**Student Council Report**

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Position: President  
Date of Council: 24/03/21

Please find below a summary of the 5 main projects I have been working on since the last meeting of Student Council.

1. **SPEED MEET – THE ICEBREAKER**

   Speed Meet, brings the students together on a social video-calling platform to spend some time together and increase the sense of belonging in the University.

   **Explanation:**

   Pandemic affected the living and well-being of every individual in the entire world. Due to lockdown, social distancing and several measures taken to curb the spread of COVID-19, loneliness has become the new normal which is subjecting individuals to other health issues. To satisfy the need for connection and sense of belonging, Speed Meet- The Icebreaker project brings everyone together on a social platform to get to know about each other and make acquaintances with those who have similar likes and dislikes. This is one of the ways to combat loneliness and the challenge the distance pandemic has created between us all.

   **Current status** – Combating the distance has become a great challenge these days with repeated lock-down and restrictions by the government to limit the spread of COVID-19 Pandemic. We launched the SPEED MEET project to let the students experience the lost connectedness. We organised three Speed-Meet session from SU, A large number of students have attended the session. We received positive responses from the students who participated. Upon several requests received from students, we plan to take it further from here. With an aim to create a benchmark on promoting mental well-being of the students during a pandemic, Thereafter, we have planned to organise Speed-Meet sessions in respective individual schools of the University of Hertfordshire. The SPEED MEET sessions are on-going successfully.

2. **SAFEGUARDING STUDENT RIGHTS**

   International students are entitled to work for part-time during the term and full-time during vacation. Most of the students miss the opportunity to work full-time due to certain requirements.

   **Evidence:** The requirement to aid the students in their part-time and full-time employability is brought to the notice of Quintin Mckellar, Vice-Chancellor, UH, Julie Kelly and Karen Omisore, from the Department of Academic Registry, UH.

   **Explanation:**
International students are missing the opportunity to utilise their permit issued by UKVI to work full time during holidays, as they are required to present a letter from the University confirming the enrolment of the student and the university term calendar. Based on the feedback I received from the students, many queries requesting such letters were not answered or delayed. Outcome of which was lost opportunities despite the rights. I explained the Vice-Chancellor regarding the situation, and I was supported in this regard. I received a disappointing response from the Department of Academic Registry, UH, as they stated that this is not a standard practice across the sector. During another meeting session with Academic Registry, UH, I, humbly explained the intricate details of not having such letters on time and its impact on students. I, then received positive response from the Academic Registry team.

**Current status** – I proudly announce that the University of Hertfordshire will, from now on, provide the letters confirming the enrolment of the students with an access to the link to the academic calendar in the letter provided. This will serve the said purpose for the students’ hassle-free experience.

Representing the voice of the students, I prioritise growth and development of the students. Student Union, UH, values the feedback and works above and beyond for the welfare of its students.

3. **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT**

- **Financial Support during Crisis:**

It is unfortunate that the circumstances are unpredictable day after day. The period of uncertainty is escalating the panic among students. The crisis remains and it is worsening. We are currently living through Lockdown - 3.0. It is unknown as to when the restrictive measures to limit the spread will be lifted. The queries regarding how the university could help students during such unprecedented times are increasing in number. From the last student council, I continued lobbying this issue with Quintin Mckellar, the Vice-Chancellor of the UH. Due to persistent circumstances, the hon’ble government of the U.K has announced hardship funds to the students who were impacted immeasurably. Taking International Students into consideration criteria along with home students has become ray of hope to those international students with terrible times due to financial constraints. I am happy to confirm that, considering various issues faced by students so far, the University did its best in distributing the funds, prioritising the needs of those with extreme crisis.

- **Improvising Language skills with Language workshops:**

With regards to Language Workshops project, I continued my efforts to lobby this concern to Quintin Mckellar, the Vice- Chancellor, UH, who with much interest raised the issue in one of the CEG meetings. There is progress regarding the Language Workshops. Academic programme leaders from one of the schools have taken the initiative to build up an online resource with short videos and interactive tasks to support students. As an update from the last student council meeting, I am glad to report that the new content is created, in the form of sequence of online
email writing workshops and will be made available to students in semester B. We are also collating existing content into a meaningful series of stages of support for students, including how to tackle assignments and how to write effectively from sources (i.e., how not to plagiarise). There is will be continued support from the SU to the Centre for Academic English to promote language and skills workshops, writing consultation and online support tutorials.

- **Convenient Payment Plans:**

I appreciate the support received from the Finance team of University of Hertfordshire in providing grace periods to pay the fee so far. The present situation of lockdown persists and the country is in the process of gradual roll-out from the lockdown. But, the long-term shift from normalcy and hard hit on the economy and finances of every individual takes time to become normal. It might be different for each individual. Therefore, my lobbying for the extension of deadlines and providing the students with convenient payment plans continues. Supporting students in this aspect not only contributes to easing out their hardships but also significantly eases out the mental stress one is going through due to this situation. The Students’ Union is continuously working towards making the students’ experience better despite the loss of social connectedness.

4. **OFF-CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE**

I continued lobbying for off-campus assistance with Quintin McKellar, Vice-Chancellor, UH, as there is increased burden on students due the huge upfront demands of the land-lord if the student is opting for off-campus accommodation. The situation mandates the emergent assistance in providing a customer-friendly guarantor company which assures the provision of guarantor that is required to obtain off-campus accommodation with which the student can waive such huge upfront rental deposits. Keeping this in the view, I have taken the initiative to recommend the trust-worthy guarantor company to the UH. There is a positive response from the Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Students UH. Awaiting documentation approval and implementation.

5. **PLAGIARISM AND MISCONDUCT AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

University education provides substantive benefits of interpersonal skills development and inculcates innovative learning.

**Evidence:** I have discussed the intention of Plagiarism and Misconduct Awareness Campaign with Tasha Crump, Campaigns and Policy Advisor and Stephanie Keegan, Acting Advice and Support Centre Manager. This campaign will be collaborated with Muhammad Saad Raees, Vice-President Education.

**Explanation:**

The right awareness helps the student to avoid plagiarism and misconduct in their learning requirements. Being aware of do’s and dont’s not only prevents such cases but also improves the
performance and confidence of the student. The initiative aims to reduce the number of emails and inquiries the students send with regards to misconduct cases and helping students avoid such situations.

**Current status** – Initial discussions and Planning stage.

Further information about the work I do can be found here: [https://hertfordshire.su/your-say/electedofficers/president/](https://hertfordshire.su/your-say/electedofficers/president/)

And further information on Student Council can be found here: [https://hertfordshire.su/your-say/student-council/](https://hertfordshire.su/your-say/student-council/)

Thank you for reading!

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President