

Nekesa Khisa Nancy – VP for Welfare & Equality Manifesto

Hi everyone,

My name is Nekesa and I am a Postgraduate Student with a deep passion to serve and believe that Student's lives, and how they enjoy or do not enjoy their college years largely depend on policies that touch welfare. Because let's face it, the welfare of students is everything as it determines the quality of life.

But the link breaks when this becomes a school management issue, rather than a student-driven issue.

I believe that as TU Dublin we are still struggling with this balance and our voices have not been heard loud enough! Therefore, I have decided to run for the position of VP Welfare and Equality with the sole objective to return this power to the students so our voices can be heard.

Students are accountable and officially recognized by the University's Governing Body as the sole autonomous voice of its students.

Why I should be elected?

Having served on Student Council as a Councillor this past year, I gained some insight into some of the issues that students struggle and out of this a desire was born to want to serve in the welfare docket.

This is an opportunity not to serve you but to also deepen and enhance my leadership skills even as I transfer what I have learned in my previous roles. As a Professional, I have previously worked as a manager in a communications role for over five years. I served as a Public Relation Director for one year for the Rotary Club of Nairobi Upper Hill where I am a Charter member.

While in college at the University of Nairobi is held various positions among them Welfare and Diversity officer, College Liaison Officer, Press Officer, and Media and Agency Management Officer.

I am also a Parliamentary intern at the House of the Oireachtas as part of my study program.

With this wealth of transferrable knowledge and skills, given an opportunity and with dedication and purpose, I will endeavor to communicate TU Dublin's vision in this area while making sure that the voice of students is heard. Your needs are attended to and addressed to a meaningful conclusion within a timeline that is reasonable.

My action plans are:

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Without exception, all should feel included in our community and be treated equally and fairly by staff members as well as fellow students. This should cut across their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. This should be our spirit as a community, and this is what I stand for and am passionate about.

Disabled Students

Living with a hearing disability myself, I believe that accessibility and disability services should be prioritized both on and off campus. Although this service is available on Campus, information on how to access it is not readily available to students who need it.

It has taken me almost a year to have my hearing aid fixed and I can attest to the fact that lack of such essential services can cause untold anguish to a student in need of it. Given this opportunity, I will ensure that advice, information, and support to all disabled students is mandatory and part of their welcome pack.

International Students:

Working closely with the International Students Officer, I will ensure that the untold struggle that comes because of not knowing where to start for students in this category is a thing of the past.

Being an international student in Ireland can be both exciting and depressing and therefore my key priorities will be to ensure that the International Student's office works around the clock to support these students to alleviate some of that uncertainty.

Together with the Chaplaincy team, I will strive to bridge the support gap so that students know that they can access some specific international funding awards set aside for them. For this goes a long way to flatten the learning curve for these to make sure that they all aspects of study and student life.

Additionally, I will strive to ensure that information on these other aspects of their students' life is readily available at the Welfare desk as well as the International Students' office.

Immigration, Visas, and Support: at TU Dublin, often international students stumble upon this information in a manner that does not seem like a deliberate effort.

We will drive the effort to ensure that information on applying for a visa, extending a visa, and answering all your student-related immigration matters are addressed.

We will also try to alleviate the struggle that comes with trying to acquire PPS numbers because, given the high cost of living experienced by students across Ireland, this has a net effect on whether a student can access work or not.

Health and Welfare

My priority will also focus on ensuring that the health care services provided on campus are enhanced and negotiating with the service providers to see that consultation hours are extended and cover campuses that are lacking these services.

This will also go for accessing key services on campus as well as responding to the matters that are of concern to students, among them welfare and hardship allowances to students who need; because I have been a beneficiary of this effort and therefore raising awareness around it is key to me so I help out one, and help out many.

LGBT+

Coming from a country that was the first in its region to acknowledge and legally allow the LGBT+ community their rightful place in society, I will work closely with this leadership to drive positive and inclusive campaigns. These events may include but are not limited to social and educational events, including regular coffee meets speaker events, pub crawls, and more.

Ethnic Diverse Students

My team will also undertake to run campaign programs that represent, support, and advocate for all ethnic diverse students at TU Dublin. At the core of these campaigns will be building a community that cares and is compassionate towards the needs of ethnic diverse students, especially in the face of the recent racial attacks witnessed around campus.

Accommodation

I'm sure this is one subject that drives cynicism among many students, but I believe with more purpose and intention something can be done. My starting point will be lobbying the Accommodation Office to reach out and negotiate with real estate agents to help provide referrals for registered students.

Equally, have this office update all the postings available on the StudentsPad portal because the fact of the matter is that most of the listings expired many months ago and this leads students to

waste a lot of time trying to contact the owners only to be informed that the property was rented months before.

Conclusion

I understand some of the issues that I raised have been spoken about at large, year in and year out, and you may be driven to question if indeed any meaningful solutions will be found, but my promise to you is that these will be delivered in a manner that is satisfying because I am on record, and my colleagues at the Students' Council can attest to the fact that I have challenged us on numerous occasions to move away from the culture of raising issues with the University management and be solution-oriented within a specified time frame. And in its absence, there must be a contingency plan.

Therefore, together with the TU Dublin SU President and their leadership, I will seek to not only provide a political platform where your voices can be heard, as each one of our opinions counts but at the core of my service to you will be working tirelessly to enhance your Student experience at TU Dublin.

As I have demonstrated in the last year that I have served as Student Councillor, a position that I have held with pride in knowing that I was honoured by my colleagues to hold. I will fight tirelessly, fearlessly, and with integrity to ensure that our voices are heard!

Because let's face it, life as a student is full of new exciting, rewarding, and fulfilling opportunities. However, while you may be here to study, it is important to make sure you look after your mental health because a lot of the things raised in my Manifesto have been known to be the leading cause of unhealthy mental well-being.

Thank you!