

Exec #5 17/01/2022

First exec meeting of Trimester 2.

Attendance: President, Welfare Officer, Campaigns & Engagement Officer, Entertainment Officer, Education Officer, Graduate Officer, Science College Officer, AHSS College Officer (x2), Health College Officer, Eng College Officer.

Agenda:

1. Executive Elections 2022
2. Budgets
3. Business College Officer
4. Pieta House Darkness into Light
5. Charity selection with Student Services.
6. College Officers Bios for Website
7. HEA Bill 2022
8. Campaign Planning for the Year

AOB.

Item 1: Exec Elections 2022:

The Sabbatical team are looking to speak to IADB to ask them to continue to keep the nomination threshold lower this year. Despite a return to campus the sabbatical team will argue that the numbers on campus are not back to normal. The President then asks Exec for thoughts on what these thresholds should look like and approval to go to IADB. President met with Ag and Law College Officers before exec and sought their approval prior to election.

Potential thresholds proposed by returning office: 1,000 signatures for referendum, 75 for sabbatical election, and 50 signatures for College Officers and Oifigeach na Geailge. Lower threshold than pre COVID years but the proposed thresholds are the same as last year.

The Returning Officer has said that all signatures are to be gathered using an online form. You can collect signatures in person on campus using for example your phone.

Referendum threshold: Issues raised with how high this threshold still is with campus still mixed with online and in person, if campus was to be closed would this be possible. The jump from the proposed 75 for Sabbatical elections to the proposed 1,000 for a Referendum was noted by different College Officers.

College Officers & Oifigeach: Number of signatures was reasonable and wasn't too difficult to get last year even with the university online. College Officers believed there wouldn't be an issue gathering 50 signatures if UCD remained open.

Sabbatical Officers: Conversation around the possibility to increase the threshold of the Sabbatical elections. It was noted that as the constituency for the Graduate officer is much smaller than the other officers it is harder to gather the necessary signatures needed for this role. It was suggested that the President enquire as to whether it is possibly to give a derogation for the graduate role and

increase the threshold for the other officers. If this isn't possible then the Exec suggests the threshold remains at 75.

The Returning Officer has said that all election prep, hustings workshops all to be done virtually.

Exec had a discussion on whether it was possible to have a live audience at hustings or even just the candidate/panel in person with the event live streamed.

Potential for Webinar style format so audience people could be on zoom call to ask questions to stop time delay while also live streaming it. Proposal to expand the number of sites used to stream the event to Instagram and YouTube alongside Facebook. The aim would be in this case to only use questions submitted via the Zoom Webinar for efficiency reasons.

Length of time for hustings: proposal to extended husting from 6 - 9 pm, adding an extra hour. The hope is that if races are contested hustings will also need to be extended to allow for this. A suggestion of changing the time to 5 – 8 pm rather than 6-9, however, there is an acknowledgment that some classes won't finish until 6 pm and if audience is only virtual then keeping it at 6 pm will allow people to move from campus to somewhere suitable for viewing.

Order: Who goes first? Exec or Sabbats. Sabbats coming first could potentially mean no one remains in the audience for College Officers. College Officers note that Sabbat elections are generally more popular and leaving them to the end will ensure that College Officers have an audience.

Item 2: Budget

What have College Officers & Oifigeach spent?

AHSS has plans to work with Arts Soc on a ball and will be using their budget to help pay the deposit and maybe subsidising buses/tickets. This is up in the air due to COVID. The College Officers are hoping that this will be able to go ahead still on a later date.

Health: Plan to adopt a Cheese and wine style event as seen during the Post Grad week and run one for different year groups within their constituency. They also propose that if this isn't possible, they might reach out to Med Soc to see if they'd be willing to collab on an event.

Science: Want to do some more give aways using their budget with the plan to use whatever is left on book vouchers.

President has asked that College Officers present proposals for spending at the next Exec. If it becomes clear that College Officers will not be able to spend their budget, then the Exec will look at pooling budget resources to plan a bigger event across constituencies.

Item 3: Business College Officers.

There is interest in a by election for Business College Officer. By the time Exec had begun 5 Business class reps responded to an email from C&E expressing their interest in running for the Business College Officer at the first council of the trimester. C&E was asking for Exec's permission for the Returning Officer to open the nomination process. SU council would then hear from the different candidates and vote in the next College Officer. The nomination process will be advertised on the SU website and Social Media channels also.

Item 4: Pieta House Darkness into Light

Pieta House reached out to UCDSU to ask whether we would like to work with them on their Darkness into Light event this trimester. The SU would have worked with Pieta House prior to COVID on this event. It is noted that the event is very time intensive, and it is during exam season which is an extremely busy and expensive time for the SU already. In previous years the SU had a full time Events Manager who was in charge of the Darkness into Light event which meant there was less pressure on Sabbatical teams. COVID also means that the planning for exam seasons has become more intensive as plans are constantly being revised and extra monetary and staffing resources are needed.

Issues were raised about supporting Pieta House due to criticisms raised about the service. Issues with the wages that upper levels of management receive to allegations of negative treatment of staff and those availing of the service, especially those from the LGBTQ+ community.

Decision: No interest expressed by any member of Exec pushing for the Union to work with Pieta House on this year's Darkness into Light. The COO of UCDSU will reach out to different units within UCD to see if they would like to take charge of the event. If no other unit is able or willing to take over the event Exec will be updated.

Item 5: Charity selection with Student Services.

Dominic O'Keeffe, as head of Student Services, and UCD AFC are looking for a charity to support with a €40,000 donation. O'Keeffe has asked for the SU's input on what charity to select. UCDSU does work with Empower the Family, however, the donation is in collaboration with Dublin City Council who do not want to donate the money to a charity working around housing. Exec suggested charities such as Jigsaw (who the SU have worked with in the past), Niteline, Women's Aid and the DRCC. Education suggested that in light of recent coverage around how school closures due to lockdown affected children from lower economic backgrounds that the SU look for charities that work with children from disadvantage areas such as those in DEIS schools and help support them with after school activities and work to promote access to higher education. Organisations such as An Cussan, SOLAS project and Cross Care were proposed. The Education Officer will look into these charities and come back to Exec.

The President will contact O'Keeffe about whether it is possible to select multiple charities, the perception is the charities logo will go on the GAA jerseys so this may not be possible.

The President will talk to the group overlooking this project to discuss what type of charity they want to support and whether SOLAS, which does not focus on college students specifically, suits the idea of the project.

Number One preference: SOLAS style charity. Second preference would be Jigsaw.

Item 6: Website College Officers biographies.

The SU's Social Media Manager asked for the President to remind College Officers to send over a short biography to go up on the SU's website.

Item 7: HEA Bill 2022

The President outlined how the bill was being introduced into Dáil this week. Some of the main changes coming out of the bill are, UCD Governing Authority will not have only 17 members with more external representatives, the SU currently has 4 Student Reps which will be cut to 2 reps but the SU will gain proportionally. In talking with the trade unions on campus it appears they are not overly happy.

Another section of the bill deals with Performance Frameworks and Funding Frameworks. The purpose of these frameworks is to monitor how the universities are using public funds granted to them by the HEA. This isn't very popular within universities as they feel it is a threat to the university's autonomy. The President explains the pros to these frameworks to Exec. These frameworks will ensure that universities will use funds as intended and will ensure strategies such as the mental health strategy are actively worked on rather than just left sit idle by management. Cons issues of autonomy of the university and their relationship with Government. Health College Officer asks whether these frameworks could be used to impact housing costs on campus, it is decided probably not as funding for accommodation on campus comes from the HFA rather than the HEA, but this can be something the SU lobbies to be introduced within HFA funding to universities.

Size of Governing Authority: The Education Officer raises an issue with the increase in external reps featured in the bill. There is a worry that these reps may be pulled from business and corporate backgrounds with no background or expertise in education or higher education. Ministers' choices do much better proportionally with the new size of GA while internal members are losing out proportionally, this is likely to be a sticking point for staff and academics.

The bill is being debated in the Dáil on Thursday. The Graduate Officer notes how UCD has done minimal public lobbying compared to for example Trinity. The Education Officer mentions that Trinity's public lobbying is due to the individual set up of their governance structure and that they are looking for specific acceptations to be made for them in the bill. UCD is likely letting the IUA lead in relation to lobbying around the bill and responding to it.

The Education Officer asks if USI has made any public response to it yet and if they had any input into it. Exec is unsure but assumes they may have been consulted in the drafting of the bill.

The C&E officer notes how there is both a mandate and constitutional change possibly needed when the new change to GA comes in. Currently the SU has a mandate around gender balance on GA and constitutionally the Graduate Officer has an obligation to seek election to the Governing Authority. The mandate on gender equality is due to expire next month and the C&E officer will bring this back up with Exec at this time once we know more about the proposed changes.

Item 8: Campaign planning for the year

A demonstration is being planned for. The focus of the protest will be on fees, commercialisation of higher education, mental health, and housing. The President asked for feedback and input from Exec on plans.

One aim for the protest is to put pressure on Prof Mark Rogers the current Registrar who will take over from Deeks as Interim President once he leaves and Minister Harris for the end of term. Exec wants to make sure that during the selection process for UCD's new President that all candidates are aware of student issues and what UCD students want to see addressed.

President spoke to SIPTU and IFUT about the protest and mentioned it to Unite while in a meeting. Both SIPTU and IFUT said they'd support it conditionally as need to pass it by members. The hope is that the Unions would support a potential student walk out for the protest.

The SU is going to reach out to societies and clubs on campus as the SU want as much buy in as possible across campus.

President plans to work with UCD Confessions to publicise the protest.

Action points: President asks Exec to think about what they feel the Union should be doing in the lead up to the protest to ensure a good turnout such as ways to advertise, stunts and notable people on campus we should be talking to. It is proposed that we have a specific meeting to brainstorm about the protests between Exec, Ents Forum and the Campaign Coordinators. The President and C&E will then bring it to council next week.

AOB:

The Education Officer asks if any College Officers have any particular interest in the topic of Repeat/Resit fees and would like to be involved in a research piece planned to let her know.

One of the AHSS College Officers asks if the Union has any plans for any anti-racism campaigns for this trimester. The C&E officer proposes that this AHSS College Officer, the Diversity and Inclusion Officer and himself meet soon to discuss different campaign ideas. The Education Officer mentions that she is hoping to run a small campaign around VISA issues for international students with the Graduate Officer and asks the AHSS Officer if she'd like to be involved.

One of the AHSS College Officers mentions a meeting they had with the Disability Campaign Coordinator around the basement space and old DramSoc theatre in Newman. They have been talking about whether it may be possible to convert this space back into a (Arts and Social Science specific) society space. They have reached out to the Newman Building Manager to see what has been planned for this space in the Newman Regeneration Plan.