UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

**COUNCIL / SENATE**

Summary Report on the latest meeting of Student Senate

The twentieth meeting of the University Student Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, was held on Wednesday 22 February 2017.

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed all present, noting that some staff and students had given their apologies due to other commitments. Professor O’Prey also welcomed in particular Marilyn Holness, who had recently assumed the role of Director of Student Engagement at the University, and would from now be a full member of Student Senate.

The **Report on the last meeting** (Paper 2, previously circulated) was confirmed by those present as an appropriate record of business. Under **Matters arising** from the Report the following updates were advised at this meeting:

* Student attendance Monitoring: There it was recognised that there were still some problems relating to attendance monitoring, which were being reported by students and addressed by staff. Dr Driver reassured students that attendance was not normally directly linked to marks received in assessments unless specifically stated in local programme regulations. Overseas students who were particularly concerned about the impact of attendance records, especially if they appeared inaccurate, were asked to contact staff directly.
* Careers Services: The University was planning a new one-stop base for careers-related information and advice, and suggestions for an appropriate title would be welcomed.
* Student Voice: As well as the introduction of the role of Director of Student Engagement, a Student Engagement Working Group had also been established and was currently discussing student representation on committees.
* Laundry Facilities on campus: The Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) and estates staff were investigating potential locations for additional laundry facilities both temporary and permanent
* Heating and hot water supplies: The PVC also reported that strategies for solving problems relating to heating and hot water in new residence areas were being finalised, and a general overall condition survey of heating was being undertaken across the campuses to address whether refurbishment or even replacement of systems needed to be considered.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**Internal Communications Review**

Liam Hurley (Director of Communications) introduced a summary report from the recent review which set out findings and proposed responses. The University was seeking to learn from the review the most effective and efficient changes to communications strategies to introduce, and at this meeting was particularly interested in students’ views on the findings.

For further information the Executive Officer to the Vice Chancellor, Hamina Mehraj, reported the outcomes of a number of focus groups held with a wide range of students. The focus groups had helped to clarify particularly what communication tools students use, and how much they engage with those and how much they are able to prepared to engage with each.

The basis of the University’s response to the review regarding students, and intentions proposed, was summarised as follows:

* To make it easier for students to contact the University
* To ensure students receive what is most relevant to them
* To update students more quickly on important matters
* To explain new systems to students in advance; to improve communications about unexpected issues; to offer more opportunities for face-to-face discussions
* To improve the Student Portal, Moodle and academic-related documents (such as handbooks)
* To provide more opportunities for student feedback on communications

Matters raised and suggested by students present at the meeting included the following:

* To continue to work to standardise (across programmes) and improve turnaround time for academic feedback to students, and personalise feedback if possible
* Ensure students are aware when feedback will be available and how, and consider lecturers contacting students by e-mail to say their feedback is now available
* To consider using the start of lectures for lecturers to update students on general matters
* Consider the use of posters, if these can be well-designed within branding parameters and suitably placed to attract attention, but also ensure that out of date posters are removed
* Consider pop-up messaging to students about events when they open up Moodle
* More, and more effective, use of large screens in key places on campus such as college receptions and dining areas
* Consider use of blackboards in similar locations
* The need overall to use communication routes that do not become out-of-date too quickly

**Student-led Budget for 2017-18**

This meeting of Student Senate made an initial consideration of students’ ideas for spending the student-led budget for next academic year. A wide range of ideas were put forward, of which the following were the most strongly supported prior to a costing process:

* Longer opening hours in dining facilities to help students taught in the evening
* Touch-screen maps and advice boards across campus
* Support Creative Community Projects across departments
* Crèche facilities/childcare provision for student parents

The following were also put forward, receiving less support, but are recorded here:

* More copies of e-books, and longer loan time, for key texts
* Sponsor a key leaders’/leadership skills conference for all students
* Improve Wi-Fi in halls (by improving enhancement software?)
* Online magazine for students
* Support volunteering opportunities overseas - via student societies?

The most popular ideas will be costed and further discussed at the May meeting of Student Senate.

**‘TOP OF YOUR AGENDA’**

*In this regular item students advised the meeting about a range of matters of particular interest to them as individuals.*

On this occasion, the meeting was advised about the Student Accommodation Fair (plus related survey) on Monday 6 March, and the RSU Women’s’ Day Leadership Conference, to be held on Wednesday 8 March, which had some distinguished speakers appearing. The Departments of Dance, and of Drama and Theatre Studies, had performances in the near future that all would be welcome to attend.

Several individuals welcomed the response of the University to problems raised regarding new accommodation, and the work that had been done to alleviate problems raised at the last meeting. This had led to some positive feed-back from residents, and Mike Hall was particularly to be thanked for his actions.

There were some concerns from members regarding current drugs-related problems on campus, and it was agreed that this would be discussed further fuller discussion at the next meeting. Senior staff were also asked to consider improvements to lighting on campus, as some areas were dark due to failed lights that had not been replaced. Senior staff noted all the matters raised under this item and would endeavour to come back with early responses.

At the end of the meeting the Vice-Chancellor thanked all present for their commitment to Student Senate this year, adding best wishes for the Christmas break.

**Next meeting: Wednesday 3 May 2017**

Andrew Skinner,

University Secretary and Secretary to Student Senate

February 2017