

Name: Emma Brown

Role: Union President

Date of Report: 03.06.26

Area of work: Transport	
Sabbatical Plan Goal	Details
<b>Evidence gathering for bus route changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University transport survey released and currently getting student responses, closing in mid June.</li> <li>Made two videos to promote the survey – one targeted at bus users, another for people who are focused on other methods such as bike, taxi, walk, car etc.</li> <li>SUSU’s Rate Your Crib survey also included questions on the buses – I requested more specific questions to be added such as what routes in particular, although they were not added. Rate your crib was a resource I looked at very frequently when it came to decision-making, so it’s great that a new round of results is coming in soon.</li> <li>Survey results act as additional evidence to reinforce the need for changes to be made in areas, as well as highlight any additional parts that may not have been investigated.</li> </ul>
<b>Feedback/Reporting System on the Buses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QR code graphic made for the buses – links to a form that allows people to write in their experience of the buses. Previously the only way to provide feedback was by emailing the bus company, which meant it was not seen by the university, and often times was not actioned upon properly. The new form hopes to improve the ability to see common themes around complaints/feedback, and for improved transparency to the university who commissions the Unilink routes from Bluestar.</li> </ul>
<b>U1 route changes or additional route to bevois valley/NOCS</b>	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with University’s transport team – they are happy with my work on buses and are very keen to make the changes I’ve requested as long as they have strong evidence behind them.</li> <li>Will be implementing a proper feedback system for students, guided by in-person consultation on the Redbrick. This will include improving transparency, adopting a “you said, we did” messaging system for social media, and ensuring that the university’s transport team and potentially SUSU have access to the feedback and not just Unilink.</li> <li>Work focuses on route changes for the new academic year – including improving services to Bevois Valley.</li> <li>They are keen to get me more involved in bus decision making and give credit for the changes made from my work, even if they are implemented after leaving in July.</li> <li>Surveying, data compilation, pushing city council for funding for routes.</li> </ul>
<b>Bus Pricing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met with Unilink manager to discuss prices but from a business perspective there is not much Bluestar/Unilink can do – the Southampton City Council was subsidising the buses to be £1 after 6pm.</li> <li>Night buses to a lower price will be difficult to predict how many people will use the bus – Unilink manager raised concerns that if too popular, we would have to skip picking up people. Emm a raised this as not a good reason. Night buses are also the most expensive service to run which poses challenges.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Council lobbying with local councillors to get more funding for bus subsidies. Local MPs, notably Darren Paffey and Satvir Kaur could help.</li> </ul>
<b>WSA Buses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now obtained WSA student housing heat map from Insights team – now able to proceed with WSA bus routes project. Will be passing on the information through my handover as incoming Union president will also be working on buses.</li> <li>• Changes will hopefully be implemented by new academic year.</li> </ul>
<b>Area of work: Social Enterprise</b>	
<b>Sabbatical Plan Goal</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>The Stag's</b>	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video on <u>changes made to the Stag's this year</u> has been a great success, with almost 20k views. Changes made this year include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ £2.75 Stag's lager and Thatcher's gold (previously £3.50/£3.80)</li> <li>○ £1.50 J-bombs (between 7-10pm)</li> <li>○ 12-inch pizzas with 2-4-1 pizzas every Tuesday when you buy a drink</li> <li>○ Food in Stag's available earlier at 6pm</li> <li>○ Digital screen displaying when safety bus is due to leave, and waiting bench outside SUSU shop</li> <li>○ More booth seating</li> <li>○ £5.50 cocktails</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stag's social media page idea not implemented this year due to limits in capacity but may be considered in the future.</li> <li>• Requested slushie machine in Stag's for alcoholic/non-alcoholic slushie cocktails to be served, but no progress yet.</li> </ul> <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After Grad ball, which has put a huge strain on adding new things to the Stag's in past couple weeks, I will request some final changes to the pub to be added – such as new cocktails, better alcohol free options, and better decoration in the pub to showcase our history.</li> </ul>
<b>Bridge, Redbrick Kitchen, Shop</b>	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New high-protein and high-fibre labelling added to meal deal mains, in the same style as the vegetarian/vegan/GF labels I added earlier this year which have been incredibly helpful to shop customers, especially in a busy environment like the Shop at lunchtime.</li> <li>• I facilitated a meeting between our head of social enterprise (SUSU food) and the Vegetarian/Vegan society . Their feedback has been passed to our food supplier. They were really helpful, suggesting easy, practical fixes such as switching mayo to make an item vegan instead of vegetarian. As our fresh food supplier is local and we are their biggest customer, we can have discussions and make changes to their products.</li> <li>• The SUSU Shop has supported a £250 donation to Second Chance Animal Rescue through the Nisa Making a Difference Locally scheme! The charity rescues and cares for vulnerable animals, and we're proud to make a positive difference in the local community.</li> <li>• Passed on a comprehensive list of feedback to the Bridge – not enough people using the space are buying food/drink. Changes I have made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New printed menus on tables. Previously we had QR code menus which creates an additional barrier to customers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Whiteboard feedback collection and staff asking customers what they would like. We also collect feedback on Instagram stories. This ensures that students are at the heart of decision making and they feel empowered to leave feedback.</li> <li>○ Looking into more side options as they are very popular but we need more variety to get more customers. This includes: veggie gyoza (chicken gyoza already sold), garlic bread, onion rings, hash browns.</li> <li>● We had to decide to remove the draught taps from the Bridge bar. We do not have enough purchases of drinks on tap aside from large events, and having them on tap is too costly to maintain financially, as beer/cider does go bad if not consumed, and the equipment is complex and costly. I have asked the team to look into any temporary solutions for large events such as freshers and Grad Ball.</li> <li>● Changes were made to the Bridge food menu which I asked them to reverse as the prices had changed without student consultation. Additional changes should be held off until the new academic year.</li> </ul>
	<p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stronger push to social enterprise team to make changes to food; often changes are delayed or there is pushback due to financial reasons.</li> <li>● Menu changes for summer/new academic year.</li> </ul>

### Area of work: SUSU History and Murals Project

Sabbatical Plan Goal	Details
<b>Old SUSU Photos</b>	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Researched Southampton online archives and have been in contact with the Hartley archives. Many archived items are listed with solely a name/description with no attached photo, so the process on receiving photographic copies is longer than initially expected.</li> <li>● Proposal doc written up has been sent to some of the SUSU senior leadership team and I am working to get funding for the installation of framed archive photos around the SUSU building.</li> </ul>
<b>Murals Project</b>	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Concept document has been produced, but with limited time remaining in the year, I am going to pass on this project to the new sabbatical team if they are interested. I have good connections with the Art society, and a student has reached out to say they are also interested to paint a mural, so there's resource available to do one. However, more research needs to be done about whether a mural can be installed anywhere, and the timing at the end of the year is not ideal. Being a purely aesthetic project means that other items were prioritised above it throughout the year, hence the timing problems.</li> </ul>

### Area of work: SUSU Campaigns

Sabbatical Plan Goal	Details
<b>Safety Campaign</b>	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Met with MP's office to talk about student safety in the city. Discussed measures to improve student safety, focusing on increased police presence in</li> </ul>

	<p>the night-time economy areas, safety campaigns, and the importance of affordable travel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobbying for £3 night buses to be reduced in price and added onto the bus pass.</li> <li>• Initial planning into safety messaging and initiatives</li> </ul> <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launching SUSU safety campaign – to provide information on how students can stay safe, and reassurances about safety.</li> <li>• Careful comms about the recent protests in Portswood and the city centre.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Renters’ Rights Changes – Information Campaign</b></p>	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Series of videos on Renters rights has been published – all the key pieces of info have now been communicated, videos will be reposted to remind students.</li> <li>• Many students are now coming to the SUSU advice centre about their housing as some landlords are making these changes quite confusing and concerning. From ad-hoc conversations with students, and some conversations overheard, it seems like students are quite knowledgeable of the changes that come with the Renters rights changes, and are passing the information along to their friends, which is great to hear.</li> <li>• Worked with <u>SASSH</u> (Southampton Accreditation Scheme for Student Housing), a housing scheme that is run in partnership between the University of Southampton, Southampton Solent University and Southampton City Council. The purpose of the scheme is to ensure that students have access to a supply of high quality, safe accommodation that is well managed. Houses that are advertised through the scheme must meet the required SASSH standards. One of the manifesto points was to ensure student housing is up to standard, but with this scheme already in place, this is more on an issue around awareness. Emma will be making a video to promote the SASSH website for students moving properties, as it is a very helpful resource that many are unaware of.</li> <li>• Emma met with Student No Fee agency, one of the large property agencies in Southampton, and SASSH representatives from Solent and Southampton universities – where SASSH will be making a tenancy agreement that landlords throughout Southampton can use that abides by all of the new housing rules that come into place through the Renters Rights Act.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Halls information campaign</b></p>	<p>Work so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Producing videos, filmed at Glen Eyre and Wessex Lane – to promote moving out advice. <u>Take and Donate site at Wessex Lane</u> video has surged in popularity, quite unexpectedly. Students have been praising the Take and Donate site at Wessex.</li> <li>• Filmed <u>Anglo Doorstep Collections Video</u> for Sparkle, VP Communities</li> <li>• Planning a video to encourage more students to properly recycle (main issue is waste contamination). Where does your recycling actually go after you put it in the bin. Have received a lot of great footage from the recycling company to showcase what happens at the sorting facility.</li> </ul> <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to move out of halls checklist video guide.</li> <li>• SUSU’s Don’t Ditch it, Donate it campaign working with videographer at SUSU and sustainability manager – will make a video promoting a Take and Donate</li> </ul>

	service in SUSU, once it is available in mid-June (later than expected as the original wheelie bin we were going to use for this no longer exists).
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## Other work:

### Student Accessibility Network

The accessibility network has been meeting regularly, and have produced a survey to collect anecdotal evidence of students' experience with accessibility and inclusion at the university. One of the points we want to find is their experience of disability support with exams and assessments. Once enough useful info is collected, we can hopefully pass it on to the incoming VP Inclusion to do some lobbying to the university to ensure changes are made.

### University Lobbying

It is a difficult time to do much lobbying, mainly as our Vice-Chancellor has just left in May. We have an interim, Professor Phil Wright, who I am excited to be working with during my final month as President. However, the difficult position of an interim includes keeping the university running – business as usual – with no large changes made. This is because the new, full-time VC, will begin in at least 6 months' time, or later – and the interim shouldn't make any significant changes that the new VC may or may not agree with.

However, before I leave, I plan to write a few short lobbying letters – one being a consistent provision of period products across the university. I met with one of the leads of EDI at the university, who is keen to bring my ideas to the VC. Previous VC was interested in the idea, but wanted a letter to explain, in detail, how the scheme could work and remain financially and practically sustainable.

### Vice-Chancellor Recruitment

As Professor Mark Smith, our previous Vice-Chancellor, who has been in post since October 2019, has recently left the university, Emma has been part of the process to elect a new Vice-Chancellor (VC). The VC is the most senior leader at the uni and is responsible for overall strategic direction and decision making.

Emma ran a session is the opportunity for the candidates to hear directly from students, consisting of the new and current sabbatical officers and student member of university council. Emma fed the students opinions onto the selection committee, which proved incredibly helpful. She and one other student attended all-day interviews with the candidates, where we asked some tricky questions regarding the student experience, and gave our thoughts on each of the candidates in detail. While the results of the process remains confidential for the next few weeks, Emma found that student voice was listened to very well – and found we made a real impact in the process.

### Interviews

Another effort that has taken time has been Emma's involvement with the interviews of the Deans – for the business, and for the medical school. Emma works with the Deans at the University Executive Board (a two-hour meeting every Tuesday morning that she attends, which goes through all of the important information for that week that the executive team at the top needs to know about). These are all-day interview processes and require

the candidates to be assessed, both for their ability to perform at a strategic level, but also keeping student voice involved in their decision making.

### **Russel Group and Southern Students' Unions Conferences**

Emma and the sabbs attended several conferences throughout the year where sabbatical officers meet up, share best practice, and discuss lobbying projects.

### **Appeals**

One of the aspects of the role that Emma takes on is managing appeals at the highest level – both university academic appeals at Stage 3, and disciplinary appeals. It is often a difficult process, as she must review all of the documents involved, all of which are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

### **University Council**

Emma has been attending university council throughout the year – the top level decision making board of the university. Each council is a full-day process, often being held at different campuses, consisting of members who are both internal and external to the university – and their job is to scrutinise the reports presented to them. Often times, papers can be hundreds of pages long, which takes a significant portion of time to read and assess. Although this has been a more expected time-consuming aspect of the role this year, Emma has been incredibly grateful for the experience this has provided and the opportunity to bring issues to the top. She ensures questions are asked that ensure that the university is held to account for decisions made, much like how student council works at SUSU.

### **Lobbying Transnational Education at University of Southampton**

The University of Southampton currently operates two campuses; one in Malaysia and one in Delhi (opened last year). The concept of operating campuses overseas, in short, is also called transnational education (TNE). Emma met with representatives from the university to raise her concerns over the amount of resource, financially and staff-wise, into opening these campuses. Much like many universities across the UK, Southampton is currently going through cost-saving measures such as Voluntary Severance (VS) – where staff members are offered a sum of money to leave their roles, which saves the university money in the long term (as they will have less staff to pay). Naturally, this produces a strain on the university's workload capacity – particularly in professional services where areas such as the student hub lies. With financial issues being a major problem that Emma has witnessed develop through her meetings in the university's executive board, she questioned why is the university putting resource into TNE. Having an opportunity to study at the University of Southampton is great for the students, and the existing campuses should remain as there are students currently getting a degree that can greatly improve their job prospects in the future. But, Emma raised concerns over the ability to have an effective Students union in these campuses, and strongly questioned putting resource into expanding any TNE efforts while we have financial struggles.

### **You Make Change**

SUSU operates a service on their website called You Make Change, which allows students to submit questions or suggestions to the sabbs – this has led to a variety of ideas being put forward. Not all could be actioned upon (particularly when considering the university's financial issues at the moment) – but some notable changes have been made including:

- Emma has installed a new bench outside of the SUSU shop that serves as a waiting bench for the SUSU safety bus.
- New merch in the locker added as per students suggestions
- New items added to the SUSU shop, and some changes to existing items after working with our sandwich supplier.

Not everything suggested could be complete, particularly in lobbying projects that are outside of SUSU's direct control – such as increasing number of buses or cheaper food in university-run outlets, but the feedback has been passed on to the relevant teams.

### **Students Moving Out**

Emma has been working with SUSU's sustainability manager on an information campaign about the services and resources available for students moving out. Emma is producing videos on the donation sites available, waste collection, moving out checklists and recycling. The June-July move-out period has a significant impact on the local communities and services around it - this campaign tries to reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill during this period, and helps students who would have otherwise been confused what to do with their unwanted items.

### **Local Elections**

Getting students to vote in the local elections has been surprisingly a challenge! Emma organised a meeting with a student who has conducted a lot of research on how to encourage more student voters – which has been so helpful, to herself and Sonia (SUSU CEO), Joshie (VP Education) who will carry on the information after Emma's term ends. The main difficulty is that, in general, telling students to do something is not very effective. Emma recorded numerous videos to encourage more students to both register to vote (important as they must re-register if their address has changed), and to actually vote when the early May local elections came around. The impact of the videos is difficult to assess, and the video success is medium (students see "local elections" and immediately scroll versus a video about the SUSU shop). Next time it would be good to have elections as a permanent addition to the marketing team's yearly campaigns.

Emma was invited to speak on **BBC Radio Solent** about local elections – discussing what students might vote. She spoke about students voting on policies that would affect them in the most positive way, such as transport, housing and food, much like the sabbatical officers leadership elections at SUSU. She raised the difficulties around empowering students to become voters. Emma was told she did a great job and has been invited to speak on the radio if she'd like to do it again! Yay! Thank you to Surge Radio (who I shouted out on air) for teaching Emma how to speak properly on radio.

### **Grad Ball**

Emma has been meeting regularly with the teams behind Grad Ball to ensure it is a successful event. This year they sold out of tickets and have been able to get all 3 fun fair rides. Emma worked with the team to make decisions about how many tickets we could sell, because of rain - will be very busy in our indoors venues. Emma will be working during the event itself.

### **Student Experience Awards (SEAs)**

Emma was one of the hosts for the SEAs, held on the 29 April in the Cube. The event celebrates students throughout the university and those involved in our clubs and societies and community projects, who had been nominated for their fantastic contributions and volunteering. Having attended the awards ceremony for the past 2

years while she was a student, having the opportunity to stand on stage was an incredibly meaningful and exciting experience for Emma.

### **Videos Project**

Emma has been producing a series of videos on [sususabbs](#) to make students more aware of changes throughout the Students' Union. Since March, she has produced over 20 videos – with all the editing, script writing and some of the filming done by herself. Early in the year, she didn't have videos at the top of her priorities – but as her skills developed in editing/recording, she realised the value of awareness through social media. Some videos – such as "[Wessex Lane Take and Donate](#)", the You Said We Did series: "[SUSU Shop Changes](#)", "[Stag's Changes](#)" – all achieved 20-26k views, almost the whole University of Southampton population! These videos have led to a surge of new [You Make Change](#) requests, positive comments, reshares between students, and in-person feedback, as well as general awareness of the sabbatical officers. Emma has been surprised, and incredibly proud of these videos, as it has made students more aware of useful services, such as the Advice centre, registering to vote, what to do when you move out, etc. While previously dismissing the importance of communication through short-form videos (only thinking it could be good for silly videos) – this has proven that more sabbs in the future should focus on this style of communication.

They also linked in nicely with existing projects she has been working on – such as B75 project board – having a [site walkthrough](#) made students finally aware of the purpose of the project. Even before Emma's time, it has been noted that students do not typically read the sabbatical officers' fortnightly updates – but this proves that students want to listen as long as content is in a format they want to hear news through. Emma has applied for student content creator part time when she returns to studies next year, so she can bring her video-making skills to the new sabbs and to bring more awareness throughout the year.

### **Handover Process**

Emma will be meeting with the new sabbs, especially incoming Union president, to hand over the information and lessons learned from this year. She's had a lot of time to reflect on the challenges from this year, and no doubt it has been a fantastic, yet difficult, experience. Having a university go through a cost-cutting programme, losing a sabbatical officer, and learning how an institution of this scale operates and navigating the process on how to make change, has been huge learning experience. Emma will be returning to her studies next year to finish her master's year – and hopes to visit the new sabbatical officers often. She is writing up a handover document, and is planning the meetings to ensure the incoming sabbs feel comfortable and prepared, although she is expecting it will be a lot of information to pass on.

### **Final note**

Thank you all for being a part of student council this year. I have had a truly amazing experience this year, and I hope that I have made a difference to students across the university. While not everything followed my plans completely, I had to adapt to new problems arising and discovered that there are so many ways to make an impact with students. The skills I've learnt, the people I've met, and the opportunities I've had have been beyond anything I could have expected. I've grown so much in confidence this year and learnt so much, I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to be your Union President. Thank you all.