



YOUR COLLEGE
⇒ **YOUR WAY**

South Lanarkshire College

Students' Association

Board Report

August 2021

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Overview

The Student President and Vice President both produced winning election campaigns focused on building relationships with students, engaging with them and being the voice for the students at South Lanarkshire College. This relationship between the students and Student Association will continue to be developed in the upcoming academic year. The main areas of focus for the Student Association this year include highlighting the importance of mental health, improving student engagement and focusing on student poverty.

A SA newsletter was sent out to all student in June who had a conditional and unconditional offer via email to introduce them to the new Student President and Vice President.

The SA newsletter provided students with information on who was elected and what the SA achieved in the 2020-2021 academic year. Going forward we will send all new students a welcome SA newsletter which they will receive on the first day of their course. This includes what we want to achieve throughout the year and the different ways to contact us i.e. social media platforms, email and contact number. We will continue to send weekly SA emails to all students to keep them updated all the latest news and events the SA is involved in.

The Student President and Vice President have also recorded and uploaded 'Welcome videos' to social media to introduce ourselves and engage with student. These videos outline what students can expect from us when studying at SLC.



Training

NUS 'College Lead and Change'



The Student Association recently undertook the Lead and Change training by NUS. As was the case last year, the training took place again on a virtual setting via Zoom and involved five days of workshops. The training was informative in relation to the Student Association, including details on Think Positive training, student finance, GAP information, etc. There was a great range of key speakers from different organisations talking about their experience of working within an education setting.

Lead and Change is a great opportunity to create new working relationships with other Student Associations and allow opportunities for sharing new and exciting ideas. It allowed us to work together on ways that we are hoping to engage with students for the upcoming academic year.

NUS 'The Gathering'



NUS recently hosted 'The Gathering' which was also a virtual event via Zoom. Over the course of two days they created an interesting and packed agenda for everyone attending. This included:

- Leading voices across the sector sharing their expertise and motivating all student officers to thrive in 2021/22.
- The opportunity to debate whether "Online learning will or is destroying Students' Associations and the student experience". This session was hosted by the NUS Scotland President, Matt Crilly.
- An array of development themed workshops for staff and officers hosted by sector experts.
- Meeting with other Student Associations and building on our networking opportunities, including linking with others SAs that have the same key manifesto points as SLC.

South Lanarkshire College Staff Conference

The Student Association was delighted to attend the College's first virtual Staff Conference in August 2021. During the conference the figures from academic year 2020-2021 showed that students were very satisfied and that the College is doing everything it can to support our students. By the end of the conference it was clear that SLC is a strong and happy place to work. As part of the conference there were some great discussions about what we excel at, our values and what we could improve on. The staff conference was also a great way to network and build working relationships.

Student Mental Health Agreement

The SA and the College continue to work closely together to create our Student Mental Health Agreement, as part of the NUS Think Positive initiative. For the first time we have decided to carry forward our Student Mental Health Agreement over two academic years to capture the huge amount of great work taking place within the College in this area. This is particularly important due to the ongoing impact on mental health as a result of Covid-19.



We look forward to launching the Student Mental Health Agreement during Freshers' week in September and will be creating accessible content in partnership with our Marketing team such as videos and updated infographics. We will be promoting the Agreement via our various social media platforms. As part of the events planned for this year under the Agreement, we look forward to hosting our first Positivi-tea event for students.

Student Support Incentives

Hey Girls - Free Sanitary Products



In 2018, Plan International UK research found that period poverty affects 1 in 10 schoolgirls across the UK. However, in Scotland, the number is thought to be closer to 1 in 4. This is an area that we are keen to support as we believe there should be no barriers to education.

As the first college in Scotland to introduce free period products in 2017, we are incredibly proud to have played our part in providing free sanitary products and offering free home deliveries throughout the last academic year.

We look forward to continuing to work alongside Hey Girls to provide these products and promote this fantastic service via our SA weekly emails, newsletters and social media channels.

Free Yoga Sessions & Mats

During the last academic year, we were delighted to introduce free student yoga classes. When classes were first promoted, we provided free yoga mats for all students who signed up for the online classes.

Due to it being such a success with lots of positive feedback we are pleased to say yoga classes will be continuing this academic year. Alongside this we have also purchased an additional 50 yoga mats for new students who would like to sign up to classes.



Health & Wellbeing Packs

We are delighted to advise that last year the SA offered 50 free health and wellbeing packs to students on campus. These packs contained reusable face coverings, hand sanitiser and a SA branded water bottle.

Packs were quickly snapped up and were so popular that we hope to be able to continue providing similar packs over the coming academic year. As before these packs will continue the usual items, as well as some college branded goodies!



Smile boxes

Following the success of the health and wellbeing packs, we decided to provide some amazing tailored mental health packs for our students during Freshers. As such, we have joined up with Smile Box to provide 500 Smile Boxes for our students! These will be handed out each day during the week of Freshers'.

At the SA we are fully committed to student success and have been particularly focused over the past year on supporting our students' mental health and wellbeing. This gift box is packed full of products to let students enjoy some well-deserved 'me-time'. From tasty treats to a spot of pampering, as well as some gifts to help students relax! There are also some mindfulness resources that will help support student's mental health and highlight the various support services that the College has to offer.



Free Soup & Sandwich

The SA's 'Free Soup and Sandwich' initiative was a great success and we were able to provide lunch to an amazing 856 students!

The initiative was promoted each week on the SLCSA Facebook page, and we would like to thank Inspire catering for helping us to provide this free service to students. We are hoping this initiative can continue into the new academic year and are investigating options of how often we can offer this to our students, especially as we look forward to welcoming more students on campus with restrictions easing.



NUS have also asked us to do a case study for their website as we are the only college in Scotland currently providing free soup and sandwiches for students during the pandemic. They were particularly interested that we were supporting our students in this way during a period of financial difficulty, which we are extremely proud of.

Togetherall



To help support the mental health and wellbeing of the South Lanarkshire College Community, we are delighted to continue working in partnership with Togetherall.

Togetherall is a support service for students and staff that provides 24/7 mental health support from trained professionals. It provides a safe space online for students to explore their feelings and learn skills to help them self-manage their mental health and wellbeing. The service is completely free and confidential to students and college staff.

Going forward we will continue to increase the promotion of this vital service, including the provision of a QR code to enable easier access to the website, providing a virtual session for Togetherall at Freshers' and highlighting it across the SA weekly emails & newsletters.

Operational Plan

The SA Operational Plan has been updated and we have reflected upon areas which we could not perform last year due to the pandemic. This has included plans such as face to face student engagement, as well as other aims such as community partnership for this academic year. We look forward to bringing these plans to action going forward.

The operational plan contains the three main priorities from the manifestos of President and Vice President. These priorities are:

- Improving student physical wellbeing and mental health
- Student engagement
- Tackling student poverty

As well as the Operational Plan, a social media calendar, events planner and draft budget were also created and shared with other departments, such as Student Services.

College Open day

Clearing event

On the 17 August we held our first face to face information open day in 18 months. This was a great opportunity to speak to prospective students, let them know who the SA officers are in the college and what different incentives we offer to students as well as detailing what support is available.

We were one of five stalls, student association, admissions, learning development, bursaries, and student services. Potential students were also taken a tour of our campus, showing the facilities we have, also a member of each facility was on hand to answer any questions in relation to courses.



We had 71 attendees, with many choosing to apply on the day using the library PCs. Which was brilliant news.

Student Inductions

This year with more students on campus we are looking forward to meeting as many students as possible, however we are aware that this academic year will still have a blended approach.

We have been able to return to an open-door policy with safety measures in place, such as only 2 people accessing the Student Association office at any one time. We will be operating on an appointment-based service for most enquiries where possible and will continue to be available via Teams, as we are aware some students may feel anxious speaking in a face to face setting.

Students can request appointments with the SA via email, social media channels or phone. We will be visiting class groups to personally welcome everyone to the College, while maintaining social distancing. We have created a PowerPoint presentation to help provide an overview of how the SA can benefit students, as well as highlighting the different events we are involved in.

In addition to this, we have produced a short video which forms part of the Learner Induction Process to promote student representation through the Students' Association, class representative process and Student Officer roles. This is available on YouTube and the South Lanarkshire College website.

Emails have been sent to Curriculum Managers to encourage lecturers from all Faculties to book in a time slot for class visits. These visits will be done in face to face settings in classes and virtual via Teams.

The College will also be giving out free student lanyards and ID badges this year as part of the induction process. This is to enhance security and to make it easy to identify who is a student and who is staff. Students will be encouraged to wear them whilst on campus.

Freshers 2021 – Importance of Student Mental Health & Wellbeing



Freshers' will be taking place from Tuesday 14 to Thursday 16 September this year and we have a fantastic selection of activities taking place!

This year Freshers will be virtual on the 14 and 16 September, with Police Scotland hosting a stall on campus on 15 September. We are very excited to be able to invite Police Scotland on site and they will be speaking with students in the main atrium about many different topics, whilst also handing out freebies. For the virtual event days, we have lots of fun and informative sessions lined up for our students.

A new Teams page has been created for Freshers' and promotion of this will start from 30 Aug when students start back on their courses. Promotion will take place via class visits, weekly student emails, welcome newsletter and social media posts.

The Student Association will deliver a session on who we are and what we do for our students, as well as present a PowerPoint on what deals are available to our students.

Last year we hosted an online Escape Room and since it has such great feedback from students then we have decided to run it again this year! To help encourage team building within classes we have decided to run it as class events rather than individual sign ups. We think this will be a fun way for students to engage with their new classmates.

A quiz will be hosted via teams and all questions will relate to the College. To make it fair all student participating will be entered into a prize draw. We have 3 x £30 Amazon vouchers to give away to the lucky winners.

We have also booked a caricaturist that students can email a photo to. They will then create a drawing which will be posted out to them. This also was very well received by students last year and we hope it is a great success again.

Several live sessions within the Teams channel will be available such as a Mindfulness session, Finance information, Learning Development session, Q&A session from former students, a Resilience workshop and a session from Togetherall.

On Wednesday we will have an SA table out to give away freebies. As part of this we have contacted Tunnocks, Walkers, Dominos and Inspire Catering.

College Hoodies

We will continue to provide excellent quality hoodies to our college population, especially as more students attend classes on campus.

Due to less students being on campus last year then we have still small and medium hoodies in stock, as such we will be ordering more L-XXL. The College hoodies are hugely popular and are significantly subsidised by the College, costing students only £5 to purchase.

We will operate the same system as last year with appointments being required to collect hoodies from the SA office in a safe manner and in line with social distancing guidelines.



Forthcoming Events

- **Freshers' 13th - 16th September** - Freshers' week is a busy, fun event that kicks off the new academic year. As outlined above, we have a fantastic variety of events taking place virtually and on campus.
- **World Mental Health Day 10th October** - This event showcases the importance of talking about mental health and highlights the support available within the College and wider community. We encourage students and staff to set time aside for activities that boost resilience and have a positive impact on mental health.
- **Care Experienced Week October** – This continues to be an important event for the SA to promote. We will be highlighting the support available to our care experienced students, including one to one support from their named staff contact.
- **Health and Wellbeing Week October 2020** - It's important we take time to look after our health and wellbeing, so during this week we will be highlighting lots of great ways to maintain a healthy lifestyle. We will be looking at what gyms and social clubs within the area are available for students.
- **Pink Friday October 22nd October** - Students and staff are encouraged to wear pink to show their support for Breast Cancer Care.
- **Social Clubs** – Within the next few months we aim to have at least three social clubs (Fantasy football, Netflix & Debate club) up and running along with looking at the feasibility of having our own college football team.