Lorraine Adams - VP Education

I can’t believe we’re already into the second half of the academic year! It’s been a really busy two months and there’s a lot going on in the near future. We have a great team attending extra meetings to have our voice heard about the Transformation. If you haven’t already, check out Nicci’s speech given at the Student Voice Symposium. And after years (yes years!) of the Association hassling the OU to provide students with Eduroam, it’s finally happening. We do have an impact.

Remits Review - What it means for Student Voice

Within the Student Voice team we currently have a number of student representatives including Vice President Education, Vice President Representation and Research and Faculty Association Representatives for each of the University Faculties and the Open programme. The Students Association regularly reviews the remits and responsibilities of the student leadership team (Central Executive Committee) and the current review is likely to result in changes to our Student Voice roles. A proposal for a change in the current Vice President Representation and Research remit to one which encapsulates the work of the Student Voice Steering Group was met with general support from the Central Executive Committee. The Executive also discussed the role of Faculty Association Representatives and agreed to remove the role of the Open Faculty Association Representative position from the Central Executive Committee. The full details of the remits review have not yet been confirmed but will be published later this year in time for the elections in Spring/Summer. FIND OUT MORE - TALK TO YOUR STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
Postgraduate Research Students
The Students Association hosted several PRG “Drop In's” from October - November 2017 with the attendees giving feedback as to what representation, engagement and support they would like and how they would like to engage with us. Discussions are being held about the content of some PGR only space on the ousstudents.com website that includes information about feedback and relevant representation, support and the PGR community. We are working closely alongside the Graduate School Network, and are looking to host a structured student voice "Knowledge Exchange" event with PGR students on the 8th March 2018.

Meet Your Students Association
The Central Executive Team will soon be progressing their Meet Your Students Association events, as recommended and agreed following the Grassroots research project in 2017. The aims of these events are for the student leadership team to liaise face to face with the student body, and for the CEC to speak with students about their study experiences. Meetings are currently being scheduled in Kent and Birmingham, with the hope to also engage with the Nations offices. There will also be the opportunity for the Students Association to discuss what it does and achieves for students, and demystify the work of the executive team.

Induction and Symposium
In January 2018 the Voice team and VP Education hosted two events. The first was a Student Voice Induction event, and the other was the second Symposium. The Student Voice Induction was aimed at the new volunteers involved in voice related roles, and had 28 attendees. Students gained skills in how to navigate our complex virtual environment and shared best practice about their roles in the widest sense. It brought the students together in an informal environment, and is something that we will seek to deliver again in the future. The Student Voice Symposium event was hosted on the 29th January, and on the day attracted over 100 attendees (online and in person). The Students Association delivered presentations around representation, research, what we define as a student community and Nicci Simpson delivered a passionate speech about the Redesign programme. The content generated from this event will go towards training, marketing and promotion use for both the Students Association and the OU. The link to view the Symposium is still available via Stadium, and short clips will also soon feature on social media and the Association website.

WATCH THE SYMPOSIUM HERE

Latest Senate Reference Group report available online now!
Click here

We are excited about the launch of our new Twitter account @OUstudentsVoice
Within its first week we covered our Student Voice Symposium and Induction Day, tweeting key messages from the speakers as the events progressed as well as photos to our quickly gained audience of over 200 followers.
Thanks to Victoria Crawford as our Project Sponsor
OU Redesign / Transformation

As the work of OU Redesign continues at pace, student representatives have been involved in numerous workstream meetings, workshops, governance committees and online activities. Representatives have provided feedback on ideas as they emerge and develop. We continue to raise concerns that the changes proposed will not do enough to address the low retention, success and completion rates at the University and could undermine the founding mission of the University. Recently a number of Student Association representatives and staff met with some senior members of the University to discuss ways that student engagement could be more fully embedded in the Transformation. While some workstreams should be commended for the lengths they have gone to engage students in their work, others have been more challenging. It has at times been difficult to navigate the interdependencies between workstreams as work is undertaken concurrently. Student representatives have also been constrained by the strict confidentiality agreements which they must agree to. Around 50 student representatives on the Central Executive Committee, Senate Reference Group and OU governance committees will be attending a workshop organised by the Transformation Communications and engagement team next month. This will be the first workshop of this size for students within the transformation programme. The Association continues to press the University to create more meaningful engagement and consultation opportunities for the wider student body. WATCH THE SPEECH HERE

We Are #OUsstudents

After consultation with the OU’s Government and External Affairs team, the Students Association decided to think creatively when responding to government consultations late 2017. The consultations reviewed the set up for the new Office for Students (OfS) and how the Students Association and OU can work together to try to ensure that the part-time and distance learning student voice is on their agenda. A video response to the Office for students was sent on 20th Dec to Nicola Dandridge, OfS CEO. This video has been viewed nearly 400 times on YouTube, and has been viewed and retweeted by senior people at the OU, including the Vice Chancellor.

A roundtable event was hosted by the Office for Students on the 23rd Jan, which was attended by 12 students from around the UK and abroad. The students shared very impactful and meaningful stories with Nicola Dandridge about why they study part time and/or at distance. Nicola was particularly interested in whether or not students were given any information about the OU model in terms of careers advice – and many said ‘no’. There was also a discussion about the OfS first piece of research on value for money. One OU student pointed out that any research conducted on whether or not students believe their degree offers value for money, must consider the part time/distance model separately - otherwise the findings will not accurately reflect the monetary value (or not) of this particular provision. Nicola said she would take this on board.

READ MORE HERE

Want to contribute to our next bulletin? Or find out more about a feature? Get in touch: student-voice-team@open.ac.uk