

Elections

One of my main aims this year was to make everyone who got involved in the paper interested and excited about non-media related Union business and services, and all that loveliness. I set myself a personal target of at least five people from the newspaper being inspired and engaged enough to run for a Union position. I am really pleased that three sub-eds are running for Student Direct Officer, and two other sub-eds are running for other sabb roles.

I spent a long time in the run up to nominations discussing the Union and Elections with a wide variety of interested students. I am really pleased with the broad spectrum of candidates that are running for all the positions, and I am excited about the future of UMSU.

With the help of the Communications Officer, I also used the newspaper as a way of advertising for students to run in the elections, as well as advertising the elections themselves, through the form of both editorial and adverts.

Student Direct Board

I had an important and exciting board meeting with the other Directors of Student Direct Ltd. Initially prompted by a simple look through the end of year finances, the board has started some fantastic conversations about the important place of Student Media in Students' Unions, and how we need to adapt to better serve students.

With the rise in tuition fees, and many students feeling forced to take courses they believe will provide them with better graduate prospects, more people will be looking to their Students' Union to provide them with quantifiable skills and help improve their employability. We also need to provide the opportunity for students to explore creativity through student led non-commercial media, as it is a strong possibility the opportunity for creative expression will be diminished.

The action points that each Student Officer took from the meeting, is to start the process of real research and consultation into how students use media, and what they want from their media in the future. We also tasked the Directors/Managers of each of our Students' Unions to look at how the finances, staff and elected student officer roles should play their part in Student Media.

Everyone involved has made it a priority that we will come up with a practical plan that can start being implemented as soon as possible.

Union Restructure

I am sure council are aware that the Union is at a crucial point in its restructure. The rumour mill has certainly gone into overdrive, as it is a very complicated subject, close to many people's hearts. As it is so sensitive I can only really report back on this in broad terms – but as it takes up a lot of my time at work and affects my role as an Exec member, Trustee and Editor, in a variety of ways, it would be wrong not to comment on it to council.

I work closely with UMSU staff who have displayed amazing dignity and professionalism throughout this extremely difficult time. Work still needs to be done, and I am honoured to work with people that can take any new stresses, gossip, or speculation on board and still make fantastic co-workers. I am also impressed on a daily basis by the compassion and professionalism of our new Union Director, and can happily confirm to Council my 100% confidence in the amazing, student focussed future that Andrea Strachan is leading the Union towards.

As my team of *Mancunion* contributors are some of the students who use the Union building a lot, I wanted to officially record how much more difficult their job has become amidst the rumours about the restructure that some people have perpetuated; as journalists, as students, and as friends of many of the Union staff. I respect the important questions they have raised, their sensitivity in the matter and the professionalism that so many of them have displayed.

Finally, my 'other' team, my fellow Exec, have been a fantastic source of support, and I want Council, and all students to know how much I value their passion and integrity. I just couldn't get my job done, if everyone else on Exec wasn't so earnestly good at theirs.