

Union Council - October 2007

STAND

Wednesday the 17th October witnessed the launch of our new student training programme STAND. (Student training and new development) Over a quarter of a million students graduate across the country each year and many unions have taken the initiative to help their students stand out by offering tangible and transferable skills to boost their employability. There are of course key benefits for the Union in offering such a course, my aim is to initiate a cascading effect where the students who I train in semester one become trainers themselves the following semester. It is hoped that training will then grow exponentially and with it the efficiency and quality of student executive bodies and committees. Currently there will be three main strands of training on offer including media, management and campaign workshop programmes. As well as teaching tangible skills these workshops will also offer life skills such as presentation skills, confidence building and team working.

Volunteering

The new democratic structure of VIP (volunteering in Portsmouth) makes it a student run, student led organisation thus placing it at the heart of the Union's participatory and democratic policies. This allows the opportunity to dedicate time in advancing VIP whilst planning its long term development. Key objectives for this semester include securing outside funding from lottery grants and the local council whilst broadening the range of projects on offer to students. These will include Environmental projects which I aim to launch with both the Hampshire wildlife trust and the Universities Science facility. I have met with David Franklin, the associate dean of the science department to discuss collaboration with his environmental projects in local schools.

I am also looking into creating a project in collaboration with STAR which centres on Haslar asylum detention centre in Gosport. I have been in communication with STAR and my counterpart in Southampton who launched a similar project. Gorilla volunteering was also launched this week, kicking off a series of unconventional, one off volunteer projects across the city throughout the year.

Societies

Over the past two years societies have gone from strength to strength and this trend does not look like stopping now. In the past month we have witnessed the foundation of various new societies as well as the revival of some we thought dead. These societies have included Amnesty International, Portsmouth Sikh Society, a Greek and Cypriot society, a wine tasting society, Go-karting, talent spotting and a new Latin dancing cocktail society. This means that over 3000 students are involved in now societies.

The Campaign Coalition will be launched on the 22nd October by myself and Kat King. The coalition is the first opportunity for campaigning societies to coordinate their efforts in the spirit of collectivism and with the aim of advancing change. The first opportunity I aim to present is the Union's campaign for free education.

There has also been a reorganisation of the society executive committee and the role of society's council to ensure that the society's structure remains transparently democratic and encourages participation.