

**NUI, Galway Students’ Union Council**

**Comhairle Comhaltas na Mac Léinn, OÉ Gaillimh**

6:00pm, Monday 12th November 2018

Venue: Kirwan Theatre, Concourse

**Present:** Megan Reilly (President), Eibhlín Seoighthe (Vice President for Education), Clare Austick (Vice President for Welfare & Equality), Chuka Paul Oguekwe (Mature Students’ Officer), Cameron Keighron (Postgraduate Taught Officer)Brandon Walsh (Societies Chairperson), Sabrina Vaughan (Students’ Union Council Chairperson), Rían McKeagney (Convenor of the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies), Scott Green (Convenor of the College of Science), Liezel Ravenscroft (Convenor of the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences), Clodagh McGivern (Convenor of the College of Business, Public Policy & Law), Roshan George (Convenor of the College of Engineering & Informatics), Alex Coughlan (Gender and LGBT + Rights Officer), Muireann O’ Sullivan (Disability Rights Officer), Victoria Chihumura (Ethnic Minorities Officer)

**Apologies:** Ryan Guilfoyle (Clubs’ Captain), Daniel McFadden (International Student Officer), Adhna Nic Dhonnchadha (Oifigeach na Gaeilge)

**Minutes / Miontuairiscí \***

**Introduction to Council/ Fáiltiú:**

S. Vaughan (SU Council Chairperson) commenced council.

M. Reilly (SU President) asked for a moment of respect through a minute of silence for family member of a Students’ Union staff member and a family member of a former SU President, (Education officer and college convenor), who had both passed away over the weekend.

**Matters Arising / Nithe ag Éirí Astu:**

There were 3 corrections to the minutes from the previous council on the 15/10/18, they are as follows:
“Welfare officer” was corrected to “Welfare & Equality”
“Ant bullying” was corrected to “anti-bullying”
“Distress” was corrected to “de-stress”

**Minutes\_/ Miontuairiscí:**

The Chair proposed the minutes from the previous council from the 15th of October 2018. They were seconded by E. Spain (2BA Law).

They will now be available on the NUIG SU website.

**Speakers / Cainteoirí:**Brendan Smith (Former UCG Students’ Union President 1980/81) was voted in before the officer reports unanimously.

**Officer Reports / Tuairisc na nOifigeach:**

Officer Reports that were sent out in Council email were taken as read by each officer in SU Council.

There were a variety of questions asked to different officers.

E. Spain (2BA Law) asked V. Chihumura (Ethnics Minorities Officer) about the Direct Provision action to be taken by Council.
Reply: This will be discussed later during A.O.B
This reply was taken as satisfactory.

E. Hannon (4th BSC IT) asked R. George (Convenor of the College of Engineering & Informatics) for a follow-up on an issue raised in the Engineering College Council.
Reply: An email was sent yesterday as a follow-up.
This reply was taken as satisfactory.

E. Seoighthe (VP/ Education Officer) gave her officer report at council, as it was not included in the email. She also stated that she was very busy, and that she was working with S. Green (Convenor of the College of Science) on a petition for more seating. She also gave her previous report from the 27th of September as read, as this report was circulated.

A. Garrison (Microbiology) asked M. Reilly (SU President) about the focus group for carrying failed modules.
Reply: The turnout for the focus group was very low but it was felt that the input received was quite resourceful and for management to see students that failed 5 credit modules having to repeat/
This reply was taken as satisfactory.

**Speaker 1/ Cainteoir 1**

Brendan Smith (Former NUIG SU President 1979/80) (Former Vice President 78/79) was invited to talk about Activism and Sustainability.
Speaker was voted in unanimously.
*Activism*“Do not copy the past, but learn from it, each era is different” – Brendan SmithMr. Smith spoke about the different campaigns that happened during his time, such as the introduction of condoms and the opening of the college bar.
Outline of some of the services produced during his time: Smokies, College Bar, bettering transport on campus, Non-alcoholic disco on Fridays, Cinema Club, DICK magazine (pornographic magazine raising money for charity).
Outline of some of the campaigns during his time: Rights for students to register in their college constituencies, boosting the grant from £500 to £1000.
*Sustainability*
Mr. Smith spoke about the need for a legacy and that Galway could potentially be the first urban National Park. He gave an example of London, a city that people would commonly associate with people, traffic, and work; but that it was in fact 51% green with 15,000 unique and different species.
Mr. Smith mentioned the need to reconnect with nature, and that we are the first species to create waste. There is a mass clean-up of Galway city on the 8th of December and all are invited to help out.
*Discussion*E. Spain (2BA Law) asked for advice on motivating and engaging students.
Reply: “Get an issue that affects them, take what you can get. Unite with common issues. There is no ‘magic wand’. Sometimes a low turnout can feel disempowering, but a small difference is a difference nonetheless.”

E. Walker (2nd Engineering) asked if there were any networks to get involved in.
Reply: “Galway Volunteer Centre, Alive Programme and membership/ engagement within the Students Union.

M. Reilly (SU President) asked what for a favourite memory of the students union and thanked the speaker.
Reply: “Winning the ballot box campaign, winning the right to vote even though the government at the time opposed.”

E. Seoighthe (VP for Education) asked for an idea on something pro-active to help.
Reply: “More tree and flower planters are needed. Working with minorities. Possibly get into contact with the Galway Volunteer Centre.”

C. Austick (VP for Welfare and Equality) asked what Mr. Smith what he would like us to campaign on.
Reply: “The environment. There is no Plan(et) B.”

S. Vaughan (Chairperson) thanked Mr. Smith and stated that she would circulate his email so that people could get into contact with him, or to alternatively contact him through C. Austick (VP for Welfare and Equality)

**Items for information/ Le Eolas:**

1. Upcoming campaigns
(i) Big Fat Table Quiz – M. Reilly (SU President) 🡪 Table of 4 for €20, last time it happened was two years ago, officers are making the rounds, money raised going towards Cope Galway and the Galway Rape Crisis Centre.
(ii) Welfare Campaigns – C. Austick (VP for Welfare & Equality)
🡪 Mental Health Mondays : engaging with students, encouraging people to help out.
🡪 SHAG Week: Raised €245 for charity
🡪 Pink Training: Largest LGBT+ conference held in Europe. This year it is going to be hosted by NUIG SU. Students can sign up as delegates to participate (online through GIG Soc)
2. NStEP 🡪 A. Coughlan (Gender and LGBT+ Rights Officer) Important training for class reps. There will be more training in semester 2. There were high and low turnouts for the different sessions provided. Asking for feedback through SU President or VP for Education.
3. Sustainability Strategy 🡪 C. Austick (VP for Welfare & Equality) Setting up a working group to outline a sustainability strategy for the union. Clare had a sign-up sheet after the meeting.

**Items for agreement/ Le Socrú:**

1. Motion (decriminalising sex workers)
“NUIG SU to campaign and support campaigns to decriminalise sex work in Ireland and encourage the safety of those engaged in sex work.”
- Proposed by Haley Little (2nd BA) Feminist Society.
Recent negative media by SWAP with information about student sex workers. This motion seeks to destigmatize and support sex workers rather than criminalising the purchase of sex. Attacks on sex workers have increased since criminalisation in 2007. There are many reasons why students do sex work, for example; rent, food, and paying fees.

*Discussion/Debate*
*Against: D. Clifford (2BCT):* The reason given for opposing this motion is because the motion mandates action by the students union, and should not mandate action by individuals within the union. Union should consider the moral objections that individuals should have, and if this motion is passed it would betray those moralities, thus doing a disservice to those affected.
*For: A. Coughlan (Gender & LGBT+ Rights Officer)* The reason giving for a mandate for action is because that’s how mandates and a union work. Anyone can oppose the mandate if they feel the need to. Gave an example of the recent Repeal movement that the union supported but also respected those who did not. Stated that everyone in an industry needs support and to be respected.Closing/ SummaryA. Coughlan (Gender & LGBT+ Rights Officer) This motion was drafted as it was felt that this would be quite an important stance. Felt that this mattered because we are a union, and come from a strong trade union background, supporting workers in their industries and their rights. This is about recognising the rights and safety of sex workers and not pushing them into a black-market industry.

Motion passed by two-thirds (2/3) majority.

**Items for discussion/ Le Bheith Pléite:**

**Topic 1/ Topaic 1**

Financial Aid Fund Update: M. Reilly (SU President) There was a statement uploaded to the Students’ Union Facebook page in response to the dilemma. A recommendation has been brought to UMT and hopes for a fix by the end of the week.

 *Discussion*
E. Spain (2BA Law) asked “What does the SU want”
Reply: An internal and external review of the Financial Aid Fund system.
E. Spain (2BA Law) asked why the statement was released on Facebook instead of going to the newspapers & media.
Reply: The union decided against a press release in the hopes that the university would agree to pay the 500 people potentially affected.

A. Coughlan (Gender & LGBT+ Rights Officer) stated that the lack of communication from the university stresses students even more. Going forward there should be a clearer line of communication.

E. Spain (2BA Law) stated that she didn’t agree that a FB status cuts it and thinks the university should’ve been hit by the press.
Reply: M. Reilly (SU President) agreed and noted the idea for the future.

**Topic/ Topaic 2**

Student Partnership Agreement: M. Reilly (SU President) Working with the university with the hopes of codifying things with students and management. Hoping to hold management responsible and make sure that the roles are not tokenistic. Is hoping for student input, and wants to go into the meetings with a clear idea of what the students want to get out of the partnership.

*Discussion*

J. Hallsburn (1BA) asked what the ratio of management to students would be.
Reply: 50/50 ratio

R. McKeagney (Convenor of the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies) asked how you would encourage that management enact on issues that are raised with them.
Reply: Acknowledged this issue but stated that she was not sure, perhaps an oversight process, perhaps there should be a section during the meeting that people must report back on issues raised.
A. Coughlan (Gender & LGBT+ Rights Officer) stated that there should be emphasis on common-goals for both students and staff, ensuring that everyone will work together in a constructive manner.
Reply: This is a good idea and is preferable to the Trinity model.
 **Topic 3/ Topaic 3**

Closure of Direct Provision Centre (Salthill): V. Chihumura (Ethnic Minorities Officer) This centre houses families and children is being closed. Residents have not been given official dates for the closure but are aware that it is before the end of the year. There are some NUIG students that are living in the centre. Referred to an earlier mandate of the union from the 3rd of March 2016 which states “The Students’ Union condemns the direct provision system which is inhumane and denies asylum seekers their basic rights and calls for its abolition and replacement with a system which respects the human rights of asylum seekers. In line with policy supported by the Migrant Rights Centre and other concerned NGOs”.
From this, V. Chihumura (Ethnic Minorities Officer) calls for students to write to their local TDs asking for those affected to be relocated within Galway.

*Discussion*

Liezel Ravenscroft (Convenor of the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences) asked if there was a template that could be used for the letters.
Reply: M. Reilly (SU President) replied that there could potentially be a Letter Writing Session and welcomes suggestions to build a campaign.

J. Hallsburn (1BA) asked if a template could be forwarded to other within each representative’s respective class.
Reply: Yes

E. Spain (2BA Law) suggested that we hand out letters and get them signed. Perhaps get every class rep to bring their own stack of letters to their respective classes to get as many signed as possible.

C. Austick (VP for Welfare & Equality) spoke about the possibility of setting up an online petition calling for the provision centre to relocate people within Galway and get all class reps to share it with others.

M. Sullivan (Disability Rights Officer) spoke about setting up an awareness campaign.

Chuka Paul Oguekwe (Mature Students’ Officer) asked if we knew how many students were staying in the Direct Provision Centre.
Reply: 5

N. Murphy (2nd Biomedical-Engineering) asked for clarification on if the petition was for the closure of the Direct Provision Centre, or for those affected to be relocated within Galway.
Reply: For those affected to be relocated within Galway.

D. Lydon (2BA Philosophy) asked if this would be something that a press release might be useful for.
Reply: V. Chihumura will be doing an interview on the Late Late Show and that will be all regarding a press release.

**A.O.B/ A.G.E**

1. S. Green (Convenor of the College of Science) spoke about the College sit-down campaign for more seating on campus. The petition is a physical chair that people are signing. It will be going on tour around campus but lives in the SU office. Once completely signed, it will be sent to the Chief Operating Officer’s office. Hoping for John Gill (COO) to make pledge funding.
2. S. Vaughan (SU Chairperson) spoke about voter registration, and that the deadline for registering is Sunday the 25th of November, and that forms are available in the SU office.
3. M. Reilly (SU President) Winter Conferring Information: Áras na Mac Léinn should not have been shut off during the conferring and is calling for a review.

M. Brogan (Microsociology) stated there were issues with security grabbing her bag whilst trying to enter the building, and with shoving also.

E. Spain (2BA Law) stated that there were fire escapes being blocked (cars being parked on front of, stewards blocking them, metal fencing being positioned on front of them) and had reservations about safety.
4. C. Keighron (Postgrad Taught Officer) stated that the next postgraduate council would be postponed to a later date.

**Closing**
S. Vaughan (SU Chairperson) set the next meeting for the 26th of November.

The chairperson then concluded the meeting at 7:30 pm as there were no other issues arising.

12/11/18

Minutes proposed by: Sabrina Vaughan (SU Council Chairperson).

Seconded by: C. Murphy (2nd Year Commerce)

26/11/18

\*These minutes were prepared from a contemporaneous note taken by Dara Rickard (SU Council Secretary) at the meeting Monday, 12th of November 2018 at 6PM in the Kirwin Theatre and were typed into this memorandum style document (and edited with the SU Council Secretary and Council Chairperson) for the record of Council.