

Name: Aoife Meagher

Position Contested: VP Welfare & Equality City Campus.

My name is Aoife Meagher, I'm a Commercial Modern Music graduate and I'm re-running to be your VP Welfare and Equality in the City campus.

I've been heavily involved in the students union for the past 5 years, being a school rep twice, class rep once and a part time officer and most importantly, a full time officer for the past year. It's been an absolutely amazing experience being your Welfare and Equality Officer this year. I have a lot more knowledge about representative structures in the Students Union but also TU Dublin itself. This knowledge and the relationships I've built have become invaluable and I want to continue to work closely with TU Dublin to get what students want. I know I'm ready for another year in this position as I feel I still have so much more to give to the students of TU Dublin.

Engagement

The student experience of college has been varied in the past few years and I've been advocating and trying to empower students throughout. I plan on doing more on the ground work next year if elected to continue this work and to encourage more students to get involved. How I plan on doing this is by utilizing part time officers and doing more stands and small events on campus. We can and need to hear more from students on a very regular basis, something which can be lacking at times at the moment.

I believe our social media is a very powerful tool, however it is under utilized. I have plans to make more content to get officers' faces out there, interact with students on the ground and have content which we can use to lobby TU Dublin on issues such as facilities. This plan could include video diaries of officers, podcasts and interviews with students. A lot of students don't know what officers do as part of their job, so this will make us more visible and keep everyone more informed than simply posting event posters.

The past year I have spent as an officer has been great, but I even found myself feeling disconnected from students. These plans will hopefully reconnect students to their union and so officers can know what students want and more actions can be taken from these interactions.

I also want to review all welfare campaigns that took place in the last year to see what worked and what didn't. In some cases, week long campaigns could be less beneficial than regular smaller campaigns. Having campaigns more regularly could increase our engagement with students as they would be involved constantly, rather than the rarity it is right now.

Welfare

I want to reinstate and actively recruit a Welfare Crew next year, the welfare crew had been abandoned over the past few years due to COVID which made running events a lot more difficult. I want to not only have more help setting up events and generating ideas, but I want to empower students to get involved, as the welfare crew was how I got involved in the Students Union in the first place.

This year I was able to work a lot in the area of welfare specifically by taking the lead on SHAG week which included 3 sold out evening events, stands on each campus and small events on campus. This format seemed to work best as we got many different students interacting with the events and had so much positive feedback.

Sexual health is definitely something I'm very passionate about and want to work more closely with the medical centre to inform students on as many aspects of this topic as possible.

There are many aspects of sexual health that students need to be aware of, especially those who are also in the LGBTQ community. I want to help continue the work of the union by working with the health service in TU Dublin about providing PREP and Rapid HIV Testing alongside USI. I aim to expand our SHAG week, further as it was such a success this year.

Consent is also an incredibly important area of work within this area and I want to promote the consent classes put on by TU Dublin and offer training throughout the year as uptake in these classes in semester 1 was quite poor. I want to plan more events in which we speak on consent as it should always be in the forefront of any campaign, not just sexual health campaigns.

Mental Health

Access to Mental Health services is still poor, with very long waiting lists in the counselling service in TU Dublin. At some stages this year the Tallaght campus had no counsellor which I had to lobby the counselling service to inform students of, and to urge them to come up with solutions in the short term while they were still in the hiring process. More solutions need to be found to improve this service so I plan to sit down with the counselling service during the summer to make changes for students next year.

I hope to run smaller and more regular mental health focused events and campaigns, as Mental Health should definitely be talked about more often and ties into what I stated earlier about more regular short campaigns.

I want to focus on positive mental health so building campaigns to help cope with mental health. I would like to run events such as fun exercise classes (for beginners) such as ZUMBA and yoga with the sports office, coping skills workshops, book clubs and such so that students have more opportunity to interact with each other outside of classes. I want to link up with the USI about running training for students such as boundary training and mental health first aid training so students can learn how to support their friends more, but also get accreditation in those areas.

Equality

- **LGBTQ Rights-** Myself and previous welfare officers have worked incredibly hard to get gender neutral bathrooms on campus. My deputy president and myself launched a campaign to get students to send their concerns to us to bring forward to TU Dublin Equality Diversity and Inclusion group. Short term and long term solutions to this issue were discussed and I will continue to lobby TU Dublin until these bathrooms are put in place on campus and not forgotten about when they are building the rest of Grangegorman. I have also brought a motion to USI National Congress for them to raise awareness and lobby relevant ministers to introduce funding for all Higher Education Institutes to have a TFund. However, until funding from the government is considered, I plan to continue to lobby EDI for funding in the interim as it is a vital service for our trans students.

- **International Student Rights-** We need to continue to lobby on behalf of international students on campus who are being treated as if they are cash cows for the university. Fees for international students are extortionate and are rising, some courses even raising the fees for international students this year. We need students to be aware of this issue so all students can work together to alleviate some of the costs for them to study here.
- **Students with Disabilities-** I will continue to run campaigns similar to the previous VPs to show students how to access the PC1 forms. I want to work more closely with the Disability service in TU Dublin to find out what students want and need. I've also organized an accessibility audit across campuses to see how accessible the campus is to lobby for changes to ensure students can attend college.
- **Sustainability-** Sustainability is a big passion of mine and I have a lot of ideas of how we can improve sustainability on campus. First of all, I want to work with Green Campus to make sure there is an investigation done about recycling contamination on campus, if there is still a high level of contamination, I will run a campaign to educate about how to recycle. I will also continue to lobby for more bins on the Grangegorman campus as there has still been no improvement in this area.
- **Period Poverty-** I've worked alongside the welfare team to create a proposal for EDI to get funding for period product dispensers to be put in all bathrooms on campus. I want to ensure these are in place next year and will create a distribution plan so campuses don't run out.

I have so many more ideas, so if there is something missing from my manifesto that you would like to discuss then feel free to contact me!

Remember to vote Aoife Meagher #1 for Welfare & Equality on the 29th and 30th and 31st of March!