Vice President Welfare:

Elected Officer: Amy Merchant

Vice President Welfare Amy Merchant

I’m Amy Merchant, and I’m running to be your next Vice President Welfare. I’m a third year English Literature student, former County College President, and the current LGBTQ+ Social Media Officer. Over the past two years I have been an AVD College Ambassador, a Campus Tour Guide, and even a Bonfire Events Marshall, which demonstrates my confidence and versatility.

I believe that this position needs someone who puts student voice, community, and liberation at the centre of their role. Throughout my time at university, these three aspects have been at the heart of all of my positions, which is why I want to take it further and channel my passion for student welfare into this role. The key policies which this manifesto aims to address are: housing, student wellbeing, and liberation.

If elected I want to focus on;

**Housing**

The National Student Accommodation Survey 2020 showed that nationally, 28% of undergraduates start looking for a house before Christmas. The rush to find housing can mean that students sign contracts with other students that they barely know, which can lead to further issues. The same survey showed that the number one issue for student renters was housemate related, with other prevalent issues being dangerous housing conditions, inappropriate landlord visits, and lack of water and heating. Another concern is that only 1 in 3 students read their housing contracts and know their rights. These factors can largely impact upon a student’s experience and welfare; therefore, I aim to:

• Work with LUSU living alongside VP Union Development to ensure that their housing contracts are not signed until after the Christmas break. This gives students sufficient time to get to know each other and look around various properties before deciding on housing.

• Deliver better signposting of university facilities that help to tackle tenancy issues, such as the SU Advice Service.

• Promote the ‘Marks out of Tenancy’ tool so that students can fairly assess potential properties before signing contracts.

**Wellbeing Campaign**

The Annual Report 2018-2019 showed that only 27% of students felt that the Student’s Union positively impacted their wellbeing. University is an overwhelming transition for many, and the union could be doing much more for the wellbeing of students during this time. Whether someone is an international student or not, no one really know what to expect from life at Lancaster. With the help of student media, I want to introduce an online video campaign called ‘How to Adult at Lancaster’, providing advice for students regardless of their stage of studying.

This campaign will cover the things we wish we knew when coming to Lancaster, such as:

• The facilities available: student kitchens, faith spaces, study spaces.

• The services available: Advice team, Employment and Recruitment Service, transportation etc.

• How to find suitable housing at Lancaster

• Independent living: time and financial management, work-life balance.

• Getting involved: the clubs and societies available at Lancaster.

• Preparing for life after Lancaster

This campaign will aim to prevent the small but daunting stresses of life as a student here at Lancaster University. The minute areas of student wellbeing must not be neglected, and the union must aim to provide students with the skills to thrive independently.

**Community**

The roles that I have taken on since being a student demonstrate that liberation and community are two areas that I am extremely passionate about. I want to ensure that this campus is not only a safe space for everyone, but is a place that celebrates the diverse student body here at Lancaster. I would achieve this by:

• Publicising and supporting the campaigns and events ran by the six part-time officers, particularly during Black History Month and LGBTQ+ History Month.

• Promote the existing petition in order to push the university into declaring a climate emergency.

• Explore options available in the circumstance that religious celebrations clash with exams e.g. working towards making sure that no exams are held on specific days of celebration.

• Bring back the ‘Out in Sport’ campaign that celebrates diversity and allyship within sports. This project will break down the existing stereotypes and create a safe sporting environment for students.

• Greater consultation with PG Board to attain an insight into the current welfare issues that post-graduate students are facing.

Thank you for taking the time to read my manifesto. If you would like to find out how I plan to implement these policies, please read my extended manifesto via this link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N-kxY2Rx420NlvOEXuJEoMs5i6tdabpxBmZQSOm4Y4I/edit?usp=sharing

Vote Amy Merchant

#iAMYourwelfare