

February Student Council Report – Vice President Community & Welfare

Accommodation:

This term I have done a lot of work around accommodation; this has focused around the rent setting report. We got 411 responses (over 10% of the halls population) to the survey, and I compiled this into a report within 36 hours prior the rent setting bard. This report had 11 recommendations that the university are now looking at. I have a meeting to follow this up with the director of facilities soon. These recommendations come directly from student feedback and focused on:

- Quality of halls
- Investment into the village, Carroll Court, Glenside and The Hollies
- Overall price and value for money
- Cost of washing machines being too high
- Asking for a bus pass and/or gym membership to be included in rent
- More receptions to be open during the day

A copy of the report 'UWE Bristol Rent price survey findings 2016-17: "the cost is too damm high"' can be found on The Students' Union Website. The findings have also been shared with the university directorate, as well as accommodation services itself.

Alongside this, following previous feedback, we now have secured a take away delivery point by S Block, so students from Wallscourt Park do not have to walk as far, as well as wi fi in the laundry rooms on campus.

Mental Health & Wellbeing:

One of the major things I have been working on the past few months is lobbying the university to replace the £20,000 that they diverted from the Wellbeing budget (to use for a trail for online counselling). This issue took a long time to resolve, but eventually we were able to get them to replace the £20,000, whilst also keeping the money for the trail they would like to run.

I am also in discussions with the university about running a Nightline, they have agreed to run a trail of the service which is great. There is still a fair amount of work to be done about writing up agreements, and contracts, and knowing exactly how the service will run. We are in a much better place than 7 months ago though, as the university are now clearly admitting that they need additional support for their students out of hours.

University Mental Health Day is coming up, I will be running a planning session on 22nd February and will update council on what is decided at the meeting. I am hoping the day will follow on from the success of World Mental Health Day in October last year!

SHAG Week:

Something that has taken up huge amount of my time these past few weeks is sexual health awareness and guidance week.

During the week we raised money for Terrance Higgins Trust, ran a HIV fast test clinic on Frenchay, got our 13 of sports teams to compete in the Chlamydia Test Drive (this is over a quarter of them), ran a roadshow on Glenside, Bower, and Frenchay as well as having events happening at Gloucester. Olivia, Jamie, and Serena also supported through running TIGER training (teaching individuals gender equality and respect). We had a round in the quiz talking about sexual health, and a Blind Date night at Glenside. We also worked with Debating Society to run a debate around whether porn objectifies

women, the discussions were interesting – thank you Debating Society. The week was hectic, but rewarding!

International Students:

I have been mandated to work on lobbying the university to act as a guarantor for its students. This issue disproportionately affects international students, but also care leavers and estranged students. The university have now set up a working group on this issue, which I sit on. We will be presenting a business case to the university in due course to ask them to act as a guarantor.

I also sit on a group looking at improving communications with international student's pre arrival. There is scope for videos to be made for student's pre arrival giving key information about UWE, such as what to do when they arrive etc.

#UWESaysRelax:

Jamie and I have been working on our exam stress campaign: #UWESaysRelax. During the January exams, with the help of Olivia as well we handed out bananas to students and encouraged them to take a break from revision, to make sure they are looking after themselves. We are now in the process of contacting companies asking them to donate products and vouchers for care packages for students during our next assessment and exam period.

Course Costs:

After our win on graduation course costs (getting a £20 price cut per guest ticket!), Jamie and myself wanted to run more campaigns around course costs. We ran a session at Student Rep Committee to gather feedback around what additional course costs there are, and we are now looking at how we can lobby the university to take the brunt of some of these costs.

Jamie, and I have also worked with Beth, the Glenside Campus officer to support the Bursary or Bust campaign. This campaign looks at the removal of nurses bursaries, and what we can now do to get the university to support their healthcare students more, as well as taking the campaign to a national level to ask the government to reverse the decision.

DSA:

Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) funding has changed in recent years, universities now how to front the cost of a lot of it. This has meant that some of the services have been changed, and there will be a budget deficit. I have been working with Nikki the Disables Students' Officer to lobby the university to ensure this support remains for our disabled students. We will be running focus groups in the next month to talk to students about the changes, and gather their feedback about the service. We can then present this to the university, and ask for improvements, and increased funding.

If you have any questions that weren't answered at Student Council, or would like to get involved in anything I am doing please email me at vpcommwelfare@uwe.ac.uk or you can pop into the office at Frenchay.