Minutes

USI Hustings Emergency CRC
Date: 31-03-2021
Venue: Online via Zoom
Time: 17:30

1. Candidates for Vice-President for the Dublin Region

Caelainn Kerrigan (NCAD SU)
Caelainn started her time in the SU five years ago. Caelainn was class rep for three years, a part-time officer for students with disabilities and the VP of the SU. Plans to work with officers across the region to alleviate pressure in any way possible. She wants to hold monthly briefings for officers to offer support and to work with the exec team to run more events where officers can network.

Caomhie O’Carroll (DCU SU)
Caomhie was an active class rep and also humanities and social sciences rep. Caomhie is running her manifesto on three pillars: To revive the student life in Dublin, to facilitate USI’s operation as a network and to mobilise the students of Dublin. This includes a standardisation of services on campus and keeping Zoom capture for those with commitments.

Question 1: How has your experience working with the Student Unions in your respective colleges qualified you for this role liaising with SUs around Dublin?

Caomhie: Class rep and faculty rep and would have worked with USI. This has given her a broad sense of how SUs work.

Caelainn: The small union and lack of support has given her experience with issues across the board.

Question 2: Once campuses reopen and students need to travel for in-person teaching, how will you use your position on the USI executive to ensure the best possible experience for commuter students from the Dublin area and beyond?

Caelainn: This is a point in her manifesto. Aims to tackle the issue of travel costs and ultimately abolish transport costs.

Caomhie: Aims to tackle the issue of what students can do once they get to campus if they are far from home - A commuter hub where people can hang out.
2. **Candidates for Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge**

**Muireann Nic Corcáin (TCD SU)**
Muireann has just finished an internship in developing a representing diversity training programme with NStep. Muireann wants to increase accessibility of the Irish language through: inclusivity, accountability, language rights and supporting campaigns in the North. Muireann wants to break down barriers and create opportunities for the Irish language.

**Grian Ní Dhaimhín (QUB SU)**
Grian could not attend. Students are encouraged to look up Grian’s policies and manifesto.

3. **Candidates for Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship**

**Bukky Adebowale (MSU)**
Bukky is the current VP for student life that has helped her learn about the different roles and the impact of student voices in areas such as equality and citizenship. Wants to ensure direct and collective action to influence SU action on a national level. Her manifesto aims to bring students into the world of activism in areas such as healthcare, academic equality and discrimination.

**Luke Daly (TUD SU)**
Luke aims to tackle issues such as the CETA agreement and political engagement. Luke wants to solve the problems regarding student nurses, teachers and students. This will be achieved through local action once officers can receive training to take on their local representatives. Aims to implement a model on political engagement coupled with a zero-covid push in Ireland and address issues such as non-binary recognition.

**Question 1:** What ideas do you have to continue to champion students living in direct provision and ensure deportation orders are not issued to asylum seekers in third level education?

**Luke:** Campaign against integration centres, direct provision and CETA. Lobbying for the immediate right to work.

**Bukky:** Issues regarding direct provision need to be tackled. The financial barriers and resources need to be actioned on.

**Question 2:** How will you work with member organisations to ensure a greater number of students from minority groups who have previously been underrepresented in SU elections and on sabbatical teams around the country?

**Bukky:** Student voices need to be heard. Tackling issues such as racism that minority groups face.
Luke: Developing platforms. Put students on the USI boards who are disadvantaged and make them activism camps.

4. Candidates for Vice-President for Welfare
Somhairle Brennan (IADT SU)
Somhairle is the current president of IADT SU and has been class rep and union officer. Aims to be a constant support for all union officers through regular one-on-ones and training sessions. Drug harm reduction is a key area Somhairle aims to tackle by providing information resources to all. These include addictions such as gambling and alcohol. Other areas include student renter rights and susi grant.

Question 1: How will you work to promote student rights in the workplace and to communicate with member organisations regarding the relationship between USI and SIPTU that many SU officers may not be aware of?

Somhairle: Working with member organisations directly to see what the processes are as a generalised system won’t work.

Question 2: What are your plans in the USI to tackle shocking level of sexual abuse amongst students and specifically image-based sexual abuse?

Somhairle: The USI needs to create an information piece and campaign but also work with the colleges individually for students to know the support available.

5. Candidate for Vice-President for Campaigns
Beth O’Reilly (UCC SU)
Beth is the first commercial fundraising officer in the UCC SU. She has spent the past year advocating for UCC students and students across the Southern region through her work on the USI Campaign Strategy Committee. She has experience working on campaign rollout and education for all campaign actions. Beth recognises the major changes in campaigning and activism this past year and student engagement by revamping USI communications is one of her main focuses.

Question 1: How will campaigns be run if they’re online and how will you be sure that these are both engaging and impactful?

Beth: The USI committee should be there supporting sabbatical teams with their local issues and campaigns.

6. Candidates for Vice-President for Academic Life
Eimear Curtin (UCC SU)
Eimear is the education officer and vice president of the UCC SU. Over the past year, Eimear has worked for student issues such as the library being open 7 days a week and being able to resit exams that students have passed. She carried out a student survey on online learning and published a national report on the results. Staff training is now being carried out in UCC due to the report. Eimear wants to reach out to officers and class reps to tackle issues specific to them.
Megan O’Connor (TCD SU)
Megan is the education officer and deputy president of the TCD SU. Megan has been a class rep and a part-time officer for off-campus students. She is passionate about protesting for student-nurse rights, and is a nursing graduate herself. She has worked on creating better work placements, accommodation databases and fighting for financial assistance for placement students. This past year, she has worked on improving online assessments, run faculty surveys and implemented a fully-online voting system.

Question 1: What are your plans regarding students having to pay fees while they’re on INTRA or placement etc.?

Megan: Regulation regarding these placements must be implemented and the whole system must be changed as this is unpaid labour.

Eimear: Students should not pay fees and the Education for All Campaign must continue. Campaigns should be run recognising student work.

Question 2: How do you intend to work with the VP for Postgrad Affairs to tackle PhD students doing massive amounts of teaching as part of scholarships without proper worker benefits or proper monetary compensation?

Eimear: They are not getting the benefits of students nor staff and should be getting staff benefits when carrying out duties such as online class preparation.

Megan: The part time position as postgrad officer should be a full time position. Lobbying for taxable pay needs to continue so that they may apply for schemes and assistance.

Question 3: With vaccinations happening, restrictions hopefully easing soon, how will you ensure better accommodations made for students regarding assessments, remote learning and no detriment policies are kept and strengthened if you are elected?

Megan: Universities need to be made aware of the lack of access to resources available to students over the past year.

Eimear: Services such as lecture recording need to continue to be made available, especially for students who may not feel safe returning to campus.

7. Candidate for President
Claire Austick (USI Exec)
Claire has the knowledge, experience and determination to fight for students. She has been a class rep, a part-time welfare officer and VP for welfare and equality as well as president of the NUI Galway SU. This past year, Claire has been the USI VP for welfare. She acknowledges that Irish students are paying the highest fees in Europe and students cannot get access to support services, working and living in expensive substandard housing.

Question 1: What will you do to support student nurses for the coming year?

Claire: They must be paid as they are working crazy hours, frontline in a global pandemic.
Question 2: How will you ensure that students in every college, including DCU, will feel like they’re members of USI and address the feeling of disillusion with USI?

Claire: Communication and engagement is the most important thing. This begins with students knowing what USI is and what the benefits are.

Question 3: How will you use your role to ensure USI maintains a good relationship with the student movement in other countries and student activists around the world?

Claire: USI is a member of ESU, so that network can be used to tackle academic and social issues.

On that note, USI Hustings Emergency CRC was adjourned.