

Annual General Meeting Report -President Communities and Wellbeing

Introduction

As President Communities and Wellbeing, my core priority has been to champion student wellbeing, strengthen inclusive communities, and ensure that every student at Southampton Solent University feels heard, supported, and represented.

Throughout my second term as a Sabbatical Officer, I have worked to place student voices at the heart of university decision-making. Whether through committees, campaigns, crisis response, or community-building events, my focus has remained clear: to advocate for students, improve their experience, and create spaces where they feel they belong.

Induction

At the beginning of my tenure, I undertook a two-week Sabbatical Officer induction. As this was my second term, the training provided both reflection and renewed clarity on the responsibilities of wearing three hats: Sabbatical Officer, Student Trustee, and Student Governor.

I held introductory meetings with key university stakeholders, including members of the Vice-Chancellor's Group (VCG), Senior Leadership Team (SLT), academics, professional services, and affinity groups. These early conversations were crucial in establishing strong working relationships and ensuring that student wellbeing and representation remained embedded in institutional priorities.

The induction strengthened my professional confidence and prepared me to represent students effectively at strategic and operational levels.

Welcome Week and Freshers' Fair

During Welcome Week, I delivered presentations introducing students to the Students' Union (SU), outlining our support services, campaigns, representation structures, and wellbeing initiatives.

I actively participated in Freshers' Week activities and supported the Freshers' Fair, which saw thousands of students engaging with societies, services, and external partners. I also supported the Refreshers' Fair, which saw nearly double the engagement compared to the previous year.

Through initiatives such as the "Give It A Go" campaign, we encouraged participation in low-commitment activities including creative workshops, wellbeing sessions, gaming events, and outdoor activities all aimed at building connection and community.

Committees and University Representation

Throughout my tenure, I have represented students across multiple university and SU committees, ensuring their concerns are addressed at every level.

University Committees:

- **Board of Governors** – Acted as a Student Governor, contributing to confidential strategic decisions alongside senior leadership.
- **People and Culture Committee** – Addressed workplace culture, HR policies, and overall wellbeing for staff and students.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDI)** – Advocated for inclusive practices and student belonging.
- **Safeguarding Committee** – Ensured student safety and appropriate support frameworks.
- **Student Experience Committee** – Raised key academic and pastoral concerns, including block teaching transitions.

I also represented students during discussions regarding strike action, seeking approval from the Board of Trustees for a potential referendum in case of academic impact, and remained in constant communication with the university to mitigate disruption.

Additionally, I met with representatives from the Office for Students to share first-hand student experiences, highlighting cost of living pressures, mental health challenges, and academic concerns.

SU Committees and Working Groups:

- Board of Trustees and Directors
- Student Council
- People and Culture Committee (SU)
- EDI Working Group
- Activities and Volunteering Working Group
- Campaigns Working Group
- Freshers' Working Group
- Elections Working Group

These working groups, introduced to streamline strategy and collaboration, have strengthened cross-team planning around wellbeing events, liberation campaigns, and community engagement.

Key Issues Resolved

NMC Course Concern

From 7th August, I worked closely with the university when the Nursing and Midwifery Council raised a critical concern regarding a course, resulting in students being unable to continue their studies.

During this difficult time, I worked collaboratively to ensure affected students received financial guidance and wellbeing support. My priority was to ensure students felt supported, informed, and not alone during an incredibly uncertain period.

Block Teaching Transition

I remained in active communication with the university during the transition to block teaching, ensuring student feedback and representation were considered throughout the process.

International Students Levy Consultation

I supported a sector-wide initiative led by the President of Hertfordshire Students' Union regarding the proposed International Students Levy. Recognising the potential impact on universities and international students, I signed and supported the letter advocating for clearer guidance and student consideration.

Key Initiatives and Projects

Nourish Hour & The Big SU Exchange

On 13th October, I launched **Nourish Hour**, a free breakfast initiative promoting wellbeing and community while easing financial pressure.

This initiative also highlighted **The Big SU Exchange**, our community pantry supporting students during the cost-of-living crisis, offering:

- Take What You Need shelf
 - Free period products
 - Sexual health products
 - Book donations and recipe books
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SU in The Spark

Through themed “SU in The Spark” events, I connected directly with students via creative and liberation-focused activities.

I led the “Man Enough x Get It On” event, inviting external speaker Mark Darcy, founder of a New Forest charity, to support discussions around men’s health and sexual health awareness.

Man Enough Campaign

I rebranded “Mandown Solent” to **Man Enough**, a campaign focused on challenging stigma around men’s mental health. During Men’s Mental Health Month, I filmed conversations with male students across campus to encourage open dialogue and vulnerability.

Pause Campaign

The **Pause Campaign** was created to offer students a safe and reflective space to unwind and build healthy coping strategies.

Sessions included:

- Tea & Poetry
- Tote Bag & Bookmark DIY
- Upcoming external speaker event: *Pause – Success, Presence and Purpose*

The campaign promotes mindfulness, creativity, and connection as preventative wellbeing strategies.

Wellbeing and Community Events

- Wellbeing Fayre (24th September) showcasing SU services
 - Stride and Social wellbeing walk in collaboration with university wellbeing teams
 - Black History Month event with Helena (breast cancer survivor) and cancer charities
 - Interfaith Forum (21st October) supporting faith societies
 - SU Global Day (24th November) engaging international students
 - Volunteer Officer Training – sharing leadership experience
 - Public Health student lecture on student wellbeing challenges
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Student Space Campaign

Alongside fellow Sabbatical Officers, I lobbied for a dedicated, informal student space on campus.

Actions included:

- Conducting and analysing a student survey
- Researching best practice at other universities
- Developing and presenting a business proposal
- Benchmarking potential features

Although the university is currently unable to support this proposal, the campaign demonstrated strong student demand for accessible, inclusive social space.

Conferences and External Engagements

I attended the Southern Union Conference (18th–20th August), networking with officers from across the UK and participating in sessions on:

- Disabled student support
- Mature student inclusion
- Freedom of speech
- Community wellbeing

This experience broadened my understanding of the national impact of sabbatical officers and strengthened collaborative networks.

I also participated in five recruitment panels, including:

- Two Independent Governors
- Student Voice Coordinator
- Activities and Events Coordinator
- Exchange Assistant

This ensured student representation in key institutional appointments.

Conclusion

Serving for a second term as President Communities and Wellbeing has been both an honour and a responsibility I have carried with dedication.

This year has been defined by advocacy during crisis, proactive wellbeing campaigns, strategic representation at governance level, and meaningful student engagement. From supporting students during regulatory challenges, to lobbying for inclusive spaces, to creating campaigns like Man Enough and Pause my focus has remained on building a university community where students feel supported, empowered, and connected.

Representation is not just about attending meetings; it is about listening, acting, and standing alongside students when it matters most. I am proud of the work achieved this year and grateful to have represented the diverse and vibrant student community of Southampton Solent University.