

**Agenda:**

**UCDSU Council Meeting 5**

**Monday, 21st February 2021, 6pm**

**Venue – Hybrid**

**Physical: Fitzgerald Chamber UCD Student Centre**

**Digital Link: (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88056038805>)**

**(a) The declaration of a quorum by roll call.**

Council was quorate

**(b) Minutes arising of a previous meeting.**

Minutes passed by a majority vote.

**(c) Matters arising.**

No matters arising.

**(d) Student Survey.ie presentation**

**Presenter**

**Lisa Bennett; UCD Research Data Analyst**

Chair: we will have the StudentSurvey.ie presentation to Council by Lisa Bennet - student satisfaction survey.

How the survey data is used by UCD.

Reports drafted and implemented across departments on campus.

Snapshot of data from the 2020 and 2021 survey - just before COVID time, and after a full year of lockdown. Major dips across all survey areas during lockdown.

The survey has opened for 2022, and will remain open for 3 weeks. It has been sent to first and final year students, so if you are in those groups, you should have already received your invitation and some reminder emails. Of course, it is also important for class reps and society members to encourage their classmates to take the survey.

[institutional.research@ucd.ie](mailto:institutional.research@ucd.ie)

Chair: Any questions for Lisa? If not, we'll jump ahead to the next item.

**(e) USI Presentation**

**Presenters**

**Clare Austick; USI President**

**Caoimhe O'Carroll; USI Dublin Region Officer**

**Ben Archibald; USI General Manager**

Chair: Next up, the presentation from the USI. I have had a conversation with Caoimhe, updating her on the conversation we had at the last Council and the information that you were looking for. Please remain on mute and reserve your questions until the end.

CA: Hello, we are here today to give you an overview of the USI, our work, and our structures and process, to inform you about how we operate. It is very much down to our member organisations to decide how we work.

We represent 374,000 students across the island, and 32 member SUs. There is a broad variety of issues on the ground, for example with accommodation. In Maynooth and NUIG, the SUs had threats to their core funding. In Blanchardstown and Tallaght, we tailor our support to students who come predominantly from lower socio economic backgrounds.

The student issues we represent are very diverse - we represent universities, ITs, TUs. We make sure that the student voice is always heard, regardless of the institution type. We have been working a lot recently on accommodation issues, the SUSI grant, access and financial burdens associated with education. We really are the umbrella organisation for student unions in Ireland. I'll hand it over to Caoimhe now.

COC: I am the VP for the DUblin region, and I will present our Coiste Gnó. The USI is about students representing students. These sabbatical officers on the screen are students, they may have been part time or sabbatical officers in their own institutions. We also use Irish names now for our board and congress.

The president is the main go to person for media and important, top-level meetings. They oversee and dictate the mission for the year ahead, informed by our members' voices.

Then we have policy officers - I won't introduce everyone because they change year on year. But we have a campaigns officer (responsible for campaigns for the year, and ensuring that students are feeding directly into them); equality and citizenship (a lot of events, driving engagement with the student movement, ensuring diverse student representation across the board, voter reg and things

like that); Gaeilge (promoting the Irish language across the movement, beyond just tokenistic gestures); Welfare officer (sexual, mental and physical health; hold many positions on different national boards; lobbying on different issues, currently a big agenda regarding drugs); academic affairs (QQI, academic integrity, and ensuring that students get the best academic experience); post grad officer (a part time position for the moment, promoting the rights of post grad students and workers). Then, we have the regional officers, and I am one of them. We also have a trilateral agreement with northern Irish and UK unions, so we have an NUS-USI officer, and then also other regional officers in Ireland.

In terms of what we do - I have broken it into 5 points:

- Representation and advocacy - media, board positions where we express student issues to ensure our voices are heard, there are really lots of examples so I am happy to answer any questions later.
- Campaigning, lobbying and protesting - no keys no degrees; fuck the fees. The inaccessibility of education and financial barriers to education are massive annual campaigns. We also run demos and campaigns on specific issues, or with stakeholders/ partners. We have some SDG campaigns, we work with STAND, a recent campaign about spiking, the getreg campaign for voting registration, and the drug harm reduction campaign 'if you go, go slow'.
- Training and events - so Bukki would be very much involved in planning these. Member organisations gain lots of benefit from this. So, we have sabbatical officer training at the beginning of their officership, ensuring they can mix within the network and have tools to be effective. We also run training for part time officers and class reps too. We also run Pink Training, the biggest LGBTQ+ training event in Europe, creating a safe space for students and allies, making sure you can feel comfortable and be yourself in college everyday of the year. Also Women Lead, which is for SU officers but also society leaders and other groups, for women. Reflect - which is all about ensuring that officers can live out their term as sabbatical officers; it's all about re centering and re focusing sabbatical officers, recognising how exhausting the work is. (more in presentation).

We also have many partnerships, a snapshot is in the slide. We are very active with partners to have seats on boards and have a stronger voice.

And we operate as a network. As a regional officer, my job is to get people together and brainstorm. And right now, I think the student movement has really suffered throughout the pandemic, so networking and connecting with one another is so important.

Quick run down - Ben will give more details - but we have working groups under each officer; then there are committees, like the campaigns strategy committee; then the Comhairle Naisiunta, which is all about getting all the officers together from across the country to set mandates or discuss issues that we need to take stances on; comhdhail, the annual congress, where we have elections and also pass mandates which last for 3 years in our policy book.

BA: This is a rare opportunity for me to be out of the USI office. USI Congress is our flagship event. The pink training is probably our best event, but the congress is the beating democratic heart of the student movement. It is 1 delegate per 1,000 students, except for small colleges which are all guaranteed two delegates. What does congress do? It represents the interests, desires and needs of the students of Ireland. They can submit motions, each SU can submit up to 5 motions to USI congress on whatever topics it wants relating to international, national, education, welfare matters, anything. Whatever is important to students will be discussed by congress.

The submitted motions go to the steering committee, who go through the constitutionality of every motion that it can be discussed at congress. Once a motion is determined to be constitutional and lawful, it is put to congress. A 50+1 percent majority is necessary to pass a motion. And a motion that is not strictly about student matters, requires a 66+1 majority.

Some fringe matters can be brought to congress.

Panel discussions - most USI Congresses have had a government minister grilled at them.

Things that matter to students come to congress.

And there is a social. 8 hours of debate every day at USI congress. Hard work in the interest of students. So after that, we create a space for students from all over the country to interact and to truly experience what it is like to be a student in Ireland.

How do you get elected in USI? We love a secret ballot! There are nominations for any candidate seeking election. Any student in the general membership of USI can seek a nomination from SU. You have a spending limit of 350 euro on campaign materials, and there are hustings organised. There is 1 official husting on USI, on the first day of Congress student candidates can present themselves to Congress. Then, the next day, there is a secret ballot. There are booths, ballots, and we have very secure ballot boxes. Then, there is an observed count.

Lastly, I wanted to cover governance. So, USI governs itself. USI is an unincorporated association. It has no requirement to do anything other than congress. However, a few years ago we decided that we needed better structures for robust governance. Our governance committee membership is on

the slide. We have solicitors, students, a head of HR, a person who runs festivals and events, and 2 attending people. And our accountant.

The job of the governance committee is to appraise my work, to check the financial situation of the organisation, it receives and approves the accounts (which are presented every year to the congress), we establish our risk profile and mitigation, oversee HR decisions and policies, and conduct disciplinary and investigative actions.

CA: this is just a snapshot of the academic year in USI (on slide). Monthly priorities/ events.

That's just a broad way of looking at USI. In short, it is about representation, advocacy, ensuring that the student voice is at the top table, regardless of whether it is students from Dublin or Carlow or any other part of the country. We are happy to answer any questions which you may have. To contact us, see the QR code in the slide! Aon ceisteanna?

CHAIR: The last day, there was a lot of interest in USI, so now, I will open the floor to questions.

Gary Ward, stage 2 politics: How much is it to join, and why should UCD join USI?

CA: It's the same cost for every student; 5 euro for a full time and 2.50 for part time. And why? Unity. Ni neart go cur le cheile. It is easier when we meet with ministers if we can point to all of our members' experiences. Also events; access to women lead for election empowerment; pink training about the lgbtq+ community; empower training; participating in national campaigns. USI exists to fundamentally promote access to third level education. Recently, some announcements have been made with regards to moving on the Cassells report - this has been a massive area of our national lobbying for years. So joining would ensure that your voice is heard on all of those issues.

Miranda Bauer, AHSS College Officer: Are you campaigning for international students? We are being overly exploited on fees and accommodation costs, and I didn't see this issue reflective in the slides.

CA: thanks so much, this is such an important question. We do lots of work to support international students, especially on the fee element. This was a part of our 'Fuck the fees' campaign, and we are hoping that international fees will also be reduced as part of the review of the funding model for higher education. This is something we have been campaigning on heavily for a long time.

Furthermore, we believe that international students should have access to student assistance funds and SUSI, we have a position paper on this issue also.

COC: And it is important to note that we have partnerships with ICOS (Irish Council of international students), so we do have access to influence at high levels. And we do talk about commercialisation of higher education as part of all that we do, it is a major focus of our work.

NS, Gender Equality campaign coordinator: So, with regards to your part time post grad officer. We have a full time officer who is a very important team member both for post grad issues, but also general support in the union. Is there a plan to make your post grad officer full time?

CA: Once we have the funds, it will be full time. It has to be brought as a motion to congress to be passed. It has been brought in the past, however the funds were not there. So we hope to bring it back to the membership, once the funding can be secured in our budget. It is really important to ensure the graduate student voice is strong nationally and it is something we really hope to expand on.

RC, AHSS CO: All my time in college I have been in an institution that has not been a member. When you were students, in what way did you feel a difference by your union being a member of USI? What edge did USI bring, in terms of what your SU couldn't achieve by itself.

COC: So, last year I was a voluntary part time officer. And I knew a bit about USI, but not a huge amount. As a class rep before that, I was always encouraged to be involved though. And the biggest value that I saw was on the sabbatical officers. The ability to meet with different sabbatical officers in other institutions, to group resources, to hear from other teams. And I always felt USI was a continuous presence on campus to keep up momentum on national issues. As a local officer, you can get so caught up on local issues, on case work etc, and you can lose sight of the national narrative. But USI were always there as a fire beneath us on national issues, especially the universal ones. Like, I remember Craig McHugh organising a protest on campus, and that had a big impact on me. It definitely encouraged me to go straight for a national election with USI after being a part time officer. SO you do feel the impact, you become aware of SIPTU and other trade unions, and it broadens your perspective on the union movement as a whole.

DKO'T, disability campaigns coordinator: Some history I found on the internet. So in 2013, UCDSU walked out of congress for not being given floor time. What has changed since?

BA: I was there. So, in 2013, UCDSU walked out. For history. There was a personality in the room that wanted to rile up UCD, so the first change is that this person is no longer around. At that meeting, there was an animosity that existed which was misunderstood, and it went from an animosity between individuals and animosity against UCD. The question about floor time at congress and speaking rights is now completely dealt with. We operate a balanced debate system now where the person chairing is able to identify if there is a very large number of people speaking on one side and less on the other, and encourage additional speaking slots for the less popular side.

The meeting where UCDSU walked out was complex, emotional, there was no need for it, and it created a sense for UCD students that they were not welcome in the room. It was untrue then and it is untrue now. The steering committee has addressed it since.

Matthew: Your education for all campaign advocated for a public funding model. Can you elaborate on it more?

CA: So publicly funded education - any of the policies that we have are a result of the debates at congress. And policies on our policy file have been voted on by members. We want to see a complete abolishment of the student contribution charge. We want to see the government fund the HE sector adequately, so there is sufficient staffing, resources, buildings etc to maximise the student experience. That's it really - government funding and supporting the furtherment of the whole sector, lifelong learning, accessibility and ensuring that everyone can reach their full potential no matter what route they take to education. Every year we also have a pre budget submission which pushes for immediate and long term goals.

RC, science stage 3: Today, we have seen a lot of opportunities and student involvement. But how can USI membership provoke more involvement among students who are less active?

COC: I feel like a lot of questions we get asked are about the affiliation fee. But those events which we mentioned are such a good way that reel people in - and they don't know that they are getting involved in an SU activity, but then become class reps. These trainings and events have a massive effect, they reel people in, they are wide in their remit. And aside from that, we are definitely looking to recruit and engage better. We have to recognise that post covid, this is very hard. I sat on a panel today discussing engagement as a perennial issue for all unions. The fuck the fees campaign was very experimental for us. It was about trying to engage the unengaged. To give a tangible example, I was a bit sceptical about the campaign. I was in TUD putting up QR codes and a bunch of lads, who didn't look like the typical SU hack, were going out for a smoke and one of them scanned the code and asked his mates if they knew that they paid the highest fees in the EU. That felt like a moment where my job was done! Not everyone supported that campaign, but if you have ideas on how it could have been done differently, you need to be at the table to feed that in.

BE, Science College Officer: I suppose, one thing that sets USI apart from us is your seats at governmental committees and other boards. But, you have had some seats for a long time. And the most prominent issues, like rent, I still have to pay 10k to live on campus. Yes you have those seats, and we could join you in that student voice, but will it actually lead to realistic change?

CA: I think that is a very valid question. At all levels of society, it takes time to make change happen. For example, with the referendums, student activists were at the fore front of those. On the more

bread and butter issues, we have a seat on the intergovernmental steering group on housing. At the start of this academic year, we responded immediately to the situation, we camped out at the dail, we brought forward a USI bill on accommodation too. Two years ago, we saw a need that students needed to be supported better, especially around covid. So, we brought a bill in so that students would get rent back where they had to leave accommodation suddenly, and also that they would only have to pay rent monthly and not in big bulk amounts, so they would have flexibility if they needed to leave. So, as a result of our lobbying, there was an immediate impact there, and we continue lobbying and pushing for more affordable student housing to be built rather than luxurious accommodation. That's how we set the narrative and work to change attitudes and directions. And this year is the first time ever that the government is looking to reduce the student contribution cost, and thibs is a direct result of our pre-budget submission and years of lobbying. And with the SUSI review - we actually set the terms of reference for what should be reviewed. These are just a few examples from over the last two years.

MOL, stage 1 science class rep: My question is on engagement. If I'm talking to someone in Science tomorrow, and telling them that they'll have to pay 5 euro more, what will they get from that? If they don't take part in training, what other tangible thing are they getting?

CA: So, engagement comes in different ways. For example, the free antigen tests on campuses are a direct result of USI lobbying. On a side note, whether it is the representation at the top levels, ensuring that affordable student accommodation is a priority, that the student experience is improved. A student may not attend a USI event, but they will still benefit from the work that USI does on these issues. They are still being represented, they might be able to attend counselling services because we lobbied for increased investment in them. Whether it's introducing the monthly rent payments in student accommodation, ensuring that lectures can be recorded, there is just so much.

COC: Reference to the work tangible makes it difficult. It is difficult to sum up our work into something that everyone cans ee and touch. It might be more wider effects, and perhaps we can improve how we communicate about it and talk about the achievements and success of our work. And also this idea of a collective - it is an underlying feeling of belonging and belonging to student life. It brings something less tangible, but it should not be underestimated. Pink training is a massive event for so many members, and it gets a huge amount of traction too.

CM, stage 2 mechanical engineers: related to the last question. So, it won't be us who decide if we join USI, it would have to be through referendum. And without these tangible effects, it will be a

difficult issue to put to students. Even though you pushed for those free antigen tests, we still got them even though we are not members.

COC: well, it is a cup of coffee, and it is for a whole year. And we don't want to boil it down to an exchange and a tokenistic thing. We are fighting against commercialisation, and here we are treating membership as a transaction, pay a fiver and get something back. That isn't the frame we should be going for. We should be looking at it in a more holistic way. We don't want to dictate how a referendum, should it be called, should be run. You know UCD students better than we do, so you tell me! You need to consider what would best resonate with your student body.

BA: This is a very fair question. At the end of the day, what can UCD students also contribute? And right now, we are very close to saying in meetings, 'all students are against this!' But right now, they can turn around and say, well what about UCD and UL students? Unity is so important. And the government will not be able to ignore that. It gives you the ability to roll the student tank onto the lawn of those who mean students harm.

NS, Gender Equality Campaign Coordinator: As someone in an SU, we can all reflect at the end of the year about things that didn't go so well. So my question to you, as someone who is in USI, what are the worst things in USI, and how can they be improved?

CA: Everyone might have a different answer to this. I think one thing we are doing well is our governance structures review. So oversight, accountability and transparency has improved. That has been a positive change. What can we do better? Represent all students! And we have a lot of working groups that try to react to needs on the ground, which have helped pick up issues and promote adaptability in our work. So we are very much focused on local and national issues.

COC: I think something which we have fallen down on, but also come back up, is making sure that its students representing students. Being a grassroots led movement, not afraid to step outside the box. USI has in the past been described to me as a mini college for politicians. Going from sabbat, to USI officer, to TD. But I am an example of someone different, who was not a sabbat before being elected. And we have become more reactive and experimental, like the no keys no degrees campaign, and I see that as a big positive change. We are more open to hearing the voices of students as things happen, rather than only acting according to a strategy and always only acting according to what has been thoroughly thought through, and not according to what is going on on the ground.

Chair: That's it. I would like to thank our presenters from the USI. Questions can still be directed to [president@usi.ie](mailto:president@usi.ie) or [dublin@usi.ie](mailto:dublin@usi.ie), and you can also find their details on their website and QR code.

## **College Officer Reports**

- Louise Costello - Health Sciences college officer - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Eoin Martin - Law college officer - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Louise Mahon - Irish language officer - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Meserah Abdullah - Engineering and Architecture college officer - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Billy Egan - Science college officer - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- AHSS College Officer Ronan Cloney - Taken as read (also, AHSS ball! )

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- AHSS College Officer - Miranda Bauer - Taken as read.

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

## **ENTS Forum Reports**

- Emma Gregg, Promotions officer

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Áine Nangle, Productions officer

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Ruth Goulding, Entertainments Rep Coordinator

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Aisling Moloney, First year promotions officer

Chair: Deferred to the next meeting.

### **Sabbatical Officer Reports**

- Welfare Officer - Molly Greenough - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- President - Ruairi Power - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions?

DKO'T: The 175 has dipped once more. When will this bus properly serve UCD students?

RP: We are going to do something on it. The last few weeks have been all hands on the protest, but we will pick this up after mid term. We just needed to divert attention to the protest.

EG: Can we add the 47 to that?

RP: No problem at all. We will reach out to the minister and ensure to collate all notes from the transport townhall to this work.

RC: Just curious there on the centre point, how positive are we on reduction to chicken fillet roll prices?

RP: We sat down with the management of UCD centra. I've asked for a meal deal, and they promised to come back with a proposal. They sounded willing to do it. Going forward, they would rather the issue be brought directly to them rather than plastered all over social media, but they are willing to see what can be done.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Graduate Officer - Carla Gummerson - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Ents Officer - Sarah Michalek - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Campaigns and Engagement Officer - Darryl Horan - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

- Education Officer - Aoife Bracken - Taken as read

Chair: Any questions? Put it to a vote.

*Passed by a majority.*

**(e) Motions on notice.**

**(f) Items for discussion.**

1. *(Emily Bollard): Ideas for sustainable or energy-related research projects (on behalf of UCD Sustainable Energy Community)*

[Emily.bollard@ucdconnect.ie](mailto:Emily.bollard@ucdconnect.ie) - feel free to send to me!

DKO'T: Are you asking us to propose something to be done, or for us to do? If someone could do research into the energy waste in lighting the James Joyce library, as a result of the brutalist design. That would be interesting!

CG, Graduate officer: In Maynooth, they also had solar panels on the library, and collected water on the roof, and lights were sensor operated. So there are a lot of ideas out there in practice that increase efficiency and sustainability.

EC, HS College Officer: Health Science is always baltic, so maybe a project on heat conservation down there?

M, Masters Rep: Cigarette butts around the residence halls. I know smoking is not permitted there, but people do it. There is a lack of cigarette butt dispensers, and this contributes to the littering problem!

BE, Science CO: Does it have to be energy based? Or, it can also be sustainability based? What about lab waste? The test tubes, pipettes, everything is disposable. So much glassware is thrown out in chemistry labs.

RC, Science stage 3: Solar panel idea in the new science wings!

Chair: Any other contributions? No, we might wrap up the conversation there.

EB: a final note - 'just transition', an exhibition is coming to the science center, 1st of March at 6 pm. It's free, just register to it (we will email the link). It will be an hour long, so I recommend it! Thanks so much for all of your help!

**(g) Items for noting.**

**(h) Items for approval.**

**(i) The reports of each Executive Officer, Campaign Coordinator and ENTs Forum Officer.**

**(j) Questions on notice.**

**(k) Questions not on notice.**

**(l) All discussions deferred to the instant meeting from any previous meeting, which discussion shall include the hearing of the report of any committee of Council and the taking of any vote consequent upon such report or discussion.**

**(m) Motions not on notice.**

## **1. Mask Wearing Requirement in Teaching Settings – Ruairi Power**

RP: We were approached to see if students would support mask wearing in teaching settings for a period of time, to stand in solidarity with lecture and teaching staff who are immunocompromised

Chair: Anyone to speak against the motion?

DKO'T: It's more, if masks are not mandatory everywhere, then we should provide masks to students. Because once masks are not mandatory anymore, people might not have them at all times.

Chair: Speakers for?

EB: Kinda in favour of the motion and to respond, UCD already provide free masks. You just need to fill in a google form and you can pick them up at building 71.

Chair: Speaker against? No. Okay, then back to Ruairí to summate.

RP: Absolutely if this goes forward, we will back universal delivery of masks. There should be no issue if the university decide to maintain the mandate. I ask you to support the motion.

Chair: Put it to a vote.

*Passed by majority vote.*

**(n) Submission of motions to be on notice for next meeting.**

**(O) Any Other Business**

RO'K, Environmental campaign coordinator: Just to let everyone know that green week is on! Please do take part!

**Next Council: 28th March**

**Motions must be submitted by the 20th**

**Reports and other items must be submitted by the 25th**

**And coordinators and ents reps will need to submit their mid-term reports, before the last council.**