



Executive Committee Report to the 2011 UMSU AGM

This year's Executive team were thrown into an unusual scenario at the start of their term of office as the staff team had undergone major changes which needed to be resolved by the incoming team, we legally needed to pass a new constitution by the end of the academic year and, on top of this, Higher Education was facing the largest shake up in decades in relation to their funding with NUS calling for the largest student demonstration ever. Furthermore, we were aware that the Union has been for many years failing to reach out to many of our members and not giving the correct amount of focus to our core purpose of academic representation and support of student welfare.

Therefore, the Executive, both full time and volunteer officers, have in many ways put aside their own priorities for the year in order to collectively work together and support each other. This has been essential in ensuring that we could meet the demands of an incredibly challenging year in higher education, but perhaps more importantly, put the foundations in place for ensuring that UMSU becomes the best Union in the country in the next ten years. All members of the team have made difficult decisions this year, whether in where we have focused our energy, putting aside our individual opinions where the collective opinion has differed and keeping focused on the fact we have been working on building a stronger Union for years to come.

It would be difficult to lay out the wide variety of areas of where exec have spent time and this detail is available in individual exec reports which have been presented to council and are available online in the council minutes here:

http://www.umsu.manchester.ac.uk/your_union/council/minutes

Therefore below we have highlighted a few of the key areas that we have worked in as a team this year.

The core issues which the Executive have worked on as a team are:

- **Governance** – Consulting on, writing and promoting the new governance structure.
- **Staffing** - Restructuring the staff team to focus us on our core aims of academic representation, advice and support excellent student activities and active democratic structures.
- **Priority Campaign** - Running and then facilitating HE Cuts Campaign. Although by the end of first semester this had developed to be led by a much larger number of students, the exec put a lot of work in promoting the initial march in London and working within the University to encourage them to criticizing the government policy and speaking against the changes in University meetings.

Additionally we have all contributed to reviewing and improving specific areas of Union activity, such as:

- **UMSU's relationship with the University** - Reviewing and building a constructive partnership with the University to ensure that the student voice is being heard and respected at different levels in the University. In particular we have focused on promoting students as partners, not consumers and how the University will deliver a quality education consistently across disciplines.

- **Supporting all the Union funded campaigns** and, amongst many other campaigns, standing up nationally for international students by submitting evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee on Student Visas.
- **Societies** - This year we introduced the STARS scheme which supplies additional training and rewards to societies and those who lead them to help enhance the quality of activities offered and also develop the individuals involved.
- **Pangaea** - Supporting volunteer team in another successful Pangaea, which remains the largest student-led festival in the UK.
- **Democracy** -Promoting various aspects of Union democracy, including the promotion of a 400 strong General Meeting at the start of the year and the highest election turnout in memory.
- **Communications** - Undergone a rebrand at the start of the year, including changes to the weekly email and enhancement and development of The Mancunion.
- **Appeals, Advice and Support** – supporting students through academic appeals processes and providing support.
- **Building redesign** – looking at the space usage of the building and focusing the layout around the needs of students rather than our commercial activity. (Work to commence Summer 2011)

There have been many other areas that exec members have put their time and energy into. Much of this has been in supporting the activities of individual students who are the core of the exciting opportunities UMSU delivers, some of whom we will celebrate tonight at the awards ceremony!

Sarah Wakefield

General Secretary (on behalf of the Executive Committee 2010-11)