

Date: Friday, 09 November 2018

Item: Sabbatical Report

Union Senate



Evie Reilly (VP Democracy & Creative Industries)

Twitter: @sotonvpdci

Email: vpdci@susu.org

Facebook: /suvpdci.southampton

The details in this report reflect progress made since the last meeting of Union Senate, which took place on Thursday 17 May 2018.

Minutes of previous meetings can be found on our website here:

<https://www.susu.org/representation/minutes/committees/1745>

Leading the Union	
Goal 1: Strengthening the Student Voice	We have several different mechanisms in the Union to seek out student opinion, and in my view they are underutilised. Not only this, but I think we as a Union should be more actively seeking out student opinion, and getting their views not just about issues on campus, but more broadly on issues that students face nationally; looking at issues such as Brexit. Over Freshers I ran a poll at two events, asking students if they thought there should be a people's vote on the final Brexit deal, in which 79% of responders said 'yes'. I am looking at the possibility of following this up with an all student vote on the same subject as my next step. Now that the University's new Director of Student Experience is in post, I'm keen to work with them to look more broadly at how the University takes on board student feedback, and even looks for it in the first place. This will also hopefully mean that I can soon move the progress of this section on further. We're also building on the Making Change Summit this year, incorporating You Make Change more into this process, and will continue to work with the University on its student forums.
Progress: 1	
Goal 2: Lobby the University for a commitment to creating new	As the University embarks on its ambitious 10 year building plan, I believe that this is the perfect time to get a commitment from the University to creating more space for our Performing Arts groups. Anyone involved in a society will know that currently there just isn't enough space, and performing arts in particular often need simple but specific things in order to properly rehearse.

Performing Arts space	I'm looking to try and secure purpose-built spaces but also flexible spaces, to try and decrease overcrowding and the huge demand for our current spaces. This is also something I have fed back to those involved in the recruitment for the new Vice-Chancellor, that the University needs to back up its commitment to the arts with spaces for students within this, and that the new VC should be committed to growing the arts at Southampton.
Progress: 0	<p>Securing this space is not something that I have yet been able to work on much. I had <i>some</i> commitment from the previous Director of Student Experience, but since her retirement I have been unable to pick it up whilst this role was vacant. With the new Director now in place I hope to begin work on this soon.</p> <p>I also wanted to take a moment to recognise the great work that our Performing Arts Officer Isaac has been doing with our marketing team in terms of re-marketing the Annex and doing more to promote the shows that go on there, working to improve the current spaces that the Union has on offer.</p>
Goal 3: Review the remits of our Sabbatical Officers	This has definitely been my biggest project so far, and something that I have carried over from last year's sabb plan, but is finally nearly finished. The Union has faced cuts in all areas, from core staff to clubs and societies, and it's time that we look to the sabbatical roles to work not just to streamline and improve efficiency of the team, but also simply to make some cost savings. Myself and both last year and this year's sabbatical team have worked to create two new possible structures of the sabbatical team. These are open for students to vote on at the Union's upcoming AGM, and can be seen pictured below. More details
Progress: 2	including how to vote on them, what the AGM is and more detailed role descriptions for them will be available at www.susu.org/agm . These changes, whichever plan is approved, will be in place for the 2019 Spring elections.
Additional Comments: Strengthening the Student Voice is probably the least specific point on my sabbatical plan, but I wanted to ensure that there was space for flexibility, and particularly that as the point is to respond to student feedback and increase opportunities for this, and once the AGM is done there will be a lot more time to focus on this, and other points.	

Pictures/links to blog posts relating to the work in this section:
<https://blogs.susu.org/blog/2018/10/19/lets-talk-about-brexite/>



The Annex

Autumn Programme

In the limelight
 From sketch to Shakespeare



Blithe Spirit
 by Noel Coward
 31 October - 3 November
 19:30



Comedy Freshers'
 9 - 10 November
 19:00

Nell Gwynn
 28 November - 1 December
 19:30



Legally Blonde
 5 - 8 December
 19:30

Macbeth
 12 - 15 December
 19:30



#AnnexTheatre

Find out more and book tickets
www.susu.org



SUSU.
 Our Students' Union

Should there be a people's vote on the final Brexit deal?

We want to hear what students think!



On 23 June 2016, Britain held a referendum to ask whether it should leave the European Union, with Leave winning by 51.9% to 48.1%. Since then, more than 1.4 million young people are now eligible to vote. No one yet knows exactly what the UK will be like after Brexit, and there is now a campaign asking for this final deal on Brexit to be put to a public vote.


Check out what else you can get up to at SUSU on Facebook

[University of Southampton Students' Union](#)

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PRESIDENT	EDUCATION & DEMOCRACY	SPORTS	ACTIVITIES	WELFARE & COMMUNITY
Avenue Officer NOCS Officer WSA Officer UHS Officer Boldrewood Officer Sustainability Officer Halls Officer	Faculty Officers (X5) Joint Honours Officer PGR Officer PGT Officer Faculty PGR Reps (X5)	Athletic Union Officer Sports Participation Officer Intra Mural Officer	Performing Arts Officer Media Officer Volunteering & Fundraising Officer Enterprise Officer	International Officer LGBT+ Officer Women Officer BAME Officer Disabilities Officer Wellbeing Officer
University Liaison Union Services Community Relations	Deputy President Elections Union AGM Senate All Student Votes Petitions You Make Change	Athletic Union Clubs Intra Mural	Societies Constitutions AGMs Affiliations Employability	Housing

CONCEPT #1 Top Line: Student Officer positions reporting to that Sabbatical Officer
Bottom Line: Additional duties of the role



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Avenue Officer NOCS Officer WSA Officer UHS Officer Boldrewood Officer Sustainability Officer Halls Officer	Faculty Officers (X5) Joint Honours Officer PGR Officer PGT Officer Faculty PGR Reps (X5)	Athletic Union Officer Sports Participation Officer Intra Mural Officer	Performing Arts Officer Media Officer Volunteering & Fundraising Officer Enterprise Officer	International Officer LGBT+ Officer Women Officer BAME Officer Disabilities Officer Wellbeing Officer	
University Liaison Community Relations	Deputy President Employability	Athletic Union Clubs Intra Mural	Societies Constitutions AGMs Affiliations	Housing	Elections Union AGM Senate All Student Votes Petitions You Make Change Union Services

CONCEPT #2 Top Line: Student Officer positions reporting to that Sabbatical Officer
Bottom Line: Key additional duties of the role



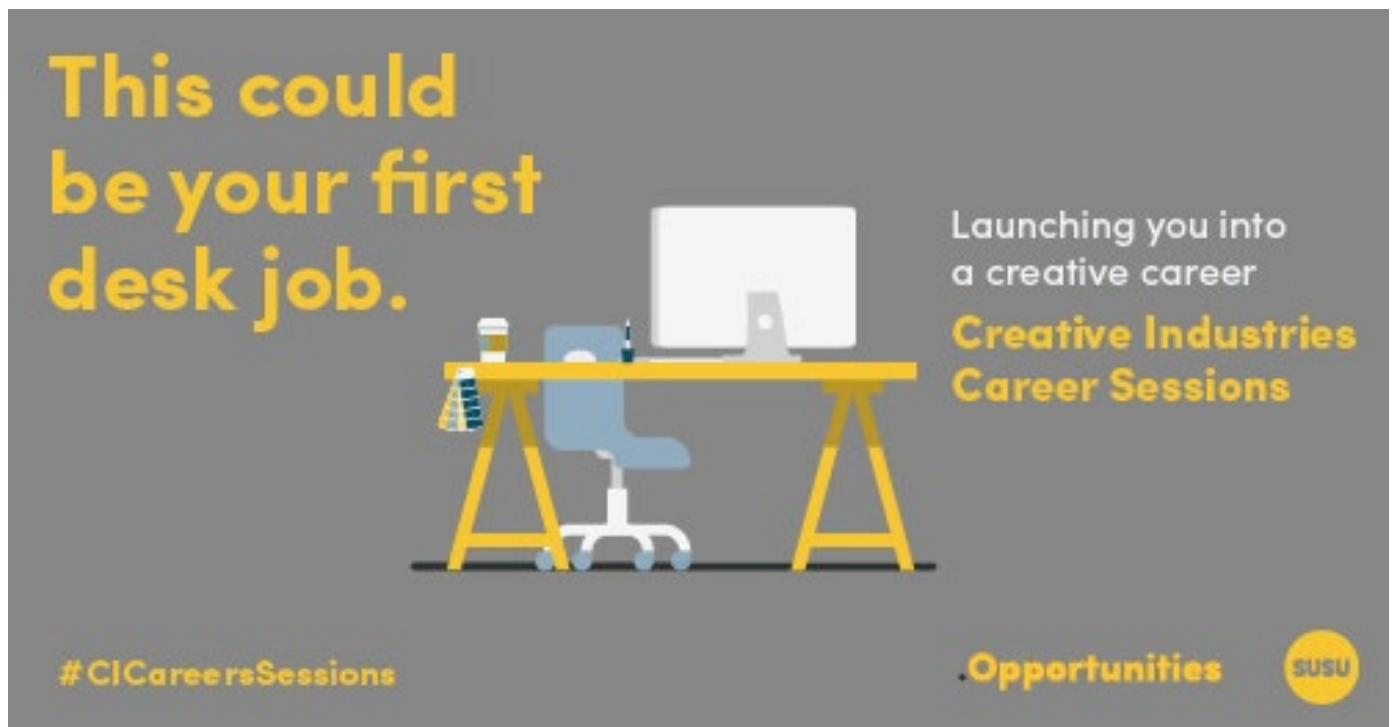
New Ideas	
Goal 1: Rules Review	Anyone who has had a look at the Union’s rules and tried to effectively use them will know that they are unwieldy, sometimes contradictory, outdated and ultimately just not very user friendly. Quite simply, I want to rewrite the rules to make them a more usable document that students are confident using. I’m not just looking at the 12 main rules, but also the by-laws that sit under them. I am looking at cutting the main rules down, stripping out parts that are subject to change, and putting these more changeable elements into the by-laws. This is not to overly bloat the by-laws that we have, but to make them more useful tools, that do more than simply set out the make-up of zone committees, or remain unused as they are currently. Work has started on this, however this is going to be a very lengthy process, as if rushed then we’ll surely end up in the same position as we are currently, with rules that aren’t especially useful. Currently there are 7 working groups looking at the 12 rules, as well as the
Progress: 1	

	Articles of Association and the by-laws. This was put on pause slightly in the lead up to the AGM and the finalising of the new sabbatical/elected student structure but will start up in earnest now.
Goal 2: CI Careers at WSA	Creative Industries careers is now an established series, with the first session of this academic year having gone successfully to very positive feedback. Sessions that we've held at WSA in the past have been popular, and I want to use this to try and fill a gap in the University's careers offering. Much of the University's careers offering is very STEM based, even at their 'all-sectors' events, and they're all held at Highfield. To counter this, the Union is organising a week of careers events at WSA, beginning on 25 th February, including holding a careers fayre on the Wednesday of this week. Planning for this project has begun, and we're in contact with members of University staff as well as external bodies to put together the events for this. It's important to me that we have something related for all main courses offered at WSA, as well as the events being engaging enough that students might travel from Highfield to Winchester for them (as the whole week will be open and advertised to all students). If this week, and particularly the careers fayre prove successful, then we will have evidence to the University that they should invest more in promoting careers in the arts, and not just for art students, particularly alongside the new faculty structure with the pairing of arts and humanities. By the next Senate this event will be just 2 weeks away so I will be able to detail all of the confirmed events and then in the final Senate of the year I will update on how the events went and any areas for improvement.
Progress: 1	
Goal 3: Welfare in Elections	Whilst welfare in elections is not strictly a 'new idea', I want the absolute focus of this year's Spring elections to be welfare. I want to ensure that the candidates feel more supported throughout the process, have more pre-arranged contact time with staff and are communicated with clearly. As deputy returning officer, I plan to have some 'office hours' over weekends where I will be available to candidates, either via email or in person, as I'm aware that although staff work 9-5 Mon-Fri, campaigning is not restricted to these hours. One other change I am making this year is actually cutting the voting period shorter than in previous years. The days in which voting is open are generally some of the most stressful, so this year it will be open for just 3 days. Previously I feel that voter turnout has been prioritised over candidate welfare, and although I'm aware that cutting the voting period could result in a lower turnout, welfare should be the priority. Equally, this allows for better resourcing of staff time during this period and less money spent on any incentivising of voting.
Progress: 0	Not only is the welfare of those running for elections important, but also the welfare of those student volunteers who support our Spring elections. We have already begun meeting with the media heads to discuss ideas and responsibilities to ensure that these groups can be as prepared as possible for what is ultimately a very busy and potentially stressful period for them. Also, as part of the re-evaluation of student leader roles, I plan to move the election of Union Groups heads to Summer. This will hopefully relieving some of the stress

on our media groups as any member wanting to run for editor or station manager will still be able to contribute to election coverage.

Additional Comments: Most projects in this section are not far off the ground as yet, but once the AGM is completed at the end of November, these three projects will take on key prominence. The rules project will likely take until the end of the year, due to the importance of the project and the delicacy of making sure everything fits together properly, but by the next Senate meeting the other two will have a strong amount of progress, if not be near completion.

Pictures/links to blog posts relating to the work in this section:



Building on the Union’s Work	
<p>Goal 1: Re-evaluate our Student Leader roles</p>	<p>Alongside looking at the Sabbatical roles, we have also been looking at the structure of our elected students. One thing that is clear is that the rules do not at all accurately reflect what level different elected students are or what these levels mean. The current student leader roles are also not all the most representative of the student body. I put together a proposal for what these new roles could be and opened it for student consultation through the ‘You Make Change’ section of the website. These were some of the most common pieces of feedback from the website:</p> <p>These are responses to some of the more frequently asked questions:</p> <p>Postgraduate Representation: We were asked whether there would be scope to expand the representation for Postgraduate students. Since the consultation opened we have formally put in place and gone out for election on 5 new Faculty based Postgraduate Research roles, 3 of which are currently filled, meaning that under the new structure there would be 6 student officers representing PGR students and 1 representing specifically PGT students. Our VP Education Sam is working with the University to find out the feasibility of adding the equivalent roles for PGT students.</p>
<p>Progress: 2</p>	

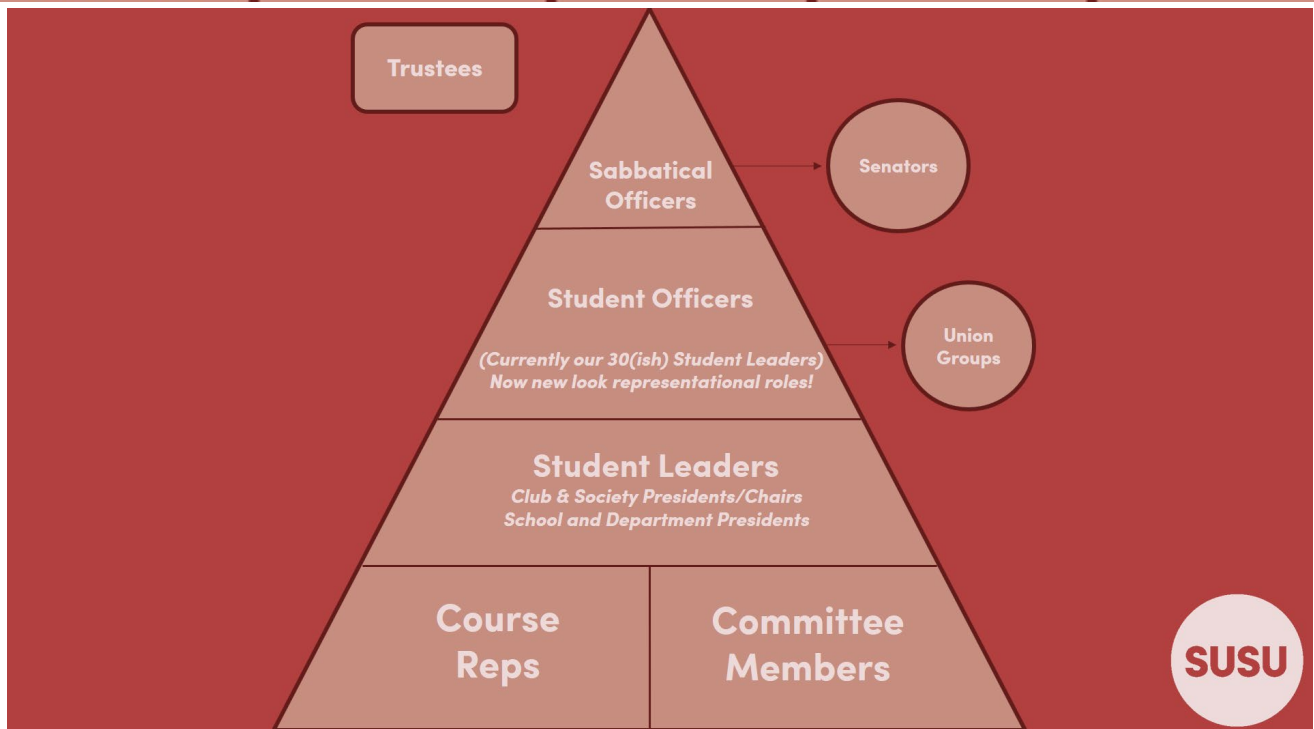
	<p>Boldrewood and WSA: We were asked as to whether it would be possible to add a Boldrewood Officer alongside the roles at other satellite campuses. We were previously unsure whether there would be demand for this role, as we didn't want to have roles that would be unfilled, but as we have seen the demand for this role from students, we are happy to create this role. We also received feedback about renaming the WSA President role to Officer, in line with the other positions, which we have also now done.</p> <p>Faculty Officers and Site Officers: There were some commenters who didn't understand the need for the site officers (WSA, Avenue, NOCS, UHS and now Boldrewood) when we already have the 5 faculty officers. These new roles were created to try and ensure that we can give an as equal as possible offering to all students, regardless of where they are studying, not focused on academic issues but things such as facilities and activities</p> <p>Union Groups: There were concerns about the removal of roles such as Surge Station Manager and RAG President from the list of Student Officers. For clarification, these roles are not being removed, but these new Student Officer roles are designed to be representative, as opposed to the operational nature of running a society or Union Group. Under this new structure, the Union group leaders will no longer be expected to attend the same meetings as the Student Officers, freeing up more time to focus on running their groups. They will still be offered the same level of staff support that they currently have, and will still be elected by the full student body.</p> <p>As part of this project I also wanted to look more widely at all elected students in the Union, as there is currently no structure for this. The result of looking at this you can see in the pyramid below. It was important to me that clubs and societies were brought into this structure, as we have a responsibility to them in terms of support as elected students, and equally they have an understanding of how they fit into the Union and the expectations we have of our elected student volunteers.</p>
<p>Goal 2: Redefining the relationship between Clubs & Societies and The Union</p>	<p>This is definitely a long-term project and not at all something I'm working on alone. This is a lot of much overdue changes to try and improve our processes for students, societies and internally. Part of this has been the change to membership on the Union website, alongside newly required society financial information.</p> <p>One of the parts that I've been most involved with so far is looking at the Affiliation process. One of the main purposes of this that what we found last year was that the actual meetings of the committee ended up being very long due to the number of requests, but each potential society would ultimately have a very short period of time to present to the committee, and the committee would have limited time to question. Equally, many of the requests were ultimately rejected or deferred due to a lack of information. To try and rectify both of these problems, we have developed the process that potential societies must go through pre-meeting, to ensure the viability of societies as assessed by the co-ordinates who would have to support them. The affiliation round is currently still open, but I will give a verbal update on how this process is going at the meeting.</p>
<p>Progress: 1</p>	<p>One of the parts that I've been most involved with so far is looking at the Affiliation process. One of the main purposes of this that what we found last year was that the actual meetings of the committee ended up being very long due to the number of requests, but each potential society would ultimately have a very short period of time to present to the committee, and the committee would have limited time to question. Equally, many of the requests were ultimately rejected or deferred due to a lack of information. To try and rectify both of these problems, we have developed the process that potential societies must go through pre-meeting, to ensure the viability of societies as assessed by the co-ordinates who would have to support them. The affiliation round is currently still open, but I will give a verbal update on how this process is going at the meeting.</p>

<p>Goal 3: Grow the presence and functionality of 'You Make Change'</p>	<p>You Make Change is the main feedback channel for students. Having overseen the process for a year, I'm very aware of the positives of this system, but also ways in which it can be improved. One key part of this is the usability, both on the front facing end but also on the back end that sabbatical officers use. I have found myself getting behind on my own You Make Changes due to the time it takes to update the spreadsheets and other mechanisms we use to keep track of which You Make Changes belong to which Sabbatical Officer and what stage they are at. Equally there is a gap in the process by which there is no formal end to the process, which could mean that idea submissions particularly could be open for months on end if implementation takes a long time. These are both important issues that I hope to address over the course of the year. We have started collating a list within the sabbatical team of improvements that could be made, and what could further improve this process.</p> <p>We will also be talking about some of the most popular topics that come through You Make Change at the Making Change Summit after the AGM.</p>
<p>Progress: 1</p>	
<p>Additional Comments: Again, re-evaluating the student leader roles is something that has been a long time in the making, and when the AGM is done the other two goals in this section will be more of a priority. I'm also aware that the other two goals are very much in partnership with other staff members and in part reliant on their timelines and projects, but I will ensure that there is appropriate progress on these areas.</p>	

Pictures/links to blog posts relating to the work in this section:

www.susu.org/aqm

<p>Avenue Officer NOCS Officer WSA Officer UHS Officer Boldrewood Officer Sustainability Officer Halls Officer</p>	<p>Faculty Officers (X5) Joint Honours Officer PGR Officer PGT Officer Faculty PGR Reps (X5)</p>	<p>Athletic Union Officer Sports Participation Officer Intra Mural Officer</p>	<p>Performing Arts Officer Media Officer Volunteering & Fundraising Officer Enterprise Officer</p>	<p>International Officer LGBT+ Officer Women Officer BAME Officer Disabilities Officer Wellbeing Officer</p>
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Developing the role

Additional Comments: *Due to recent events, the Sabbatical Team has been unable to meet and agree upon a set of common goals for the “Developing the Role” section. However, some areas of focus have already started to appear naturally (including the Union Review) and it is therefore our intention to have a full set of goals complete for scrutiny by the second meeting of Union Senate.*

Conclusion/AOB

We have already had one of our three main elections for the year, and this year Autumn saw the inclusion of five new representational roles for PGR students, thanks to the hard work of Sam (VP Education). This year we have separated out halls from this election, and the halls election is currently ongoing with a new structure for our halls committees. I can't believe it's already November, but we're well underway to planning Spring elections, and I'm confident that we will be more prepared for this than ever before (a particularly good this considering the new sabbatical roles we will have!). Union Review (the combination of reviewing both the sabbatical officer roles and the student leader roles) has taken over a year, but the end is nearly in sight and I'm excited to see student reaction to the hard work of two sabbatical teams. Hopefully what we have proposed is a more logical and straightforward look for future sabbatical teams, and our reasoning for the change are clear – I'm sure no one particularly thinks my role, for example, is a particularly natural pairing!

Planning for the Union's AGM is well underway, both a necessary legal requirement and a chance for us to discuss some of the issues that students have asked us most about; sustainability, postgraduate engagement and the Union taking a stance on issues widely affecting students, such as Brexit. I'm also very interested to see which sabbatical structure students pick! I'll also be pleased to be able to start work more fully on some of my other projects, and of course embarking more fully on the other particularly large task of re-writing our entire rulebook. This is a project that I am determined will not take more than one sabbatical term to complete, not least because I wouldn't be there to see it finished. Ultimately, I hope that by the end of my term the Union that is handed over to the new team will make a bit more sense, and be a bit easier to navigate, and will make more sense to our students.