



UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON
STUDENTS' UNION

UWLSU Trustee Board

Meeting of 9th December 2020, 17:00, Zoom meeting

MEMBERSHIP: Alessio Di Vito (AD), Ancha Joof (Chair)(AJ), Andrea Miller (AM), Anthony Coad (AC), Helen Dawit (HD), Stella Webb (SW)

SMT: Matthew Myles-Brown (MMB), Tye McMahon (TM), Hamna Azam (HA)

IN ATTENDANCE: Patrick Fuller (PF), Vanessa Dankyi (VD), Rachel Mundy (RM), Darren Douglas (DD)

APOLOGIES: Helen Dawit (HD)

Minutes of Trustee Board

1. Introduction

1.1. UWLSU continues to remain focused on helping students achieve the best outcomes they can in the current climate. National events which are increasing uncertainty in higher institutions are the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit negotiations.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1. AM stated that she is now running the BA course at MET FILM. UWL are also involved in this course. AM will be involved in this project for a couple of months.

3. Minutes and matters arising from 06/10/2020

3.1. The group were pleased to hear that the air quality of UWL campus's is checked monthly and there is an annual maintenance schedule. It has been suggested that Covid-19 might be found in re circulated air.

3.2. AC previously asked if the Trustees could be given access to Blackboard so they could review the Welcome talks and sample lectures. He would have liked to experience what students have access to. This request could not be approved because of security reasons. AD is currently a student so AD suggested that he would go through Blackboard with AC.

3.3. The Trustees are keen to review the pay of Student staff. In 2021 a paper on this subject will be presented to the Trustees.

3.4. An update of SABB priorities is now a standing item at Trustee Board meetings.

3.5. UWL have assured TM that there are robust plans in place to deal with a mass outbreak of Covid-19 in halls. Mass outbreaks of Covid-19 have occurred in other institutions. Lateral flow devices (LFDs) are one of the new tools being used to detect and fight COVID-19.

3.6. As a substantial amount of in person activities cannot happen at this moment in time, UWLSU's online presence is extremely important. Following the last Trustee Board, the Comms engagement figures in regards to social channels were reviewed. UWLSU's facebook and twitter accounts have gained an extra 500 followers. This figure is encouraging.

3.7. The Trustee members might have competing priorities which prevent them attending Trustee Board dates. After the last meeting the Trustee Board meeting dates and times were reviewed and amended to try to accommodate all members. Calendar invites have been sent out regarding these meetings. The Trustee Board Items of business 2020-2021 with the updated dates of meetings will be sent to Trustees with the minutes from 09/12/2020.

4. Actions from 06/10/2020 minutes

4.1. The following actions were created or updated based on the discussion of the minutes:

VD – Set up a meeting between AD and AC so AD can go through Blackboard with AC.

VD – Send out updated Trustee Board Items of business template 2020-2021 with finalised minutes for Trustee Board on 09/12/2020.

5. Sabbatical Officer Priority Report (Ancha Joof, Stella Webb, Alessio Di Vito)

5.1. The group **noted** the report.

5.2. The group were pleased to see that the SABBs are on track to achieve their priorities. Despite the global pandemic the SABBs are still focused on helping students.

5.3. Ancha Joof - Update on Priorities

Learning Disabilities:

- AJ is keen improve and refine the resources students with learning disabilities have access to. It is imperative that students are assisted at the start of their degrees and throughout to help them achieve the best marks possible in their degrees.
- AJ and RM recently met Michael Cobden in regards to the ongoing work with students with learning disabilities.
- Varied assessments are a key focus to ensuring that everyone is assessed fairly. There does not appear to be a valid reason why assessments can't be varied.
- A lot of students do not access the help they need. To combat this, it has been suggested that a question regarding learning disabilities be added to Big Conversation. This is a new idea and the technicalities of this idea being made into a reality will be discussed in the near future.

Ace Network:

- The ACE network has been beneficial to those students who have accessed the network and it is important that this project continues after AJ has left the organisation.
- A reason that the ACE network has been so successful is that it helps build the confidence of participants.

- The Trustees were pleased with the perceived success of the ACE network as a main focus of UWLSU is to reduce the black attainment gap and improve the prospects of our students.

5.4. Stella Webb – Update on Priorities

Sexual Violence Prevention Response Group (SVPR):

- SW is now the chair of the Sexual Prevention Response Group (SVPR).
- This area of work involves 5 strands.
- In semester two the policies regarding this area of work will be reviewed.

LGBTQIA+ Art Installation:

- SW has gained approval for a LGBTQIA+ Art Installation. It will be installed by the end of 2020.

5.5. Alessio Di Vito – Update on Priorities

Sustainability:

- AD has gained agreement from UWL that when their power contract is up for renewal they will consider getting a contract with a 100% renewable energy supplier.
- Hedgehog Friendly Campus Campaign – AD continues to liaise with UWL to get this implemented. Following this initiative helps hedgehogs to thrive and it is beneficial for the environment.

Mental Health:

- AD is keen to build resilience amongst the student body. This is a focus of AD and SW. Helping students have the resilience to deal with life's challenges is imperative. AD has been liaising with Michael Cobden from the UWL regarding helping students with their mental health.

Action:

AJ – Share feedback from ACE network with Trustees.

6. Big Conversation (Rachel Mundy)

6.1. RM presented a powerpoint presentation about Big Conversation. Big Conversation involves new students being asked a set of questions during their Induction and Enrolment into the university. Big Conversation is facilitated by UWLSU and it helps UWL and UWLSU understand our new student's needs.

6.2. Overview of information received from Big Conversation during enrolment/induction in October 2020:

- A lot of our students are parents.
- A lot of our students have multiple commitments
- A lot of our students were recommended our institution.
- Responses to Covid-19 questions showed that students had realistic expectations of teaching in the current environment.
- 89% of students had equipment they require to study.
- A lot of students struggle to study at home.
- Students are less confident than in previous years. In regards to the confidence questions there were more 4's than 5's than in previous years.

6.3. RM stated that the information gathered from Big Conversation has been shared with UWL. UWL did an IT survey on the back of UWLSU's findings from Big Conversation.

Action:

VD – Send Big Conversation presentation to Trustees

7. Honorary Memberships (Darren Douglas)

7.1. The board **approved** the awarding of an Honorary Life Membership of the Students' Union to two of its eldest graduates.

7.2. DD highlighted the reasons why the students have been nominated to receive honorary memberships. They both have been model students who are a great example to others. They are heavily involved in their courses.

7.3. The group were keen to award these two students the honorary memberships. These two students will encourage other students to achieve their goals.

7.4. AM was keen to know how many of our students are over 60. The Trustees agreed that their stories are inspirational. The group discussed if seeking to gain more students over 60 would be a good strategy.

Actions:

RM – Liaise with various parties to ensure the students receive their honorary life Membership.

TM – find out what percentage of our students are over 60.

Rachel Mundy and Darren Douglas left the meeting at 17:40

8. CEO Update (Tye McMahon)

8.1. The board **noted** the CEO Update.

8.2. There are 6 key issues currently facing the SU that are either impacting on our work or have the potential to impact in either a positive or negative way in the coming months:

- a) Shift to online teaching
- b) Student satisfaction with the current learning experience
- c) NSS
- d) Students in residential halls
- e) Student mental health
- f) Changes to the UWL Senior Leadership team

8.3. From 9th December all universities had to shift to online teaching only. This was a government directive. The rationale for this decision is to ensure students can self-isolate before returning home for Christmas with their families.

8.4. Overall, students are largely satisfied with the experience they are having in relation to both in person and online learning. The UWLSU issues tracker which is managed by the UWLSU Representation team gathers student's feedback and this feedback is shared with Heads of Schools and VCE members.

8.5. NSS activity is due to take place on wc 18th January 2021. Plans are currently being finalised.

8.6. The students that had to be relocated from Paragon Halls of residence have now been relocated into either 7 different student accommodation residences across West London, returned home or found their own accommodation. It is thought that about 80-85% have remained in UWL supported accommodation options. 580 students were affected.

8.7. UWL has invested in additional resources to support the mental health and wellbeing of students. The group was also keen to find out what UWL and UWLSU are doing to help with student's mental health over Christmas. Some students won't be able to go home to visit family members. TM stated that unlike other years UWL will be open over certain days over the Winter break and students will be able to access mental health services. The UWLSU front desk will also be open over certain days over the winter break to answer queries.

8.8. There have been some changes to the UWL Senior Leadership team. These changes are:

- Chris Fenner – Director of Property Services has retired
- Charmagne Barnes, the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the College of Nursing, Midwifery and Healthcare will take on the oversight of our student residences and will lead on the process for the Athena Swann Charter
- Professor Joelle Fanghanel, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), will oversee the School of Human and Social Science and its Head of School, Dr Sharon Cahill
- Sara Raybould has been promoted to Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)
- Konstantinos Tzortzis has been promoted to Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor and Director of Strategic Planning and Data Services

9. NSS Update (Tye McMahon)

9.1. NSS activity will take place on wc 18th January 2021.

9.2. The group were wary of the possible changes to the NSS Survey. It seems that the new NSS survey will focus on employability and retention.

9.3. UWLSU is currently finalising letters about the proposed changes to the NSS Survey which will be sent to the Minister for Higher Education and Ealing's local member of parliament.

Action:

TM – Send Trustees a copy of the letters about the changes to NSS which will be sent to prominent figures.

10. Quarterly Report (Inc risk register summary) (Tye McMahon)

10.1. The board **noted** the report.

10.2. Q1 saw UWLSU work collaboratively with UWL to deliver an accessible and COVID safe induction experience for students in the 20/21 cohort. Throughout Q1, UWLSU also did significant work internally to prepare its services for COVID safe delivery in order to continue to support students during these challenging times.

10.3. Some highlights from the Welcome Period include:

- 1600 new students having a 121 Big Conversation with student staff
- 1800 new students attending one of the SU-led induction activities
- 13 social events, including two, socially distant, physical events
- 330 new course reps elected
- 3600 students attending virtual Freshers Fairs
- 24% of all students engaged during the Welcome Period

10.4. To help keep students engaged, over the last two weeks 1300 level 3 students have been contacted by UWLSU staff to ensure they are okay and ask if there is anything they need help with.

11. Management accounts (Hamna Azam)

11.1. The group **noted** the monthly management accounts for UWLSU.

11.2. The group were pleased to see that despite the challenging global circumstances that UWLSU are operating in, the finances are still in the black. The thorough planning of the finances has enabled UWLSU to maintain a healthy balance sheet.

11.3. There are tight controls on spends at the moment. All spends need to be approved by a member of the Finance team or a member of the senior management team.

11.4. Following the reforecast and carefully considering uncertainties of the pandemic, the operating result at year end is expected to be a surplus of £10k. The operating surplus of £10k is a reduction of the forecast surplus. The reasons for the reduction of the surplus are a combination of the following reasons:

- reduction in forecasted income in commercial
- a lower insurance claim settlement

11.5. To retain a surplus UWLSU has offset financial challenges by focusing on reducing cost of sales and other expenses. There have also been some staff cost savings.

12. Audited Accounts (Hamna Azam)

12.1. HA gave a verbal update on the audited accounts. UWLSU's accounts are audited each year by an external company.

12.2. The account results are promising with only a few minor areas for improvement.

12.3. TM apologised for the paper being delayed but this has occurred due to the auditors being delayed in producing the report. The full audited accounts will be sent out on week commencing 14th December 2020.

12.4. The group were pleased to hear that UWLSU continues to produce clean audits.

Action:

13. NUS Delegate Elections Report (Matthew Myles-Brown)

13.1. The group **noted** the report

13.2. Voting for the NUS Delegate Elections took place on 1st December 2020 – 2nd December 2020.

13.3. The following elections were declared by the Returning Officer:

- **NUS Delegate:** Stella Leonie Webb
- **NUS Delegate:** Alessio Di Vito
- **NUS Delegate:** Mae Kelly

13.4. Plans to improve the voter turnout for future elections include:

- An improved digital communications plan for centrally promoting the election to voters
- Support for candidates for digital campaigning
- A review of the rules to consider whether they need to change further for this new context
- Physical presence from SU staff on campus to promote the elections, even if voting booths are not possible
- Whether there is a safe way to conduct a combined paper and online voting system
- Review engagement with academic staff and student groups to identify possible initiatives to better promote the election.

The closed business of CEO appraisal was discussed between the Trustees at 18:50-19:00. The people who left the meeting at 18:50 so the closed business could be discussed were Tye McMahon, Matthew Myles-Brown, Hamna Azam, Vanessa Dankyi, Patrick Fuller.

At 19:00 the following people returned to the meeting: Tye McMahon, Matthew Myles-Brown, Hamna Azam, Vanessa Dankyi, Patrick Fuller

14. AOB

Trustee Obligations – Attendance at meetings

14.1. The group discussed the obligations of Trustees in regards to attending Trustee Board meetings. The obligations of Trustees are referenced in the bye laws and articles.

14.2. Trustee obligations in regards to meetings as stated in the Bye Laws 5, section 3:

'I will attend all appropriate meetings and other appointments at the Union or give apologies. If I cannot regularly attend meetings I will consider whether there are other ways I can engage with the Union.

I will prepare fully for all meetings and work for the organisation. This will include reading papers, querying anything I do not understand, thinking through issues before meetings and completing any tasks assigned to me in the agreed time.

I will actively engage in discussion, debate and voting in meetings; contributing in a considered and constructive way, listening carefully, challenging sensitively and avoiding conflict. I will participate in collective decision making, accept a majority decision of the board and will not act individually unless specifically authorised to do so'.

14.3. In section 25.7 of the Articles it is stated that the office of a Trustee shall be vacated if 'they fail to attend three consecutive meetings of the Trustees and the Trustees resolve that the Trustee be removed for this reason'.

Action:

AJ – Follow up with Trustee attendance at meetings

Trustee Recruitment (Ancha Joof)

14.4. The Trustee Board need to recruit two external Trustees and one Student Trustee.

14.5. AJ is finalising the process of recruiting a Student Trustee with MMB and TM. AJ, AC and AD will be on the panel for the recruitment of a Student Trustee.

14.6. In regards to lay Trustee Recruitment the people on the panel will be AJ, AM, PF. TM will be involved in an advisory role.

14.7. The group reaffirmed their focus on ensuring the pool of applicants is diverse so the process cannot be rushed.

Matthew Myles-Brown is leaving the organisation

14.8. MMB is leaving UWLSU after 7 years of loyal service. He is a great example of the dedication and passion SU staff have. He will be dearly missed.

14.9. The group are sad to see him leave but are excited to see what he achieves in the future.

15. Summary of actions

AJ – Share feedback from ACE network with Trustees.

VD – Send Big Conversation presentation to Trustees

RM – Liaise with various parties to ensure Maureen and Craigan receive their honorary life Membership.

TM – find out what percentage of our students are over 60.

TM – Send Trustees a copy of the letters about the changes to NSS which will be sent to prominent figures.

HA – Send Trustees Audited accounts paper on wc 14/12/2020

AJ – Follow up with Trustee attendance at meetings

Actions from 06/10/2020:

VD – Set up a meeting between AD and AC so AD can go through Blackboard with AC.

VD – Send out updated Trustee Board Items of business template 2020-2021 with finalised minutes for Trustee Board on 09/12/2020.