

Societies Training

I have been trying out a new layout for training sessions recently, given that the demand for them seems to be sporadic and unpredictable. This has been done by putting a training session at the same time in the same venue every week on Tuesday, calling them 'Tuesday Trainings' so that people are more likely to remember when they will be. I've recruited people from societies, temp union staff, and ex-students to run some entirely new skills sets, but also ones that will be sufficiently general so as to benefit a large number of societies, such as project planning, facilitating meetings, and public speaking. I have also planned and delivered a new training session in one of my own areas of expertise, that of expanding society membership and recruiting and overseeing a team of volunteers. They seem to have gone down well.

STARS

We now have 7 Gold Societies*, including Irish Society and the Harmony Gospel Choir, showing that it is not necessary to be a huge or completely mainstream interest group to be an exemplary society. On top of that we have 45 Societies with Silver Award, several of which have already put in pending Gold Award applications.

*(This is not including RAG, Student Action, and the Mancunion, who Societies Committee agreed to treat as groups with Gold status by default)

Societies Social

At the time of writing, the Societies Social has not happened yet. By the time you are reading, it will have happened on Monday, 14th March. Originally, Societies Committee agreed a portion of the Societies Grant budget for the task of a networking social, when I asked to go away and organise it. I decided against using it and put on the event without spending a penny.

The reasons for the social:

- 1) Societies Network - Society committees want a space to meet up with other society committees, to network and socialise – we are not isolated societies, we are a union.
- 2) Bar promotion - To promote the Union Bar and get societies using it more.
- 3) An experiment – I decided that on a Monday like the 14th, with no gigs on and (relatively) very few events, the week after elections, the Union Bar would be at its slowest and emptiest (for a weekday in term time). Into this void, you can fill a bar with students and everyone can have a good time, whilst delivering the bar good business as well. With no budget and no risk, I was able to do the maximum required on the minimum input and create a free event that students could enjoy.
- 4) An example – If I'm able to put on a really good evening with no cost whatsoever, and therefore no financial risk, and no union budget required, I could not only make it free entry and get it busy, but also create a precedent that such a thing could be done, and a great night could be had, for societies, without taking on the huge financial risks that some of them are prone to. Many societies shell out lots of cash and give themselves tough marketing jobs to get their socials how they want them, and spend their money very inefficiently. I have for a while been trying to combat this, **without** putting them personally in a financially difficult place (as was once done to me by a Societies Committee of previous years). The best method is through training and encouragement, and if I can have a shining example of a brilliant social where not a penny is spent, I've got a good tool of encouragement and advice for them.

Let's hope it is brilliant. If it is, there will most certainly be more.

Pangaea

Pangaea's had a difficult two weeks. We've realised that the next natural stage for development of Pangaea is not to expand in the classic ways, (get bigger or 'better') but instead to get safer and more organised. It's a tough slope to conquer. We've already come a long way since last year, in sharpening things up and running a tighter, safer, more cohesive ship. We're now facing challenges at every area on how to keep Pangaea awesome but also expand our responsibility to what happens before and after the event, regarding our student guests, how stringent we are with our ticketing policy (i.e. clamping down on the number of non-students who are able to get tickets), and how safe the event is, both for students, financially, and for the union generally to run. We've allocated sections and recruited the new team, which is largely made up of first and second years, to secure Pangaea for next year, we've ironed out the kinks, and are planning ways of dealing with issues we've had generally, back from the moment Pangaea started reaching its capacity limit. Pangaea will always be in a certain sense chaotic, but we're

trying to ensure that it remains chaotic in all of the positive ways, and stops being chaotic in the negative ways. Pangaea 'Gone Wild' is Thursday, 9th June after exams.

Graduation Ball

Please see the Mancunion issue 17 front page for reference. The graduation ball is run by a team of event promoters in Manchester and is not officially affiliated to the university or the union, but it has 'come across that way' to many students. I have received, now, almost 50 emails from students complaining about this event, which hasn't happened yet, as they have reserved tickets and transferred money but then been refused, they have been messed about by the promoters, or they think they are being overcharged. In response to this, I took the story to the newspaper, and quite clearly and severely worsened my working relationship (or lack thereof) with a big figure in the Manchester events promotion business. This has been difficult for me personally as he has been giving both me and the Mancunion News team grief about it, but I do not believe that it will negatively affect either Pangaea or the union in any serious way. Moreover, whilst I still cringe at the 'dragging his name through the mud' of where I'm quoted, the article is the truth, and it was the right thing to do as a student newspaper and as a student representative, to stick up for students, and expose those who may abuse them.