

### Sabbatical Officer Name and Role:

**Ryan Murphy, Co-President (Self-Identifying Male/Non-Binary)**

### Date of Report: 21/03/24

Video Link – *(attach video link to Officer report)*

## Updates

### Manifesto

**Title Update: Campus Equity**

**Update Category: Insight & Action**

As Co-President of Beds SU, I'm excited to share our progress on the Campus Equity manifesto goal. This initiative is at the heart of our efforts to create an inclusive, accessible, and supportive environment for all University of Bedfordshire students. By focusing on practical solutions to everyday challenges and actively responding to student feedback, we've made significant strides towards enhancing the campus experience. Below are key updates and our strategic direction moving forward.

#### **Affordable Catering Facilities**

Responding to valuable student feedback, the Beds SU has proactively lobbied for substantial improvements to our catering facilities. Following negotiations with the university, an agreement was reached to augment the existing space near the canteen in Luton with additional microwaves over the Easter break. Regrettably, due to budget constraints, the university was unable to fulfil this enhancement. Demonstrating our commitment to student welfare and convenience, the Beds SU has independently acquired and installed two new microwaves. These are now accessible outside of the Sabbatical Office, on the Mezzanine Floor of G Block, ensuring our students have enhanced facilities to support their needs.

#### **Ongoing Lobbying for Better Student Accommodation**

Our efforts to advocate for improved student accommodation conditions have elicited positive responses from both the university and its representatives. Despite our intention, as outlined in last month's report, to organise a follow-up forum to address the concerns raised in the pre-Christmas forum, progress has been hindered. This delay is attributable to a confluence of factors, including the scheduling challenges posed by our student elections, a surge in the utilisation of our advice services, and the integration of new staff members into our team. In the interim, we have addressed students' concerns on an individual basis to ensure that no issue goes unattended.

As the academic year draws to a close and the likelihood increases that students will complete their assignments and return home for the summer, we recognise the need to reassess the viability of hosting the intended follow-up forum. Considering the present situation, we are exploring alternative approaches to ensure that the issues raised are effectively addressed and resolved, maintaining our commitment to improving student living conditions.

### **Advocacy Against Parking Fees**

As highlighted in prior reports, the introduction of parking fees at the Bedford campus has raised significant concerns among our student community. In response, I initiated discussions with the Chief Finance and Resources Officer and the Deputy Director of Facilities and Estates. These efforts culminated in the organization of a student forum aimed at directly addressing these concerns. Regrettably, the forum's impact was diminished due to low attendance, with only three students participating.

Further complicating matters, I have since conveyed additional concerns from PGCE and part-time students, for whom the £10 monthly parking fee poses a particular hardship. Despite these ongoing dialogues, the stance of the university administration remains firm. They argue that the parking fees are reasonable, comparing favourably with charges at other institutions and even other campuses within the University of Bedfordshire. Furthermore, they cite a petition signed earlier in the year, arguing that the fees have been set lower than initially proposed thanks to student feedback.

Nonetheless, we continue to advocate for a reconsideration of this policy, underscoring its detrimental impact on student welfare and campus accessibility. Our contention remains that the imposition of these fees is a barrier to inclusivity and convenience for our student body. Encouragingly, the university has agreed to explore the possibility of including parking fees in the accommodation costs for students residing on the Bedford campus from September, which could offer a partial resolution to these concerns.

### **Development of Theories of Change**

Theories of Change models are strategic frameworks used to plan, implement, and evaluate social or organizational initiatives. They outline the steps necessary to achieve a desired outcome, detailing the assumptions, interventions, and metrics that guide progress from the current state to the envisioned future. These models are particularly useful in clarifying how and why the proposed changes are expected to bring about specific outcomes.

Recently, I revisited the Theories of Change I developed at the outset of my tenure, focusing on refining the outcome metrics. Although my term may conclude in a few months, the campus equity policy, a cornerstone of our efforts, will be active for the next academic year. This makes the accuracy and relevance of our Theories of

Change model critical in guiding the union's direction on this pivotal issue. To ensure transparency and foster collective understanding, I will share an updated visual representation of the Theory of Change model in advance of next month's report. This update is essential for aligning our strategies and efforts towards achieving campus equity effectively.

### **Engagement in Block Grant and Master Plan**

In recent times, a broad spectrum of departments—including faculties, student support, library services, careers, the Treehouse, SID, finance, IT, and others—have been actively involved in discussions surrounding the University's Estates and Infrastructure Master Plan. This comprehensive plan is pivotal, as it delineates the University's structural and developmental trajectory for the coming years. Such collaborative discussions are instrumental in shaping a cohesive and forward-looking strategy that aligns with our collective vision for the University's future.

Concurrently, we have initiated our annual dialogues with the University's administration to negotiate our block grant. As a student union, our operations are significantly underpinned by the financial support we receive from the University. These discussions are critical, as they provide us with the platform to articulate and justify the necessity of continued funding for the forthcoming year. In advocating for this financial support, we underscore the vital role that the Union plays in fostering a sense of belonging among students and enhancing the vibrancy of the campus environment. These contributions are directly linked to the University's overarching Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of retention, recruitment, student satisfaction, and narrowing awarding gaps. By reinforcing these connections, we highlight the integral part that Union activities and initiatives play in advancing the University's strategic objectives and enhancing the overall student experience.

### **Faculty (CATS)**

#### **Update Category: Insight**

Since the commencement of our entire student voice team in January, we have been deeply engaged in a variety of initiatives, including the Beds SU elections, Faculty Academic Boards (FABs), Student Staff Experience Committees (SSECs), campus site support, Course Rep training, and direct student engagement. Additionally, our efforts have extended to exploring the future landscape of Representation, enhancing support for course reps, devising reward mechanisms for Course Reps, and bolstering our support for Academic Societies.

In the upcoming weeks and months, our team will pivot our focus towards the recognition and rewarding of Course Reps, fostering engagement with Academic Societies post-spring break, and the SU Awards. I am ready to provide further

clarification on any of these areas as needed. With this orientation, my support for the faculty will predominantly be aimed at strategic planning for the forthcoming year.

Reflecting on my recent endeavours, I have actively sought to deepen my engagement with the academic societies within the CATS faculty. This focused effort is designed to strengthen our connection with students, thereby enhancing my advocacy for their academic and extracurricular pursuits. Such engagement is crucial in ensuring that our initiatives are well-aligned with student ambitions, contributing to a campus environment that is inclusive, vibrant, and equitable.

Our journey has encountered obstacles, notably due to staff turnover, which briefly impeded the progress of our academic societies. Despite this challenge, the successful onboarding of new team members presents a renewed opportunity to push our objectives forward.

Looking ahead, my aim is to rejuvenate these societies with the new staff's enthusiasm and fresh ideas. This endeavour is geared towards reinforcing the synergy between the SU and academic societies, ensuring our actions are attuned to the varied needs of our students. This revitalization is essential not only for boosting student participation but also for crafting a campus culture that aligns with the aspirations and requirements of our students within the CATS faculty.

## Other

Update Category: **Action & Insight**

The engagement data for the sports pilot, conducted in collaboration with UoB Sport at Luton, showcases promising participation across a variety of sports. The pilot, which included football, basketball, badminton, and cricket, was designed to cater to diverse interests and foster physical wellbeing among students.

### Reviving the Sports Campaign in Luton

In a concerted effort with UoB Sport, Beds SU launched a social sports pilot in Luton this semester, featuring activities such as football, basketball, badminton, and cricket. This initiative was aimed at appealing to a broad spectrum of interests and promoting physical health. Strengthened by partnerships with various university departments and proactive student outreach, the project successfully enhanced awareness and participation.

Get Active - Luton Sport Attendance - 12/02/2024 to 12/03/2024

	12- Feb	19- Feb	26- Feb	04- Mar	11-Mar	Total
Mondays						

## Sabbatical Officer Reports (23-24)



Football 17:00 – 18:00	4	18	12	10	5	<b>49</b>
Tuesdays	13-Feb	20-Feb	27-Feb	05-Mar	12-Mar	
Basketball 16:00 – 18:00	7	9	8	6	3	<b>33</b>
Wednesdays	14-Feb	21-Feb	28-Feb	06-Mar		
Cricket 15:00 – 17:00	0	0	5	7		<b>12</b>
Thursdays	15-Feb	22-Feb	29-Feb	07-Feb		
Football 17:00 – 18:00	20	18	14	13		<b>65</b>
Fridays	16-Feb	23-Jan	01-Mar	08-Mar		
Badminton 15:00 – 17:00	7	2	0	2		<b>11</b>
Grand Total						<b>170</b>

These figures underscore the enthusiastic response from the student body to the revitalized sports campaign, highlighting the importance of providing varied and accessible recreational activities.

### Conclusion

Our unwavering commitment to deepening connections with the student community has been manifest, particularly through our strategic engagement with sports teams and the planning of events that celebrate our students' diverse backgrounds. The pilot for social sports in Luton, in collaboration with UoB Sport, has been a testament to this dedication, offering a range of sports to cater to varied interests and enhance physical wellbeing. This initiative, supported by partnerships and proactive outreach, has significantly contributed to raising awareness and participation, marking a pivotal component of our strategy to foster a holistic university experience. By listening and responding to student feedback, we continue to cultivate a dynamic, inclusive, and engaging community, reinforcing our mission to support the success and well-being of every student at the University of Bedfordshire.