

VOTE
REBECCA MURPHY #1
FOR USI WELFARE OFFICER



I am a 24 year old UCC graduate from Cork. I studied Drama and English; I like baking, tea, chats and am overly obsessed with condoms.

I am currently UCC Students' Union Welfare Officer and have served as Campaigns and Projects Officer with UCC SU in 2007/2008.

I was Auditor, ex-officio committee member and Campaigns Officer of UCC LGBT society in 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively.

My key achievements as UCC Welfare Officer this year:

Committed the university to introducing a staggered registration fee payment and the automatic issuing of student cards to first years, regardless of registration fee payment.

Conducted a number of awareness-raising weeks including mental health, road safety, alcohol awareness, fire safety, sexual health, healthy living, and stress reduction.

Participated hugely in community respect initiatives instigated by UCC SU this year.

Secured an extra €100,000 from the university for Student Assistance.

Secured €5,000 for a student emergency fund.

Organised training in suicide awareness (SafeTalk) for uLink Peer Supporters.

Involved in UCC and CIT Day of Action on 3rd level fees

Delivered workshops to students on finance issues and sexual health and guidance.

Involved in the launch and promotion of the Student Health STI Clinic

Researched and produced the UCC SU *Finance Survival Guide*

Assisted USI Equality Officer in carrying out Equality Seminars throughout November 2009.

Helped in the evacuation and rehousing of 2000 students during the floods in November, as well as administering the flood relief fund granted to us by the university as a result of SU lobbying.

Ran a peer education service for the STI clinic in UCC.

Secured sponsorship for one student's registration fee for the following year from Bishopstown Credit Union

Liaised with TDs, Senators and councillors in responding to the grants crisis – introduced parliamentary questions on the issue as well as personally advocating on students' behalfs on the issue.

Other Achievements:

UCC Societies Guild Fresher of the year 2006/2007

Best Maiden Speaker Award, Congress 2007 (...and Angry Young Woman Award, Congress 2008)

Founder of Cork Action for Equality in August 2009

Plans and Ambitions:

Training:

I believe that to best serve students, the USI Welfare Officer must offer the highest standard of training and support to the welfare officers that come into contact with students every day of the week. Often we're thrown into the job at the deep end, with little formal training and no time for skills development. To tackle this, I propose:

- Specific training in peer support, suicide awareness, active listening, and referral during UOS through interactive sessions (e.g. group work, role-plays, case studies and problem scenarios).
- Health promotion training in mental health, sexual health, and physical health – it's one thing knowing the information yourself, but knowing how to impart it to the demographic we deal with is another, far more important one.
- In conjunction with the Education Officer - Interactive training using case studies, problem scenarios concerning the Maintenance Grant – the complexities of the system mean that currently many education and welfare officers only get to grips with the issue halfway through the year or after they've already confused a student with advice they weren't sure of. Using past officers who have dealt with the system before as trainers is a possibility.
- Offer ongoing training to welfare officers throughout the year by accredited organisations on issues as they arise amongst welfare officers.
- Issue an information pack on each campaign that USI runs, as well as others run by COs as requested containing researched, relevant information on the topic as well as examples of stunts, promos, events and sample timetables as run in other colleges both within Ireland and beyond.

Support:

The USI Welfare Officer is, in many ways, the welfare officer of the local CO's welfare officer – or at least that's how I would envisage the role. The job of the local welfare officer entails absorbing, processing and dealing with students when they are at their lowest - and this can take its toll on you, emotionally and physically. To this end I would:

Offer myself as a listening and support for welfare officers whenever they need advice or just someone to talk to.

Investigate counselling or supervision services for welfare officers as needed or as appropriate.

Visit COs as often as possible (and as requested) to ensure welfare officers are aware of the support I can give them, whether it's answering their phone for a day or helping them hand out with leafleting.

Alcohol Awareness:

Alcohol abuse is fast becoming a huge issue both within and outside the walls of our colleges. A national strategy and on-the-ground implementation are needed, with input from all affected sectors. Assistance must be provided to allow local COs run campaigns to the highest standard.

I would:

- Provide info packs on research and campaigns done in other universities and countries on the alcohol abuse problem.
- Work closely with relevant national organisations to ensure co-ordination of alcohol strategies and campaigns around the country.
- Hold focus groups in each area with students giving their input into the alcohol campaign.
- Investigate ways of ensuring that USI events can maintain an alcohol aware ethos.
- Assist welfare/other relevant officers with methods and means of providing their RAG/Raise and Give Weeks with an alcohol awareness perspective.

Sexual health:

Prevalence of STIs amongst young people has spiked in the last number of years, and sexual health education must begin to emphasise the dangers of unprotected sex from a disease control perspective. I would:

- Provide sexual health promotion training to welfare officers at the start of the year.
- Ensure the SHAG packs were inclusive of all sexualities and provided information on prevention of STIs during diverse sexual activities.
- Work with relevant national organisations to provide comprehensive campaign information to welfare officers and students across the country.

Mental Health:

- Continued promotion of national services, and portals (e.g. Please Talk, reachout.com, spunout.ie) etc where these services are contactable and streamlined into one place
- Training of welfare officers in suicide alertness as well as facilitating welfare officers in organising Safetalk workshops for students within their own colleges.

Grants System:

While traditionally an education officer's responsibility in USI, I will throw my full weight behind any campaign to implement the student support bill as speedily as possible – I dealt with grants issues in UCC this year and witnessed firsthand the delays, the injustice and the downright inefficiency inherent in our grants system.

This manifesto has only briefly touched on my plans and ambitions to make USI a better union that serves both students and the sabbatical officers within local COs. If you have any questions about my manifesto or on other issues, please don't hesitate to contact me on rebecca4welfare@gmail.com
