**Officers Report**

**Bayanda Vundamina**

**Senedd**

**30/10/2023**

**Summary:**

It's been a wonderful experience witnessing the arrival of both new and returning students in Aberystwyth and their enthusiastic start to the academic year. Freshers' Week was a resounding success, boasting impressive attendance at our evening events and meet-and-greets. We're eagerly anticipating a year filled with exciting events and impactful campaigns that all our officers hope will be well-received by the student community.

In our first month on the job, we mainly concentrated on getting our officers up to speed with their roles and hashing out our plans for the year. We all headed to Leeds for a Lead and Change event, which turned out to be a fantastic opportunity. It helped us get a grip on what we needed to do throughout the year and brought us closer as a team. This unity really came in handy when it came to organising Freshers' Week.

We're part of various university committees and boards like Council, Senate, and Academic Board to make sure your student voices are represented. Engaging with these committees has been really intriguing.

**Welcome Week**

Freshers was a huge success for us. Students and staff enjoyed themselves and it was a great introduction to university life. We would all like to say a huge thank you to the opportunities team for all their hard work they put into running Freshers Week.

Our officer quiz kicked off the week and we were so excited to see how many students showed up. It was really fun to run, and we had a great time – especially seeing the officers faces on famous movie posters. We spent the rest of the week promoting events and meeting students in the freshers fair.

We also hosted a bunch of Meet and Greets during the week for students who've often felt left out in higher education, like BAME, LGBTQ+, Trans, Women, International, Postgraduate, Mature, Independent, Welsh, and Disabled and Neurodivergent students. These gatherings were a huge success, and we want to give a big shout-out to all the officers and union staff who helped make them happen.

**New Staff**

We have also had two new staff members this year! Our former president Ash has taken on the role of Campaigns and Democracy coordinator and Zoё as our Academic Representation Coordinator. We know they are both going to an amazing job and are supper happy to welcome them all to our team.

**Bayanda - President**

So far this year I have been working on my objectives, starting out my campaigns and planning events.

My main priorities for the year are as follow.

* International Student Support
* Run an anti-racism campaign.

As part of my international student support priority, I have been working closely with Ren, our volunteer officer to help promote events and services that international students may not realise they have access to. We had the opportunity to speak at the international student welcome ceremony and be able to welcome them into the University journey.  I have been working with Global opportunities to provide fun events for the cultural exchange students as well.

My plans for the year include running a global week for the students to embrace the different international cultures within the university. I also plan to diversify the food bank to give international students a choice of more familiar food.

As part of my anti racism campaign, I have been granted money from the HEFCW anti-racism fund to be able to run an anti-racism campaign throughout the year. Through my black history month week I was able to run my own Anti-racism workshops.

I am also part of the university race action group where we are currently working on the race equality charter to help the university achieve a bronze award. Through this I have been able to receive top quality Anti-racism training with a focus in education from AdvanceHE and will be able to use the things I've learned to help make the student population anti-racist. I plan to organise several events throughout the year including getting some guest speakers and interview panels.

I will also be working closely with Ash, our Campaigns and Democracy coordinator on green impact again this year and will be able to give more information at the next Senedd.

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

It’s been a busy period for Elain as the President of the Welsh Language Students’ Union of Aberystwyth, as she organised many events for the Union’s members during the first weeks like the Welcome night, Karaoke, the Quiz, Rownderi, Trip Tregaron without forgetting the first Sŵn of the year which was held in the Cŵps with Gwilyn and y Cledrau performing. We also celebrated Shwmae/Su’mae day in the Union by playing Welsh language music in the Cwtsh Bar and sharing a video of the staff greeting the viewers with ‘shwmae’ or ‘su’mae’ and with them then sharing their favourite Welsh word. Elain is currently in the middle of organising the Intercollege dance which is held every year in November in Aberystwyth. This is one of the highlights in the Welsh language Unions’ events calendar, given that students from every part of Wales will head to Aberystwyth for an entire weekend of events, like the Pub Eisteddfod, football tournament, and the Dance with some of the most well-known bands in the Welsh rock scene, the line up this year is DJ Tes, TewTewTennau, Dros Dro, Fleur de Lys, and Candelas. Another important event in the calendar this year is UMCA 50th celebrations, and Elain has already set up a committee and began preparing for the occasion. Finally, here are Elain’s priorities for the academic year 23/24:

 Celebrate 50 years of the Welsh Language Students’ Union of Aberystwyth.

 Hold exciting events for Welsh speaking students and learners.

 Protect the Welsh medium modules in the University departments, whilst aiming at increasing the numbers in the future.

 Encourage the University to stop investing in Fossil Fuels.

**Tiff - Opportunities Officer**

Tiff has selected her priorities for the year based on current SU policy and student feedback. They are below:

* Improve communication between the University, the Student’s Union, and the Students
* Fix the Boathouse
* Ensure facilities used for activities are appropriate for use

Tiff recently completed a policy submitted two years ago; which was to bring back our RAG charity. Students submitted suggestions, these were whittled down to four by our officer team, and students voted during Fresher’s Week. The charity chosen was Wales Air Ambulance. Give It A Go returned again this year. So many new groups got involved this year, and it was wonderful to see so many students trying something new.

Tiff has also been in many talks with the Head of Student Services regarding improving our Faith Space and this has led to our faith societies directly impacting the choices made about the space and what additions will be made.

She has also been supporting the PostGraduate Officer in efforts to improve our PostGraduate Network; as well as our LGBTQ+ officers in their endeavour to provide a time for trans and gender-non-conforming students to swim.

Tiff has succeeded in setting up monthly meetings with the Sports Centre and is involved in their long-term plans for the facility. She is also in the process of officially setting up Strength and Conditioning sessions for our Sports Clubs and is currently ironing out the details.

She has also been the lead on creating an officer instagram as an extra measure of accountability for our officer team and allows us to directly update students on the work we have been doing every week.

She has also launched ‘Tiff Tries.’ This is where she tries every sports club and society and allows for extra advertisement of Student Groups. This has linked well into the recreation of the Boathouse Committee, and she is in talks with Estates on making the changes they have requested.

She is currently planning and looking forward to a variety of events in the first semester, such as AberChallenge, Artsfest and Socsfest.

**Anna – officers report**

Anna has been working on two primary priorities alongside representing students in 13 different boards/committees.

The first priority is in respond to the risks and opportunities for students arising from artificial intelligence, specifically in concerns to how the university’s learning and teaching responds with potential assessment, learning and teaching changes. Anna has been a part of the AI working group working to represent students and advising the group on the practical implications of AI for students. With the understanding that how universities respond to AI can determine if it becomes friend or foe, Anna will be continuing to work with the university to ensure ethical guidance, equity and future assessments impact students positively and students are kept well informed.

Alongside AI, Anna has made neurodiversity needs a priority for the year. So far, Anna has been working alongside Helen (the wellbeing officer) to lobby the university into a more secure Learning and Teaching Strategy for disabled and neurodiverse students. We recognise that neurodiversity is just as much about student experience and wellbeing as it is about teaching delivery. There is cross-over into AI territory when it comes to accessibility needs, so in ensuring equity and knowledge of AI tools, the university’s teaching delivery/assessments will help to encourage diverse minds. Alongside a keen eye on teaching delivery, Anna is and will continue to work closely with Xavier and student voice teams (both in the SU and the university) to ensure a line of feedback for disabled/neurodiverse students remains open and appropriate actions are taken in response to student feedback. Alongside student voice, as well as lobbying the university towards mandatory neurodiversity training for staff, Anna will be organising a stream of events particularly in March during Neurodiversity Celebration Week that will involve different societies, student volunteers, staff members, disability charities and the university careers service.

Finally, as the academic reps are now in post, Anna will be working with Zoe to put on training for reps as well as the rep conference. This year’s vision is to create a community amongst reps, with weekly updates to ensure reps are confident and kept in the loop.

**Helen- Wellbeing Officer**

Since starting their role as Wellbeing Officer in July, Helen has attended a variety of meetings to raise, discuss and understand issues that students are currently facing at university. A majority of meetings have been within Student Services, beginning to understand and develop their Suicide Safer Action Plan as well as the 2024-2027 Wellbeing Strategy. As Well as trying to make accessibility a priority for the Learning and Teaching Strategy currently being drafted. Since starting the role, Student Services have had a remodel and as such communicating this with students has become a large part of their priority to improve mental health services on campus. They’ve sat on interview panels during this process and consulted with the staff members on those panels to appoint people who will work in the best interests of students. After reviewing policy off the back of the Charlie Asked for Help campaign, Helen has begun to meet with heads of departments in Student Services to improve their current Student Death and Safeguarding policies, discussed within the Suicide Safer Action Group. Within the union the Book House Project is underway, with book swap, bookmarks and a wellness event was run alongside this where students contribute painted tiles so the shelf itself became a community project. Developing the Wellbeing Room is a priority to provide students with a safe space. Helen has also been working with our campaigns and democracy coordinator Ash to plan SHAG week, the theme this year being back to basics, they’re looking to deliver consent workshops during this time and producing content to help educate students on the basics as well as the law.