

Officer Report Transcripts -17/06/10

Campaigns Officer

Firstly, my co-officer Sue sends her apologies. I am going to start by coming to something I built on at the last UGM, which is something we have been working throughout the term, which is expanding committee membership. We have been very successful on this, on a few levels. Firstly, we have got increasingly involved in the GSA, we have a regular representative from there, which has been much more effective in gaining representation from mature and graduate students. We have also recently got a new member from Derwent College, who was elected in the by-election, which was very successful, which will presently mean that Derwent College will now have some representation on the campaigns committee. We have also had more regular attendance from our current college reps, from a few campaign people running this term who have been much more pro-active about getting involved, which is positive. An issue that we have dealt with fairly recently, which although it is not complete, is something that a few people have asked about, which is twenty-four hour portering in fresher's fortnight. We have looked a bit into this, although nothing is finalised so far, and we have gone through college provosts who have broadly been in favour in support of this. They have taken this to their provosts' meeting with Jane Grenville. And who has committed to take it to the university management (?) So although we have not finalised anything on this, the reason I bring it up is because some people have asked about it, so I feel I should mention it. We have undertaken an accommodation audit of Langwith College, which has been a big success, in terms of going round speaking to a lot of ordinary members of Langwith about the problems with accommodation in their blocks. We have been taking those problems to estates(?) who have been very perceptive and positive about supporting that. So that is something we are working very closely with the university on, and they have been very good and helpful working there. We have also started working a little but more closely with the environment and ethics officer on a campaign that went through at the last UGM about battery eggs, getting rid of battery eggs on campus. And I imagine that, should other motions in this pass, we will be working more closely with environment, which will be good getting a bit more co-operation between officers. And briefly just to finish, we have also been looking at fresher's week planning, trying to engage more fresher's with the activities of the campaigns committee and YUSU in general. We have been looking at packs and also ways to involve college reps in getting a bit more representation out there, so that college officers are a bit more approachable to first years, who often are the brunt of a lot of problems faced that the campaigns committee is best suited to deal with. Thank you.

Racial Equality Officer

Hi, Winnie and (?) racial equality officers. Basically we have been planning our events for next term and for the end of this term. For next term we have a careers fair in line, a (?) careers fair, and then hopefully we will be joining with an (?), to bring that (?) For fresher's week we have organised welcome packs (?) and a meet and greet event. We have begun to organise some debates and public lectures and during the end of this term and over the summer, we are going to run a writing competition for people who write articles on race issues, and hopefully there will be a prize for the best article. We have a project planned for raising awareness about the racial equality committee; it is going to be outlining the NUS definition of black, which is quite a controversial issue. NUS define black as African, Caribbean, Arabic people who have been co-opting people to enter our committee and we will have a more regular and larger committee attendant. And a final thing is (?), which is running with (?) we are going to see good hair by Chris Rock, and (unclear) and the lady coming to demonstrate how to look after ethnic hair, and answer advice.

YUSU President

TN: Giving a verbal report, I will put a more comprehensive written report online. This report is going to be an officer report, an update on things that have happened, I'm going to talk about my key achievement for this year, and my objectives for next year, so a bit of a policy update. Swimming pool: this has been a very successful (?) with the university and with the council. The proposal passed at the policy and resources committee, which essentially means that funding from the university, has been accepted. It's going to go to university council next week, and again it should pass at that committee. It has gone to the highest decision making body of the council for approval, Sport England have taken it to their highest decision making body as well, for the one-million pound funding, and so long as all three of them pass, the swimming pool should start progress, building the swimming pool should start at the beginning of next year, so we should aim to have that live and kicking within a year and a half, which I think is an achievement of the university, and deserves bit of recognition because they have been taking some stick for not doing it in time. Catering and social facilities is another project as well which will be up and running in the next year. We have identified the funding, and it is going to have the same sort of capacity as the Roger Kirk, so that is going to be up and ready to go, and we will be providing not just for the first stage of Heslington East, but it has been designed to also cater for the next phase of Heslington East, so that it is more than ready to handle the capacity of two phases thinking ahead. And lastly, a new initiative that has started. You might have heard of the first initiative, which has been running directly with the facilities management, this initiative has also kicked off with relation to student support services, and we have the first meeting, or the first half way gate of that, just over a week ago and there has been quite a few discussions coming out of that, and one of the things that we will be looking to do is merge not just the progress of the (?) meeting, but also merging it with the DFM meeting, so you have got some joined up thinking happening between some support services and the operational (?) to the university. Moving on to some key achievements of mine this year, obviously it is the end of the year, I was elected on the mandate that I had some policies to achieve, so I am giving you an update on what I think are three of my key achievements for this year, but I will put a more thorough update of my policies online after this UGM. First key achievement is Heslington East. I am very proud of the work that has gone into Heslington East, not just for myself but all of the officers of the union who have worked really, really hard to ensure that a. The buildings are open on time and on budget and b. That the buildings are designed and fit for purpose. I think that many of you that have been to Goodricke will agree that it is one of the best bits of accommodation on campus, a lot of people doubted its distance, other people doubted if it would open on time, it blew away all of those expectations and, talking to students who live at Goodricke College they will agree that the building is of a high standard. There have been a few (?) issues, but the work to rectify this has been scheduled for over the summer, you will see a lot of improvements going to the college, and obviously the learning blocks will taken out of that, and Langwith college should in theory be a perfect build. Also Heslington East, not many know this but the bus going from this campus to that campus was actually a suggestion that came from YUSU officers and that suggestion has carried through, and it now exists not just for students but for staff, not just those who work or live there, it is for all students and staff, and next year the university is going to expand this hop-on hop-off service between all bus stops on campus, so you will be

able to go and take the bus from Biology all of the way through to Goodricke and not have to pay a single penny. So that is something that is going to be getting pushed forward, and again that came from the YUSU push, and again I am really, really proud of that. Strategic plan: I have talked so much about this and I am not going to go on about it again. But again, this is something that, as officers, we have pushed really hard on, and we have now got a much, much stronger mandate for some of the policy decisions that we are making, some of the direction of our thinking, and again this will guide us throughout the forthcoming year. And lastly: the website. Many of you will know that the website has gone through a serious re-design, if you had seen the previous one you would agree that the current one is a much better product, however there is still ongoing work to it, and there is still work being done to make it easier to access, and easier to use as well for our members. Moving on to some key objectives for next year; one of the big things in my policies was to work closely with other affiliates of the union, particularly the ISA, colleges and the GSA. One of the things where we wanted to get that going was fresher's week, so we have got a fresher's week coming up and a lot of the officers have identified ways in which we can work with these groups to better integrate our events, get some more integrated thinking, so that is something I am going to try and lead over this coming summer. Also the communications strategy have been underway that the university, and similarly within the union we have to do our part to ensure that we are communicating not just to the Undergrad population, but to all of the different target groups: postgraduates, international students, making sure that our website is accessible, making sure that we cater for the disability needs of those that can't read information in the usual way we put it out, more importantly, making sure that we reach those that we don't already reach, and how we can go towards achieving that. So, that's some of the work I am going to be doing over the summer, alongside the constitutional reform we just spoke about earlier on. So that is going to be the bulk of my summer work, and I will expect to give you an update on that at the first UGM of next term. My policies are available on my manifesto, which I have online on Facebook, or wherever you want to look, and again, I will give you a more thorough update on my policies that I said I would achieve this year. Thank you very much.

Welfare Officer

BH: Right, so I have been doing these things for year now and almost every time, in about five to seven I think why on earth have I not actually written out my speeches, rather than speak from notes, I apologise if I ramble. The first thing I will say is yes, once again I think it is true of a lot of the officers tonight, I am publishing a blog tonight or very early tomorrow morning, depending on how long it takes me, which will go through in depth each of my policies, where I've got with them, where I have still got to go with them. I have to say I made an ambitious manifesto which I have made a good deal of progress on this year, and if you would like to look on the website to view those details in full, I would really encourage you to. As I was saying something about this year, it has been absolutely fantastic. It has been amazing, it has been so much fun, it has been the most challenging thing I have had to do far in my life, and it has been astounding. I have done policy, I've done politics, I have had really interesting relations with some of the newspapers, I've worked on services, (?), I've had to battle with and against the uni, I've planned, I've done something else I can't even read my notes. However, it has been amazing, it has been so much fun, there are so many people that I want to say have been amazing this year: my PA, the committee I work with, the equality welfare and diversity committee, they don't get talked about much in the media and that's why I say a big thing for them. All of the college reps, the nightline reps, my three ordinary members that no-one on here knows, but the equality and welfare committee has three ordinary members Olivia, Philip and Amy are fantastic, all of the liberation officers (?) so much (?) Ellie, Peter, Claire and Dennis, and of course the wonderful liberation officer that is coming in for next year, (?) the union. I want to leave, maybe, this year with the thought for next year. It is not going to be easy, the next year or two. (?) coming out telling us exactly what he thinks of students and where they are in the world. We have heard in recent leak (?) they are thinking about maybe £7,000 immediately and £14,000 invested in commercial loans. In the short term, on the twenty-second, the conservatives (?) substantial cuts. On the 29th June, in fact, I will be at a conference on London and working out how we can respond to those cuts at the NUS HQ. Because of the severity of the impact on some institutions, I am happy to say that our institutions will not be one of the worst affected. If we were in Leeds right now, it would be very different story. Next year we are strong, and we have got going for us. We as a union are much more diverse, much stronger, much more representative and we have got a much clearer focus on those representative aspects, the academic and the welfare side. But it is not going to be easy, in a year when we are facing challenges which the (?) since the 1980's, so terms of cuts and changes. We will only succeed if we are united. I tell you what; there are an awful lot of other people that are trying to get out of these cuts (?). Don't forget the university has got a lot of stakeholders, it has got businesses, they have got an awful lot of people doing research, they have got staff, there is the government, there is the council. Everyone under the sun has got something they want out of the university, and in these cuts we have to be the ones that say, actually no, can we prioritise during those cuts process us students. If we are going to do that, are (?) than everyone else. (Unclear). For that we need everyone to muck in. Quite simply, this is a pivotal time for higher education, and certainly for York. Battles won and lost will have a historical affect upon our institution entire sector. Everyone in the York University has an opportunity to be part of that fight, part of that battle next year, and you have also got the opportunity to opt out. In five, in ten, in fifteen, twenty and twenty-five

years' time when your children are going to university, your response to them; say yes at that time I was there, I did something, I didn't. I encourage every single member of the union to join us next year and do something to change it.

Student Activities Officer

RK: For Lewis and I this is the last ever UGM we will ever go to, so this is a sad moment. And this is the last speech I will ever make at a UGM. So I have made it into a bit of a goodbye speech. I am pleased to report that, after its first year in existence, the student activities officer role does work, and I have absolutely loved my year in office. It has been a pretty massive role, there are points at which I have been so incredibly snowed under that I have not loved it quite so much. Like when societies turn up in the office and pile up their problems when I am trying to do something else to do with RAG or volunteering, or when we have to talk about (?) or when I am tripping over RAG buckets in the office. But these things are quite annoying, but I think that genuinely the most rewarding job that is on offer to each and every student here, and I think it is just so valuable that we have this opportunity within the union. A bit about my year: so for societies this year I have tried to create a greater sense of community and a greater motivation for development. It is really hard, and as I have said before, in the societies' committee motion, it is really difficult when so many societies won't engage with myself and with the rest of YUSU. We have got such an active, enthusiastic bunch of students who are so incredibly good at what they do, but they rarely turn up to meetings or reply to emails, and it is so difficult when they don't help me to represent their interests. So this year I have laid the foundations, I have consistently consulted them in decisions, I have got them into college events, I have put them into categories to thrash out the most relevant issues, I have given them a committee hopefully, to debate their purpose and direction, I have done YUSU fair one, YUSU fair two, I have given awards, I have involved them in Woodstock, but these are just the foundations. So, to Nick who is going to be doing this job next year and to everyone: societies is an area of the union that has suddenly got a load more attention this year due to the change in sabbatical roles, but it really requires so much focus, it requires so much hard work and imagination to keep the momentum going from this year. I am confident that Nick is going to do, he has everything he needs, to do a really good job next year. He can develop the societies and structures and give them the support that they need. I think that we are at really good point now; I think it is only going to go up from here. On Rag and volunteering obviously we have our own offices on these areas, and I think that the ways we have developed this year these roles have worked really well. We have taken a step back compared to what Jamie did last year, the FCC officer, and RAG and volunteering officers have had the ability to really do their own thing. It does create a difficult position sometimes, because when I want them to do something I can't tell them to do it, and I have to leave the decision with them. But I played an advisory role, so that is always something to be aware of; the relationship between the student activities officer and the RAG officers and the volunteering officers. On RAG, they have had a hard year, obviously with (?) but I think that we have really raised the profile of RAG on campus. Everyone now has to raise money for RAG. I think that everyone feels that they are now a part of RAG, and also with the beneficiary elections, everyone has that buy-in to RAG, so I think we have done a really good job this year in building the foundations. I know that year John and James have got some really good ideas on, just making money out of nothing, doing crazy things with RAG, so this is really exiting for next year. With volunteering, we have rebranded, obviously we are called YUSU Volunteering now and it is really exiting to hear the college reps, that last year would have been called student action reps but now they are called YUSU volunteering reps, and they don't know...

it's just really exciting to see that change. we have done lots of stuff, particularly we have developed our volunteering projects, the support and they training that they have got this year and they have made some really big achievements, we have won some national awards now so I'm really proud of the work we have done there, and with Rachel last year. I think, overall, the work I have been doing with the university I would be really keen to say that employability is something that I have worked so hard on, and I really want to see that continued over the next three years. We have got three years of active policy on it and it really needs to stay of the agenda, we have got the university's employability strategy, but now we need an action plan, and we put all of these principles in place and told the university what we want on it, and I think that is something that will be really important next year. And the other thing is facilities, I have been working really hard with Lewis this year on providing facilities for our students, particularly for societies, at the moment we are asking questions like why can't we use this hall, or that hall, why can't we get into the Roger Kirk centre and use it as a dance practise space? I think these are the kinds of questions we need to be asking now and we need to be asking them next year. These are the big things that I have been doing and I want us to continue. So, me, I didn't do this for a gold card, I didn't do it for the big chair or the big desk, although I did get the big chair and the big desk thanks to Charlie, I did it because I genuinely felt that, and I still feel that YUSU have a massive impact on students' lives, and I really wanted, and I still want, people to understand that. Embarrassingly, over a year ago I stood on this exact spot holding a box of cereal stating that you are YUSU and YUSU is you, which everyone laughed at, so I know it was cheesy, I know people laughed but I genuinely want every student to understand that all of that, this meeting, that bar, everything is part of YUSU, all of you people are part of YUSU, I sound as crazy as I did the first time round. But I also want to make the point that just because some of us here are officers or sabbatical officers, it doesn't mean that we are different I think, I went into this with the mentality that I wanted to stay the same person, I'm still a student at heart even though I do a job and don't do a degree. So I hope that the sabbatical officers this year have given that impression, that we are still in touch, and that we are still kind of student-y. So, in my notes I have gone and banged on about this union being yours and this is your (?) and your societies, this is your RAG and these are your decisions, but these are the kinds of things that I really want people to understand. It frustrates me that people don't vote on UGMs, because I really feel that people don't realise how much of a difference people can make in this university and this union. So, to round up, we have had a really, really fun year I have made some really good friends with the sabs, obviously they are like a little family, they come into the office and sit with us every day, and I will always be a part of this union even when I'm in London somewhere at my desk, hopefully, if I get a job, and I will probably still check Nouse and Vision and the URY on the websites to see what is going on. So thanks very much everyone for a really fantastic year, and I will keep in touch. Goodbye.

Democracy and Services Officer

LB: That just leaves me. Thank you everyone, like Rhianna this is my final speech at a UGM and it is my final office UGM. For the first time ever I have bothered, not bother obviously, have time to write out a speech. You are going to have to forgive me because it is relatively formal, but it is fairly concise, so there we go. For me, speeches have had a bit of an unexpected side effect for me, every so often I find that my eighty-two year old grandpa has seen these speeches, and whenever we chat about the finer points of YUSU policy, it reminds me of the variety and diversity of this job, and ensures that I never forget a surreal element of (?) Over the past year I have run events, created budgets, negotiated contacts, consulted lawyers, run elections, written minutes, researched policy, recruited staff, pulled pints and developed ideas. I have sat in meetings, fought in meetings, and I have represented students to the university, to the community and to national bodies. These have been opportunities given to me by the student body, opportunities for which I am incredibly and eternally grateful. I am proud of the work that I have done over this year, to leave a union that is more professional, more efficient and better resourced than it was when I have arrived. I have implemented a staffing restructure to ensure that we are better equipped to serve our members and support our officers, I oversaw the development and refurbishment of (?), the studio and the students' centre ensuring we have a fit for purpose area for welfare and academic support, and that we ensure that our student activities are as accessible as they can be to all of our members. I am proud of the fact that our budget next year is likely to reflect our increased focus on our representative function, in particular academic affairs. I am proud of the fact that more students voted in our election this year than last year, and that we are likely to remain one of the top unions in the country for election turnout. I'm proud of the fact that we ran a successful general election campaign, one where over thirteen-hundred students voted on campus, and I am proud that I have developed a more successful strategy for student representation within commercial services, ensuring that Derwent bar stays open, and that we have our say in future developments. I am proud of the work I have done with venues in town to ensure that students have safe, fun and successful nights out. I will be submitting a blog on the YUSU website today or early tomorrow morning with some more detail about what I said I did and what I have done. The time available to you as a sab can mean that it often hard to quantify the results of your actions, too often the things that we take the most time happen behind the scenes, fighting to ensure to retain the good things about student life at York, and fighting to ensure that every single decision is made with students in mind. Since I have stood here more than a year ago, I have learnt a huge amount about myself, about students and about the university. Being a sab is more of a lifestyle choice than a job, we are human we make mistakes, but never doubt that we are working for you. There is no commission, there is no end of year bonus, there is no expenses allowance, criticise us, question us, challenge us, but never forget that the thing bringing us to work in the morning is the belief that we are making decision that are best for the student body as a whole. Anyone that has looked at the league tables will see that the key to the future success of our institution is an improvement in the student experience. YUSU must ensure that academic standards are maintained, and that the university always remembers the importance of our members in the face of change to the national landscape. As students and as an organisation we need to where we will compromise

and where we will stand our ground, and where we want to our institution go. To do this we need your support and we need your engagement. YUSU is, and only ever will be, as strong as the sum of its parts. This is my last ever UGM, I hope you will forgive me for being a little sentimental. I would like to thank the staff at YUSU for the support and assistance you have given me; I would like to thank Tim, Ben, Emily, Charlie and Rhianna for making this experience genuinely enjoyable for me. You may not miss my music choices, but I will certainly miss you. I would like to thank every single student that has been involved with YUSU this year, whether or not you agree with me, and whether or not I agree with you. It is you that runs this union, it is you that makes this union and it is you that gives this union its power and strength. To next year's sabs I say this: you will be criticised, you will be challenged, and never, ever forget who you work for, you are managed, you are paid, and you work for the students of this university but if you can always go to bed and say that you made the right decisions for the students at York then you have done the right thing. YUSU is always changing, improving and renewing itself. Over the next year you have got a great opportunity to make the lives of students at York better, I look forward to see how you use it. Thank you.

And with that we can conclude the UGM, if you didn't receive your voucher or if I forgot that you received your voucher, which I probably will have done, then please do claim another one. Thanks a lot; I will see you next time, well in won't in fact, thank you very much.