

UNION PRESIDENT LAWRENCE COOMBER 2024/25

Area of work: Student Living Experience	
Sabbatical Plan Goal	Details
Goal 1 Improving and aiding the SASSH (Southampton Accreditation Scheme for Student Housing) System	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with the City Housing Relationship Manager of the University (Residences Department) who oversees the SASSH website. She presented me with data from the website, showing a decrease in the amount of students registered on SASSH. This academic year to date saw 1,367 students registered with an account on the website compared to 2,666 in the previous academic year. She assured me that this was not as bad as it could have been, given the introduction of the Renters’ Rights Bill this year by the government that saw some landlords sell their properties. Nonetheless in the meeting we discussed some of the conditions for accreditation that are required of landlords, where she reassured me that outdoor lighting is already a requirement. I asked this because in a meeting with our Head of the Advice Centre and the local Police, outdoor lighting was said to be the best deterrent to crime. We hosted our second Housing Fair, where I manned the SUSU stall for two one-hour periods and the SASSH stall saw 43 new interactions. This was fewer than the first Housing Fair, however this was to be expected as most students have already found housing, and this fair was targeted at those who are still looking for housing, a smaller sample size.
	<p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet again with City Housing Relationship Manager to discuss in more depth the impact of the Renters’ Rights Bill; evaluate the Housing Fairs and plan for improvements for next year. Renters’ Rights Bill means students cannot sign contracts more than six months in advance of the tenancy start date – this means students will not be able to sign contracts before 1st January for start dates on 1st July. City Housing Relationship Manager is keen to create a ‘Wait for SASSH’ campaign
Goal 2 Work with Solent, UoS and SSC for a Southampton Student Living Strategy	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with Director of Residences, Sports and Community and Head of Student Living Strategy on 15th January. This was because the Student Living Strategy has progressed very slowly, and I wanted to ask what I could do personally to help. I was told that my role remains roughly the same – to feed in student opinion and concerns and so to continue the same work with the Advice Centre and SASSH to ascertain the student experience in housing.
	<p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up meeting with Director of Residences to discuss worries about pace of progression.

Goal 3 Create a Student-Council Housing Helpline	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings have now been set up with the Southampton City Council Cabinet Member for Communities and Safer City. In our last meeting we discussed student housing and Council licensing, as well as a plan to create a Welcome Pack for students living in Private Rented Accommodation after halls. This will include their rights and routes of support for housing. <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue regular meetings with City Council about housing issues, look for joint solutions and other ways of improving the student housing experience.
Area of work: Cost of Living Support	
Sabbatical Plan Goal	Details
Goal 1 Campaign for Maintenance Loan Rise	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign is now a lower priority given that the government did raise tuition fees by 3.1% for 2025/26 academic year. Has not appeared on Russell Group Student Union Priorities, or elsewhere. Focus has shifted toward supporting international student finances since fees are uncapped. <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with other sabbs to pressure the government to repeat increases in the maintenance loan with inflation yearly.
Goal 2 Improve Promotion of Advice Centre and Food Bank	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed a set of four videos posted to @sususabbs Instagram account promoting student housing information and the Advice Centre. The topics were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What landlords cannot deduct from your deposit (1,232 views, 44 likes) How to get your deposit back (1,143 views, 16 likes). Reporting a Landlord (478 views, 5 likes). Before you sign a contract (948 views, 10 likes). Have met regularly with the Residences Team at the University and our Halls Officer to set up a Community Pantry at Wessex Lane as a trial. A disused shipping container has been outfitted with signage and storage for it, but the plan lacks details on where funding will come from and staffing. <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete an evaluation of the media campaign, meet with Advice Centre to see any changes in number of contacts. Ascertain where funding for the community pantries is going to come from, evaluate feasibility.
Goal 3 Cost of Living Working Group	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group has not yet been formed. However, Student Experience Survey data from our Insight Manager is informing decision making in most working groups within SUSU. One of these is Project Food, led by our Head of Social Enterprises, who is using the results of the survey (which indicate price is still the greatest concern) to inform policy around food, namely making sure it is the cheapest as possible. <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure data showing student priority for cost of living support is embedded in all SUSU activity in the groups that I am a member of. Continue to gather data and student feedback on cost of living.

Area of work: Modernisation and Sustainability	
Sabbatical Plan Goal	Details
Goal 1 Digital ID on the UoS SuperApp	Work so far: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Law set to change this year allowing for Digital ID. • The University SuperApp project continues, although focus has been on user interface. We have been told that it is not possible for scanners to be set up in the library gates. • Wrote to the Secretary of State for Digital, Science and Innovation for greater clarification on digital ID providers (for when it comes into effect). • Was told that the providers are not named yet as they cannot do so before the law passes, and that it will be down to individual businesses, pubs, as to whether to accept digital ID but there will be a government campaign to reassure businesses to accept it.
	Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push for the development of a digital ID software section of the app so that when the law comes into effect, the app will act as a valid ID. • Develop an information plan to help convince local pubs, bars and clubs (and supermarkets) to accept digital ID when it comes into place.
Goal 2 Creation of SUSU App for ordering	Work so far: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUSU+ was launched at our Refreshers' Fair recently. • Has so far been a success – almost 3000 downloads which is roughly 12% of the student population. • Students can now collect points on purchases from our venues, including the Locker. • Table ordering has not come out yet, but is planned without a set date yet.
	Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for table ordering launch within the SUSU+ Working Group that is led by the Head of Social Enterprises that I sit on. • Continue to collect feedback on the app and bring up issues to the Head of Sustainability when students tell us. • Possible adding of your personal QR code to Apple/Google Wallets soon.
Goal 3 Estates sustainability	Work so far: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEQ will begin ground construction on the 5th March – I have sat on the Project Group since July and pushed for student involvement along with our Head of Representation who also sits on the board. • Attended a Student 'Look-and-Feel' session that saw students come and give their opinions on the design of NEQ and interior makeup, along with sustainability goals. • NEQ will have rainwater collection, rainwater ponds for water diffusion, biodiversity spaces outside, solar panels, passive cooling throughout the whole building. All the bells and whistles have been included and not dropped! • These principles will be incorporated into the Estates Masterplan – plan for the Uni estate over the next 10 years headed by the Director of Estates at the University – expect all future buildings and refurbishments to be held to the same high standards. I sit on the Estates and Infrastructure Board and the Estates Programme Board to ensure this is continuously pressed for.

	<p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby in the Project Group to ensure that the sustainability aspects of NEQ are not abandoned due to cost saving. • When attending EIC and EPB push for new plans following the Masterplan to the same sustainability standards.
<p>Goal 4 Work with sustainability officers</p>	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the Dean of Engineering and Physical Sciences (FEPS) with the FEPS Sustainability Officer.
	<p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with the other Deans and their respective Faculty Reps.