

AGM Report For VP Societies & Media Officer

Name:

Shannon McCaul

Role:

Vice President Societies and Media

Progress on Manifesto Pledges:

We all know that this year has been a difficult one, but more notably one that has brought so much change. The change to my manifesto pledges is a huge one, but I'd like to start off my saying not all change is bad, and although I haven't managed to complete the majority of the ideas I outlined last March, I've worked both reactively to the situations the pandemic has put us in and pro-actively to work through the key themes I presented in my Manifesto last year. Those themes were Visibility, Collaboration and Training and even though the year has given me some exciting projects to work on that weren't initially outlined in my priorities, where possible I have tried to ensure my core ideals were brought into consideration.

Without going through one by one what has been achieved and what hasn't, here is a rundown on the themes and how I have approached them throughout this unprecedented term in office.

Visibility – *Off the back of the work of last year's VP Activities and with the help of staff teams, we have launched the new society federations and society forum meetings. These provide a (currently virtual) space for different society execs to not only meet with the SU to tell us about their upcoming events, share their concerns and bring forward ideas and questions, but to also meet with other societies with similar interests to encourage **collaboration**. Working together on joint events, promoting events and exchanging membership too. I'm really excited to see how this new initiative can grow over the next few years, especially as it moves into a physical space.*

With the incredible work of our Student Media Teams, we pulled together a completely online freshers' fair with live commentating, virtual stalls and links to group website information. Not only was this a fantastic event to work on, but one that really showed the positives of moving to the digital sphere. The website used for re-freshers fair, is one that can be used in years to come alongside our physical fair, providing extra information, better accessibility for all students and even more visibility and promotion of all our student groups.

One thing I'm annoyed I haven't been able to work on this year, is the live calendar of student activity on the home page of the website. Yes, COVID has meant there hasn't been as much activity as normal, but it would have been great to advertise the sessions that have been going ahead in this format. I worked with the university in term 2 to get a few spotlight events shared on the campus life pages and have had conversations about creating an interactive spreadsheet for activity to be uploaded to and the viewing link be shared across social media. Although these aren't the final goal, they are steps in the right direction that we can complete at this current time. I'm hoping to have further discussions in my last few months around the website and how to get the wheels in motion for a student friendly 'live calendar'.

Finally, I believe from a personal visibility aspect, I have done well at keeping my social media up to date, being available for students who wish to get in contact and responding to emails in a timely manner. The officer take-overs on the central SU channels and drop-in sessions we have ran, were put in place to ensure our visibility and contact ability to students. I did pledge for drop-in sessions in

my original manifesto, which we have run 'specific topic' ones throughout the year, however I could have publicly advertised a virtual drop-in session for myself each week.

Collaboration – *As mentioned above the federation and forum meetings are ideal spaces for collaboration and such an incredible project I was lucky to get to carry on with, which lined-up perfectly with my core values for the year. I'm grateful to have had the chance to start working on these and setting up a digital space that can be continued to be used by student exec members in years to come, to converse with other societies and the SU about the events they are hosting, organising and planning.*

Unfortunately, I was not able to run my yearlong 'Get Active' campaign, which was the forefront of my manifesto, however I have a current project I'm working on that will hopefully bring a few of my ideas from this into fruition. (Which I mention later on in this report)

Our student media teams have been incredible this year and have really shown us just how much is possible, two virtual freshers fair, Roses Unlocked and promotional content. I have loved working with our student media teams on projects both for themselves and for the Union. The collaborative efforts with all of the media groups together has been incredible, and I am honoured to have been able to be a part of it. I would also publicly like to say how grateful I am for their hard work and dedication in helping the SU run such successful virtual events this year, we couldn't have done it without you!

I've been very fortunate to have been brought in on conversations with our volunteering teams and society collaborations, Theatre Group at Christmas and The Doctor Who Society last term, both of these were with the school's partnership programme, looking at collaborating with the local community, which was one of my personal goals heading into this role. I also sat on the interview panel for the new community volunteering and internationalisation student staff members. It is amazing to see the team starting to grow as we prepare for future volunteering projects, whilst we move through the stages of easing restrictions.

Training – *Unfortunately in person training hasn't been able to happen at all this year, but I was grateful to be able to observe and help out in the JCR training sessions done virtually at the start of the year. It was really insightful to see how it can be done remotely and although it may not be as interactive, I viewed it just as informative, fun and helpful. It was eye opening to see how this model could be used and moved across and throughout the entire organisation to our societies, sports groups and student media teams in future years.*

Reaffiliation, has been a big project the societies and sports staff teams have worked on this year, prepping our groups and supporting them through not only this COVID year but helping them become sustainable and still manage to re-affiliate this academic year, ready to regain their membership in October. We have introduced new elements to the re-affiliation space including, drop-in seminar style sessions to help answer queries, handbooks have been created to aid with the student-to-student handover process and the space itself has been reworded and restructured. There is still lots of changes that can be made to make the space more interactive and easier to navigate, but given all of the challenges and time restrictions this year has given us, I'm very proud of the work that went into this project and believe it is a huge step forward in the right direction to training our student leaders. I would just like to thank every student for their input and feedback helping us develop these changes and to our incredible student staff teams for working insanely hard to ensure all resources are up to date, student friendly and just all round fantastic.

Other Projects I Have Been Working On:

I worked with Green Lancaster and Lancaster SU Veg Soc, collaboratively, to bring a Veganuary campaign throughout the whole of January. It was great to be able to work with both of these groups and institutions to create a little community within our Lancaster community. A group of encouragement, support and everyone striving to do their bit for the planet, for animals or for their health. This campaign really showed me the importance of building small communities within large ones and how they can still thrive, and are sometimes even more beneficial to individuals, when they are virtual. Thank you to everyone for getting involved and for all the hard work and effort that went into making it a success. It was one of my favourite months in the job!

I have been working with our student media teams looking into a future model and how it might suit them better, working as one rather than four separate groups. It has been a difficult year on all groups, and student media memberships have suffered just as much as other societies. This new idea and plan moving forward over the next few years could be a really impactful and leading change for our media teams and I am excited to see how it can develop as the VP Societies & Media role is shaped and moulded too. It looks to benefit not only the membership of groups but the work they create and their relationship with the SU.

As a team of 6 we have worked really hard at putting our students first and it is the motivation behind everything we do. I am so honoured to have been able to work with such an incredible bunch of individuals and I'm so happy to call them my life-long friends. Working together on comms pieces, papers, reports and agendas has been nothing but fun (even if the topic maybe a little less so). We have also made sure to spend a day together every couple of months to refocus our team goals, plan ahead and ensure we are doing the best for those we represent. These have been some of my favourite times of working in this role. Thank you team, you are all amazing!

Priorities for the remainder of the year:

It's pretty scary that there are only 2 months left, there is so much I want to get done, and I really don't want to leave! However, I am working on a really exciting end of year celebration in partnership with the University, focusing on celebrating all of the good and amazing work our students and staff have managed to achieve during a pretty difficult year. It's currently in early stages of planning but it has my full focus and attention, and I cannot wait to celebrate the end of this COVID year with some good fun and hopefully fantastic weather!

I also want to make sure the next VP Societies & Media is fully supported and ready to hit the next academic year head on. I'm going to be working on creating a detailed handover to ensure they feel as equipped as possible before starting in July... and of course, Roses Unlocked is also a top priority!

Officer Budget Expenditure:

I have spent very little of my budget. The cost of my officer jumper and a prize voucher for the winner of a competition during the Veganuary campaign, these come together under £50.