

VOTE

Marie Lyons

for Vice President for the
Border, Midlands and
Western Region



Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

Background



Hello, my name is Marie Lyons and I am running to become your Vice-president for the Border, Midlands and Western region. I am currently the President of St. Angela's College, Sligo Students' Union. Originally I am from Tipperary and came to Sligo to pursue a career in teaching. I graduated with a Bachelors of Education in Home Economics and Economics and as a teacher my passion is to better the educational experience of all students through inclusion within our education system. This passion for inclusion and support in education led me to put myself forward as a Class Representative, a part-time officer and finally President of the Students' Union in St. Angela's College.

During my final year in College I was lucky enough to be elected as the Vice-President for Welfare and Equality and voted Deputy President of STACS SU. Although, this was a part time position I was an active officer in the union running a number of campaigns in the area of sexual health and mental health and attending a number of USI events. During my time I established the first Welfare Crew within the Students' Union and ensured that mental health was not only an issue for students but the College also by working with staff in regard to campaigns and training.

Student Centered
Reliable
Approachable



WHY VOTE FOR ME?

Experience:

I believe the BMW officer should be **approachable, accessible and student focused**. As a Class Representative, part-time officer and then President I had the privilege to work with a number of incredible officers and students. Supporting the students, Class Representatives, Part-time officers and sabbatical officers within the BMW region will be my main concern for the year. Having experience in a number of different and diverse positions within St. Angela's College, Sligo Students' Union I hope to support and represent the students and officers to ensure you can achieve the most from your experience in higher Education and your year as an officer.

As the sole sabbatical officer this allowed me to experience and work within every area of the union and communicate with students through a number of different mediums. I witnessed the importance of a supported Class Representative structure and the influence Class Representatives have within their classes, the College community and the wider National student movement. Through engaging Class Representatives with local and national issues and ensuring the voice of Class Representatives is heard loudly we can ensure that the student voice is strong and at the front of change.

Part-time officers:

Having experience as a part-time officer and working closely with the fantastic team of part-time officers in STACS SU, I acknowledge the immense role undertaken by part-time officers and the desire for change and support which led to them running for election. Student led unions with a strong part-time officer voice allow for greater development and change within our organisations. I will work with each union to best facilitate part-time officer training and support the diverse needs of each union. I will aim to support where possible part-time officers during their events and campaigns.



SUPPORT



Through my experience to date I have had the opportunity to work in a number of diverse areas which can support a number of diverse students and officers.

Class Representatives

Regular contact with Class Reps will be achieved through attendance at Class Representatives Councils/Senate. This will allow USI to gain a sense for the issues being experienced on the ground.

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Sabbatical officers

Each MO has different structures and roles and this must be reflected in the support provided by USI.

As President of STACS SU interacting with the student body and aiding in resolving their problems is a large amount of my work. I have experience in dealing with a number of welfare and educational issues which allows me to support both education and welfare officers within the BMW region along with members of officerboard. I am acutely aware that dealing with these issues can be emotionally demanding for officers and I aim to help support these officers along with the relevant Vice Presidents from officerboard. With my experience to date I feel I would provide a wide variety of advice for each officer within the BMW MO's



ENGAGEMENT

Regular engagement

As a regional officer if elected I want to engage regularly with students through rolling out USI campaigns, voter registration drives and supporting campaigns run by Students' Union officers.

Campus Presence

A strong campus presence will allow for students to see the value in their membership of USI including a presence on satellite campuses. Attending class representative councils regularly to ensure the projects and campaigns of USI are communicated to students and also gaining a sense for the issues experienced by students on the ground.

Training

Attending MO training to outline the role of USI and plan for the academic year ahead early in semester one will be a priority.

Part-time officer training

Organising regional based PTO training in consultation with MO's will ensure the training is meeting the diverse needs within each MO.

Communication

Clear and regular communication between USI and MO's is important for the growth of the organisation. Therefore, I will aim to send weekly/bi-weekly updates to executive teams to ensure they are fully briefed on the work USI officerboard are undertaking on their behalf.

I will aim to produce content which can be forwarded to students therefore making them aware of their national union and the role they play in representing them on a national level. Regular communication with officers from each MO is vital in ensuring USI is best supporting each individual union catering for their individual needs.

Regular interactions with students through bi-weekly social media addresses to outline the projects officerboard are working on to all USI members.



PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION



With the under-funding of Higher Education Institutions coming to the fore through the #SaveOurSpark and #FundOurFuture campaigns, continued movement towards publicly funded education and greater financial support for higher education will be the focus for USI.



With a 363% increase in the student contribution charge from 2007 to 2014, students are feeling the pressure now more than ever. Combined with an increased cost of living and ever increasing accommodation costs students are being priced out of education.



We must ensure students on the ground are aware of the impact this under-funding is having on them, whether that be greater pressure on College services, increased class sizes or pressure on library services. We need to ensure each student in higher education is aware of the implications for them.

I will work on a regional level with MO's to best support them in their actions. Regionally, in lobbying local TD's in the BMW region and nationally along with USI officerboard ensuring the student voice plays an important role nationally.



ACCOMMODATION

Working with MO's to ascertain how to best outline the need for investment in accommodation and the introduction of rent caps on student accommodation is important. Throughout the country the impact of the accommodation crisis can be felt differently, therefore each MO will require a different angle in which to outline the crisis to their students.



The importance of Students' Unions can be seen from the results of NUIG SU's "Cuirt Shakedown", DCU SU's "Shanowen Shakedown", With UCC SU, NUIG SU & GMIT SU's focus on the rental price increase for student accommodation vocally highlighting the impact of a lack of rent caps on student accommodation.



With this year's #RaisetheRoof campaign the student voice was loud and clear in regard to accommodation.

With legislation in regard to rent caps slow to progress through Oireachtas, we need to keep pressure on the Government to ensure this is passed through.



I will work with each MO to ascertain the best means by which to roll out campaigns and support them in their fight for adequate accommodation.

CAMPAIGNS



Local campaigns

Through regular communication with officers I hope to support MO campaigns where possible from the initial planning up to the execution of the campaigns and events.

National Campaigns

With limited resources not every MO can have the opportunity to facilitate USI roadshows. I will work with members of officerboard to roll out these campaigns on campus to ensure each MO is supported in rolling out national campaigns through means suitable to them.

Regional campaigns

Due to restraints within the BMW regions often many MO's experience similar issues. Regional campaigns with local MO's or as a region to gain greater support and attention from authorities to resolves these issues. Regular BMW meetings will allow USI and MO's isolate where larger scale actions could be utilised within the region through means most suitable to individual campuses and inclusive of MO's with multiple campuses.

Regional Mental Health

Students at third level often experience their first symptoms during this time. Research on students during the 2016/2017 academic year found a rise of 46% in the number of students registering with mental health condition. (AHEAD, 2017) Therefore focusing on promoting conversation and awareness during this period is important.

I have recently become involved with Sligo Darkness Into Light group and elected as the volunteer co-ordinator for this years event.

I will support officers to lobby for adequate mental health supports on campus and locally.

I will work with officerboard members to ensure the BMW region is not forgotten during national discussions.



CAMPAIGNS



Student Teachers Campaign

As a newly qualified teacher I am acutely aware of the struggles of student teachers. Having completed five unpaid placements over four years I am aware of the pressure faced by student teachers and the subsequent inequality when they graduate. Working with officerboard members I will support student teachers and work on the findings from USI's Student Teacher Placement Report, which outlined the shocking impact placement has on student teachers which I presented to the ASTI's Education committee and attended a Teaching Council Consultation in relation to school placement earlier this year



Placements

With the work to date in regard to the Pharmacy students campaign and student nurses in previous years, I will work with officerboard, MO's and trade unions to ensure the momentum gained to date remains and the student voice is heard.



Gaeltacht Fees Campaign

I will continue the great efforts from this years officerboard in regard to re-instating the Gaeltacht grant for student teachers. This mandatory placement is making access to the teaching profession elitist and inaccessible.



Mergers

The landscape of higher education is changing dramatically at present with the progression of Technological Universities and mergers of smaller Colleges.

Experience

At present St. Angela's College are incorporating into NUI Galway and this has been a focus of my work this year. Through my experience I would be able to support the Connacht-Ulster Alliance and NUIG and STACS in their incorporation progression and ensure the student voice is at the fore of all negotiations.



Brexit

The impact of Brexit at present is uncertain and will massively impact those living on the border and students traveling through the border. I will work with NUS-USI, USI officerboard and MO's to best support them during this transition.



Thank you for reading my manifesto and I would be delighted to hear from you.



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Marie