

Hi! My name is John Fortune. I am a 23 year old from Wexford. I am running to be your next Vice President for Equality & Citizenship in USI. I am currently the Vice President for the Southern Region in USI.

## Voter Registration

We need to ensure that while we are recovering from the Pandemic, that we use the anger that students have had from online learning to get them engaged in USI. I want to ensure we have Voter Registration drives in all Member Organisations. We need to ensure that students know their power when it comes to voting in the general and local elections. I will work with the VP Campaigns to coordinate the voter registration drives and organise an information campaign on why every vote matters.

## Seanad Reform

The current Seanad system is a broken, elitist system. USI are mandated to lobby for Seanad Reform. During the first wave of the pandemic a grassroots campaign was coordinated by local SU's to work on Seanad Reform. We need to continue this fight. The USI President should lobby to have the seanad voting open to all Irish Citizens. I will work with the President to lobby for Seanad Reform along with the Voter Registration drives.

## Electoral Reform

USI are currently mandated to lobby the Government for a complete Electoral Reform. This includes lobbying for the right to vote at 16. We have witnessed great strides in NUS-USI working on this campaign. I believe we could work together and use the NUS UK, NUS-USI and USI Trilateral to mobilise students on the issue of voting at 16.

## Sustainability

It is the VP Equality & Citizenship's job to coordinate all USI Sustainability and Climate Justice work. This year, as a result of our work on Climate Action, we were able to send an officer from USI to COP26. This allowed us to show students what world leaders get up to at COP and spotlighted the complete lack of action on the Climate Crisis. I would like to review our climate action policy and see how effective it is in USI's work.

## Direct Provision

Direct Provision is a cruel system that was established to help home asylum seekers in Ireland as an interim solution. We need to ensure that we continue fighting for the abolishment of Direct Provision and the establishment of a system that is humane. This year I have had the pleasure of working with the European Students' Union and it has helped me see that we could propose a European best practice model using their expertise. I believe we could work with the ESU Equality coordinator for this. I would also love to revive USI's campaign on abolishing Direct Provision.

## International Students

International Students face many barriers when accessing education in Ireland. I aim to work closely with the Irish Council of International Students (ICOS) to tackle these barriers. When organising our national campaign, we must remember International Students pay higher fees, struggle to find accommodation and face discrimination every day. I also aim to lobby the Department of Justice in relation to the visa requirements for International Students in Ireland.

## Events

I plan to have an advisory committee for every USI Equality Event, populated with members of the community that the event is aimed at. This will ensure that while the VP E&C may not be a member of the community, they will be guided by people who are.

## Mature Student Seminar

To ensure the conference has engagement and buy in, we will have to look at the accessibility of the conference. We will need to consider the commitments Mature Students have and should investigate the possibility of having a hybrid event that allows people to attend virtually or physically.

## Pink Training

This year I was delighted to co-organise Pink Training with the current VP E&C. The event was forced to be moved online due to the pandemic, so next year should see the return of in-person Pink Training. This means that having someone who has attended in person organising the

event will be of huge benefit. My aim with Pink Training is to ensure that we have a broad range of sessions offered. We also need to ensure that each year there is an efficient crossover on not only Pink Training, but all Equality Events. We need to hear directly from LGBTQI+ students on what they want to see at their next Pink Training, so feedback will be essential!

## EMpower

EMpower is an event for anyone who is from an Ethnic Minority background. EMpower is one of the newer Equality Events, so it is vital to acknowledge that it may only be finding its feet. My aim for EMpower is to have it in person and to try have it as big and renowned as Pink Training is. I will ensure that we have a diverse range of speakers and would love to have the EMpower advisory committee to pick a theme for the Event.

## Women Lead

This is an event that focuses on uplifting and empowering women across the island to stand for election and to be in leadership roles. It is important that we have this campaign early in the second semester around when elections open up. We will see this event return to an in person space, so it would be great for USI to have strong representation from the student movement, past and present.

## Power of Disability

This event is run in conjunction with AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access & Disability). The event is open to any and all students who either want to learn more about disabilities or have a disability. It is important to recognise the accessibility of this event while it was online, as it allowed people to join from wherever they were most comfortable. I will work with the team in AHEAD, to see how best the event can work moving forward.

Feel free to email me on [johnf7399@gmail.com](mailto:johnf7399@gmail.com) for any questions and/or suggestions!