

USI VP Campaigns Manifesto

Aodhán Donnelly

Dia daoibh! Is mise Aodhán Ó Donnghaile. Hello there! I'm Aodhán Donnelly and I'm running for VP Campaigns. Throughout my time in college, I have been up to my neck involved in activism, both student activism and as a part of wider campaigns.

We live in a tumultuous time for student activism. Students across this island have played a pivotal role in campaigning for some of the most important social and political issues of our generation. From the recent (and long overdue) advances in LGBTQ and abortion rights in the north, to the currently ongoing protests in multiple colleges against increased rents on campuses as part of the ever-worsening housing crisis. I wish to be a solid voice for student activism within the USI, forge stronger links between the USI and students unions on campaign issues and engage with on the ground student activists in order to assist them in whatever way possible in campaigning for the issues that matter to them.

Experience

- Was involved in organising protests for Take Back Trinity, including the occupation of the Dining Hall – we successfully got College to get rid of the proposed 450 euro supplemental exam fee
- Helped organise the successful campaign for an SU referendum in Trinity which mandated that the SU support the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign as well as run a yearly Anti-Apartheid Week in solidarity with the Palestinian people.
- Participated in several protest actions within Trinity as part of the Cut the Rent campaign.
- Participated in protest actions as part of Take Back the City and the Raise the Roof Rallies.
- Canvassed and leafletted for the Repeal campaign.
- Attended the first ever march for Choice rally in the north.
- Was part of a bloc of students from Trinity who stood in solidarity with a UNITE picket by striking Irish Life workers
- Campaigned and leafletted for the Aramark off our Campus campaign.
- Participated in an anti-fascist counter rally in Belfast against the BNP.
- Stood in solidarity with striking nurses at INMO pickets.
- Brought a successful motion to SU council mandating that TCDSU give full support to the student strike for climate.

This online manifesto is a working document ahead of USI Congress. I want to hear your input on issues that matter to you. Please feel free to contact me to further discuss anything or if you have any questions: adonnel3@tcd.ie | 0858106666

Campaigns and Issues:

Housing Crisis/Student Accommodation:

- Liaise with grassroots student campaigns such as Cut the Rent TCD and NUIG with regards to campaign strategies and tactics to oppose rent hikes by Universities on their students.
- Meet with university subcommittees to advise on alternative sources of funding, rather than treating students as cash cows.

Gaeilge

- Work with the VP Gaeilge to ensure that Irish is fully utilised in any campaigns throughout the year.
- Work in tandem with both the VP Gaeilge and with the NUS-USI on continuing Irish language issues in the north.
- Ensure that Irish language translations are made available of all campaign material and that the inclusion of the language is not merely tokenistic in nature.

Brexit Issues

As a student from the north studying in the south myself, I am all too aware of the worries and concerns of students that study on the opposite side of the border from their home. As VP for campaigns, and by working in-tandem with associates in NUS-USI my aims will be to:

- Campaign against any attempt by the government of the south that would impose non-eu fees on northern students studying in the south, or any measure that would raise fees on southern students studying north of the border.
- Run an information campaign on what is happening, in student friendly language.
- Ensuring that students are considered on every level throughout the currently ongoing period of negotiations with a targeted lobbying campaign.
- Include NUS-USI in lobby efforts in the South.
- Support NUS-USI and SUs in the North in their campaigns.

Postgrad/Workers rights issues:

Postgraduate students are subject to often gruelling hours of work, and yet are given no more than a stipend which, in the case of Trinity for example, is capped at a maximum of €18,000 per year. This is not anywhere near a livable wage, especially with the worsening housing crisis we currently face in Ireland. In addition, the precarious teaching and demonstrating work that many postgraduates do is neither reliable nor secure. As VP for campaigns, my aims on this issue would be to:

- Meet with members of the TCD PhD worker’s rights group and any similar groups to discuss the possibility of rolling out a wider island-wide campaign on the issue.
- Among the aims of such a campaign would be to demand:
 1. The recognition of PhD students as workers, with contracts and full employee and collective bargaining rights
 2. An end to unpaid teaching
 3. PhD stipends based on the living wage

LGBTQ and Abortion rights issues

- Marriage equality and abortion rights may have been won both north and south (thanks to the tireless work done by activists and campaign groups across the 32 counties), but the wider fight on these issues is not yet over
- Issues such as Trans Healthcare, gender recognition and gender-neutral toilets are still issues that need campaigning on.
- In addition, the MSM 1 year blood ban that exists in the south and the lifetime ban that exists in the north still must be campaigned against

Campaign Training

- Run non-violent direct action workshops with student unions in partnership with the All-Ireland Student Activist Network to prepare SU reps and volunteer student activists

Disability rights/Accessibility Issues

- Work with the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and Vice President for Welfare on establishing a disability training course for class reps, similar to the Pink Training course, with the aim of raising awareness of the needs of disabled people and equipping SU reps with the skills and information that they need in order to support disabled students.
- Work with SUs across Ireland in lobbying their Universities to accommodate for students with disabilities who wish to go on Erasmus and ensure that accessible Universities are made available for them.

Environment

Action on the environment is one of the most vital issues of our generation, and student activists have been at the very forefront of this fight. Figures like Greta Thunberg and activist groups like Extinction Rebellion have helped highlight the severity of the climate crisis and the need for immediate action against the fossil fuel industry. My aims will be to:

- Ensure USI support of the wider student wing of the climate action movement, both through SUs and by meeting with leading climate activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion Ireland

Direct Provision

Direct provision is a cruel and unjust system enforced upon asylum seekers in this country, one which dehumanises its victims to absolutely abhorrent levels. It must be continue to be opposed by students across this island, many of whom are themselves asylum seekers. As VP for campaigns I pledge to:

- Work with the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Minister for Education to extend domestic fee status to students who are asylum seekers across all third level institutions.
- Help the VP for Equality and Citizenship on devising a national campaign strategy on what to do in the case of a student being faced with a deportation order (learning from the “Save our Shepard” campaign by DCUSU last year), and develop materials and resources around this for Students’ Union officers.