

**Trinity College Dublin Students Union// Aontas na Mac Léinn
Choláiste na Tríonóide
Union Forum// Fóram an Aontais**

8th February 18.00-20.00

Chair//Cathaoirleach: President // Uachtarán
Secretary//Rúnaí: Education Officer //

Present: President, Education Officer, Welfare Officer, Comms Officer, Ents Officer, Environmental Officer, Access Officer, LGBTRO, STEM Convenor, Secretary, Disability Officer, Chair of Council, JCR President, Citizenship Officer, Mature Students Officer, VFC, O

Apologies: Gender Equality Officer, International Officer, AHSS Convenor

Matters Arising//Ceisteanna ón gCruinniú Deireanach

Items for Noting// Míreanna le Tabhairt faoi Deara

- Diversity In STEM Minutes
- Constitutional Review Working Group Minutes

Approval of Previous Minutes //Dearbhú na Miontuairiscí

- UF#6 Minutes

Reports//Tuairiscí

Agenda // Clár

- Leadership Race - **Chair of the Electoral Commission**
- Provostial Elections - **President**
- Constitutional Review Update - **President**
- ATOTMXTCD - **Welfare Officer**
- Discussion on the role of VFC - **VFC**
- Diversity in STEM - **STEM Convenor**
- Nath na Coicíse - **Oifigeach na Gaeilge,**

AOB //

- Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Presentation

****Rachel Hester and Derina Johnson joined the call for this discussion item****

Derina (Project Manager) discussed the issues with IT limitations, diversity in reading lists.

Rachel explains their main goals and the cross college involvement.

Student partners are to be identified and recruited based on the nine grounds of equality. She asked Union Forum for their advice on how best to recruit these students as those who are disengaged are likely those who need representation the most.

The Welfare Officer spoke to the issue of having to conform to a curriculum and the power of the hidden curriculum. So many students have overcome various barriers to Notes Societies will be a good way of engaging with particular student groups.

Derina speaks to the social and emotional transition to the college community The Mature student officer noted that many of the cohort of students they represent have encountered difficulty. Derine notes there may be many other hidden, intersectional circumstances which can serve as a barrier

Mature student officer notes that the curriculum is too inflexible. Tells of a story where a friend experienced a bereavement and had to miss an exam, sat the assessment in the supplemental session but was unsuccessful. The college did not permit the student a second chance in the same way everyone should.

Rachel echoes the Mature student officers point and notes things such as the high costs of field trips serves as a barrier to education.

The OCO notes they accessed Trinity through TAP and notes that the HEAR orientation shows you everything you could possibly need but often the rest of students are not offered the same opportunity to engage with supports.

Education officer suggests setting up an email chain with the TIC team to gain further feedback. Derina reinforced the fact that this is a multiyear project and welcomes input.

Matters Arising//Ceisteanna ón gCruinniú Deireanach

- None

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- UF#6 - Approved.

Reports//Tuairiscí

President

- Student spaces are ongoing
- HIV rapid testing is moving forward.
- Petition on the environment for Provost elections is going around.

UF is tight on time and decides to skip the rest of the reports.

Agenda // Clár

- Leadership Race - **Chair of the Electoral Commission**
- Nominations are now open until next Monday 15th. Please support the Campaign and encourage people to register!

- Provostial Elections - **President**

SU Hustings will be on the 29th of March from 19.00-20.30

Will be chaired by the President

Submissions to be part of the interview panel are open to all and all personal information will be redacted. Looking to do something with Women's week given the fact that there are 3 female candidates.

- Constitutional Review Update - **President**

CRWG has now met twice and is going well. Aiming to meet one a week for an hour. Provisional deadline for the report is March 22nd which will then give us three weeks. Secretary said that UF is meant to receive the draft minutes and will get it to them as soon as possible. President notes there is great work going on. Secretary notes that it is part of the TOR that we must consult with the relevant PTO's when discussing their roles. President notes we are amending the TOR review dates.

- ATOTMXTCD - **Welfare Officer**

Enactus got in touch about launching 'Any time of the month' regarding alleviating period poverty in third level education.

We have further funding thanks to the gender equality officers' work.

The welfare officer is bringing it to UF as we mainly represent the students who are There is a meeting this coming Thursday at 6pm and would be very grateful if members of UF could join and shared the link to register in the chat.

- Discussion on the role of VFC - **VFC**

The VFC notes the constitutional difficulty with the fact that the position doesn't actually exist? Notes the STEM convenors guidance with his involvement with VDP has been helpful. The STEM convenor notes that the Volunteer Forum Coordinator was an individual who worked with

all of the charity societies. The VF at some point, didn't exist any more and for at least the four years we have been electing a VFC, when the VF does not exist and their role is very important and should be better defined. The VFC notes they are not elected by the Volunteer societies and that contributes to poor engagement. The Education Officer notes the importance of the VFC and queries would there have to be CSC involvement.

The secretary noted that the role is important

STEM convenor notes that the amount of Charity Societies in the college and it likely became too much to handle for one person and untenable for those to coordinate. Asks the current VFC The VFC feels that due to them being elected by SU Council, they have no authority to speak on behalf of the volunteers and societies. There is a lack of connection between the two places. STEM convenor proposes that rather than the VFC being chair of this body, it facilitates the charity whereby the VFC is the SU liaison officer with charities.

VFC notes that Ents also has a 'Charity Liaison' officer also which contributes to further issues and overlap. The Welfare and Equality officer talks about Civic Engagement and its importance and recommends getting in touch with the Disability officer about how they work with the Ability Co-Op. STEM convenor notes that the Ents Charity Liaison officer and VFC have huge overlap. The Education Officer asks Union Forum if we want a SU specific role or a Society Charity Liaison role as if so, we will likely require a MOA with the CSC to be able to maintain that working relationship. President echoes hopes that an MOA with the CSC might be possible. Ents Officer requests UF to be mindful of the issues the SU may encounter with another Capitulated body long term, even with an MOA.

Comms officer notes that the weakness of the CSC constitution means that although the SU could be held to the MOA, the CSC may not and there are systemic issues with that functionality.

VFC hopes to promote volunteering within Trinity in the role, organise RAG week and support all student volunteers, not just societies. President advises the VFC to liaise with Simone Cameron-Coen in the Civic Engagement office in Trinity.

VFC notes that conversations need to be facilitated, this discussion was helpful, this needs more work and they will report back to UF.

VFC will discuss their options with the Societies and report back to Union Forum and Comms officer to bring MOA as Agenda

- Diversity in STEM - STEM Convenor

STEM convenor notes that an issue was encountered where a member of Union Forum was also an applicant but this was then later amended and the process will be changed for the future.

An apology was sent to the President for not inviting him to meetings.

Podcasts are going well, 80+ listens to date and good plans going forward. The Chair of DIS has been onto the Ass. VP for EDI regarding promoting individuals changing their name on Blackboard to include their pronouns and normalise this practice. Notes the VLE policy is up

for renewal and LGBTRO notes the current gender choices on Blackboard. President commends the work that has been done to date.

Education officer asks for clarification on the ability for students to choose their gender on blackboard and recommends the STEM convenor to contact Geoff Bradley from IT services regarding expanding or changing these options from Male/Female/Prefer not to say.

STEM convenor notes concern regarding publicising this feature, as there is the possibility of students misusing the feature and we do not want to lose access to it. You can currently change your name, title, gender etc. Hopes this can be done with the AVPEDI and get formal permission. Work needs to be done on how you can submit assignments.

The Education Officer notes the President has been working with AR on expanding training for staff. Notes students cannot graduate with a degree that doesn't have your legal name on it and there is a lot of work to be done with this.

President notes they have updated their policies to include trans and lgbt training.

The Welfare Officer notes that there is a Gender Identity and Expression Policy that many people are not familiar with. It's actually really easy for students to change their name and it can be recognised by the college, students do not need a deed poll but only since this policy came in. It's a form you can fill in and it can be on your parchment, your student card, everything but students are not aware of it. The continues to say there is a huge appetite for this in the college and now is the perfect time.

STEM convenor notes that a TA had their pronouns at the end of their name which prompted this discussion. Part of the reason why they are going through the Ass. VP for EDI's office is to hopefully encourage staff to also do this.

The President notes the importance of giving attention to these issues now as the Provostial elections are so important.

Secretary welcomes the review of the Diversity in STEM review to Union Forum and notes that every committee with the exception of DIS has not brought their minutes. Many committee do not have TOR's yet and if there

Notes if these committees are not required and are not 'on the books'

President

The Education Officer offers her thanks to the Secretary for all of his work to date this year. The Secretary has time again been left to pick up the pieces when everyone else let's things fall and sacrifices his weekend. She continues to state that it's her opinion it's not fair for such a job to be on a student due to the workload and it's important for Union Forum to note the level work he completes.

The Welfare officer notes it is a thankless job to the agreement of Union Forum.

- Nath na Coicíse - **Oifigeach na Gaeilge,**

The Oifigeach offers Union Forum the phrase Go n-éirí leat (sing) / libh (pl) which Union Forum then sings back to her in a cacophony.

AOB

- Engagement Discussion Item.

LGBTRO hates emails.

Secretary notes that the whole point of Slack was to separate SU and life. Mature Student Officer like emails - it's much easier to keep up with official communication and decisions rather than if there have been 100 messages on Slack.

STEM convenor notes that the SU is not 'elitest' and all but a few faces at UF this year are new, loves the Slack but also has the rolling issue where we can only access the last 2 weeks worth of messages. Important to keep work life balance, many members are friends and need to separate conversations.

(somebody suggested we can set up a discord) lol

Comms - 'it's very difficult to metric what engagement means' Externally, the referendum was the only thing people could see. There is no way to address the 'issue of engagement' Social media engagement is going really well. We are here if students need us, we provide a student service.

Action Point: Encourage everyone to use slack more and more official emails.

- Cummna Gaeile Campaign

OSD notes the CnG are looking to get their Gaeilge Room accessible and asked for SU support.

President notes that we are looking into getting a lift in House 6.

Comms officer

Education officer (1.35.30) notes that this is much bigger than just this one room

Halls Issues

JCR President notes that a student is bringing a discussion item to Council about Halls issues

and the Trinity News articles regarding this issue have added to concerns being raised by students.

Secretary requests if UF wants to go in Camera for this topic.

******Union Forum votes to go in Camera******

TCDSU OSD is the Disability Officer for TCDRU, they are bringing a motion council tomorrow. The individual who is pursuing the line of questioning of Halls has started to attend these meetings and tried to commandeer the conversation about rent to focus more on 'the terrible conditions in halls' and is unsure as to how tomorrow will go in relation to this.

JCR President is unsure as to what to do if this comes up at Council.

It's a fine line and in some cases students have done wrong, and meetings have been held with the Wardens and students on what they would like to see going forward but the media seems to be completely ignoring the legalities of all of this.

President notes that the newspaper is missing the mark and there are serious concerns for students' welfare at this time and they are instead giving light to the wrong things and at least tomorrow will give us an opportunity to address this.

Comms officer offers point of clarification - newspaper. Not newspapers.

JCR President is also very concerned as the Warden and Ass. Wardens are primarily there for welfare support and as a consequence of this media coverage, students are less likely to go to them for support.

Welfare officer mentions that at the town hall, students voiced concern about not knowing exactly what they could do, they wanted clarity on what fines etc. Students do not always know the difference between security and the wardens and need to know

Students can bring whatever they like to council and that is their right. Students are angry and they need a palace to vent. All we can do is field it in the best way we can.

President notes that the JCR President will have the full support of the sabbatical team.

The Education Officer notes that some students have raised concerns about this same individual 'pressuring' them as an elected rep and this is a very unfortunate situation. She spoke with the Newspaper the individual was associating themselves with and clarity was provided that this individual was not a member of their team nor associated with any investigation the paper was undertaking. If this is to continue this is something we may have to address with this individual but believes, and really hopes that this is not of malicious intent but rather misdirected energy and this individual thinks they are doing what is right.

The Education officer also noted the fact that not one member of the Sabbatical team has received an official complaint from a student in halls and is delighted to see this coming to Council as the only correspondence has been

She continued to commend the JCR President in maintaining his cool in a very difficult situation, supporting students and acting as an invaluable liaison between students and wardens in halls all while working alongside the SU. He has gone above and beyond, and should be proud of himself.

The President echoes the Education Officer's comments notes that over 25% of students in Halls have had disciplinary meetings at this point over misdemeanor or parties etc and is finding it very difficult to defend them and prevent the worst case scenario in meetings as staff are so frustrated and genuinely very concerned.

JCR President accepts thanks from Union Forum.

The Comms officer echos the comments made regarding the JCR President. He continues to note that some students are literally breaking the law, and then those who are genuinely concerned about their welfare.

It was 'fiercely evident' that the article was intentionally framed to be the worst case scenario and there's no saying that what was said in the article didn't happen, but it didn't do the situation any justice whereby so many are just trying to avoid contracting the virus. The Comms officer notes that another newspaper has not commented on this at all to date. It's so difficult as this is much bigger than just students in halls, and it is irresponsible for us to defend the students' misdemeanours who are putting others at risk but it is also very difficult to defend the Wardens actions as they are seen to be the ones so there is a power dynamic. It's our job on paper to support students, but that is very difficult to do so in such an indefensible situation. Echos the comments of the Education officers comments that we have not heard anything and the only reason we held the town hall with the JCR was because the only places we heard these concerns was in the papers and he hopes that students will speak up if they are facing issues so we can 'build action points' and if the TCDRU have heard complaints he would love to hear from them about what we can possibly do. It's currently a void, with not one single complaint filed with us, we haven't been tagged in tweets, nothing. We are here to help students and it is a welfare issue if they are not communicating with us, because then we cannot support them. The Comms officer notes the sabbatical team have been discussing this over the last two weeks and they are really at their wits end as nobody is speaking to us so we cannot take any action and he is genuinely concerned for these students.

STEM convenor appreciates the work of the JCR President and feels so bad for him. He has read the article and the comment from a student who had been fined for 'having three non-resident friends over for homemade pizza' and 'it was a first offence that didn't put any of my housemates at risk' Students are not understanding the issue at all. These disciplinary hearings are likely valid but students are not understanding the reason for them/ the larger issue. He asks Union Forum if we have a responsibility to stand up at council tomorrow when this comes up, to not stay silent but comment in support of the wardens as what they are doing is in order to protect students and these students' actions are not only putting themselves at risk, but their housemates and peers. This individual did risk their housemates health and that is

undeniable. As a Union, we have a duty of care to students and believes we need to comment on this at Council on the basis that we must protect the welfare of the student body.

President notes the importance of the language we use and not saying “we support the punishment of students” and states that the majority of students are trying their best but those who are choosing to break the rules and restrictions are endangering over 300 other students who are trying their best to stay safe which is something we must continually remind ourselves of.

The Secretary to council notes that he believes it is not his place to offer an opinion on this topic, but if people are going to comment to this issue at council it will likely be communicated to an audience ‘a bit wider than those who read the council minutes’ and it’s important to ensure it is not ‘off the cuff’

The Education Officer notes that the Sabbatical team has discussed this earlier today and will be drafting a statement to be read at Council tomorrow. Notes the need to ‘put an end to this particular line of conversation one way or another as it is so harmful to students’. Trying to find the balance between our public health obligations to be very clear and to the point on the rules, but also ensuring that we remain accessible to anyone who may genuinely be wronged. The sabbatical team will be drafting something in the morning and can share with members of UF prior to Council if they wish. One way or another, we need to end this conversation as it is so harmful to students on so many different levels and is very disappointing to see the impact a few individuals have had and the knock on consequences of that is very disheartening.

JCR President thanks everyone for their help and advice, it is much appreciated and fingers crossed for tomorrow.

President notes the JCR President has the Sabbatical officers full support and reiterates this to all members of Union Forum.

***UF votes to come out of Camera**

President offered his closing remarks and Union Forum ended at 20.17.



Signed:
Eoin Hand
SU President

Date:
7.4.21