

Section 1: Winning on Funding

Introduction

As VP Education, I have made eradicating hardship and debt my priority. In the last eight months I have worked tirelessly to build a national campaign that involved students and campaigners to put pressure on the Government to deliver change. Having played a central role in the campaign that defeated the threat of top-up fees last year, I am now leading our Education Campaign for a fairer funding system. Our campaign is having a huge impact and has the government on the run. In November, I co-ordinated one of the biggest regional actions in recent years, with ten rallies in major cities involving over ten thousand students. In December, I organised the most successful Lobby of Parliament for a decade, involving over 100 unions from all corners of the UK, providing activists with the opportunity to directly put pressure on decision makers at Westminster.

The start of the New Year saw the biggest ever student e-mail campaign in the UK, with over five thousand students sending letters to the Prime Minister. We also saw over one hundred thousand students sign petitions calling for more money from the government. I worked hard to secure the high profile route for our national demonstration, which received an unprecedented amount of coverage in local and national media.

I have supported our Special Regions in their fight for a better funding system. I addressed the NUS-USI demonstration in Belfast and attended the Welsh Assembly debate on student funding to support NUS Wales.

Next year, I will build on these successes to win a lasting change for all students in the UK.

A Winning Message

If we are to truly deliver victories for students, our demands must be realistic, relevant and appeal to the wider community. Our campaign has been turned around and started to have a huge impact. Alongside grants coming back in Wales and the imminent changes in Northern Ireland, we are now close to winning in England; it is not time to sit back, but to see it through. As President, I will intensify lobbying of DfES to provide Education Maintenance Allowances and access to social security benefits to all students in the FE sector. I have built closer ties with the National Postgraduate Committee and will continue to work with them to lobby for the extension of loans to postgraduates.

As President, I will intensify our pressure on Ministers to regulate overseas students' tuition fees and provide support for overseas students through access funds. I will work with UKCOSA to provide advice and practical support for overseas students on financial support from universities and scholarship charities. I will work with NASUWT so secure financial parity for all ITT students.

Winning Investment for Widening Participation

Students' Unions and NUS are best placed to lead the work on widening participation and put an end to the generations of families who have never considered post-16 education as an option. The government rhetoric on access must be matched by huge investment to our institutions and provide them with financial incentives to meet the target of 50% for HEs & 750,000 for FEs. I will support SCA and Partnerships for Progression projects and provide information on how to access Widening Participation project funding. I will work closely with institutions to lobby ministers for new money for widening participation, an end to the student accommodation shortages and the provision of resources to meet the demands of expansion.

A Winning Strategy

Our campaigns can only win if they appeal not just to the traditional activists but to students and officers up and down the country. We must modernise our campaigns to make them accessible to part-time, nursing and placement students. I have tried to make our campaigns relevant and accessible to all students. Along with the National President, I proposed a ballot of all unions for the major actions ensuring student officers determined our strategies. I co-ordinated the regional actions, which were tailored to encourage students' unions to play a full part in the fight against hardship.

As President, I will use IT to reach out to more students than ever before – utilising online petitions and student e-mails. I will ensure that Priority Campaigns and national actions are determined and directed by officers. I will also provide a timetable for all actions before the start of the academic year to ensure NUS' campaigns fit into the work of unions and not the other way round.

I will be a campaigning President who will not sit in NUS HQ but go out into unions, guilds and associations to speak at AGMs and events to generate involvement. I will work with Student Media to promote our campaigns. I will support officers taking local actions and provide the financial support for regional and FE/HE partnership campaigning work.

Above all I will ensure we run campaigns that can unite our movement and provide opportunities for everyone to get involved. I will end the culture that has divided our movement and cost us so many battles. I will lead our campaigns to make a difference to the everyday lives of students and target decision-makers not each other.

A Winning Coalition for Students

To secure a lasting change from the current HE Review, we cannot afford to work alone, but we must reach out to the wider community. Parents played a vital role in

our campaign to defeat top-up fees. This year we have worked with Parent Teacher Associations and schools. I have worked with Trade Unions and secured practical and financial support for our campaign from UNISON. Jointly with the National President, I secured the support of The Mirror and Universities UK, which have been crucial in building a momentum for change.

As President, I will continue to work with the Trade Union Congress and ensure that in return every campus-based trade union is encouraged to work with student officers to campaign locally. I will provide sustained support to our Special Regions to effectively lobby their respective governments and build partnerships to secure new investment from Westminster.

Winning New Money Not More Debt

Press leaks and speculation on the possible introduction of commercial loans highlight one of the biggest threats facing students. Commercialised loans will force students into an unprecedented amount of debt and hit those who benefit the least from their education. Our movement must be united if we are to defeat this threat of student debt doubling every six years after graduation. This year, we have regularly questioned ministers every time the subject of commercial loans has been brought up. I fought against the IPPR report in favour of commercial interest rates and, by working with the media, there is now a wide coalition opposed to the idea. Next year, I will lobby Ministers to implement the Rees Report to raise the loan repayment threshold to over twenty thousand pounds. I will work hard to ensure the Student Loan Company delivers a fast and an efficient service. I will work with Unions to build case studies of students who receive an inadequate service from the SLC, so we can lobby ministers with the facts.