

**Annual General Meeting**

**8th December 2016**

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| **In attendance** |
|  | Chair - Maja SmithDeputy Chair – Tareke GreggPresident – Lowri JonesVP Sport – Philippa WilliamsVP International and Outreach – Davide BertelliVP Welfare – Chloe Mills VP Activities – Jess Vagg VP Education – Steph WearneChair of Accountability Board – Josh Knight |
| **Reports and the finance presentation can be found online at** <http://www.upsu.com/studentvoice/agm/> |

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| **Minutes** |
| Welcome  | The Chair welcomed everyone in attendance and explained that as a charity UPSU has a legal requirement to present accounts to its members each year for approval. As well as general matters of housekeeping, the Chair then went on to run through the following points:* Please respect the opinions of other people and their right to speak, if you get involved in a debate then please make sure that you are questioning the issue and you do not get personal.
* Any inappropriate language or behaviour will not be tolerated and anyone being inappropriate or offensive will be asked to leave.
* Please note that all previously submitted reports must be followed
* Any student registered on a Plymouth University course is classed as a full member unless they have chosen to opt out. All full members can speak and vote on any issue. Other people present may speak but cannot vote.
* This meeting will be conducted in accordance to UPSU Constitution and its by-laws as well as all other relevant policies.
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| Notice of Any Other Business | Four items were raised by students in attendance; * Promotion of the motion deadline for AGM
* Akuma kit contract
* How the university handled Black History Month
* Voting at the Union Executive Committee regarding the ‘Stop Selling Hate’ motion
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| Accounts and Finance Presentation | The Chair delegated the presentation of the Accounts and Finance report to Sarah Davey, UPSU Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Membership.The accounts cover the period from 1st August 2015 - 31st July 2016Question for Sarah Davey – Are the figures given for representation spent on political representation?Sarah Davey explained that the figures cover all costs for the Student Voice Team and Executive Officers including; AGM, forums, elections, training and development. Elements of these areas do involve political representation but it is not given as a separate figure. |
| Matters to discuss  | No matters were submitted prior to the deadline.The Chair explained that any student can submit an idea or motion at the forums or through the Student Voice Team. studentvoice@su.plymouth.ac.uk  |
| Reports | Board of Trustees Report |
| Lowri Jones, UPSU President gave an overview of the report, see appendix 1There were no questions concerning the Board of Trustees report  |
| Union Executive Committee Report |
| Maja Smith passed the Chair to Tareke Gregg whilst she gave the Union Executive Committee report.Question for Maja Smith – Which members of the UEC voted which way?Maja Smith responded that that information is unavailable but she would be happy to discuss the process of voting at UEC after the meeting.Maja Smith resumed as Chair |
| Accountability Board Report |
| Matt Hatfield, Chair of the Accountability Board gave an update on the Boards activity so far this year, there were no questions for Matt. |
| Executive Officers Reports |
| The Executive Officers gave their verbal reports then welcomed any questions from the audience.Lowri Jones - President Lowri covered the following points in her report;* Alcohol Impact
* Sustainability
* Global Project
* Representing at various boards and committees

There were no questions for LowriSteph Wearne – VP Education Steph covered the following points in her report;* Review of Academic Representation
* Stress Less events
* Postgraduate Student Experience
* Course Reps & School Reps

There were no questions for StephDavide Bertelli – International and Outreach Davide covered the following points in his report;* Global Project
* Supporting students progressing from partner institutions
* International guarantor scheme
* LGBT+ Forum; BAME Forum

There were no questions for DavideJess Vagg – VP Activities Jess covered the following points in her report;* Support for societies
* Recognition project within activities
* Engagement barriers
* SU:Media update

There were no questions for JessChloe Mills – VP WelfareChloe covered the following points in her report;* Mental health
* Sexual health
* Personal safety
* Zero tolerance to sexual offences

A student commented that JKD and Kickboxing clubs did not get invited to participate in the self-defence sessions that will be taking place in January.Chloe explained that the Ju-Jitsu club approached her regarding running a session and that other clubs are more than welcome to help.Philippa Williams – VP SportsPhilippa covered the following points in her report;* ‘This Girl Can’ campaign and Rainbow laces update
* One Step Campaign in partnership with VP Welfare and Nancy Astor Sports Centre
* Students of the Month Recognition
* Work that has been completed with the Head of Sport

There were no questions for Philippa. |
| Any other Business  | Promotion of AGM Deadline It was noted that not all students have Facebook or check the UPSU website and the student raising the AOB suggested that UPSU could email students reminding them of the deadline for motions in advance.The Chair read from the General Meetings Bye-law:5.4 All items for discussion and decision (motions) shall be submitted to the Chair of the AGM ten working days before the date of the meeting. 5.7 The UEC, with support from the Student Voice Department, shall be responsible for the publication of details of all Annual General Meetings twenty working days before the meeting. It must be publicised on the Union website, via social media, and other available Union publications. The Chair noted that these requirements had been met and students do need to take some responsibility for engaging with democratic processes and channels of communication. Any feedback for the future can be made to the Student Voice Department. Akuma Kit ContractA question was raised regarding the issue of kit exclusivity and if that will still be in place next year or if clubs will be able to determine their own supplier.Philippa Williams – VP Sport noted that this is the final year of the contract and attendees at the next Sports Forum will be asked to consider if the contract should continue or go out to tender.Black History Month at the university The person raising this issue had left the meeting but Davide Bertelli – VP International & Outreach, explained that he had received feedback from several students who were disappointed that the university did not acknowledge Black History Month. Davide noted that he attended the university Student Life Committee and gave feedback to them.UEC and the ‘Stop Selling Hate’ MotionThe person raising this issue had left the meeting but another student asked why the issue was not taken to wider student consultation.Davide Bertelli – VP International & Outreach and proposer of the motion, responded that UEC is the highest student led decision making body in the union and that all the elected Forum Chairs sit on the committee and have voting rights. He added that UEC is a place to discuss and debate motions and is also the place to decide the unions political stance. Davide then made a statement regarding the motion – see appendix 2 |
| NUS Delegate Speeches  | Names were picked out of a hat to determine the running order and each candidate had one minute to give their speech. More information about the NUS Annual Conference and the delegate role can be found on the UPSU website <http://www.upsu.com/studentvoice/nus/>  |
| Meeting ends | The Chair thanked everyone for attending  |

Appendix 1

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**Report to AGM**

**December 2016**

**Lowri Jones – UPSU President**

To put this report in context, it was read by myself representing the Trustees, to the university last month, which is an annual requirement.

**Introduction**

UPSU has had another excellent year with all departments recording great engagement from our students whilst continuing to deliver a high quality student experience. We continue to scrutinise and monitor our budgets very closely resulting in continued financial stability despite some ever growing commercial competition both on and off campus.

2015/16 was the first year of our new Strategic Plan and we are pleased to report that we have made excellent progress working towards our goals and ambitions ensuring that we not only continue to meet the needs of all of our diverse student body, but that we also remain a sustainable, well governed charity.

**Finances**

2015/16 saw the introduction of Financial reporting Standards FRS102 and the Charities SORP 2015, which has significantly altered the representation of our financial position in our financial statements and also resulted in 2014/15 statutory accounts being restated.

The changes are entirely due to the new accounting requirements in respect of our SUSS pension liability and the employee leave accrual, e.g. the requirement to account for the estimated pension liability within the balance sheet has impacted on the overall balance of reserves shown in the balance sheet. Wherever possible the financial statements include appropriate narrative to enable the changes to be understood. As a result of these year-end adjustments our Income and Expenditure bottom line surplus of £45,061 does now differ from the surplus presented in our statutory accounts.

Our consolidated gross income from all sources this year totalled £5,592,610. Total expenditure of £5,465,110 on the wide ranging student benefits we provide as well as our other revenue generating activities. After a net transfer of £147,168 into designated and restricted reserves an unrestricted surplus of £133,791 was reported in the statutory accounts. Transfers to reserves were also made in order to purchase and enhance a range of operational assets over the summer including the redesign of the Illusion stage area, replacement of pool tables and the purchase of a second coffee machine for the Lounge to meet growing demand. We have also invested again this year in sport with the purchase of new spin bikes, speakers and various sports equipment. We have added to our facilities development reserves to save for any future refurbishments but with potential changes afoot for us in the new estates strategy we are mindful of spending too much on some necessary major refurbishments that are needed in some areas until we have further clarity and timescales.

We continue to have ongoing budget challenges with rising fixed costs and the ongoing volatility of our commercial departments, especially as we have said with the increasing strong competition in all areas of our business. We continually try to enhance our offer whilst maintaining best value for money, something that our students’ feedback is extremely important to them

**Highlights of our year**

Our Trustees and Leadership team continue to monitor our strategic ambitions and analyse our ongoing research to ensure that we are achieving our goals and financial targets and also quite importantly that we are meeting the needs of all of our diverse staff and student body.

We continue to celebrate the successes of all of our communities through Sports, Societies, Volunteering and the SSTAR awards. We saw many students being recognised for key awards with nearly a thousand nominations being received for our Student, Staff and Teaching awards.

Our Volunteering department achieved the Investors in Volunteering status this year and recorded a massive 23,093 of volunteering hours along with nearly £328k raised for both local and national charities. We are exceptionally proud of what our staff and students have achieved in this area this year.

UPSU also continues to be recognised as a high achieving organisation and Students’ Union; we were awarded a NUS Best Bar None Gold award again this year and overall Best Bar None in the whole of the Plymouth region. We were awarded a NUS Green Impact excellence award for our work around sustainability and were also delighted that we remain in the top quartile of the NSS Students’ Union league table, a great achievement for UPSU.

Our Executive Officers have run some successful campaigns and our Student led Forums have been active with a growth seen on our Liberation Forum’s. Our Executive Officer team also worked hard on the Student Written Submission for the University’s Quality Assurance Agency audit and we have 25 recommendations that we will be working in partnership with the University to work towards.

Both our Officers and staff continue to work hard to enhance community relationships and partnerships. We have worked closely with PCC on campaigns with community groups organising events also the Police and evening and night time economy groups to help improve the safety of the campus and city.

Our new mobile Students’ Union is now operational and being very well received by our off campus students. We are also using the van to raise the profile of some departments and campaigns both off and on the main campus.

Overall in terms of our finances and also the activities and services we provide UPSU has had another an excellent year in 2015/16.

**The Year Ahead**

In 2016/17 we will be in the second year of our Strategic Plan and we feel we need to have a more consolidated approach to all of the research and surveys that we undertake, to reliably inform our decisions and to fully understand our students needs, so we have just recruited a new Insight Manager who will oversee this important area of our work.

The Trustees have also recently made the decision that UPSU should change its legal form with effect from 1st August and become a Company Limited by Guarantee. This is a big project for us this year and the new Memorandum and Articles will need to have written approval from the University Board of Governors.

The setting of our 2016/17 budget was again quite challenging for us. We try to be prudent with our commercial forecasts whilst also trying to remain innovative and keep up with our competitors. Our rising core costs are our main challenge with our ever increasing pension deficit repayments and rising prices. Our pension deficit payments are also predicted to rise significantly next year following a recent actuarial valuation. We would not have been able to maintain our current service and activity levels had it not been for the small increase in our Block Grant again this year. We would like to reiterate our thanks again to the University for their understanding and support.

We have lots of exciting plans for the year ahead where we will be working on some key projects and campaigns along with some great events and planned activities. We are very lucky in that we have an engaged, passionate staff team who work exceptionally hard to achieve what we do and as such we continue to invest in our staff development and welfare.

Finally, at this point of my report to the university I thanked the institution for working in partnership with us and for a great year, however this time, on behalf of the Trustees, Executive Officers and staff at UPSU we would like to express our sincere thanks to you, our membership, for your continued support, engagement and dedication – thank you.

**Lowri Jones**

**UPSU President**

Appendix 2

To clarify, what UPSU UEC passed on the 29th November was not a ban of the tabloids from campus. I really want to stress this point and reiterate it – there is no ban. No one is going to police you or any of our students; no one is going to tell them what to read and what not to read. If any of our students wish to do so, they can access the online versions of the newspapers or they can buy them from the many outlets dotted around this area of the city.

The motion simply states that the UPSU shop will stop stocking and selling those titles (Sun, Daily Express and Daily Mail; and their Sunday editions) as their ethics is in clear contrast with the safe space that the SU is, or is meant to be.

Those tabloids are widely known to have targeted certain groups in society for absolutely no reason other than hate. The belittling and open, blatant demonisation of immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, Muslims, the LGBTIQA+ and the black and Asian communities, the poor and the working class, the junior doctors; all of this is an offensive, outrageous, anti-scientific, non-factual depiction of British society.

Marginalised, innocent groups are identified as scapegoats for “crimes” they have not committed: when this happens (and this is happening right now and it has been happening for years), it paves the way for something out of control, nasty, poisonous to enter the public domain as a legitimate perspective. Once this is accepted as a legitimate contributor to the public debate, once this vicious opinion is validated, then it is too late to stop its spreading. Once hatred is mainstream, once hatred is platformed, it is too late to stop it. This is how fascism enters the public domain; all the signs are there but the public are too blind to shut it; too accustomed to it to fight it.

UPSU does believe in freedom of speech. You, I, all of us do consider freedom of speech as an inalienable, basic, unquestionable human right. Your and our predecessors have fought long and hard for it, many in my family did – Italy in the 1930s and 40s was not a happy place. Many in the world are still fighting for it – the battle for freedom is far from over. We have the moral and physical duty to protect this right from any form of censorship, just as much as we have a duty to protect it from the abuse of those who masquerade their hate as “freedom to express racism, homophobia, misogyny, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, classism and so forth”.

Where do we then draw the line between “freedom of speech” and “hate speech”? Platforming the hateful views expressed by titles like Daily Mail, Sun and Daily Express has given us aberrations and monstrosities like UKIP and Trump, to name but two, but this crisis is much deeper and more widespread, it’s not limited to a couple of countries in the world.

As a reminder of how serious the situation has got in this country, the UN has joined the debate, repeatedly condemning the UK for failure to tackle the “incitement to hatred in British tabloids”. The UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein stated that “under the guise of freedom of expression, racism and xenophobia are being allowed to feed a vicious cycle of vilification, intolerance and politicization of migrants, as well as of marginalized European minorities such as the Roma”.

When I wrote, debated and defended this motion I thought about all of our students who have been affected by incidents of harassment and hate crime in the past few months. I thought of the Polish family in Plymouth who had their house burnt down by fascist vandals over the summer; I thought of the Halal butcher in Walsall, attacked by a Molotov bomb in June; I thought of the student in Plymouth who was stripped of her dignity when someone tried to remove her hijab one night months ago; I thought of our students who have told me they have been scared of walking out of their homes because of the colour of their skin in the wake of the June referendum; I thought of the time when “faggot” was shouted at me by a group of people driving past me at night; I thought of Jo Cox’s family when the Daily Mail tried to justify her assassin because he was “worried” he could lose his council house to a family of immigrants.

We, as UPSU, and I hope you do agree with me, have a duty to empower, enfranchise, protect and strengthen our marginalised and discriminated against groups. I know we have made the right decision when I read the messages of appreciation, relief and gratitude that have come in our direction since the vote last week. It is an achievement to be proud of; I know we truly have done something good. This is what solidarity is about, not just a buzzword.

I am confident enough to say that right now all the Executive Officers proudly stand by the vote they expressed last week.

It has been a stressful week, month, term! I hope these words will placate the conflicts and exaggerations of the past few days.