be put in place for being registered on the Register of Electors.**

### Congress therefore mandates

**The VP Equality and Citizenship to explore the possibility for the introduction of automatic voter registration for all elections and referenda, with the inclusion of an “opt-out” scheme, and to make proposals backing such to the appropriate Government department.**

## 15 CZN 6 Election Information

Congress notes that as we head into the next academic year we are facing into a general election

Congress is concerned at the low level of political engagement among young people in Ireland with a National Youth Council of Ireland Survey of 1,020 young people finding:

**Only 71.2% of young people aged 18-25 were registered to vote**

**Only 64% of young people between 18-21 years of age were registered to vote**

**Only 20% of young people have ever had personal communication with their local T.D./Councillor**

Congress acknowledges the excellent work done by USI and MO's this year and welcomes the estimated figure of 20,000 students who are now registered thanks to the registration drive held in the early part of this academic year.

Congress believes that students are not fully informed of their rights when it comes to voting with not many knowing that students who study away from home are entitled to a postal vote.

Congress further believes that USI Policy 14 /CZN 2 did well as a comprehensive motion to create a voter registration campaign, however USI now needs to create an informational campaign on voting rights.

Congress therefore mandates that the USI Vice President for Campaigns and the USI Vice President for Equality and Citizenship should create a comprehensive informational campaign template to be rolled out in MO's that explains the voting process, including Postal Voting, PR-STV, polling station ID requirements and other such relevant information.

Congress also mandates that the campaign should attempt to work on this campaign in conjunction with the National Youth Council of Ireland, the ISSU and any other organisation deemed appropriate by National Council.

## 15 CZN 7 General Election Campaign

Congress notes

**That General Election will happen in the next 18 months with the likelihood of a new Government.**

Congress also notes

**This is an opportunity for USI to lobby and assure students' interests are provided for in the next program for Government**

Congress therefore mandates

**The VP for Campaigns, in conjunction with the USI President, to write 'the Student Manifesto' to highlight USI's key demands from political parties.**

Congress also mandates

**The VP for Campaigns, in conjunction with the USI President, to write 'the Student Guide to the General Election' which will inform the general student body on the election relevant to student issues and interests.**

## 15 CZN 8 VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEM REFORM

Congress Lauds:

**The historic success of this year's voter registration efforts, on the part of both USI and individual MOs, in advance of the marriage equality and other referendums taking place in May.**

Congress notes:

**The considerable logistical difficulties faced by USI, individual Students' Unions as well as other activist organisations, throughout both this year and previous years, in navigating the current Irish voter registration process as established by the Electoral Act 1992.**

Congress regrets:

**A number of significant problems arising from the current system which specifically disadvantage those of temporary or changing abode (such as students), which include but are not limited to: the a wholly decentralised system with practice deviating widely between individual County Councils; a primary RFA form that registers households and not individuals; and a complete lack of clarity regarding the date of referendums.**

Congress notes:

**The pre-election commitment from Fine Gael to convene an Electoral Commission to examine national practice on matters of election and referendum, which has yet to be fulfilled.**

Congress therefore mandates:

**The VP for Equality and Citizenship along with Officer Board to carry out a targeted lobbying campaign, focused on the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, seeking meaningful reform of this registration system.**

Congress further mandates:

**This campaign to be formulated and conducted by a Working Group, encompassing input of those with expertise on the relevant legislation and past experience of voter registration efforts, to be convened at the first National Council of the academic year 2015/16.**

## 12 CZN 1 NATIONAL CHARITY FUNDRAISING DAY

Congress notes:

The importance of raising money for USI's national charity.

Congress further notes:

USI's ability to attract media attention, and organise mass student participation in groundlevel events.

Congress notes with concern:

The lack of publicity and fundraising currently given to USI's national charity.

Congress mandates:

The Vice President for Campaigns, the Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region and the Vice President for the Southern Region to explore the feasibility of a National Fundraising Day for the next 3 years, with the aim of involving all Member Organisations in dedicated fundraising activities once a year.

## 12 CZN 2 STUDENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

### Congress notes:

That in order to help fund their education, many students take up a part time job.

### Congress welcomes:

The decision to reverse the cut to the minimum wage, which targeted students in part time jobs who are already struggling financially.

### Congress notes with concern:

That in many of these jobs, trade union membership is absent and in some places discouraged. Furthermore, many students are unaware of what their rights and entitlements are in relation to time off, payment and hours.

### Congress mandates:

The Vice President of Equality and Citizenship to better inform students of their rights in the workplace by providing information that is set out by the LRC, NERA and Employment legislation. This mandate should be completed within the first quarter of the Academic Year.

## 12 CZN 3 USI STUDENT PARTICIPATION AWARDS

### Congress recognises:

A lot of unrecognised valuable work is completed by MOs of USI each year across a wide range of areas and that many students work tirelessly for the betterment of Students' Union and Clubs and Societies.

### Congress acknowledges:

That the range of work completed is diverse and covers a vast area of extracurricular activities and that there is little recognition for these students in a formal capacity.

### Congress notes:

The success of the BICS Awards and NUS Awards in the UK.

### Congress believes:

That the students who work hard in these extracurricular activities should be recognised and acknowledged.

### Congress therefore mandates Officerboard:

To organise USI Student Participation Awards whereby students will be accredited for their involvement in local Students' Unions, USI Campaigns and involvement in Clubs and Societies.

The President and Officer Board to bring forward to the first National Council of 2012/2013 a cohesive plan for the Student Participation Awards which should include the categories that will be included in the Award Ceremony, who will be eligible, how they will be run and judged, deadlines and any other preparation needed.

## 12CZN 4 VOTING RIGHTS FOR CITIZENS LIVING ABROAD

### Congress recognises:

That high unemployment has meant many of our friends, relatives and neighbours have been forced to leave Ireland in search of work elsewhere, and that as in generations past, we are exporting many of our best and brightest individuals, and that many of these will settle in their new homes and spend the rest of their lives there. This legacy of forced emigration has had an extremely detrimental effect on the life of our nation and our State, and that indeed; Ireland is the only country in the world which has a lower population now than in 1845.

### Congress further recognises:

That over the past twenty years, the various holders of the office of President of Ireland have reached out to the Irish abroad, and that Article 2 of the Constitution states how “the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage”. Despite this, Ireland is one of the very few countries in the world which still denies voting rights to those citizens who are not resident in the State.

### Congress notes:

That there are over a million Irish citizens currently living outside the State, including many in Northern Ireland, alongside another two to three million people who have a claim on Irish citizenship. Congress also notes that as a community, these people are no less Irish and care no less about Ireland because they have emigrated, and that accordingly, they should not be unreasonably excluded from the life of the nation and the State.

### Congress mandates the USI:

To adopt a policy which calls on the government to extend the right to vote in elections for the President of Ireland to all Irish citizens living outside the State. The exact mechanism to be used in such elections should be determined by the government, as long as it encourages as wide a participation among the Irish abroad in these elections as is reasonably possible, but with particular regard to the opportunities which technology offers in reaching these people.

To include this policy in future Lobby of the Oireachtas documents and to approach all the registered political parties seeking support on this policy.

### Congress mandates the USI President:

To write to each of the elected officers of each member organisation in September 2012 asking them to present this policy for approval at their decision-making body of students, such as a class representatives council.