**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

7th June 2022

| | |
|---|---|
| **DATE:** | May 2022 |
| **AGENDA REF:** | 31-22 |
| **TITLE OF REPORT:** | Report from the Students' Association (Progress Update as presented to Committee) |
| **AUTHOR AND CONTACT DETAILS** | Student Services Team |
| **PURPOSE:** | To update the Board on Student Association activity to date. |
| **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS/ DECISIONS:** | The Board is asked to note the following:<br>• Our new Vice President Rahela Calin has just been elected and we all look forward to working with her.<br>• Soup and a Sandwich initiative has been kept for this year in recognition of student poverty.<br>• The SA received its certificate for the update to its Mental Health Agreement.<br>• Refreshers' Week took place from 31st Jan to 4th Feb 2022, the SMILE boxes funded by the College Trust, aimed at promoting health and wellbeing, were very well received. |
| **RISK** | • That our students do not feel fully engaged due to changes in our vice president roles. |
| **RELEVANT STRATEGIC AIM:** | • Successful Students<br>• Highest Quality Education and Support<br>• Sustainable Behaviours |
| **SUMMARY OF REPORT:** | • More students on campus and increased use of social media.<br>• The involvement of students in the gender-based violence EmilyTest pilot and participation in 16 days of action.<br>• Soup and a Sandwich initiative has been kept for this year in recognition of student poverty.<br>• The SA received its certificate for the update to its Mental Health Agreement.<br>• Coordinated activities for COP26.<br>• Worked with the college on various charity and local community activities.<br>• Refreshers' Week took place from 31st Jan to 4th Feb 2022, the SMILE boxes funded by the College Trust, aimed at promoting health and wellbeing, were very well received. |

# South Lanarkshire College

# Students' Association

# Board Report

# April 2022

YOUR COLLEGE
YOUR WAY

# Contents

Overview ..... 3
Student Engagement ..... 3
Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention ..... 4
Free Soup & Sandwich/Free Breakfast ..... 4
Free Sanitary Products ..... 5
Digital Poverty ..... 5
Discretionary Funding ..... 5
Free Bus Travel ..... 5
Student Mental Health Agreement – Think Positive Hub ..... 6
NUS Elections ..... 6
SA Elections ..... 6
SA Office ..... 7
Website and Brand Articulation ..... 8
Events ..... 8
No Smoking Day ..... 8
Forthcoming Events ..... 8
Scottish Learning Disabilities Week ..... 8
Mental Health Awareness Week ..... 8

# Overview

## Student Engagement

The SA continues to be busy supporting students and liaising with staff over the last few months. It has been brilliant to see the increase in student numbers on campus and we look forward to welcoming more students over the coming months.

One area that the SA is committed to is that of tackling student poverty. We are very proud of the number of initiatives at the College to help support students, especially during such challenging financial times. Further details of these initiatives are detailed throughout the report. An overview of these activities include:

- expanding our free soup and sandwich initiative to include free breakfast
- providing free sanitary products to students both on campus and at home
- promoting access to the short- and long-term laptop loan system, as well as re-opening of the Flexible Learning Unit
- awareness raising of discretionary funding and how to apply for this
- promotion of free travel in Scotland for everyone aged between 5 and 21 years of age

Alongside this focus on student poverty, the SA has been involved in several other activities including our continued participation for the EmilyTest Charter, promoting the College's mental health support services via the Think Positive Hub, highlighting the 2022/23 student elections, as well as a variety of events.

The time between Easter and finishing a course in June can be a very busy, and sometimes stressful, time of year for students for various reasons. We are keen to ensure students know the SA are there for them to provide support and signposting when needed. Regular student emails and social media messaging take place to ensure students are kept up to date with what's happening with the SA and the College as a whole.

## Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention

We are very proud that the College has been accepted to undertake the full EmilyTest Charter, as part of the ongoing commitment to tackling gender-based violence. The SA worked closely with the College throughout the Charter Pilot, which took place earlier this year.

We look forward to working together with the College to continue to raise awareness about this important issue. Information about the College undertaking the full EmilyTest Charter was shared with students via social media messaging, all student emails and a press release by the Marketing team.

The SA also provides their email address in any student comms, alongside the dedicated Student Support email, to highlight to students we are there to support and signpost them as and when needed. Awareness raising is also being increased with new staff GBV prevention cards and updated toilet door campaigns

## Free Soup & Sandwich/Free Breakfast

Free soup and a sandwich continues to be very popular amongst students. In February of this year 306 lunches were provided and this increased to 686 in March 2022. The SA are proud to be able to provide this important initiative in its aim to combat student poverty. This is more important than ever due to the increase in cost of living.

We will continue to promote this service throughout the remainder of the academic year. Going forward the SA will be offering a free healthy breakfast to all students one day per week. This will be an option of porridge/cereal and a piece of fruit. In order to benefit as many students as possible this will take place on a separate day to the free soup and sandwich offer. Roll out of this offer will start in May 2022.

As always, we are very grateful to Inspire Catering for working in partnership with the SA to offer this to all students.

## Free Sanitary Products

The SA has been keen to highlight that although more students are returning to campus, the College will continue to provide free sanitary products to all students direct to their home. This partnership with Hey Girls was introduced during lockdown in 2020 and allows us to continue supporting students who may be studying remotely.

Like the free soup and sandwich/free breakfast, we feel it is extremely important to continue promoting this free service to help tackle student poverty. Free sanitary products continue to be available on campus from various locations and we have increased promotion of this service via social media and all student emails.

## Digital Poverty

The SA and the College are committed to ensuring students face no barriers to engaging with or completing their courses. We regularly signpost students to both the short term and long-term loan laptop schemes. To date there have been 432 long term loan applications received and assessed.

Alongside this laptop loan system, the College has re-opened the Flexible Learning Centre for all students to access and use for study during term time. This area allows students easy access to PCs and printing, thereby reducing barriers at what can be a stressful time of year for students. The SA have been keen to promote this through a variety of different messaging platforms.

## Discretionary Funding

As part of the SA and the College's commitment to tackling student poverty, we are proud that the College has disbursed additional discretionary funding to those students most in need. The SA sent out an all-student email highlighting what discretionary funding is and how students can access this. We strongly encouraged any student that was facing financial hardship to access this funding via the Student Portal and to contact the Bursary team if they had any queries regarding the process.

## Free Bus Travel

Free bus travel is now available for all 5- to 21-year-olds living in Scotland. The SA has regularly helped to promote this initiative via social media and our student newsletters. We are encouraging all eligible students to sign up for this scheme to help with student poverty, as well as encourage sustainable behaviours.

We have also highlighted that students should apply sooner rather than later as having access to free travel will impact on travel allowances in the next academic year. We are very supportive of this scheme and hope to see many SLC students taking part.

## Student Mental Health Agreement – Think Positive Hub

The Think Positive Hub was launched on 30 March and the SA is delighted that information on the support services available at SLC are promoted on this page. We have worked closely with Think Positive to tailor this information and will continue to update it with mental health and wellbeing updates and events.

The SA regularly promotes the support services available within the College, such as student counselling, free mindfulness class, free yoga, access to Togetherall and dedicated Student Services support. Looking forward we are keen to promote the benefits of positive mental health and encouraging students to take a proactive approach to looking after their health and wellbeing. This will be a key theme in the upcoming Mental Health Awareness Week, further details of which are shared in the Events section of this report.

## NUS Elections

We would like to pass on our congratulations to the new President Elect of NUS Scotland, Ellie Gomersall. The SA is committed to working in partnership with NUS Scotland through various initiatives to ensure students are supported throughout their education.

## SA Elections

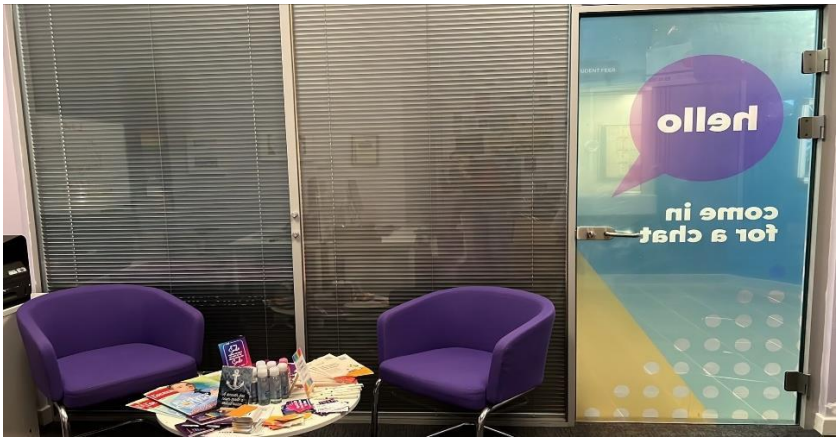
SA Elections for the 2022/23 Student President and Vice President are now underway. Students have been made aware of the elections and encouraged to participate in via social media and all student emails.

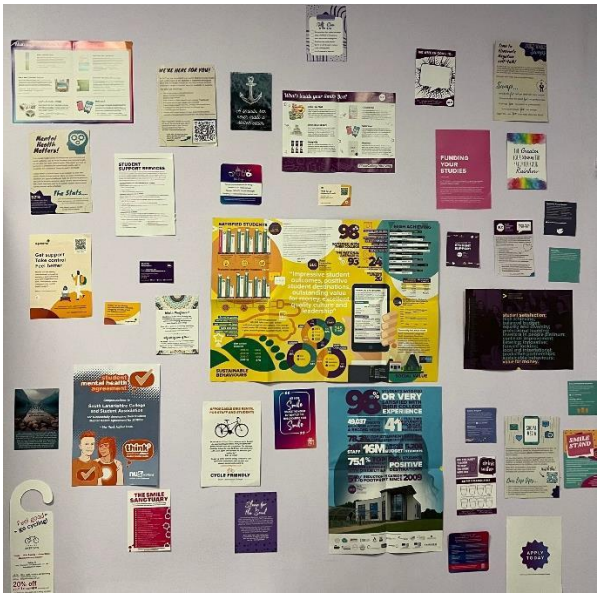
Nomination packs were available on the website from 4 to 29 April, as well as upon request via email to the Deputy Returning Officer. A briefing session will take place for candidates on 3 May. Voting will then take place online through Moodle from 4 to 18 May. All students will be able to cast one vote for their preferred candidate or they can vote for RON (Re-Open Nominations). The results of the elections will be announced via all student email and social media on 20 May.

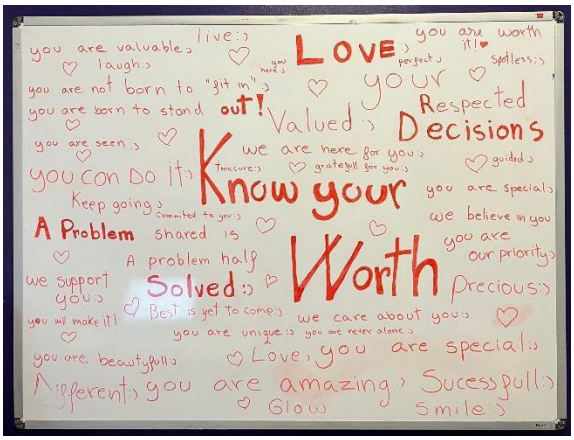
The SA and Student Services team are working closely with the Quality Department and Class Reps system to share this information as widely as possible, as well as encouraging any current Class Reps who may interested in putting their name forward.

## SA Office

With more students now coming back to campus, the SA have refreshed their office space in the Atrium to make it more welcoming. We have created a more comfortable space for students who would like to drop in for a chat, as well as decorating the wall space to draw more attention to the support available within the College. We hope this encourages students to get in touch and check in with the SA on a face-to-face basis, as well as through digital methods such as social media and email.





## Website and Brand Articulation

We were delighted to take part in the recent focus groups discussing the new website that will be launched later this year. It was a great opportunity to provide feedback and insight into how the website and rebrand can help benefit students, as well as promote the College to visitors and applicants. It also helped to build confidence and communication between students and staff by enabling students to freely share their opinions regularly, thereby assuring them we are a listening organisation. The SA look forward to being involved further with this work going forward.

## Events

### No Smoking Day

**Wednesday 9 March**

The SA were heavily involved in raising awareness of No Smoking Day which took place on 9 March this year. As part of our work, we created an online quiz that students could access via a QR code and hyperlink. This meant both students on campus and working at home could take part.

The quiz was made up of a short selection of awareness raising questions to encourage further thought and discussion. To encourage uptake in the quiz, all correct entries were entered into a prize draw to win a £30 Boots voucher. This was promoted via the all-student email and social media page. We also hosted a stall in the Ground Floor Atrium to raise awareness of the event and encourage students to take part.

## Forthcoming Events

### Scottish Learning Disabilities Week

**Monday 2 - Sunday 8 May**

The theme for this year's event is "We all have human rights!". The SA are working closely with the Learning Development, HR and Student Services teams to discuss activities for the week. This includes having information stalls in the main atrium where we can talk with students more about this event and the support within the College.

### Mental Health Awareness Week

**Monday 9 – Sunday 15 May**

Created by the Mental Health Foundation, the theme for this week is loneliness and how we can help to reduce this.

The SA will be arranging a Positivitea Event for students as part of our Think Positive Mental Health Grant Award. For this event we are working with the Hospitality department to provide free cake and coffee/tea to students in The Study Restaurant. Students can use this space to talk to each other and take time out of their busy day. Alongside this we are working on providing lots of other activities such as a speaker from LAMH, free student breakfasts, resilience workshops and promoting the free yoga and mindfulness classes.