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**Worcester Students’ Union Board of Governors Report**

**Presidents Report**

**By Wesley Hudson**

The autumn months are a very busy time for the Students’ Union, with induction week a distant memory and all the new intake of students now settled into life at Worcester, the hard work has now begun making sure the student body is being represented fully and getting the best student experience that the University and the Union can offer.

October

In between the last board of governors I have had meetings with Judith Keene, to discuss access to the Hive for disabled students. Many disabled students, particularly those who are wheelchair users have trouble getting to the Hive to collect books for their studies. As all students are able to drop their books off in Pierson, it made sense that books can be brought from the Hive to campus as well. In a discussion with Judith and a student it seemed that this suggestion was perfectly reasonable and she would look into it. We also asked Judith to look into extending the period of loan times for students with learning difficulties as they may take longer to read a book than students without these issues.

The location for the Students’ Unions new Nightline was decided and the process of redecoration is being done to make it a comfortable and positive environment for those working there. Our next step is to try and recruit as many appropriate volunteers as we can.

November

On the 7th of November some good news came to the Union, the results of the By-elections. We now have a full Executive Committee with the positions of LGBT, Student Disability and Minority Ethnic officer roles being taken up. The Student Council decided that students would relate more to these officers as the role of “Diversity” Officer was too broad. We followed the guidelines of NUS liberation groups and split this role into 4. Women’s, Minority Ethnic, Student Disability and LGBT Officer. The by-election also saw two new students become our NUS delegates to attend the NUS conference in spring 2105, where a number of different policies and new officers will be voted on.

In the past the Students’ Union has struggled to get a quorate number of students to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Thankfully we were way over target with the number of students that attended; we think was down to our heavy promotion and marketing of the meeting. The two main outcomes of the meeting were that Worcester Students’ Union has re-affiliated to both NUS and BUCS for another year. Meaning we can offer lower prices in our shop, offer NUS cards and bar and compete in national leagues of the highest level of University sport.

Lots of hard work and effort has gone into the launch of our new campaign “Don’t Rent Yet”, this campaign, with the work of myself, student advisors and the University accommodation department, aims to inform students that they should not sign contracts for houses so early, what the consequences of doing so might be and to wait until the annual Housing Week in 2015.

Despite there being a rocky start to the semester with a small number of student behaviour issues arising in the local press, things seem to have quietened down now. An all student email was sent out by myself (Appendix 1) to inform students that despite there only being a very small number of problems they are aiding in giving students a bad reputation amongst the local community. Abi Clarke also wrote a letter to the Worcester news to reinforcing the good things that students do. After meeting with staff members of the university including the head of student services and the police community support officers to name a few, we feel the student’s union need and must put emphasis on encouraging “good news” stories to disseminate throughout the local community. The most recent story is that of Connor Allen, our new disability officer who last week became the world champion in wheelchair karate. The other is Nicole Potts, who is directing a feature length film in Worcester.

Leading on from this we have a total of 510 students that have signed up for an online Volunteer Record (V-Records). This is a brilliant start for the year and we hope this number will rise considerably by the start of the next semester. Our Volunteer coordinator has been working extremely hard to try and get as many people to sign up and log their hours, on Monday 10th a successful volunteer fair was held in the Pear Tree with a number of outside organisations attending to get students to sign up to volunteer for them. A small handful of students have also hit the 200 hours mark.

Overall the Students’ Union feels as though the autumn months have now been very successful and we have seen a significant drop in issues than this time last year. We hope that our success, positive demeanour and hard work continue as winter slowly approaches.

***Tom Clarke, Vice President Education***

Virtual Centre For Learning

The University is looking to establish an Online Virtual System for learning which students can access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to gain extra advice and support on things such as Academic Tutoring and Mitigating Circumstance Claims. We as a Students Union have been asked to highlight 6 key areas that Students would like to see included. A meeting of 10 StARs is to take place on Friday 31st October to discuss this.

Walking Tour of Campus Facilities

In recent weeks myself and the Vice President Student Activities have attended a walking tour of the campus facilities aimed at pointing out things that are wrong with various parts of it, for example equipment in lecture rooms. Now have arranged for the University to run the exact same tour but take a group of StARs of which every Institute is represented. This is to enable the people who use the facilities on a day to day basis to have their voices heard and give them chance to get there thoughts and ideas across.

StARs

At the time of this report being written there were over 570 StARs uploaded onto the University SOLE page. However we still rely heavily on staff uploading their courses StARs onto this or we have no idea who they are. With no StARs yet at all for Sports Studies.

Myself and the Pro Vice Chancellor Students have in the previous 2 weeks started to undertake our part of the action plan that the board requested as part of the response to the Internal Student Survey. With us visiting all the Institute Boards to discuss the StAR system as a whole, the plans that the Institute has to engage with the system and also to gather examples of best practise from across the Institutes. To date we have met with the Boards for;

• Humanities and Creative Arts

• Health and Society

• Science and the Environment

• Sport and Exercise Science

Working alongside the Vice President Student Activities we have decided to open up the Societies Amsterdam trip to members of the StAR system. This trip can be tailored to the students’ needs/requests with the opportunity to engage in extracurricular activities such as tours round the city and the chance to visit museums and art galleries.

StARs Training

This year’s training took place during the University's first Worcester Week, with 210 students attending throughout the week.

Due to demand we have decided to expand the training programme into Worcester week 2 which will see more training sessions run aimed at developing the StARs yet further. A further 38 StARs to date have booked onto the sessions timetabled below;



StARs Forum

The first StARs Forum of the year took place on Monday 3rd November with the main theme of the meeting being centred on Academic Tutoring. The meeting was attended by the Vice President Education, Pro Vice Chancellor Students and Head of Educational Development to field the questions put by the StARs. There were a total of 91 StARs present at the forum.

A high proportion of the student’s comments were positive, with many of the students commending the system. In particular students from Science and the Environment, Health and Society and Humanities and Creative Arts were incredibly pleased with the way things were run in their Institutes. Many of negative comments were centred on students not knowing how their Academic Tutors were, not being taught by their tutors for any of their modules and also availability of staff to actually book a tutorial.

The next StARs Forum is due to take place Monday 1st December, with the theme yet to be decided. We are looking at the possibility of filming the Forum and uploading it to the Students Union website allowing all other students to view what was discussed in more detail rather than just relying on the notes at the end.

Volunteering

After the training 125 StARs had signed onto the Volunteering Scheme just under their role as a StAR, compared to just 27 last year. However the StARs maybe have signed up under different roles such as committee members for sports clubs. During the Christmas period the Students Union will be doing a more detailed analysis on what volunteering students are undertaking, at this point we will also be counting approximately how many hours have been logged so far by all volunteers.

**Abi Clarke, Vice President Student Activities**

Sport Update

At the start of October, I attended the Women in Sport Conference in Stirling, Scotland. This was an insightful event which discussed the barriers that are present for women across all levels in sport. At the Conference it was highlighted that there is a lack of women in influential positions in sport and that this has led to a lack of positive female role models for women and girls in sport, which is a large barrier to participation. This message has led to various campaign ideas to increase female sporting opportunities here at UW.

The BUCS season is now well underway and we have noted relative success in a number of sports.

Men’s Rugby 1sts, who were promoted to the National Premier league last year, have experienced a mixed set of results, with one win away at Edinburgh and 2 defeats. However, due to the nature of the points system in the league, the team have still achieved bonus points due to how close the score lines have been. The team are showing that through their increased amount of commitment to training and strength and conditioning that they are able to compete at the highest level of University Sport.

Other teams noting success this year are, our American Football team with 2 wins in a row, despite only winning their first ever game last year. Women’s Rugby are also undefeated in the league this year, this is a great reflection of the work put in by all players and staff involved at these levels.

Away from competitive sport we have new societies taking shape in the form of an inclusive sport society – which will give chance to students with a disability and able bodied students to take part in varying disability sports including wheelchair racing, wheelchair rugby, seated volleyball and Boccia.

During our AGM on the 11th November, I recommended that the students in attendance, voted to continue our affiliation with BUCS (British University & College Sport) so that our teams can continue to compete at the highest level of University sport. Our students voted in favour of this. This means we will continue to compete against the best institutions that the country has to offer across many sports.

I am working on a campaign to lobby BUCS into recognising more inclusive sports, including our leading disability sport, wheelchair basketball. This is a work in progress and I hope to have more of an update on this for the next board.

Society Update

We are continuing our efforts to promote more of our society’s activities and events. Spotlight Theatre Society hosted a variety show on the 3rd November which was attended by members, friends and other students. Loco show co, another of our performing arts societies are hosting a pantomime on the 3rd December and promotion for this event has been circulated across the SU and social media forums. Away from the performing arts we have been in regular contact with a number of our societies who also hope to host more events in the upcoming year. We are having regular meetings to discuss the best way to facilitate the societies the best way we can, whilst continuing to encourage their independence as student led groups.

At the last board, I discussed how the number of societies had risen since the start of term, I can now confirm that this number has risen again as two new societies were passed through student council. This again, highlights the fact that students are becoming increasingly engaged with extra-curricular activities and want to be able to have more say on their student experience.

Activities Update

We continue to go from strength to strength in terms of volunteering and engaging new students to get involved and sign up to V-Records, with over 500 students signed up to the online system already, this looks to be a very exciting year for student volunteering.

I would like to launch an intramural event that will see our sports and societies competing against each other in a number of different events, all in aid of RAG. We are also encouraging more of our committee members to sign up for V-Records with the added incentive of a new award at Colours Ball and at the new event – Society Summer Ball.

Over the next few weeks we will be putting an increased amount of emphasis on Varsity, by creating a Varsity committee I hope to give students even more input on the event to create the biggest and best serious yet, hopefully with an overall Worcester win.