**Officers Report**

**Bayanda Vundamina**

**Senedd**

**04/12/2023**

**Summary:**

Since our last Senedd meeting a lot has happened. Nearly a third of students are engaged in clubs and societies. There are 217 academic representatives and 75% of the 217 Reps have been trained with 98% satisfaction rate. There has also been increased engagement at our SU organised events.

Some of the union events we have run are Aber Challenge, SHAG Week, Disability History Month Events Week The Rep conference and Drug and Alcohol Awareness – all being a great success. It was great to see the engagement and feedback we received from all the events.

Free strength and conditioning sessions have started in the union, and we super pleased that they are up and running.

This work couldn’t have been done without the students and staff members who work tirelessly to make sure the events and activities are possible, and I would like to personally thank them.

**Bayanda – President**

This month I have been involved in many different university committees and board meetings to lobby the university and hold them accountable for their actions involving students.

I was fortunate enough to attend NUS strategy exchange conference in Birmingham with our CEO Trish, the main topics of discussion were about how SUs can adapt to a digital society, how SUs can tackle polarisation and support more open dialogue between students. I was also able to be involved with the consultation surrounding the proposed NUS reforms.

An international student focus group was organised by our AberForward Siobhan, and we used this to collect information about the international student experience that will feed directly into the universities’ international student strategy.

I was able to help 23 international students who had complications with their accommodation and now receiving the correct accommodation free of charge for the year. This is a huge win that I am personally proud to be in involved with.

We have launched the Green Impact award which is an award that is granted for SUs that show an excellent level of effort to make the SU more sustainable by raising awareness about sustainability and leading on sustainable projects such as tree planting. I have started collecting survey data which will help us work towards this award.

I have collected data on the SUs overall spending at Amazon last year and compared to our spending this year. I am pleased to announce that announce that as a Union we have already spent £700 less at amazon this year compared to last year and I am happy to see the union committing to this policy.

I am now starting preparations for Race Equality week and Global week in the new year and will update you on the progress of this at the next Senedd.

**Elain – UMCA President and Welsh Culture Officer**

Elain's main focus this month was to prepare for the Inter-college Dance, an event that is carried out during November every year by UMCA in the Aberystwyth Students' Union. It certainly was a success this year with around 500 attending the Dance on the Saturday night, and Aberystwyth managing to win the Inter-college Mixed Football Tournament.

Elain is now working on the Welsh Language Rights Day together with the Aber SU translator, Felix. On the 7th of December there will be a fair of Welsh institutions stalls around the Union between 10am and 5pm, a talk with Sian Howys from Cymdeithas yr Iaith at 7pm in Pantycelyn, and then we will watch the film, Y Sŵn by S4C which tells the history of Gwynfor Evans and the fight for a Welsh language television channel in the 80s.

Finally, Elain is looking forward to the UMCA Hwyl yr Ŵyl (Festive Fun), which is a week full of events during the last week of the semester, such as an Eisteddfod Dafarn (Eisteddfod in a pub), UMCA Christmas Dinner - Gloddest and Christmas Sŵn.

**Tiff - Opportunities Officer**

Tiff has been working hard on her priorities and policy this month. Strength and Conditioning for Sports is now up and running and the first session is on 5th December from 6- 7 in the Main Room. She has had multiple meetings with the Boathouse Committee now and Estates has been made aware of all of their issues at multiple levels. The progress has been a little slow on Estates end. However, the slipway has been cleared, the bathroom locks have been fixed and on the 13th of December, there will be a full clean-out of the Boathouse and a full equipment list will be made as everything is put back into the space. We are looking for volunteers, so if anyone wants to help, drop Tiff an email. Estates is also covering the cost of the skip, which is great. She plans to do something similar for the Monkey Huts next semester. For the rest of our sports facilities, she is continuing the monthly meetings with the Sports centre, and this month, she will be bringing up athletics, squash and hockey facilities which have been brought to her attention by students via her new monthly forms. The Dome has now been set up and should be ready for student use by the start of next semester. All gym equipment will be moving into the Dome, so student groups will now have access to the Sports Hall within the Sports Centre for weekly sessions. This eases the stress of student groups trying to book space in the Sports Cage.

Back to the topic of monthly forms, she has continued her weekly posts on the Officer Instagram with full updates of what she has been doing throughout the month. The next set of monthly forms will be going out this week. Tiff has been meeting with groups about their responses, advertising their events, and following up on problems they are facing with appropriate staff. Also, facilities-related, Tiff has now met with the Faith groups about their needs for the Faith Space and will be meeting with the Head of Student Services regarding implementing these needs into the space this week.

Tiff has also been extremely busy planning and running events. In November, AberChallenge took place and was a wonderful success. Tiff helped to implement new activities this year and a new addition of the prize for MVP. Sports clubs made up half of our AberChallenge teams this year, and an individual from AberSnow won the MVP award which granted them a guaranteed Superteams place. We also have a new deal with Domino’s for student groups, so our pizza party at the end of the weekend was extra special. Congratulations on AberCrafts for winning the weekend. Tiff has also planned a great ArtsFest from 4th-9th, all information on events is available on our Instagram and website, so go have a look and come along to one of the many events. Tiff also hosted the SHAG week quiz, which Helen wrote. That was a great success. Tiff is currently planning Aber7’s, Varsity, Superteams and Refresher’s Fair.

A few wins for student groups include helping Showdance with their Festival of Arts, Sailing being able to purchase and officially launch their new RIB, creating a new type of Student group for Postgrads, which runs similarly to a society, but is based in our voice department to allow Postgraduate students to directly feedback to the SU.

Tiff has now attended 18 Tiff Tries, with 24 more interested groups. She has also been on several complaints panels and has helped multiple groups in mediation meetings to solve conflict within student groups.

Lastly, a win for Aberystwyth that she wanted to mention. Tiff goes along to WSS meetings, which is Wales Student Sport - essentially a meeting for Welsh universities to share best practise and solve problems together. She found out that we are one of the only universities in Wales which allows all students to self-identify in all intra-mural sport. Tiff will be taking this to a member of the National Senedd (Elin Jones) to make it policy for all Welsh universities to follow.

**Anna– Academic Affairs**

**I continue to be a part of the Generative AI group** where we are currently drafting the new AI policy to add nuance to an otherwise constrained policy. Alongside this, I have attended various online webinars as well as linking with other student unions and universities, in order to 1. Put forth my own experiences of using AI in university, as well as getting a good picture of how AI will affect the future of Higher Education. My main priority is to ensure that the University does not respond in fear to AI but rather embraces it. So far, guidance has been given out but I recognise that a lot of students are uncertain about AI, how to use it, how or why they reference it or whether its even worth using. If anyone is to have any questions, please feel free to get in contact, as I will continue to advocate for the importance of student voice when making decisions, especially in consideration that the University may have to look at rationalising assessments. Another note, I will be teaching the SU staff how to use AI as part of a session, if students would like a similar session, I would be more than happy to facilitate this!

**I’ve been working closely with Helen, the Wellbeing Officer and Xavier, the Disability Officer** in developing the University’s new strategic equality plan as well as having a first of many catchups between the Accessibility service and students. For example, Neurodiversity is nowhere to be found on the current Strategic Equality Plan and this had to change and will change! Off of this, I have been continuing on with my Neurodiversity campaign:

* I have attended a ‘Neurodiversity in the Workplace’ conference in Cardiff, making many new connections and getting to know the different Welsh charities that can we can work with as a student’s union to better not only the Neurodiverse experience in higher education and employment by encouraging better workplace culture - if you have any questions on what the conversations are surrounding neurodiversity or what is available to help neurodiverse students, I am creating a Neurodiversity webpage on the Students Union website where it will be your one-stop-shop for education and awareness of your own neurodiversity and others, socials for neurodivergent students, communal tip sharing, what the laws are, tips for employment… everything you could think of really! That being said, I want to ensure that the webpage is sustainable after I leave my post and I want it to pretty much be student made and run. So, anyone who is passionate about neurodiversity I will be sending out in the weekly email how to get involved so keep an eye out for that *or* drop me an email/teams message/come find me in person etc.

**We also had the rep conference of 2023 -** hope those who came to that found it to be a nice chill, yet informative day. It was great to meet a lot of you and there are a few individuals that I will be in contact with to get involved in future SU things. Everything the reps have been saying in their SSCC meetings, as well as what we discussed during the rep conference have been heavily noted and will also be acted upon, for example, I will continue to help you guys out in terms of timetabling, workload pressures and so on.

**Helen– Wellbeing Officer**

Since the last Senedd Helen has been working on an array of policies such as:

• Host an annual SHAG Week

• Compulsory Consent Training

• Stopping Spiking and Supporting Survivors

• AberSU should continue to support trans and gender diverse students by providing gender affirming products.

Along with planning and hosting events in collaboration with Ash our Campaigns and Democracy Co-ordinator for:

• Trans Day of Remembrance

• Disability History Month

• Student Drug and Alcohol Awareness Week.

For SHAG Week they hosted book club as a way for students to openly talk about things like gendered association with sex and how we should be looking at people as people rather than any original ideas associated with biology. They put together and delivered a consent workshop in association with our No Excuses campaign and worked with our SVLO in Student Services to promote the ways we can keep students safe. All this linking to preventing spiking and supporting survivors, they’ve supplied anti-spiking kits to the bar and in the hub and provided more for Drug and Alcohol awareness week, where they had a stall in town with DDAS. With a rise in spiking, they are working on updating our posters and going around businesses in town to work with them to keep our students safe. We have been working to better advertise the Beyond the Binary campaign and hosted a games night for trans and neurodiverse students to come together, remember and find some comfort on what a very difficult day can be. Pushing for accessible learning deliverance, and better communication around facilities for students with accessibility needs has been a priority over this semester, Helen drafted questions for the accessibility team with Anna (Academic Affairs) to get answers for students around DSA, learning environments and how they can best be supported at university. Now they are preparing to put some small events on for students here over the winter break, having a way for them to meet and providing winter packs, alongside the giving a map/ list of Warm Welcome buildings in town which is a council initiative to help residents during this cost-of-living crisis.

As an officer team we had a meeting with Elun Jones and during this meeting Helen had some interesting conversation around statutory duty of care in higher education and will continue to be in communication about that surrounding their suicide prevention priority. At their forum, Helen presented student services new model of care to ensure students are fully aware of the support they can access from the university.

At our last Senedd, Helen passed our Sex Work is Work policy in place to take away the shame of people using things like OnlyFans as a way of making money during this cost-of-living crisis. This has since been amended to clarify that this policy is a stance and links to the NUS Survey conducted in 2018 to decriminalise sex work and informed by our Sexual Violence Liaison policy to clarify on student safety aspects of this stance.