**President of Education AGM Report 2023**

*This report details the work of your full-time officer, Alex, in his role as President of Education, since the last AGM in April 2022.*

**Cost of Living Campaign**

After my re-election, it became more and more obvious that cost of living was going to continue to get worse and impact our students so began to prioritise working on this. I attended a national cost of living session at NUS Lead and Change with other presidents across the country to begin thinking about what to campaign for and share ideas in July. I have since been leading the campaign within the SU and working on what more we can do. In August I went to another cost of living campaign group with other presidents in Birmingham which spoke more on how we can do more looking at the national picture and government. The campaign is now broken down into 3 sections; What the SU can do, What the Uni can do, What more the Government can do.

I won a bid from the university of over £20k to achieve the following initiatives that made up the cost of living campaign. I would also like to thank all the students that got involved in this, volunteering hours to support and even donating clothes, food and other items.

* Providing a free weekly dinner club (check website for dates)
* Providing a free weekly breakfast (check website for dates)
* Free teas and coffees in the Social Space kitchenette
* Increased Food Bank capacity
* 10 Free lunch bags daily in the SU kitchenette (no need to ask someone as this can be embarrassing, help yourself!)
* Free sanitary products (this, later in the year, did not come from this budget after some fantastic work by our women’s officer to increase these provisions across the campus)
* Got another microwave and hot water tap in SU
* Made parking FREE at university car parks for those with a valid parking permit for the academic year saving students up to £40 a month.
* Had a free clothes event which is also an important thing for sustainability

I also met with Ipswich’s local MP, Tom Hunt to discuss how students are affected by the cost of living crisis, how maintenance loans are not going up with inflation, how less and less people qualify for the maximum loan, how costs are going up disproportionately for students. This allowed me to write a letter that Tom Hunt sent to the Secretary of State for Education who is a government cabinet minister.

This campaign was nominated and was therefore in the top 10 in the UK, for our cost of living provisions at What Uni Student Choice Awards.

**Block grant increase last year and bid has gone in for this year**

The Block Grant is the main source of financial income for the SU, it provides our budget for each year. In my time as a student this has always sat around £400k. Since the last AGM I pushed a lot, through conversations with the university board and executive as well as within the SU team, to increase this in order to increase our staff capacity to be able to do more for students and aim higher. I was able to lead conversations during a period where we had no CEO, later supporting our Interim CEO, to come away with a 50% increase to around £600k. Our CEO has now submitted our latest block grant submission to the university which cannot yet be discussed due to confidentiality.

**Restructure**

Since the last AGM we have completed an organisational staff restructure. When I first joined as President, I noticed that our flat staff structure was not supporting capacity of our staff at any level; our coordinators appeared overworked and burnt out and same with our CEO that had to dedicate the majority of their time line managing, working operationally and putting out fires rather than having time to focus on the long-term aims and strategy of the organisation. We now have a working structure with new staff within it that remedies some of those issues, with CEO, Heads of departments, Managers, Coordinators. This has enabled the organisation to also refocus its priorities to be on our students and what we can do to support and empower them in sports, societies, course reps, part-time officers, Presidents and more.

**Recruitment**

Since the last AGM I have been on the recruitment panels for many roles to support the growth and development of the SU and the university.

* Interim CEO
* CEO
* Student Voice Coordinator
* Head of Engagement
* HR Coordinator
* Comms and Events Manager (Maternity Cover)
* 6 members for our turnaround board, recruiting some well-known names across the sector
* Careers Manager for the university
* Led a student panel as part of the recruitment for Chair of the board for UOS

**Free Food for Thoughts**

Students obviously have such valuable lived experience of what it is like to be a student at University of Suffolk and will naturally be having conversations with friends and people in their cohorts about these experiences. This manifesto point is about trying to have an ear to the ground to understand the good, the bad and the ugly students are dealing with by setting up a stall, having a chat with students and asking some questions and giving them some snacks in return. We have done this on several occasions over the academic year to better represent the views of our students.

**More student and Uni collaboration**

I believe the university and the Students’ Union should empower and support students to develop their skills and experience which both organisations should utilise. Photography students could be event photographers for the university, there should be more student staff roles and volunteering opportunities on our campus. This is something I have advocated in conversations with many departments and lobbied for this cultural shift in various committees. Whilst this becoming a norm will take a long time across the university, we have started to see more of these types of opportunities arise and we have begun reintroducing some more opportunities like these within the SU which will hopefully continue in the future post-me.

**Parking**

During my time as a student at UOS there were numerous issues students were facing with each of the university car parks, about space availability, grace periods, permit issues, Fixed Penalty Notices, drop-off areas and disabled bays. Once I started my role, I have been able to develop a good working relationship with estates and director of estates, Nigel, to remedy some of these issues. We setup some initial meetings with Ipserv to speak about our concerns and adjust the fines bracket and other issues. We started a monthly meeting to go through availability data, fines data, any issues we have heard and future development which has continued throughout my 2nd year as President. Since we have made such changes within our frameworks (which cannot be advertised to avoid them being abused) there as been an extreme drop in parking fines in the university car parks.

**Accessibility**

I have had meetings with director of estates to look at resolving some of the issues students face in regard to accessibility of Ipswich campus. The university has recently completed an external survey/audit of Ipswich campus’ accessibility.

**Block learning**

I have continued to feedback some issues experienced on block learning to the Director of Learning and Teaching, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Centre of Excellence Learning and Teaching, particularly around issues experienced by part-time students and students with disabilities. They ask that students reach out to their course leaders with any issues they are having and for any ideas that could improve the experience of students on block.

**Course Rep Forum**

I have chaired Course Rep Forum each month this year. I have tried to streamline these meetings so that reps get good use for the time they invest and volunteer as well as having guests from the university attend the start of the meeting so that students can directly impact things from Inductions to university policy.

**Committee, Boards, Senate and Working Groups**

I continue to attend every committee, board, senate and working group I can, to best reflect the student perspective to ensure student experience remains at the forefront of decisions. These include Student Experience Task Force, Board of the University, Board of the Students’ Union, Senate, Quality Committee, Ipserv and Estates Service Partner meetings, Embedding Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Task and Finish Group, Estates Strategy Group, Centre of Excellence Learning and Teaching group, Graduation Planning Group, Induction Planning Group, and Admin Management Steering Group, Access and Participation Plan group, as well as regular catchups with the Vice-Chancellor, occasional catchups with Deans of School and Heads of Directorates. It was really exciting to be on the other side of the graduation ceremonies this year and I was honoured to be part of the procession and be on stage. Graduation is one of the university milestones that many look forward to, so it was great to feel all the positivity from that week.

**Vice-Chancellor catchups**

We have setup regular catchups with the Vice-Chancellor to receive regular updates about the direction the university and schools are heading in and to feedback to her, the experience students are having at the University of Suffolk.

**NUS National Conference**

I really enjoyed Harrogate and the chance to network with other Student Unions this year. We had some amazing delegates join me who all spoke passionately about the event and within their respective attended policy sessions.

**CEO Recruitment**

The SU Trustee Board and I completed the recruitment process for a new CEO and found a fantastic for our growing, changing Union. Whilst there was a month where I took on additional responsibilities such as signing off payroll, expenses, invoices, Annual Leave and others, the organisation benefitted from having an Interim CEO until Jumara Stone started her role as CEO in September and has had an amazing impact in the short amount of time she has been in post.

**Training**

Summer was a time to undertake some additional training. As previously mentioned, I attended **NUS Lead & Change** in Leeds with sabbatical officers across the country and increased my network, now regularly talking to other 2nd year Sabbs. I recently had a refresher on **Safeguarding** which was really useful as last time I had some I undertook it from the lens of childhood and disability from my degree where I now looked at it more from HE students. I also had some training on **bid writing** which has already proved useful in the work I’m doing with cost of living and will do further as we start writing the SU’s 5-year strategy with Jumara.

**Ipswich Central**

I met with Ipswich Central today to discuss how the SU and student voice can input more into the work they are doing on improving Ipswich for tenants, students, businesses, tourists, users etc. I have now joined an external Task Force under Ipswich Central, Connected Town Task Force. In my first meeting where I shared a table with many of Ipswich’s CEOs, I was able to add a new item to future agendas where we discuss future plans for safety and the feeling of safety in Ipswich after feedback I have received through conversations with our Women’s officer and students. It was with Ipswich Central and the University work that allowed me to contribute to the Ipswich City status panel recently as chaired by Comedian and Actor, Omid Djalili.