

# UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

## COUNCIL / SENATE

### Summary Report on the latest meeting of Student Senate

The twenty-third meeting of the University Student Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, was held on Wednesday 21 February 2018.

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed all present, including Liam Hurley, the University's Director of Communications, and his colleagues Andrew Mowbray and Leah Bunn.

The **Report on the last meeting** (Paper 1), which had been presented to the University Senate and the Council was received and confirmed by those present as an accurate record of the meeting.

Under **Matters arising** the following updates were noted

Work had now commenced in developing and writing a new **Strategic Plan** for the University, and contributions from students at the last meeting had been useful. That the meeting was the first where ideas had been sought making the student contribution a significant one.

Regarding the new **University Library**, the opening hours in the café had now been aligned with those of the Library so both were always open together, and the vending machines were now operational. In order to try and tackle concerns over maintaining quiet zones, some furniture had been swapped between floors. Training had also been provided for Library staff, who were also having to get used to the new spaces and operations in the building, to endeavour to ensure useful and polite help was given to all users. Students were reminded about the importance of carrying their passes at all times to use when accessing the Library.

The **Roehampton Students Union** was supporting a large number of events and societies, and endeavouring to increase outreach to Whitelands College and to non-resident students.

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### 1. **Internal Communications at the University**

Staff from the Communications Department had come to a previous Student Senate meeting, to get ideas about student concerns and needs in relation to communications. In view of the feedback received at the meeting, and other similar exercises, work had gone into streamlining and standardising use of various communication tools and media, including in approaches to Moodle across departments and programmes.

There had been progress particularly in the following areas:

- Reduction overall of e-mails to students, by promoting alternative channels of communication with staff and students, and encouraging more targeted approaches in use of e-mail to specific groups
- Encouraging staff to use their e-mail address panels (at bottom of all e-mails they send) to inform about their office hours, out-of-office contacts etc.

- Use of Digital Screens in key places on campus which would attract students' attention, and varying content regularly to maintain viewing; RSU use similar screens and much had been learnt from their screen-based campaigns
- Aiming to standardise use of Moodle across the University by providing standard landing pages and also appropriate guidance to staff
- Use of Text messages only for urgent or very important messages
- Development of the Student Portal as an intranet for students, now more prominent with news and events and a 'common tasks' area

In response to a question about what is working well, and what less so, the responses included:

- There was still some news stayed on the portal when out of date
- It would be useful to enable students to customise what they receive by filtering
- Mature students need to be targeted to encourage their use of the Student Portal
- Some e-mails from academic staff go into junk folders
- Ability to check grades on Moodle seems to have lessened in scope since last year

In response to a questions about what other channels should be used more for students, the responses included:

- Instagram (which now seems to overcome Snapchat in popularity again)
- Guidebook

Leah Bunn, and other staff present, thanked the meeting for their useful input into this item

## **2. Ideas for the £50k Student-led budget for 2018-19**

This item was introduced by the Vice-Chancellor and the Pro Vice-Chancellor, who were seeking students' initial ideas for the next allocation of student-led budget. The most popular ideas identified today would be costed and a list finalised at the May meeting of Student Senate.

The meeting was advised that some very significant practices at the University arose from initiatives sponsored by this budget. For example 24-hour opening in the Library prior to exams and assessment periods were initially sponsored in this way and then taken into the University budget as it proved so popular, and was requested for more than one year under this budget.

Among the proposals put forward on this occasion were:

- Chill-out room(s) for students between lectures
- Occasional overnight accommodation for students from a distance wanting to study late
- Social space designed principally for off-campus students
- Taster sessions for students before module choices on current programmes, or for undergrads looking to study at postgraduate level
- Transition advice for students looking to study at postgraduate level
- Workshops (to build on the successful 'Consent' Workshop) in e.g. mental health first aid for flatmates etc., and for raising awareness of mental health (perhaps over a year, in conjunction with RSU?)
- A student Development fund to facilitate conference visits for students (not only research students)
- Sponsoring keynote speakers to come to student Science Week
- A conference for PG students across all programmes

- Provision of 'basics' to students (food, sanitary or health-related)
- Support for student parents

Regarding some of these suggestions, it was agreed to invite the Head of Wellbeing to the next meeting of Student Senate.

The proposals would be considered in terms of costs, so that further discussion to find a shortlist could occur at the May meeting.

### **'TOP OF YOUR AGENDA'**

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

Among the matters raised by student members at this meeting were the following (ordering as presented round the table):

- Taster session for modules across all departments would be welcomed (*also mentioned in item above*)
- Recent academic appointments (Humanities) had been welcomed
- It would be useful to have post receipt facilities for off-campus students
- Current maintenance staff levels meant some jobs were taking a long time to complete
- The refurbishment of 'The Reef' at Southlands had been welcomed by students
- Although laundry facilities had improved considerably, some dryers were still not working
- Training re unconscious bias seemed necessary in some areas, and would be welcomed
- Graduation costs were currently high, especially for those wishing to invite additional guests
- Support for students taking part in the 'Free Range' photographic exhibition had been welcomed
- There were concerns about drugs use at Whitelands College, and whether allegations were being addressed via student disciplinary processes
- Additional software for the audio-visual lab work would be welcomed to ensure greater student access

RSU members' Top of your Agenda items included:

- RSU elections 2018-19: deadline for candidates was 9 March 2018
- London Local Elections would be held on 3 May, and all potential voters needed to register to vote by 17 April
- Major RSU health and wellbeing workshops and campaigns included Sexual Consent Workshops, and the 'Elephant in the Room' mental health campaign from 1 March 2018

**Closure:** The Vice-Chancellor thanked all present for their contributions, and closed the meeting

**Next meeting: Wednesday 2 May 2018**

*Andrew Skinner  
University Secretary and Secretary to Student Senate  
February 2018*