

Union of UEA Students Mission 2009-13

1. To create positive change in matters relating to the education of UEA students
by effectively representing their collective views.



Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

25 April 2013

Summary

Key Discussions

- Election Timetables
- SOC Communications
- Part Time Officer Trustees
- University's failure to significantly increase UUEAS' funding

Key Actions

- Election Timetables to be agreed at next meeting
- Facebook preferred method of SOC communications
- Part Time Officer Trustees to be elected at next meeting
- Strategy for lobbying the University over funding to be discussed at next meeting

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Voting Members present:

Emma Silk (Environment Officer), Lauren Sloan (Ethical Issues Officer), Ella Gilbert (Non Portfolio Officer), Joe Raynes (Non Portfolio Officer), Rachel Knott (Women's Officer), Freddie Meade (Non-Portfolio Officer), Tu An Ngo (International Officer), Sam Clark (Community and Student Rights Officer), Josh Bowker (Academic Officer), Matthew Myles (Communications Officer), Sebastian Bachelier (Non Portfolio Officer Elect), Holly Staynor (LGBT+ Officer), Kimberley Hirst-Jones (Postgraduate Officer).

Chair

Trevor Killeen (Mature Students Officer).

In attendance:

Tony Moore (Representation Support Worker).

Apologies:

Joe Levell (Finance Officer), Daniel Delargy (Students with Disabilities Officer), Eunice Opare-Addo.

927 Membership

Chair noted that E Opare-Addo had been the winning candidate at the Ethnic Minorities Officer By Election and was now a member of SOC.

928 Minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2013

The minutes were agreed.

929 Action Log

Chair noted the completed actions.

S Clark reported that there was a small amount of writing up and some statistics to be inserted into the Strategic Plan; but that it should be finalised by the end of the coming week.

M Myles noted that, for the Impact Report, he would be contacting

the previous Part Time Officers to get them to detail their achievements over the previous year for inclusion in the Report. Chair asked the FTOs to remind J Levell about the ordering of Officers' hoodies before the next SOC meeting.

Chair asked S Clark to investigate whether the disciplinary procedure for repeat offenders against unacceptable behaviour at LCR nights had been drafted.

Chair noted that there had been no report, as yet, as to the availability of accommodation for residential training.

930 Matters Arising

There were none.

931 Ethnic Minorities By Election

SOC noted that the turnout had not been included in the DRO's written report.

J Bowker confirmed that it was 86 and that the target had been 100.

932 Elections Timetable

M Myles noted that the new Union Handbook was being compiled and that the Timetable would need to be included in it. He noted that, last year, there had been some issues over the recording of the setting up of the Timetable and he asked that this year it be formally approved by SOC and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

He noted that, in his proposed timetable, there were no changes to the NUS Delegation elections. However, for the general elections, he proposed three changes, these were:

1 Here he noted, if the new Constitution was in place, there could be online nominations, and he raised the possibility of opening nominations before Christmas.

2 The possibility of opening campaigning on Monday 3 March or Tuesday 4 March. He noted that, under the present system, campaigning began and then there was a gap until voting commenced. He noted that last year's candidates had expressed their dissatisfaction at having this gap and they wanted a shorter time lapse between the start of campaigning and the opening of polling. He thought, if SOC wanted to address these concerns: voting might start earlier or, alternatively, SOC could decide to leave arrangements as they were.

3 SOC would need to decide whether they were happy for voting to continue over the weekend and finish on the Monday. He noted that at some other students' unions voting finished on the Friday, the count took place over the weekend and the results were announced on the Monday.

Officers put forward a variety of arguments both for and against the three possible changes.

At the Chair's suggestion, SOC agreed that the four incoming FTOs would be asked for their views on the three possible changes and the matter would be brought back to the next meeting for a decision to be made.

Action

933 SOC Communications

Chair noted that, the previous year's Officers has asked that there be one communications medium for SOC communications and they had asked for this to be Facebook; he wondered if the present Officers would prefer just one medium and, if so, whether this should be email or Facebook.

M Myles believed that the previous year's Officers had very much enjoyed being able to hold discussions on Facebook.

SOC expressed a preference for communications by Facebook.

Action

F Meade noted he was not a regular Facebook user but he would, if it were necessary to his work as an Officer, use it.

J Bowker argued that using Facebook was, in essence, a lifestyle choice and Officers should not be forced into making this choice.

S Clark noted that there were often quite detailed discussions via Facebook and he believed if Officers did not use Facebook they would be missing out on these.

T Moore advised that any Officers having difficulty accessing their Officer email accounts should contact him. He noted that he had been asked to set up an account for the Non-Portfolio Officers and he had passed this request on to the Membership Services Manager.

934 Part-Time Officer Trustees

Chair noted that this was an agenda item in order for the PTOs to be made aware that they would be electing two of their number to be Trustees and that they should think about whether they would like to be candidates. He noted that PTO Trustees would be elected at the next SOC meeting.

M Myles noted that this was an important role as the Trustees dealt with all legal, financial and reputational matters that affected UUEAS; as well as managing the Chief Executive's performance. He noted that, as it was such an important role, it had been incorporated into the new Constitution that any Part Time Officer could be a candidate. Chair asked anyone interested in the role to contact any of the FTOs or T Moore for further information.

Action

935 Review of Decisions made by Union Council on 18 April

M Myles noted on the timeline for implementation of the new Constitution that it would be sent for approval by University Council on 20 May with prior approval by the Trustees and then approval by the University's lawyer having, hopefully, been obtained. He noted that if it missed the May meeting, there would be a further opportunity in June. He hoped that the new Constitution and the Bye-Laws would be in place for the start of the new academic year. He stressed to Officers that if their job descriptions were to be changed under the Bye-Laws in the coming year it would not affect them personally as the new Constitution stipulated that any changes could not be applied until after future elections.

S Clark noted the final version of the Strategic Plan would be completed in the coming week.

Chair noted that the timeline for the Budget would be discussed under Any Other Business.

Chair asked that SOC's thanks to the FTOs, for their work on the Constitution, the Plan and the Budget, be minuted.

936 Management Committee Minutes of 11 March

S Bachelier noted the question of the EU Referendum in the minutes.

M Myles noted that the original motion to Council had been for a Referendum on for or against staying in the EU and this had been changed by Council to one, solely, for staying in the EU. So any campaign that would be mounted would be for staying in the EU. He noted it had been characterised as a non-issue in Management Committee in that it was not an issue of concern to the Trustees in legal terms.

S Bachelier noted that he had not received the letter referred in the minutes but that he was still contemplating whether to start a campaign on the UK staying in the EU.

937 Any Other Business

At S Clark's suggestion, SOC agreed to invite the Full Time Officers elect to future SOC meetings.

Action

Chair noted that he had emailed the Full Time Officers about SOC making a linkage between the University coming top in a newspaper survey of student satisfaction at UK universities and the negotiations with the University over the UUEAS Block Grant.

M Myles reported that J Levell had met with the Registrar over UUEAS' request for around £300,000 to invest in services to the members. In the submission, UUEAS had asked for £166,000 to maintain the current level of provision. At the meeting, the Registrar had indicated that the University were willing to provide £40,000 for UUEAS to invest in its commercial services on the understanding that UUEAS would run student-only club nights and that the bars would, also, be student-only. The Registrar had, also, agreed yearly funding of £13,000 for the UUEAS website. These sums would be in addition to the University's funding of £460,000 for the new Megashop.

S Clark stated, that instead of the £300,000 which UUEAS had asked as a minimum to maintain the current level of services and make basic improvements, the University had offered around £13,000 for the website and £40,000 for commercial services which had come with conditions attached.

Chair believed that these conditions would have the effect of reducing UUEAS' revenues.

M Myles added that the Megashop funding would be part of the University's redevelopment of the Street which had already planned for; furthermore, he believed that if the Megashop did result in any additional income for UUEAS, the University would not see the need to

increase the Block Grant.

Chair noted that, in commenting on the University's top place in the newspaper poll, the Pro-VC Academic had emphasised the University's aim was to provide a 'gold standard' student experience. Chair noted that the Pro-VC Academic had failed to acknowledge that a lot of the services and activities that made up that 'gold standard' student experience were provided by UUEAS.

Chair believed that the University's failure to provide the level of funding that comparator student unions received, alongside their failure to recognise UUEAS' contribution to the excellence of the student experience should be highlighted to UUEAS members and to the new Chancellor.

Chair believed this was a matter that SOC should urgently campaign on. He noted, however, that he was working on placement and would not be in a position to lead the campaign.

M Myles noted that he had, earlier in the day, been interviewed by the BBC and had expressed his hopes that UEA could continue to provide the best student experience. He noted that the Full Time Officers had had frank discussions with senior University staff about the lack of a meaningful increase in funding.

M Myles believed it to be a positive development that the Officers had been able to have full and frank discussions and to make their position clear to the University as this would aid, what had to be, the long term goal to change the funding model. He noted a meeting had now been scheduled with the University to discuss funding over the long term.

Chair argued that students should be made aware of the situation in a timely fashion so that they could consider whether to mount a grassroots campaign to lobby the University.

H Staynor agreed and believed it imperative that students should be aware that their services and activities were threatened due to lack of funding.

E Gilbert agreed and thought the way forward was not to be antagonistic but to be proactive.

J Raynes argued, as to whether Officers should be involved in any campaign, that, if the Union was not going to raise any objections to what were, effectively, cuts in funding; there would be little point to its existence.

S Bachelier believed it important that the Presidents of all Clubs and Societies be informed of the situation with regard to funding and possible cuts.

K Hirst-Jones thought it worth reminding the University that, although PG students, who she represented, were not as directly involved in UUEAS activities as UG students were, the UG students acted as a feeder community: they were the PG students of the future.

T Ngo argued that, as SOC possessed information on funding which would directly affect every student, the Officers had a fundamental duty to make this information known as widely as possible.

J Raynes argued it was imperative for SOC to differentiate itself from the University so that students would not blame UUEAS for any rise in prices or cuts in services.

F Meade thought a key point would be for student media to be fully briefed on the current situation and its possible affect on the student experience.

M Myles argued that the power behind any campaign would come from the disappointment of the generality of students when it became clear that the continued lack of funding was beginning to degrade the student experience.

SOC agreed to look at possible campaign strategy in the Open Space Discussion and to consider this matter again at its next meeting.

Action

938 Time, Date and Place of Next Meeting

5 pm, Thursday 2 May in the Student Officer Centre and the Board Room.