

*Re-Elect* **KEVIN  
MCSTRAVOCK**

VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

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**Space for Your Ideas**

**This year**, I have ensured that I'm able to respond quickly to the needs and demands of our members, fielding queries and developing resources in response to requests from SU officers.

**Next year**, I want to ensure that my work and USI's work as a whole is based on the issues that you, our members identify. If there's anything you would like to see me working on, on your behalf, please email me on [kevinmcs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kevinmcs@hotmail.co.uk) or scan the QR code!



*Scan me*

Let's finish what we started

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VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS



*Hey,  
How's it going?*

**My name is Kevin McStravock and I was delighted to be elected as your Vice President for Academic Affairs at last year's Congress! I'm a Journalism with French graduate from Ulster University, and served as the Vice President for the Coleraine Campus from 2016 to 2017. I was then elected as the UUSU President, a position I held for two years.**

### My Journey so Far...

During my time in UUSU, I was proud to achieve many wins on behalf of the students of Ulster University including securing over £1 million in funding for SU facilities and services, allowing us to enhance the student experience across all of Ulster's campuses. Amongst my key projects during my time with UUSU were the establishment of a Staff-Student Partnership Agreement and an accompanying review of our Student Voice structures, which resulted in the development of a three-tier structure (Course, School and Faculty Reps), ensuring that students had representation at all levels of the academic structure. One of my biggest

achievements during my time at UUSU was the review of student officer roles which led to the introduction of a Vice President for Sports & Wellbeing, and Vice President for Education for the first time.

Last year, I stood on the platform of tackling the **bread and butter issues** affecting you as students. Throughout my tenure so far, I've done all I can to ensure that every project I undertake has the primary objective of improving your experience inside and outside of the classroom. But there is so much more to be done – and we still have a lot of bread and butter issues to tackle!



### Looking to The Future...

If re-elected as your Vice President for Academic Affairs, I intend to build on the work I have started this year as a strong and effective representative for your academic interests at a national level. Read on to find out more about what I have done this year, and what I intend to do if you give me your support to fulfil a second term!

### Breaking Barriers

**This year**, as a member of the Campaigns Strategy Committee, I have contributed to the development of the 'Break The Barriers' campaign, calling for the removal of the barriers affecting entry and participation in Higher Education. I have supported Students' Unions with on-campus promotion and action and helped to develop USI's Student Manifesto for the General Election, resulting in increased coverage of student issues during the election trail and an even greater student turnout.

#### If re-elected, I will:

- Prioritise work on the cost of education, including lobbying for a reform of SUSI, and for more core funding into Higher Education.
- Develop resources on marketisation of higher education, working with the Vice President for Campaigns to support SUs in campaigning against marketisation at a local level.
- Work to develop USI's Break the Barriers campaign, ensuring that student issues continue to be on the radar of the newly formed Government.

### National Student Partnership Agreement

**This year**, I have lobbied the Department for Education & Skills on the development of a National Student Partnership Agreement, that strengthens the role of the student voice at a national level, alongside an accompanying framework to support Students' Union Autonomy. I've been working to develop further supporting documents that reinforce the need for these national projects and ensured that this formed an integral part of USI's election manifesto asks.

#### If re-elected, I will:

- Continue to work on this project, working with Department officials and the Minister to ensure that momentum does not wane, and that we can deliver the Agreement, and accompanying framework.

### Students on Professional Courses

**This year**, I have worked to support students on professionally accredited courses in a number of ways. Be that working with members of the Exec Team to represent the interests of student teachers, working with the Irish Pharmacy Students' Association to call for an end to the uncapped Masters Fee, or working with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to develop enhanced student representation with professional bodies, I have represented the interests of these students in the classroom and on placement.

#### If re-elected, I will:

- Develop a framework for student engagement with professional bodies, ensuring that students on professionally accredited courses have the opportunity to engage with their professional bodies on the delivery of their programme.
- Conduct national research on the extent of unpaid placement across Ireland, and lobby for an end to this practice, and for students to be paid a fair wage for their work during placement.
- Continue the work that has been carried out with IPSA, to call for the fifth year Pharmacy fee, to be included within the Free Fees initiative and strongly lobby against other examples of uncapped fees e.g. Graduate Entry Medicine.

### SU Support

**This year,** I reviewed and redeveloped the training offered to Students' Union officers, working with the rest of the Executive Team to plan and deliver enhanced training on casework, policy development, committee representation and more. I have also developed a range of resources throughout the year to support student officers with CAO Results Day, Institutional Review, Quality Assurance and have made myself available to offer advice on a range of other issues.

#### If re-elected, I will:

- Develop a dedicated area for student officers to access training resources, and regularly refresh this with briefings and resources, in line with the needs of officers.
- Continue to offer support to SUs on a range of education and academic interests.
- Develop enhanced resources and briefings on additional areas such as Student Complaints and on Engaging Part-Time and Online Students.



### Cross-Sectoral Issues

**This year,** I have worked actively with other members of the Executive Team to deliver joint work on a number of cross-cutting issues. This has included delivering a joint Exam Distress Campaign with the Vice President for Welfare, working on Senior Cycle Review with other members of the team and incorporating Gaeilge into my work, in conjunction with the Leas-Uchataran don Ghaeilge.

#### If re-elected, I will:

- Continue to work with other officers on cross-cutting issues including Gaeilge, mental health and support for a range of student communities including Mature students, International students and Disabled students.
- Develop taskforces, open to all students which will work in partnership with members of the Executive Team, and like-minded organisations to develop policy, and progress USI's work in a number of key areas including:
  - Embedding Sustainability into the Curriculum, something which I'm working with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning to secure funding for.
  - Wellbeing in the Curriculum, and how this intertwines with the concept of Student Success.
  - Decolonising the Curriculum to ensure students from all backgrounds are able to freely and comfortably engage with the curriculum on their course.
  - Universal Design for Learning, in order to make education and assessment more accessible to all students.



### NStEP

**This year,** I have supported the expansion of NStEP, successfully launching its' new strategy in November, and working with the NStEP staff to ensure that it fulfils its' mission of developing partnership between Students' Unions and their institutions in order to enhance student engagement practice. I have overseen the development of an enhanced governance structure, which includes an Advisory Group with additional student representation, ensuring that students have an increase role in the oversight of NStEP and championed a review of the national class rep training programme.

#### Next year I will:

- Lobby for NStEP to be expanded and funded beyond its' current term to the end of 2021, and work to ensure that NStEP plays a vital role in the development of a National Student Partnership Agreement.



• Work with NStEP to support students' unions in designing effective and engaging class rep training, and ensure that the NStEP training programme complements and supports institutional class rep training.

• Support SUs in developing partnership with their institution including providing briefings and one-to-one support on what to expect from NStEP workshops, and how to secure institutional buy-in.

### The Student Voice in Decision Making

**This year,** I have led USI's response to the Higher Education Act reform, lobbying the Department to ensure that student representation on institutional governing bodies and on the board of the HEA is guaranteed in the new act, and pushing for greater accountability for institutions on their support for student involvement in decision-making structures, particularly as Technological University mergers continue to develop.

#### Next year I will:

• Continue to lobby for the HEA Reform Act to deliver on behalf of students and will work to ensure that this act mandates institutions to ensure students are involved in all layers of institutional governance and that they provide training and support to enable students to engage in their governance structures.

• Work with the Executive Team and local SUs to highlight gaps in student involvement in institutional decision-making and work to address these issues.

• Continue to support SUs teams who are working on Technological University mergers – not just in the SU merger but in wider discussions on merging of the institution.



## Campaigns

**This year,** I delivered a number of campaigns including the Class Rep campaign where I developed digital resources and insights to support Students' Unions in building and developing an effective class rep system. I also collaborated with the Vice President for Welfare to deliver a joint campaign on Exam Destress and fed into the rebranding of Student Survey. I have also secured the position of Chair of the QQI National Academic Integrity Network's Communications Group, ensuring that we will be at the forefront of developing campaigns coming out of this network.

### Next year I will:

- Review previous campaigns, in conjunction with students' union officers and develop and deliver enhanced campaigns on Class Rep recruitment, Exam Destress and anything else that SUs want support with.



- Lead the development of a national campaign on Academic Integrity, ensuring that students are informed of how they can best contribute to positive academic integrity, and are educated on the potential repercussions of plagiarism and contract cheating.

- Work to support SUs working on better analysis of Student Survey results at a local level – and help to close the feedback loop on this nationally.

## International Affairs and Brexit

This year, I have led USI's involvement in the European Students' Union, enhancing awareness of our role in ESU through social media coverage of ESU events, and regular reports to National Council and have built upon our existing relationships with our European counterparts to encourage collaboration and sharing of best practice. I also coordinated USI's submission to the international Bologna with Student Eyes report, and represented USI at the European Universities Association's Annual Learning & Teaching Forum. I have also took the lead on implementing USI's Brexit Strategy, meeting with the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, and providing supporting information to Students' Unions as Brexit has developed.

### Next year I will:

- Continue to ensure that USI has a strong voice in the work being carried out at a European level by the European Students' Union and increase awareness of the work of ESU amongst USI members.

- Use USI's role in the European Students' Union to lobby on the development of the new Erasmus+ programme, and work with NUS-USI to ensure that students in the North continue to have access to this programme.

- Continue to use our networks in ESU to strengthen the case for publicly-funded education and to build solidarity across Europe on some of USI and its' members' major priorities e.g. housing.

- Respond to the issues being raised by students on the ground, and develop briefings and resources to support Students' Unions in the lead-up to the next Brexit deadline of 31st December, whilst continuing to lobby the Irish Government on student priorities relating to Brexit.

## Supporting the North

I'm incredibly proud to be a Northern representative within the USI Executive Team, and have done my best to ensure that USI continues to work on behalf of students in the North this year, working to support the work of the NUS-USI President, and making myself available to our members in the North.

**Next year,** I will ensure that USI develops an even greater presence in the North. With Stormont back up and running, I will do what I can to support NUS-USI's lobbying on student issues, on any particularly around higher education funding, and will continue to develop a proposal for a student partnership programme in the North, in conjunction with the NUS-USI President and NUS-USI members.



## Digital & Future Learning

This year, I have been the student lead on the delivery of the INDEX Survey on the digital experience of staff and students, and secured funding for additional materials to support SUs in promoting the survey. I have also identified gaps in USI's policy on digital learning, and developed a policy to bring forward to Congress.

**Next year,** I will ensure that the results of the INDEX survey lead to the enhancement of national policy on digital learning, and will support Students' Unions to lobby their institutions on improving digital teaching at a local level. I will also provide support to Students' Unions wishing to develop structures to support online and blended-learning students.

## Further Education & Training

This year, I have developed relationships with those in the Further Education & Training sector, and worked with the Executive Team to develop new opportunities for USI to expand its' FET membership. I also used my role on the QQI Board to ensure that student representation was prioritised in the Inaugural Quality Review of Education & Training Boards.

**Next year,** I will build on the relationships I have developed and work to build a proposal for USI to strengthen its' relationship with the FET sector. I will also work with the Executive Team to build resources that support FET colleges to become members of USI.