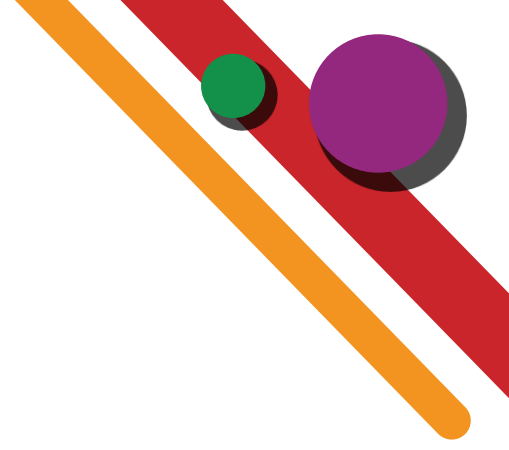




SENEDD!



Officers Report Bayanda Vundamina

Senedd

29/04/2024



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Summary:

Since our last meeting there has been a lot going on at the SU. We had our Refreshers week hosting events such as refreshers fair and the Officer Big Fat Quiz of 2023. We have also celebrated Race equality week which had a great engagement from clubs and socs.

Exam de-stress and time to talk day were also well attended and really highlighted the need to protect your wellbeing.

We also welcomed back Superteams which was super positive and fun. It was an amazing all round weekend, huge thanks to the Opps team for doing such an amazing job.

We also had student volunteering week which highlighted everything our volunteers do for us and well as show off some new volunteering opportunities. Again, huge thanks to Opps for organising this.

We had an AMAZING varsity narrowly losing to Bangor by 1-point huge congratulations to everyone who took part and won. Hopefully next year we can do better and bring it home.

We have also ran Empower where we encourage Women, Trans and GNC students to take part in sports and this was also a great success. We have held Officer, Committee and Academic Rep elections all together in March. All in all, they had a great atmosphere and the results were as follows with 1,966 students (24% - increased from 24% in 2023) casting 26,908 votes. We really challenged ourselves to deliver a full SU election that sought to encourage a diverse range of students to stand and support students to make informed votes.

The results were as follows:

Full-time Officers

SU President: Bayanda Vundamina

Welsh Culture Officer & UMCA President: Elain Gwynedd

Academic Affairs Officer: Will Parker

Student Opportunities Officer: Tiff McWilliams

Wellbeing Officer: Emily (Mo) Morgan

Volunteer Officers and Faculty Reps

Faculty of Business & Physical Sciences: Millicent Hackett

Faculty of Earth & Life Sciences: Jo Buys

Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences: Paxton Bastian

Environment & Sustainability Officer: Dewi Price

Welsh Language Officer: Beca Hughes

LGBTQ+ Students Officer: Tristan Wood

Trans & Gender Non-Conforming: Marty Fennell

BAME Officer: Ifeyinwa Anaduaka

Women's Officer: Livvy Haggett

Disabled Students Officer: Xavier Powley



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International Students Officer: Alex Molotska.

Huge congratulations to those who were elected and I'm excited to work and see what you guys achieve next year.

Bayanda – President

Since the start of Semester 2 I successfully ran Race Equality Week, where I was able to run events such as the 5-day challenge for the union staff and anti-racism workshops to help further educate people on the importance of this.

I have been heavily involved with the university race action group and I chair the student data and pipeline working group as part of the race equality charter award. In this group we are focusing on the number of BAME students in the university and looking at the attainment of BAME students compared to white students.

Global week was a huge success with over 100 students engaging in cultural events over the week.

I have attended liberation conference where I was heavily involved with discussions around what the NUS will look like for liberation groups in the new reform and can proudly say the future of the NUS is looking bright.

I have been working with the Suicide Safer Steering Group to ensure the Suicide Safer framework and strategy is properly implemented within the university.

I am also on the committee that will be discussing the University banking so will be ensuring that the university switches to a more ethical bank.

I am now looking ahead to making sure students are supported in the exam period and working on my campaigns for the next year.

Elain Gwynedd – Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President

It has been another busy term for Elain as Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President. The second term began with Refreshers Week where an Inter-college Eisteddfod Homework Night was held in Yr Hen Lew Du, and later in the week a trip to Trinity Saint David's Students' Union in Carmarthen to watch Bwncath and Dros Dro in order to support UMCA members who play in the band Dros Dro.

It would be fair to claim that the Inter-college Eisteddfod Homework Night during Refreshers paid its way in the Eisteddfod itself, as Aberystwyth won the Homework Section with 470 points, 104 more points than Bangor who came second in the Section. Aberystwyth won four out of the six main Homework competitions, and to top off the celebrations UMCA managed to win the Intercollegiate Eisteddfod Shield for the first time since 2015! Thanks to Swansea University, Hywel Teifi Academy, Swansea Students' Union and Y Gym Gym for organizing a successful weekend.

After a busy weekend at the Eisteddfod, Elain presented the following idea to the General Meeting of Undeb Aberystwyth:



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'Should Undeb Myfyrwyr Aberystwyth Students' Union change its name and be recognized as Undeb Aberystwyth.' The proposal passed with 81% of the students present at the meeting in favor of the change. Undeb Aberystwyth is now in the process of officially changing its name.

During last term Elain was also selected to be part of Llwyddo'n Lleol Event Planning scheme in order to receive financial support for the UMCA 50 Festival. As part of the scheme Elain attended six sessions via Zoom and had the opportunity to network with other organizers, and listen to the experiences of professional organizers which was extremely useful for her. At the end of the six weeks Elain had to present a pitch to the judges in order to apply for sponsorship for the festival and she received £1000.

Last but not least, Elain would like to wish UMCA the best of luck with their RAG Week. After just one day of car washing and an evening auction UMCA managed to raise an incredible amount of £2,273.00. Hopefully the rest of the week will be just as successful.

Tiff - Opportunities Officer

Tiff has been extremely busy since the start of Semester two because of all of our incredible events but has still made considerable time to work on her priorities. In the last week of Semester one, Tiff held a Boathouse Clearout. A clearout of this scale has not ever been done in the history of the space, and even three months later, it is still looking in much better shape. All of our watersports clubs got involved and put in an afternoon of hard work to make the space look so much better. Estates have cleared a lot of the overgrown plants allowing more space for groups, and Tiff is currently in contact with the council about removing the old fishing equipment to the left of the Boathouse, which will turn create more storage space outside. The long list of problems has gone down to less than 10 which is an incredible win and Tiff is already working on them.

On the topic of facilities, Tiff has kept up the monthly meetings with the Sports Centre, and she has brought up concerns for several group's facilities, and changes are already in motion. A short-term plan has been created for Athletics field activities; and although there is no plan to fix the squash courts at the moment, we have been able to allocate the club more funding through our grant so they can afford alternative locations, therefore still allowing them to take part in the free hour's scheme. Tiff plans to do a clearout for the monkey huts, similar to that of the Boathouse before the end of the semester. As an SU, we attended the Dome unveiling, and it looks great. The Sports Centre are working hard to solve any teething issues and are adapting empty rooms in the centre to become bookable for student groups and to cater to a wider community of sports. Regarding the Faith Space, all student group feedback about the space has now been passed on to relevant staff, and she has now had a meeting with Estates regarding how the space can be changed to cater to everyone's needs.

On her 'communication' priority, she has kept up her monthly forms, and regular posts on the Officer's Instagram. The monthly forms have provided vital feedback to pass on to both SU and University staff; as well as to further committees and national governing bodies. Tiff attended the



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WSS (Wales Student Sport) meeting on the 15th of February, where she passed on a list of feedback for BUCS. A member of the competitions committee and a BUCS representative have taken this feedback further to fix issues faced by our clubs in BUCS regulation, referee qualifications, using BUCS play, and how leagues are created. Tiff has had multiple catch-ups with groups when they have needed help; as well as several mediation meetings for committees when there are issues, and she has also been on several complaints panels. She has also helped set up several student groups which cater to more complicated topics and communities. Tiff has attended eight Tiff Tries since the last Senedd, with four more scheduled, and twenty-four more groups interested.

On events, Tiff organised ArtsFest which saw sixteen student groups hold events throughout the week. Refresher's was held at the beginning of the semester, and Refresher's Fair was a great success with over fifty groups getting involved. This also saw several GIAG activities and an officer Refresher's Kahoot Quiz in the SU Bar. Since the last Senedd, Tiff has also contributed heavily to the design, plan and hosting of both Superteams weekends. She and the other officers planned the entirety of the mystery event, and Tiff did the majority of the hosting and organisation throughout both weekends; as well as planning and hosting both Afterparty events, which were a great success. She has also done a lot of Varsity planning, such as finding venues, finding alternative dates which fit groups, picking stash and inviting our VIPs. Varsity was a huge success. With a final score of Aber 20 - 21 Bangor! On March the 16th, I have never been prouder to be an Aberystwyth Student. When we won, we won by more than usual when we lost, we lost by less than usual and we won more events in general, and we always win the moral victory by being much better spectators. I am so proud of every individual who competed.

Other events in the works include Empower Aber, LGBTQ+ History Month, and Women's History Month. All of which, Tiff is supporting Helen's incredible hard work. Lastly, the Officers will be launching a RAG event for the end of the semester: Charioke.

Tiff has also been working with Helen on adapting our Code of Conduct for student groups to include positive behaviours, consent training and best practices. Tiff also supported the Opportunities team in a review of the Team Aber Accreditation scheme which has now been relaunched for student groups to take part in.

Lastly, Tiff has put forward a policy regarding votes of no confidence in student groups to the AGM which passed; and has led on the Aberystwyth Student's Union NUS Wales Policy submission. Tiff and Helen submitted a policy for all students to self-identify in intra-mural sports within Universities.

Anna – Academic Affairs Officers

Key achievements:

- Academic Registry, who oversee academic administration in the university, is currently sending through a proposal in concern to special circumstances & extensions, specifically about whether students need "proof" to access them. The proposal will be discussed towards the end of April at University Senate, so Anna will update everyone as soon as she is able to. If this is passed, then the SU senate policy, "got proof", has been completed and students will see the benefits of this in semester one of the next academic year.



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- Neurodiversity Celebration Week & webpage (see below).

Artificial Intelligence (priority #1)

- The University is also in full support of making students AI literate, as they know it's here and should not be ignored. The Learning and Teaching Unit are guiding teaching staff in terms of rationalising assessments; so, looking at how they can make assessments AI embedded or in some cases AI proof (depending on the demands of your course). There appears to be major concerns in terms of departments not providing clear guidance on AI resulting in a unacceptable academic practice cases & uncertainty, this has been noted by students through the SU so Anna has raised this concern into the relevant meetings. Information Services will be uploading a discovery tool once Welsh translations are through, where you can quiz yourself on Generative AI and better understand how to use it in your lives & studies.

Neurodiversity (priority #2)

- We have had Neurodiversity Celebration Week, with the help of Neurodivergent students in the planning stage, up to the events. We had a meet & greet session, Neurodiversity training with SU CEO Trish, Q&A session with Accessibility service and Neurodiversity Celebration Brunch with student performances and numerous attendance and support by Student Services. The week went very well with 30 people attending the brunch. All materials will be uploaded onto the new Neurodiversity webpage including a recorded session of Neurodiversity training and the Q&A session.
- Anna has developed a Neurodiversity webpage embedded into the Undeb Aberystwyth website. This contains student uploads, useful links, videos from events & sessions, question submissions to accessibility and much more. This has been developed as a sustainable student-led site for people to share their experiences and to showcase Neurodiversity celebration here on campus.
- Anna further notes that if the university is going to be rationalising how they are assessing students in response to the rise of AI, this is a good opportunity to adopt complete integration of reasonable adjustments into University academic practice by providing optionality of assessments, so that is a current initiative of Anna's so feedback is heavily encouraged.
- According to student feedback, reasonable adjustments should be made standard throughout the university as this is a sustainable approach and eliminate the need for a diagnosis too. Anna has discussed implementing reasonable adjustments across the board to NUS where she was advised that this could be a concern for SETA as a policy change.
- The wellbeing room now has lights in it that you can control to fit your sensory needs (led lights with different colours & an array of sensory toys thanks to a generous donation from student, Bea).

Academic Reps:

- We also had a Rep Networking session; the university staff members who attended (which was primarily student services) had a great time and it was very useful for



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reps to understand university narratives better. The head of student services is eager to have more of these networking sessions, Anna thinks one each year around December could be suitable as reps have some experience in the role and fits around the student essay/exam times.

Other:

- Anna has attended NUS (National Union of Students) National as an elected delegate. Three policies were discussed; 'standing in solidarity with the people of Palestine and free-speech in the student movement', 'food, funding and shelter: students rights to basic necessities' and 'international student representation'. We also discussed NUS reform in relation to whether the nations are represented as individuals rather than NUS UK. Anna and Dewi have voted for each policy. From Anna's experience at national, SU's are placing huge scrutiny on NUS for not doing all they can to help students, particularly in the climate we find ourselves now with financial concerns, unfair international student treatment etc.
- The Hugh Owen Library will be undergoing renovations on Level E from May-September. Information Services has shown their timeframe of which they are prioritising minimal disruption to students doing their examinations, dissertations and for students doing resits and degree schemes outside of "normal" teaching. The renovations will allow 4 more bookable group rooms and roughly 32 more desk spaces.
- Anna has also raised with the library an issue with students booking group rooms but leaving early/not using them. It was discussed that a tap out system could be useful so students know when the space is available. Anna will update students as soon as possible when a solution is made.

Helen- Wellbeing Officer

Since the last Senedd Helen: the anti-spiking posters have been printed for our perpetrator messaging, shifting the narrative that people should be vigilant and focus more on getting help for people who recognise damaging behaviours in themselves. In February they held a solidarity group in collaboration with student services for Sexual Violence Awareness week where they could have a productive conversation about how to make our campus safer. Currently they're working on National Conversations Week, Mental Health Awareness Week and Destress week, all commencing from the first full week in May. There will be a comms campaign and collaboration with POPYRUS during National Conversation Week.

They're looking into increasing the engagement of the consent module by integrating it into society committee training, in collaboration with Tiff and the rest of the Opps team. With this they're hoping to get them as an action for temporary action panels. She is still fighting this fight and will spend May developing our code of conduct.

The Book House memorialising Charlie, who we lost just a little over a year ago now, is finished in the wellbeing room, this has a range of resources on it finished with tiles painted by students who joined Helen and Romana on their march along seafront in November. They're still heavily involved in the university's Suicide Safer Group, developing an action plan and working on the UUK framework to ensure student safety and support. Part of this framework is looking into the universities Trauma



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Informed approach and training staff through PAPYRUS. Helen has involved themselves in the steering group to map out the progress over the next 3 months. They have also attended practitioner SPEAK training run by PAPYRUS.

In February we celebrated LGBTQ+ History Month, which we held a pride celebration event that all of the officers collaborated on! Performances by student groups and Serenity the queen of Ceredigion rounded off the month in a spectacular way.

In March they lead the Reclaim the Night March, hosting a banner making sessions and collating Welsh chants for us to use as we protested gender-based violence. The mayor of Aberystwyth spoke and brought local council members which brought a unique local perspective to the event. As well as this, on International Womens Day, members of the Welsh Womens Petition for Peace volunteer project ran an exhibition and Mereid Hopwood spoke about the importance of celebrating these women's lives and the contribution they made toward peace. Celebrating this as the project was coming to the end of its 100-year celebration was something truly special. Alongside this, Helen and Tiff helped developed a visibility award in collaboration with the Women in Research Network to recognise contribution to university research by women and gender non-conforming staff which fit nicely into our EmpowerAber Campaign. 50 awards were given out and the social media campaign meant we could collaborate and recognise those individuals too.

March also meant we opened our doors to NUS Cymru for its Wales conference of which Helen was a lead delegate. Over a few days we discussed an independent Wales and on campus student healthcare. All policies spoken about have passed and will be something the NUS will work on