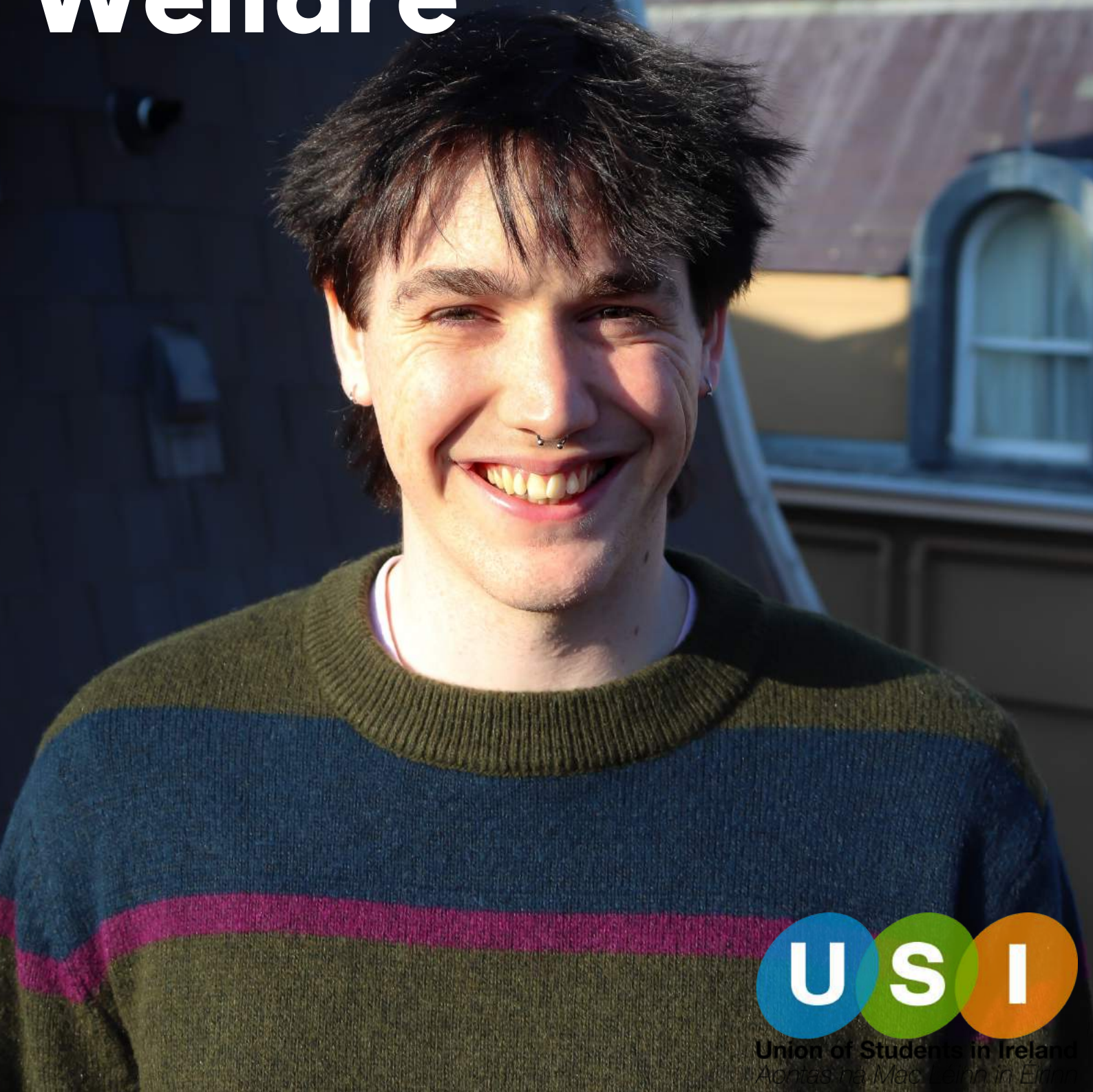


Somhairle Brennan for USI VP for Welfare



Union of Students in Ireland
Achtas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

About me:

My name is Somhairle Brennan and I am seeking your vote for USI Vice President for Welfare 21/22. I am originally from Donegal and moved to Dublin to study Applied Psychology in the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design, and Technology. I have been involved in the student movement since my first year of college, working as a class rep, sitting on the committees of societies, sitting on college committees as a student representative, being involved with student lead activism, and now, I am currently the President of IADTSU.

This year has been incredibly unusual, but seeing students and unions adapt and flourish has been incredibly inspirational, and a reflection of the resilience of the student movement. As Ireland begins to move into a post-lockdown society, there will be many new challenges and obstacles to come, but I have complete faith that we will be able to work and continue building a country that cares for and respects its students.

My time in IADT has given me a valuable insight into student life, and how, regardless of the size of the college, there are constant universal issues that students face every day. The accommodation crisis, finance, mental health, problems with sex and relationships, drugs, and alcohol. These are all issues that affect our students, and will continue to do so, but I believe with the correct actions, we can ease and lessen those burdens.

Through conversations with officers, students, and peers, I have shaped this manifesto to reflect the current national climate. I would like to use the role of Vice President for Welfare to provide a platform to the issues facing students and officers to be addressed and supported in a holistic and dedicated manner.

My core motivation throughout all my experience in the student movement has been to help and support as many people as I possibly can, and I believe, with this work ethic, I will be able to create positive change for officers and students nationally.

Le grá,
Somhairle

Officer Support:

I would like to be a constant support for all officers, regardless of their role within their union. This can be achieved through a number of means.

- Facilitate regular one-on-ones with officers throughout the year to provide any support or advice they may require.
- Foster and facilitate inter-MO collaborations on campaigns and events.
- Arrange opportunities for officers to socialise and network in informal settings, such as team building days or social evenings, both in person and via online platforms such as Zoom.
- Endeavour to provide further training opportunities for officers throughout the year to help grow and improve their skillsets.
- Continue building on the incredible work of this year's Welfare officers, by facilitating events such as the REFLECT programme more regularly throughout the year.
- Provide support to any officers coming out, questioning, or transitioning.

Post COVID-19 Harm Reduction:

- Supporting officers and the student population in a post-COVID-19 environment will be vital to the role of the Vice-President for Welfare 21/22. I would like to work with local and national officers to ensure that both students and officers are getting all the support they need both at a social, academic, and professional level.
- Help officers adapt to moving back to in-person learning, working, and the return to socialising at a level that no one has experienced since before March 2020.

Drugs, Alcohol & Addiction:

- Have frank and clear conversations about drugs (both recreational and pharmaceutical), ensuring that anyone who need to access our resources are getting all the information they may need surrounding drug use, drug interactions, drugs and sex, and addiction supports.
- Develop a campaign focusing specifically on drug interactions and drug effects, with a focus on providing information on all recreational drugs that is accessible and relevant to any student or officer, regardless of their knowledge or familiarities with recreational drugs, while also including information on potential interactions of recreational drugs with pharmaceutical and prescription-based drugs.
- Lobby to ensure the €10 million additional funding for drug and alcohol services, detailed in the 2021 budget, is implemented and used appropriately.
- Ensure there are clear and accessible resources and supports for all forms of addiction, including gambling, pornography, alcohol, etc.

Financial Supports:

- Lobby for a reform of the SUSI grant, that is reflective of the needs and costs of being a student in Ireland today.
- Lobby for increased funding to be allocated to the Student Assistance Fund.
- Lobby for specific financial supports for international students.

Disability:

- Work with the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to ensure that there are supports in place for officers living with or seeking support for disabilities.
- Lobby for increased supports for students living with ADHD, and a focus on providing public diagnostic services for students who require an ADHD diagnosis.

Sex, Consent, and Relationships

- As lockdowns continue and eventually ease, I would want to be ensuring that information is available on participating in cyber-sex safely, but also reiterating all previous messaging surrounding safety and consent as people begin to socialise in person.
- Continue to build on the work established with Active Consent and other similar organisations. This would also include supporting local officers in running consent campaigns and consent workshops.
- Provide supports and resources for student parents.
- Continue to build and grow on the resources and information available on unplanned pregnancies, ensuring that students have access to all relevant information and options.
- Continue to build on the work of the U=U campaign, and continue providing accessible information about HIV, PrEP, and Pep.
- Lobby for inclusive sex education nationally.
- Lobby for the removal of the MSM Blood ban.
- Develop an information campaign focusing on Drugs and Sex, with a focus on chem-sex, and the unnecessary use of over-the-counter medicines (e.g. Viagra connect), and their potential interactions with other drugs, both pharmaceutical and recreational. Clear, concise, and accessible information needs to be available for students on the topic of chem sex, and all drugs associated with it as essential harm reduction.
- Continue and build on the work established on Image Based Sexual Abuse, providing supports for victims, and working with relevant organisations like End Image Based Sexual Abuse Ireland (www.instagram.com/endibsaireland), and Ceartas (www.weareceartas.com) to ensure that the work we are doing is as relevant and as up to date as possible.

Mental Health:

- Build supports and campaigns to support both the student population and local officer's mental health in a lockdown and post-lockdown world.
- Have Student Mental Health as an agenda point for every welfare-working group, so that resources and supports are constantly being updated to reflect students nationally.
- Lobby for improved publicly-funded mental health services, to move away from the reliance on overworked charities and expensive private organisations.
- Lobby for the reinstatement of further funding to the National Treatment Program for Eating Disorders, and a commitment to improve the supports available to those seeking treatment.
- Support Welfare Officers in lobbying and working with their colleges to ensure that the counselling services provided by their colleges are up to standard for their students.

Student Engagement:

- The USI represents over 370,000 students, and I believe it is integral that each of students are both aware of the USI and aware of the work the USI does. I would like to work with the entire executive team on ensuring that students nationally are engaged with the USI.
- I would like to work closely with the Vice-President for Campaigns and the Regional Vice Presidents to develop campaigns that can be tailored to specific counties and regions, to ensure that every student and officer feels like any welfare campaign is relevant to them and their specific area, thus reducing the potential for students disconnecting from campaigns.
- Relaunch the USI newsletter as a monthly email resource available to any student who wishes to subscribe, detailing relevant campaigns, resources available and work being undertaken.

Accommodation:

- Lobby to ensure that there is clear protection through improved legislation for students relying on the undeniably unsafe private digs system for accommodation.
- Lobby for further student renters rights. and increased protection for student renters
- Work with relevant organisations to ensure that current student renters, prospective student renters and first time student renters have access to supports and resources relevant to their residential areas.

Gaeilge:

- Gaeilge is an area I am extremely passionate about, and I would like to work closely with an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and the Vice President for Campaigns to ensure that Gaeilge is represented equally throughout all welfare related campaigns and information published, while also developing specific welfare and Gaeilge campaigns.

Supporting Northern Ireland:

- I would like to work closely with the NUS-USI to ensure that institutions and local officers in Northern Ireland are getting the most they can from the USI.
- Similarly, I would like to work with the Vice President for Campaigns and the NUS-USI to ensure that Northern Ireland is represented equally in all welfare related campaigns.

Experience + Achievements

- Current President of IADTSU.
- To infinity and beyond Award for Welfare 17/18.
- Class Representative during my first and second year of college.
- IADTSU Returning officer 16/17.
- Applied psychology Graduate.
- Steering committee member of Le Cheile DND.
- Established a Gaeilge society and a PTO Oifigeach na Gaeilge into IADTSU.
- First year Class Representative of the year 2016/17.
- First year matters leader 17/18 and 18/19, inducting first years into college.
- Managed the IADTSU Accommodation Page, liaising with landlords & Students
- Member of the IADTSU Repeal Taskforce.
- Student Ambassador for IADT 2018-20.
- Currently working on a full Constitutional and Policy review.
- Research assistant on IADT Programmatic Reviews.
- Facilitated Active Consent Workshops for students.
- IADTSU Repeal Taskforce.
- IADT Psychology Society and Poetry & Spoken Word Society Committee Member.
- USI Coiste Culturtha 20/21.

Training:

- DRCC Disclosure Training
- HSE safeTALK Suicide Awareness Training
- SUT/SUT+ 20/21
- ZSA Suicide Awareness Training

Contact me:

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