Leading the Union

**Goal 1:**
**Strengthening the Student Voice**

So the main work that I’ve done since the last Senate relating to this is our AGM + Making Change Summit. I think that the engagement we had with our AGM in the room was an improvement on the previous two years, but will be taking forward suggestions from the event, looking at things such as interactivity, in terms of updating students not in the room about discussions, so that they can be informed by the conversations going on. I also think that holding the ‘Making change’ section of the event at the same time made it too long an event, and subsequently we had less engagement with this second half. I’d like to explore the possibility of perhaps looking at the student forums that we worked on the University with last year, and that have yet to materialise this academic year, and see perhaps about incorporating these, or a version of them to the Making Change Summit. I think that if the Union, and students, want to see more transparency and accountability from the University then we can give them a platform to do this. I hope that by the Union being more involved in this we can ensure that these are actually transparent and we can avoid too many ‘politician style’ responses.

I’m also working with the rest of the sabbatical team to look at how we can have more input into our commercial areas, such as catering and events. A huge amount of the ‘You Make Change’ submissions that we receive are about our commercial offer, and I think should be building positively on this feedback, as
clearly students are passionate about this and want to give input. I’m looking at the possibility of utilising some more of our democratic platforms for this, such as All Student Votes, and want to better promote to students the different platforms for democratic engagement that we have.

Goal 2: Lobby the University for a commitment to creating new Performing Arts space

The main thing that has been done towards this since the last meeting is that I’ve been able to sit down with the new head of Library and Arts, who took up their post at the University at the beginning of January to talk about the feasibility of this and about where our priorities join up. She brought some interesting ideas from her previous institution, and much of our conversation focused on flexible space, which she was able to demonstrate the usefulness of, and I believe is what is more likely to get University backing on. My goal is to have written commitment to new spaces by the end of my term, as the 10 year building plan rolls on, and I’m sure whoever is chosen as the new Vice Chancellor will have new ideas to bring to this project, and I want to ensure that this is something that isn’t lost because of this, as a commitment from the previous head of Arts was lost in her leaving post.

I’m also, along with Sam (VP Education) working with a newly established University committee looking at the way we use different learning spaces on campus. This I hope will better establish the appropriate uses of different spaces and especially by our varied societies.

Progress: 0

Goal 3: Review the remits of our Sabbatical Officers

At our AGM on 29th November the 5 person sabbatical plan was approved to be taken forward to the next academic year. We currently have nominations open in for these roles in the Spring elections. Since the AGM accordingly I have completed fuller role descriptors (something we have never had before!) for them, along with clearer elections marketing materials, which include descriptions on the roles and advice on nominations. We’re also being sure this year to highlight that the sabbatical roles are paid positions, as there was some confusion over this in last year’s election.

Progress: 2

At the time of Senate nominations will still be open, so unfortunately I will be unable at this point to update on how nominations have gone, however I am happy to email round an update once it is appropriate to share this information.

Additional Comments:

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1: Rules Review</th>
<th>This is currently scheduled to begin work after Spring elections. As the democracy team comprises of myself and 1 core staff member, I hope that Senate can appreciate that with elections and more day to day democracy related tasks that this is one we want to be sure of getting right, and so are delaying starting it in earnest until we can devote much more time to it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progress: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Goal 2: CI Careers at WSA | At time of writing this the programme for the Careers week at WSA looks as follows:  

**Monday 25 February**  
"Applying for Jobs" Talk // 12:00 - 13:00 // Location TBC  

**WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS ON...**  
**HELPING STUDENTS REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL?**  

Nominate yourself at susu.org/elections  
Nominations close 13 February at 13.00  

**BE THE VOICE OF STUDENTS**

Nominate yourself for one of our Officer roles and help lead the direction of the Union.
"Why Do Postgraduate Study?" Talk // 14:30-15:30 // Location TBC

Tuesday 26 February
Cover letters and CV drop-in session // 12:00 - 14:00 // WSA Café

Wednesday 27 February
"The Fashion Switch" Webinar // 10:00 - 11:00 // Lecture Theatre B (East Building)
Freelancing Bootcamp - learn about life as a freelancer including sales, marketing, time management, getting started and networking.
12:00 - 17:00 // Lecture Theatre B (East Building)

"Careers in Museums and Galleries" Talk - Come and listen to Stephen Lowy talk about his career journey and the careers that exist within Museums and Galleries. This is a great opportunity to develop your commercial awareness, gain a sector insight and ask any questions you have. // 13:30-14:30 // Avenue Campus

WSA Careers Mini-Day // 14:30-16:30 // WSA Café

Thursday 28 February
Careers Drop-In // 12:00 - 14:00 // WSA Café

Friday 01 March
LinkedIn Labs - learn how to set up your LinkedIn profile, how to showcase your skills and experience, and make your profile appealing to employers // 11:00 - 15:00 // outside WSA Library

"Work Experience" Talk // 12:00 - 13:00 // Location TBC

Talking Heads - visiting artist lecture programme // 15:00-16:00

The careers Fayre on the Wednesday has ultimately ended up being a smaller event than I had hoped for. We struggled to get buy in from exhibitors for a traditional careers fayre, despite the work of myself, two coordinators and a member of the University’s careers team. I am still sure that this will be a great event, and the week as a whole I feel is interesting and varied.

Goal 3: Welfare in Elections
I have largely continued to work on implementing this, and getting things ready for the campaigning period, alongside the work on the nominations period. We are constantly looking at the processes we have in place for this elections cycle and ways we can make things clearer and less stressful for candidates. One example of this is the decision to stop offering banners to candidates as part of their pack. Due to the timing of this election the weather is so variable that these have proved difficult to physically put up, along with the issue of space with an increasing number of candidates we have seen, and so I’ve taken the
decision to take out this time consuming element, and I’ll be looking at other ways to ensure campus is appropriately vibrant during this period.

Additional Comments: When I started planning the rules project I had envisaged that it would stretch throughout the year, however once myself and the democracy team had attempted to begin the project earlier in the year it became clear that it would be better to complete it in a more concentrated time frame where we could focus more fully on it. Equally although elections are much closer now, because the elections team is continually looking at ways to improve candidate experience I haven’t moved this point on in progress at this time.

The timing of the WSA careers week has not been ideal for me, in terms of running elections which inevitably pulls a huge amount of focus, however the date was picked to be beneficial to students, and I want to thank the amazing staff support I’ve had with this and the wider Creative Industries careers sessions. As ever, setting something up for the first time is more challenging, but if it were to continue next year I hope it might be more straightforward, and of course the Creative Industries and Democracy responsibilities will be split across different roles next year!

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

---

Building on the Union’s Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1: Re-evaluate our Student Leader roles</th>
<th>As with our sabbatical roles, I’m unable to update Senate at this time on the uptake of these new roles at this time, however we have taken similar steps to outline the responsibilities of these roles, and I will update Senate on these roles when appropriate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progress: 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 2: Redefining the relationship between Clubs &amp;</td>
<td>We’ve recently been looking at bottoming out issues such as societies with 0 listed members on the Union system, and having conversations with societies with a very small number of members about support and ensuring that these lists are an accurate reflection of members. This second round of grant funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Societies and The Union

that has now gone out was also the first where we were strict on not approving grant requests if membership numbers were under a certain threshold, to try and ensure that societies are keeping membership information up to date, and that we are distributing our resources as effectively as possible.

Progress: 1

Goal 3: Grow the presence and functionality of 'You Make Change'

As discussed at the previous Senate, we took a proposal to the AGM around sabbatical officers being able to reject YMC submissions, which was passed. However, something that I would like to have Senate’s input on is the current gap in our YMC platform. Currently the formal ‘end-point’ of a You Make Change submission, if it is more complex than a simple question/answer, is for it to become an action plan. These were used by sabbatical officers and the wider Union for a period of less than a year and are not something I, or the rest of the team have ever used or been trained to use in our time here, and so therefore there is effectively no end to the system at this point. Equally the current process is technically not followed by sabbatical officers, as currently a submission is expected to receive 25 up votes before it is considered, and I know there have been less than 5 submissions that have ever received the required endorsement. We also have the additional split of ideas and questions, one of which is eligible for up/down voting and the other is not, but for which there is no differentiation when being reviewed.

I’m also still very aware that the functionality of the system needs improving, particularly on the back end of the system. I’m hopeful that once we have the results of the website survey and we look more broadly at the website that these can be addressed, but which is sadly something beyond my skillset.

Progress: 1

Additional Comments: I’m really keen to have this conversation with Senate on the YMC platform, as I really think it is a positive platform for change, and I feel we’ve definitely had more students using the platform, however there really are these fundamental gaps in the system as it currently stands, and I feel that Senate is the appropriate place to have this discussion.

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

- The Union now offers bike pumps, tools and flat repair kits to all students. Pop along to the Union reception, building 42 if you need to get your bike back into shape.

- Great success! This win was brought to you from You Make Change. Submit your own idea for change at www.susu.org/You-Make-Change
Conclusion/AOB

Since the previous Senate (or, more accurately since the AGM the week after) the main thing that I have been working on is my biggest ‘Business as Usual’ project for the year – Spring Elections. This is a hugely time consuming project to work on, particularly with ensuring that all information accurately reflects the new roles for this, that both Union and University staff are up to date on this and then selling the roles to the students we hope to fill them! I’ve really enjoyed going out to talk to students about the new roles, attending the Bunfights at Sites to promote them there and holding drop-in sessions. If anyone has any questions about elections, please do get in touch – especially if you’d be interested in nominating yourself! We also have our great ‘Suggest a friend’ option, so if you know anyone you think would be good for a sabbatical role, go to [www.susu.org/representation/suggest-a-friend](http://www.susu.org/representation/suggest-a-friend) and let us know (anonymously).

With Spring elections being my main focus at the moment, and for the next month, I’m inevitably looking to the end of my term, even though it’s only half way through the academic year. I want to be realistic about my projects and ensuring that commitments are upheld and projects continued. We’ll have to do our sabbatical handovers a little differently this year, due to the changing roles, which will mean a more joined up approach to this. We’ve already had conversations within the team about this, and are keen that we engage the newly elected sabbatical officers, and student officers as much as is possible, or as much as they would like before their terms start.

If there’s anything you want to ask, as ever please do drop me an email, or come and have a chat face to face! I’ll be moving up to work in the Representation Office, to the right as you go into the Advice Centre for the elections period so if you wonder why I’m not in the sabb office that’s where I’ll be.