

The University of Dublin

Trinity College

Draft Minutes of the Student Life Committee

4th February, 2015

Present: Prof. Kevin O’Kelly (Dean of Students (Chair), Dr. Claire Laudet (Senior Tutor), Dr Erika Doyle (Global Officer Co-ordinator), Ms Deirdre Flynn (Director, Student Counselling Service), Ms. Megan Lee (GSU President), Ms. Michelle Tanner (Head of Sports and Recreation), Mr Ian Mooney (SU Welfare Officer), Mr Domhnall McGlacken-Byrne (President TCDSU) , Ms. Leona Coady (Academic Registry), Mr Declan Treanor, (Disability Service), Ms. Claire Buttanshaw (Vice Chair DUCAC), Ms. Caitriona Sheil (Secretary, CSC), Mr Seán Gannon (Director, Careers Advisory Service), Mr. Eanna Drury (Chair, CSC), Rev Julian Hamilton (Chaplaincy), Ms. Lee Mills (Representing John Murphy, Information Systems Services), Ms. Eimear Farrell (Deputy Chief Financial Officer), David McGrath (Director, College Health Service)

Apologies: Mr Brendan Tangney (Warden, Trinity Hall), Ms. Kathryn Smith (Library)

Absent: Mr. Adam Hanna (GSU Vice President), Mr. Adrian Neilan, Commercial Revenue Unit, Prof Emma Stokes (Registrar of Chambers), Ms Aoife Cox (Manager, Day Nursery & Crèche), Jennifer Cahill (Chair, Publications Committee)

Present: Ms Sinéad Dunne (Minutes)

Section A

SLC/14-15/28 Minutes (A.1)

The apologies were noted. The minutes were approved and signed following an amendment to item SLC/14-15/27: that the Annual Report for Counselling would be circulated not the Quality Review

SLC/14-15/29 Matters Arising (A.2)

The Dean of Students informed the committee that the Complaints Procedure Policy document has been submitted to the Quality Committee to be reviewed at the next council meeting and after that it is hoped that the website can be updated to reflect this. Declan and Domhnall requested that the document would contain details of both informal and formal procedures. In addition to this the importance of both logging a complaint and receiving (email) acknowledgement of same was highlighted and deemed important. Such a log could additionally record the types of complaints being made.

The Orientation Steering Group are going to meet with the Post Graduate Steering Group to integrate with a joint orientation, looking after both Undergraduate and Postgraduate students.

Student Death Protocol, The Senior Tutor informed the committee that the current policy will be updated and a new pack created with relevant and important information and documentation. Currently they are looking for native speakers of different languages to be able to assist in situations where the student's family is not Irish or English is not their first language. Additionally, it will be looking at the cultural perspective also taking into account religious beliefs/cultural differences etc so as to be sensitive to the situation. More on this policy is hoped to be finalised by the next meeting.

It was discussed whether the pack and associated documentation should be available to just the relevant groups involved or to the wider college community. While the Office of the Senior Tutor would be the contact point and information being disseminated to Heads of Schools and Support Services it was not agreed whether it should be freely accessible to all online with Declan and Julian voicing that it should be available to all while the Senior Tutor was hesitant for this to happen but that this matter would be revisited.

Lee Mills highlighted an issue that in cases of a student death some families have requested access from ISS to a student's account and they need to clarify what access can (if any) be granted in such cases. The Dean of Students stated that it may need to be clarified by the College Secretary to ensure that no legal implications are infringed.

With regard to the Counselling Report it was requested that it be delayed to the next meeting.

With the ISSE 2015 survey going live shortly the Dean of Students requested that services be open to allow putting up posters etc to encourage participation particularly among PG Taught courses and also 1st Years. Suggestions to encourage this included; offering prizes such as giving 5 Trinity Ball Tickets (that the committee can purchase), printing vouchers from Reids (which Megan Lee has agreed to look into) and Michelle Tanner offered four personal training sessions with a value of €150 as well as a suggestion that a % of money will be given to the Student Hardship Fund based on a threshold rather than a €1 per vote system.

The Student Life Web Presence Working Group- The Dean of Students informed the SLC that the group are moving to the next step of setting up a test/dummy version and doing a large review and overhaul of the content. This is hoped to be completed by May with the responsibility of the individual departments to review it annually after this. He highlighted that the content of the webpages associated with the operational units was a matter for them. The higher level content and links would belong to the Dean of Students and be reviewed annually with units dependent on the website. Erica Doyle asked how the links will work which the Dean of Students explained was being looked at and that when wire framing is complete, it will be brought to the working group.

SLC/14-15/30 Dean's Report (A.3)

The Dean of Students is having a meeting with the School Administrators to brief them on the report on 2014 Student Orientation. The process is starting again and the Orientation Steering Group is in the process of finalising documents including a systems report. The Senior Tutor pointed out that a lot of issues in the report are on PG orientation, and feels that that the Course Administrators as well as the School Administrators should be at this meeting. The Dean of Students felt that the School Administrators should be bringing this information and passing it on to the course administrators.

Accommodation Issues; a commissioned survey of students was done to look at the spread of needs with over 2,200 participating, a high level of response. The results of this are yet to be revealed. The SU were concerned that there is not enough reasonably priced accommodations that can match varying budgets; there was a crisis at the start of the last academic year and this was very stressful for students starting college with some of the emergency accommodation being very expensive resulting in numbers of students staying in hostels. Domhnall suggested ring-fencing of accommodation for students by landlords and other steps to prevent this from happening again. The Dean of Students stated that the college is looking to acquire more properties in order to meet the demand though this will take some time. He also mentioned that he had been speaking with Daft and asking them to set up a search parameter that would assist students searching for accommodation as well as the Accommodation Steering Group looking at the issue. Domhnall felt that this was at a high level and that there was no real progress happening on the ground. The Senior Tutor, Declan and the SU/GSU articulated a need for TCD to take more responsibility and that it should not solely be in the remit of the SU especially considering the turnover of reps every year. The Senior Tutor expressed a concern that accommodation needs to be looked at both as an immediate and long term planning issue. She said that other Universities in particular DIT have been actively canvassing a wide range of options to get accommodation for their students including leafleting asking people if they would take a student in Digs.

Megan Lee requested that a listing service and more information for incoming students as a matter of priority with emphasis on International Students. She felt this cohort should be made aware of the lack of accommodation in Dublin prior to arriving here and that assistance should be given at Orientation. It was proposed that this should be an Action Item to be followed up on again by all stakeholders in advance of this year's orientation

The Dean of Students informed the committee that he will be Chairing the Project on the Integrated Implementation Strategy for Sport. The Project Team will include two external people who are being approached now.

SLC/14-15/31 College Mentoring Forum (A.4)

Deirdre from S2S briefed the committee on this project which involves setting up a Forum as a formal way of exchanging information, training ideas, making contacts etc all of which fits into the strategic plan's aim to empower students. It is hoped to have a rotary chair. Already

the areas engaged are in Careers/TAP/Sport. The Committee were asked if they would like to propose additional members to be involved. Those who offered to be part of the group were; Julian from the Chaplaincy Service, representatives of the SU, Ian (or representative) and GSU, Megan/Adam (or representative), additionally a representative from the Trinity Volunteering Forum (Ralph) is to be co-opted onto it. The membership of this group was approved by all.

Deirdre will report back to the group on development of the S2S initiative.

SLC/14-15/32 Dean's Roll of Honour –report of the working group (to follow)(A.5)

The Dean outlined that a working group had been operating to redefine the categories in this award. Overall it was felt that a lot of good work had been done to rejuvenate this award. The approving body of the changes to the award is the VP Group from which the final version shall go to the Board for approval.

Two key points of change were; the number of hours of activity/engagement for nomination/application would be increased and could not be covered in a single event-showing that it was a sustained commitment/activity and within this up to 2 organisations can be included. The second large change was the introduction of the Leadership and Legacy awards where more rigorous criteria would need to be met, with the possibility of revisiting the idea of capping if numbers were very high (e.g. >30) for the leadership award and the legacy award is expected to be capped at 3 for exceptional commitment, engagement and involvement of an outstanding nature. Personal development and growth will still be included in the guidelines and be an aspect of the criteria.

Concerns were raised by the Senior Tutor, Erika and others over how to monitor involvement in non TCD based organisations and the additional workload that would become the remit of Simone in verifying all recommendations. The Dean verified that after all recommendations had been verified it would be thereafter based on an honour system. It was suggested that past students could be considered for the (Legacy) awards within a reasonable time frame but within which the impact of their contribution is still visible and as requested by Sean Gannon to note, only in reference to activities that happened in the timeframe that they were a student in TCD.

The Committee approved the document and the concerns were noted to be passed on. Brendan who was absent asked for his strong support for the new revised structure to be noted in the minutes.

Section B

SLC/14-15/33 Any other Urgent Business (B.2)

Domhnall, from the Student Union raised the issue of cost increases to charges being introduced. A number of these were put forward last year including supplementary exam

fees, increased student card fees and a charge for re-printing of a diploma certificate. Due to the number of objections only two went through last year with the rest to go through this year having been deferred. He feels that while stakeholders such as the Finance Committee, VP and Treasurers Office are being consulted no conversation has been broached to students on the matter. The college he feels is asserting that this is the first time students have been hit which he believes is not true as various charges and fees are increasing all the time and it is becoming a huge struggle for students to manage financially. They are looking at the possibility of bringing the issue forward as a referendum and asking students to vote on it. The Senior Tutor added that she is aware of this situation and feels a waiver system needs to be introduced for students who cannot afford to pay these additional charges, that if not we are disadvantaging students and rather than broadening access to education we are narrowing it. Megan, from the GSU expressed concern that while charges are being introduced no improvement in services is seen and that a huge number of these are as a result of operations in the Academic Registry.

Examples mentioned were of fee refunds and fee waivers that even once approved can take months for the students in question to actually get the money. Leona clarified that the Student Fee Refunds are processed by FSD and the Academic Registry are not the managers of this task. She explained that the Academic Registry processes and systems are currently being reviewed to optimise student experience and streamline activities in line with the Strategic Plan and that the changes will necessitate time and have associated costs.

The Dean of Students reminded the committee that the SLC is not in itself designed to deal with financial issues but that the concerns of the committee would be noted and conveyed to Council. Domhnall wished for it to be noted that such increases in charges could lead to negative implications on Student Life and wished to know if a risk analysis had been done on the implications of these charges. It was affirmed by a number of services (Health, the Senior Tutor, Counselling and Sports) that they would be dealing with the implications of this.

A concern was raised by Eanna Drury on behalf of Societies on how they are being treated by parts of the college community for example whereby the examinations office cancel SU bookings without informing the group involved.

The Dean asked that if large items are going to be discussed at SLC meetings that they should be submitted beforehand so as to be included in the agenda and not to be presented with no notice.

The Next Student Life Committee is scheduled to take place March 4th 2015