Student Council Report

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Position: Vice-President Community
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Please find below a summary of the 5 main projects I have been working on since taking up my role in the summer.

1. ADVOCATING FOR STUDENTS ON PLACEMENTS

One of the main areas that I am focusing on this academic year is ensuring there is adequate support for students going on placements throughout out the year.

**Evidence:** Towards the end of the last academic year the students’ union gained feedback from students across the university that highlighted that students from the school of Health & Social Work, the school of Life and Medical science, the school of education and the school of creative arts were adversely affected by the pandemic and the place that was affected the most was their placements.

**Explanation:** It was made clear from the COVID report that some of these students did not feel adequately supported through there their placements. Therefore, I have been paired with these relevant schools to work closely with their School Community Organisers (SCO) to get relevant and up to date feedback that is school specific. From this I have met with the SCO’s to discuss this section of the campaign and to go through their action plans to see where they will cross over, but also to give support to them where needed.

Working closely with the SCO’s will give them the opportunity to ensure that their issues are being represented at all levels of the university.

2. STUDENT WELLBEING

A priority of mine this year is student wellbeing and mental health, for this I am creating a tool kit for students that gives them the power to sign post themselves to the most appropriate service while ensuring that is student friendly and interactive.

**Evidence:** Over the past 6 months it has been prevalent that everyone’s mental health has been affected, this has been highlighted through research done by your student’s union and from national statistics. Following on from this we have met with partners across the university and within the union to start coming up with content and a creative way to pull all the resources together. Ensuring that the vital service have had a say and we are making the most appropriate resources for students.

**Explanation:** During start of term, we were unable to hold our usual freshers fair where new and returning students would be informed of all the services, they can utilise during their time at UH.
From this we were concerned as to how they would be informed of what would be available to them. From the creation of the tool kit students will be able to get informed on a variety of services and choose the best for this. Not only this they will be able to sign post other students to the tool kit if a student discloses something to them where appropriate.

We are creating a staff specific tool kit also, to support staff to have these conversations with students.

The creation of these tool kits will give the power to students to proactively look after their own mental health and to give staff the confidence to have these sensitive conversations.

3. SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

From my manifesto I have been working to ensure that our university is access for student with disabilities whether they are visible or invisible.

**Evidence:** Last year I noticed that there were several areas around both campuses that were not accessible for students with physical disabilities and aimed to these areas assessed and fixed. Prior to my start date some work was done onsite to ensure this. However, there is more to be done. Therefore, I have started to research into how over universities advocate and champion for their students with disabilities. From this research as union we have decided to create a disabled students’ network and to lobby the university to do an accessibility audit.

**Explanation:** The creation of the network will give us more of an understanding of the needs of students with disabilities, while also empowering and assisting lead campaigns. From the grass research I have with student on campus it was clear that there was a need addition support for student with disabilities and from this I successfully lobbied for introduction of the mask exemption scheme at the university and continue to work on the improvement of communication around this topic to both student and staff.

The creation of this network and research is a keyway to for the voices of students with disabilities to be heard and is a way for students’ union to identify specific issues. Ensuring that work the union does is representative of our diverse community at Herts.

4. QUARANTINE SUPPORT

With the rapidly change circumstance and the uncertainty of the pandemic, I wanted to ensure that there would be sufficient support for student for start of term if they needed to do a period of quarantine while at university.

**Evidence:** On the lead up to start of term, we wanted the ensure there would be adequate support for students that would have to do a period of quarantine. From this I felt that I needed find out what the university was doing to support students. With having a great number of students from outside of the UK that will need to do a 14-day quarantine due to the pandemic, it was vital that there were vital supplies available to students during this time.
Explanation: During this time found that initially the food boxes that were being advertised were concerning, after commissioning a nutritional analysis by a community dietitian ours concerns were confirmed. This analysis successfully supported our cause and let do the introduction of not only more food to the packs, but they are now nutritionally more substantial for the same price.

Having a sufficient food supply for the 14 days quarantine will reduce the likelihood of students leaving their accommodation. This work has made sure that this in place for any student living in halls of residence that may need to self-isolate.

5. STUDY / COMMUNAL SPACES

A key point for me this year has been the ability for students to come together spaces to socialise and study together.

Evidence: I have had to approach this very carefully this year in line with government guidance. With this I have lobbied that university to ensure that study spaces have been open available for students and ensured that group study areas are still available but in a social distanced way. While also lobbying to keep the seating areas in the café areas open for students to socialise in small groups in line with guidance. From this lobbying has led to the redevelopment of some of the outdoor spaces like community garden on De Haviland campus.

Explanation: These areas are a vital part of student life here at Herts, students are going to spending time isolated in the rooms because of the blended learning environment. However, having these spaces give students opportunities to socialise with one another during these difficult times.

Ensuring that these are open will give keep up the development of the community at Herts that has been difficult to maintain.

Further information about the work I do can be found here: https://hertfordshire.su/your-say/electedofficers/vice-president-community/

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

Thank you for reading!

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