Lowri Jones - President

Firstly, I’ve chosen three things that reflect the manifesto I ran with in the election in March. I said that I would make drinking safer through things such as having guidance online on spiking and providing an easier way to get water on a night out in the SU. The water is now available as bottled water on club nights here, however this isn’t sustainable and I’m looking into how to make it so. With the guidance about spiking, myself and Chloe are looking at running a campaign about the dangers of leaving your drink unattended and not watching it closely enough, and along with that, there will be information online. On top of that, we are taking part in NUS’ Alcohol Impact accreditation scheme which we are working on in partnership with the university, particularly the Director of Student Services, Mel Joyner. Through this scheme we will be starting a steering group which is starting in January and will include a range of people from UPSU, the university and the community. This group will then work through the criteria which aims to examine the culture of drinking on campus making it safer for those who drink, and more inclusive for those who don’t. As a launch of this, during Alcohol Awareness week we advertised the NUS alcohol survey which I’m happy to say that at last count, we were the top university in regards to engagement in the survey!

Next up is sustainability which wasn’t a point of its own in my manifesto but a big part of my role. I’m starting to work with other UPSU staff on Green Impact, which is basically another NUS scheme like Alcohol Impact with a load of criteria that we need to complete. My part in this scheme is looking at the campaigns aspect and working with different students in societies, volunteering projects and the relevant forum, which I’ve already started doing along with Jess.

On that note, Harry, the chair of the Environment & Sustainability Forum, other students, academics and I all went to London for a Sustainability Summit and from that, a few exciting things are happening in order to make sustainability more accessible to students.

I’ve also picked the dates for Green Week which will be 6th – 12th of March and I’ve just started planning the activities. I actually want to make a small shout out here to any of you that might want to get involved and help out. The first day is themed as Green Travel Day so if you have any ideas along those lines, that would be great, but I’d also love for you to get in touch with me about the rest of the week so if you want to be involved or have any ideas, send me an email, visit the office in the hive or I’ll be hanging around after this as well.

Next up is the Global Project which reflects the global citizenship manifesto point that I had and also fits into what Davide had planned. It’s a programme of events running all year, ranging from workshops to films to talks to discussions. Students who take part in at least half of the events get a certificate at the end and other will receive a further reward for going above and beyond. We’ve had lots of events so far which Davide is going to talk about and we also have upcoming events that will count such as events during Green Week, a panel on LGBT+ prison experiences – staff and prisoners, and hopefully a liberation conference. We’re also using the project to advertise other events across the university and more fun events that people might be interested in so make sure you join the facebook page if you want to be kept updated.

My last point on the slide isn’t from my manifesto and I added it in because I feel like it’s something we don’t talk much to students about. As a group, we represent the student body at numerous different meetings at the university and I’ve picked just a few that I go to to talk about. The first one is Board of Governors – Steph and I are the student governors and we meet with staff governors and external governors as the highest decision-making body of the university. We’ve had a few board meetings already and many key things that affect you as students have been discussed such as the Teaching Excellence Framework, university finances, the branding of the university, and so on.

Next up is Estates and I sit on the Estates Strategy Steering Group which is looking at what could be done in the future to the campus and other buildings we have across Plymouth. This one is a really exciting meeting that I love going to and I’m really excited for some upcoming announcements about the new strategy.

The next one is senate and this is again one of the highest decision making bodies but this time focusing on academic issues. Steph, Davide and I all sit on this as well as other elected students. School Reps also feed into this through other meetings.

The final things isn’t actually a meeting but university interviews. Already this year I’ve sat on the formal interview for a university registrar and informal interviews for a Deputy Vice Chancellor Education and Student Experience and Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Enterprise. Sitting on these interviews was really enlightening and it was a pleasure to represent students and be able to ask questions about what means a lot to us.

And that’s the end of my section – there are other things I haven’t mentioned because we’d be here all night, so if you want to chat about anything else, come grab me at the end, send me an email or come by the office at any time.

Davide Bertelli – VP International & Outreach Report

* Global Project
  + This has been organised as one of my manifesto points was to have more cultural events in the SU and one of Lowri’s points was to lead on a global citizenship programme.
  + So far we have organised :
    - Black History Month: we organised a talk hosted by Omar, BAME Forum chair, about Paul Stephenson and the civil rights movement in the UK; we screened “Selma” free of charge in the SU; we hosted a pop-up museum, courtesy of Plymouth City Council, displaying items and the relevance of black history in Plymouth; we hosted a Black History Themes jam house; and the organised a talk with Jumeyi Akoh from START, Students and Refugees Together, a local charity.
    - Interfaith week (14-19 November): a number of events organised by the University Chaplaincy, including a visit to the local synagogue and to the Friday prayers in Pitts Hall.
    - World Fair: student-led event in which individual societies were showcasing the diversity we have on campus. Thanks to International Latin, European Students Network, Chinese, Welsh, Islamic, Afro Caribbean and Gospel Choir societies; to a group of Turkish students; and to the external martial arts performers from “Plymouth Masters Academy” and the French singer Ashleigh Sladen.
    - Disabled History Month: unfortunately we have not been able to organise as many events as for BHM, but we have invited NUS Disabled Students’ Officer, James Elliott, to come to Plymouth to host a talk about the history of the disabled movement in the UK and how the students contributed to it.
* Transitional Students: I hosted with Chloe a “Transitional and Mature Students” tea break, to welcome all the students coming from partner institutions during Freshers’ Fair. I also gave a welcome talk during an event organised by the University. A lot of work is being done to ensure that these students’ transition to Plymouth is smooth and that they feel welcome and not left behind. We want to keep receiving feedback from students transitioning to Plymouth.
* International Guarantor Scheme: a project started earlier in 2016, looking at improving private housing experience for international students by asking the university to sign student contracts as a guarantor. It would save the students huge amounts of money, often to be paid up front. I am about to start the analysis of the data we gathered and will shortly present the case to the University.
* LGBT+ and BAME forums: I am excited to be working alongside very proactive and exciting forums this year. A lot of ideas and campaigns have been discussed and I am happy to support these forums. As I do not identify as black, I only attend the BAME forum for timed business but I am keen in working with Omar to facilitate the forum’s projects.

Jess Vagg – VP Activities

**Support for societies**

* One of my manifesto points was to increase society stability; I am really pleased that this year I have been able to increase funding for societies, allowing committee members to have more resource to deliver to their members. I have also spent some time reviewing the funding application procedure to make it as fair as possible and put on drop-in sessions to support committee members through the process.

# I’ve looked to increase training opportunities, information sessions, and drop-ins within societies. Last month myself and the Societies department held a ICONS information session followed by drop-in sessions to provide support to societies who want to complete ICONS this year. After feedback from the forum, next term we are looking to do the same with AGMs and award nominations.

* I have been using the societies forum as a platform to seek feedback from society committee members and have been working with the forum chair and the societies department to ensure the forums are as useful as possible for chairs and feel they have a voice within the union.

**Recognition within activities**

* Another of my manifesto points was to increase recognition within activities, so I am working with my fellow Execs to introduce a monthly recognition of individuals and groups called “Students of the Month” which will highlight different success stories from different areas of the union that occurred that month and hopefully increase awareness of the amazing things you guys as students do.
* Outside of the SU I have also been representing students within the university being involved in the HEAR Report Project Group and I am currently helping with gather feedback from different groups to help them improve the report and make it more accessible for students

**Engagement barriers**

* Myself and Philippa have been working with a few sports societies who have approached us this term about different barriers they have to students engaging with their activities. We are currently looking at ways in which we can help address these issues and help committees increase engagement and combat any specific barriers they have identified.
* Within Volunteering, I have been working with Hannah the forum chair and the volunteering department to look at increasing engagement with volunteering. After feedback from the forum I have created a discussion group for students to share volunteering opportunities and hopefully this platform will aid engagement and help all students to get involved in volunteering.

**SU:Media update**

* As some of you know, last year James Stoner the former VP Activities wrote a by-law joining three society UPSU:radio, SU:TV and the knowledge to become a new student group called SU:Media. At the first UEC of the year, the Media by-law has now been finalised and I have been assisting them establish themselves within the SU.
* As well as covering events, both on and off campus, they have looked to do more opinion pieces and we are looking at how they can link in with some of the forums to increase exposure of campaigns and other student voice updates. One of my manifesto points was to look at providing opportunities for sports and societies to promote themselves through SU:Media. Some ideas myself and the SU:Media committee have for the new year including opportunity for recording adverts for the radio and more coverage by the TV team of events.

Chloe Mills – VP Welfare

**Mental Health**

* I have nearly finished working on an A – Z of Help for the Advice section of the UPSU website. It is a directory of everything welfare related.
* As part of the “Stress Less” campaign, Steph and I have been planning some events for the year, like movie nights, although these are expensive because of license fees. I have put on some adult colouring and board games in the SU, which have been very popular.
* I worked with Davide to carry on the Little Book of Help, which was produced last year. We added a few more pages in, about hate crime for example, and we gave out 10,000 copies. I think they’re a great thing to have and I’m really proud of them.

**Sexual Health**

* The main thing I have been working on since I have started is promoting positive and safe sex, and ending the stigma and embarrassment of sex and STIs. I organised a Safe Sex Soiree on the 30th September, which was an angels and devils themed club night in the SU. There was no extra cost to the students; the entry fee was the same for a normal Friday night. But the SU was decorated and draped red and white, and sexual health services in Plymouth and facts about STIs were displayed on the TV screens in the venue. There were 500 goody bags, which were very popular, and were all given out. I could have done with a couple hundred more to be honest! In the goody bags, there were condoms, lube, key rings, beer mats, even a Frisbee! There were lots of leaflets for local services, such as the university medical centre, the eddystone trust, the police, twelves company, etc. There was a sexual readiness checklist, which I designed, which said things like “I understand what consent is,” “I know my boundaries” and “I know where to access support and advice.”
* I worked with the society Sexpression on the event, and I have been working with them on other events that they are planning to hold. They are going to hold a SHAG week (Sexual Health Advice and Guidance Week) in February, to coincide with Valentine’s Day. I am thinking about doing a bigger safe sex event, a safe sex ball, during that week, on Friday 17th.
* On my manifesto, I said I wanted free chlamydia tests in the SU, for students to take away. I have the tests; I am just waiting for a dispenser to be installed in the toilets, where the tests will be going. This should hopefully be done soon.
* I have organised HIV testing by the Eddystone Trust monthly in the wellbeing centre. Upcoming dates are 15th Dec, 19th Jan, 16th Feb, 16th March, 27th April and 18th May.

**Personal Safety**

* I have working on Alcohol Impact with Lowri, which implements methods with the aim of promoting safer drinking. We have made cocktail stirrers, which say “You could have been spiked” which we put in students’ drinks, which were left unattended during Freshers Week. We haven’t done it since, but we are going to do a campaign about drink spiking soon. We also have been paying for bottles of water to be put out every Friday and Saturday club night, so it is easier and quicker for students to access water. We are not sure how long we will be able to do this, as it is coming out of our budget, but we are going through about two cases of water a night so it is obviously needed by the students.
* Philippa and I have been organising self-defence lessons for students run by the Ju Jitsu club. This will be taking place on Wednesday afternoons in the Sports Centre from after Christmas.

**Zero Tolerance to Sexual Offences**

* The “Know the Line” campaign was a zero tolerance to sexual harassment campaign. I have been working on a new campaign which is a zero tolerance to sexual offences; this includes sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual violence. It is still a work-in-progress but it will be ready next year.