

OFFICER REPORTS – STUDENT COUNCIL

Vice-President Welfare Officer Report

October 2019 Student Council

Katy Baker

Summary

After starting my role in June, I have undergone training and away days with the other sabbatical officers and have been able to plan events that I want to carry out throughout the next academic year. I have met with different members of University staff as well as in the community e.g. Northampton Borough Council housing board and being part of the Mental Health Network Group; both really good opportunities to share ideas and get an insight in to external services who are reaching out to students.

Key Talking Points:

Since starting my role, I have been establishing the main key points of the role and what I want to concentrate on throughout the year. I have been focusing on representation a lot and am making plans for more events and campaigns on issues that affect students including World Mental Health Day, period poverty and anti-spiking. As well as campaigning, I have been involved with planning and hosting events during freshers with the aim of reaching different demographics. Highlights included a mocktail evening and being part of the Students' Union advice stall on Union Day.

I have also supported students on a range of matters e.g. emergency hardship fund, homesickness, ill mental health and financial difficulties.

The biggest project I have been working on is introducing 'Togetherness Tuesdays.' This is now replacing Wellbeing Wednesday so we have a range of activities going on throughout the week and as Wednesday can be sport heavy, we have decided to create a new weekday dedicated to wellbeing. We are still in the first month which we are using as a trial month to see which activities students engage in and what should be changed but I am really excited to seeing more students join in in the coming weeks.

Report

Manifesto Pledges

Hold mental health panels led by lecturers & charities and to train the residential life team in mental health first aid. Emma Dillon from the faculty of health, education and society works hard to train members of staff in mental health first aid and I am always communicating with her to see where there can be more opportunities for this.

Provide healthy recipes which are easy & cheap to make; create a food bank for students to swap perishable foods with other students. For a few weeks, I have been into the Mob Kitchen website and shared some recipes which can support student welfare. As well as healthy and on-budget recipes, it can reduce isolation and loneliness amongst students. I am currently in conversation with Tim Curtis about having cooking demonstrations and having a community fridge.

Support international students with adapting to the Uni and the town. Help them engage with the Students' Union & hold events for them. Gemma, Ryan and Tre organised and held a 'welcome to Britain' party however I am looking at holding a Christmas party for the students.

Meet regularly with the UoN Police team to make sure all students feel safe across all campus' I have met with the police team a few times to discuss the most pressing issues on campus. I have also run an anti-spiking campaign with them to raise awareness of the dangers of spiking but also making sure students know the safe route home. I am often in contact with them to see how we can work together more. I am currently in talks about holding an amnesty day and going out with them on shift to get an insight on what happens around campus.

Have weekly drop-in sessions so students can come to me with any concerns e.g. housing, budgeting, mental health or welfare in sport. I am running the drop-in sessions twice a week, once in the Engine Shed and once in the Learning Hub to increase presence across campus. This is being used as a signposting tool so students are directed to the right services if they are concerned about any welfare matters.

Setting students up for the next step e.g. guidance on housing and mental health early intervention. I am focusing on private-sector housing and health promotion as part of my role this year because I have heard from both students and landlords how important it is to feel safe and happy in your accommodation but also how this can affect your welfare. I sit on the Northampton Borough Council board where there are also some local landlords to discuss the issues that both landlords and tenants face. I am currently creating a site where students can 'rate their landlord' and 'rate their property'. In terms of setting students up for the next stages in terms of mental health, I am hoping that students reaching out and attending the mental health fair can help students.

Making sure every student is heard across all campus' and all demographics engage in the Students Union. I have created a new wellbeing day called Togetherness Tuesday which has introduced a variety of activities to cater for students. October is being used as a trial month so from November there will be a proper timetable but if students have any ideas, I am more than welcome to try them.

I have also tried to reach out to different demographics during freshers by hosting a mocktail night with Gemma. This was held during one of the nights of freshers so there was a choice for students.

Other Activities

I have been working with Gemma with the Period Poverty campaign. We now have sanitary products in all of the toilets in the Engine Shed. When we have looked at whether it is successful, we will be looking at potentially some of the products in other places.

World Mental Health Day is Thursday 10th October and I have organised a fair where different organisations and charities come in to promote their services and to come together to show how important it is to get support with mental ill- health. The theme this year is suicide prevention and from research, 55 people completed suicide in 2016/17 so I have written 55 quotes to represent this.

I am now part of the Mental Health Network meetings where mental health lecturers, the mental health and counselling team, NHFT and other members of mental health services in Northamptonshire come together and discuss how students are being supported. It is a brilliant opportunity to network, gain knowledge and get involved with each other's events.

Over a couple of months, I have written a Parent's guide for parents/guardians of students starting at University. Some of the support services include communications, residential life and the counselling and mental health team. This document is now live and can be viewed on the University website.

From being a part of sport as a student, I have been really interested in seeing where better wellbeing can be implemented in to sport. I have come up with a pledge card where clubs make 3 or 4 pledges e.g join another club with a campaign, hold wellbeing event.

Mandates

N/A

Declarations

N/A

[END]