Malika And welcome to Studio.

Danielle Hi.

Steph Hello.

Sue Morning. It’s Sunday.

Malika Last day of conference, everyone.

Sue Yeah.

Malika So, how are we feeling, first and foremost?

Steph Excited still. I’m just loving every minute of it.

Sue Yeah.

Steph Can’t wait to see the end celebration as well.

Danielle Yeah, I’m really looking forward to that. A bit tired because it’s been a lot to get round and all sorts of different activities to try, but it’s been really, really fun.

Sue I’m feeling, I’m buzzing still because seeing the students coming down from the hotels this morning there’s already in these early hours sort of a buzz and people looking for what’s happened.

Steph And the duck.

Sue And the duck, yes. There is a duck on campus.

Steph Shaking a tin.

Sue Shaking a tin. But we can tell you more about that or maybe we’ll just keep it a secret.

Malika Yes, maybe we won’t say anything. This morning is our very last show on campus and we’re going to run through the highlights, the bits that we really, really enjoyed. But first and foremost I feel we should introduce ourselves.
Sue  We ought to.

Malika  Yeah, to our audience, because we know that a lot of people are tuning into watch us, and it could be our student community but it could be anyone else who wants to find out about what we get up to.

Sue  We could go viral.

Malika  We should go viral. So, I’m Malika, you probably know me through the hashtag #hushmalika. Say no more.

Sue  I’m Sue. I’m it says on my badge studio host. And you are?

Danielle  I’m Danielle. I’m current Central Committee Representative and the incoming Area Association Representative for England.

Sue  And you are?

Steph  I am Stephanie and I am Vice President Community, I’m on the Disabled Students Group Committee, I’m a Central Committee rep, and Chair of a Business Society and…

Sue  Shall we have a little sleep? Keep going.

Steph  And I’m the incoming Deputy President – just because I haven’t got enough to do.

Sue  Are you a student?

Steph  Oh, and I’m a student.

Malika  That’s a lot to take for us in at this time in the morning after a very packed weekend. Let’s talk about the highlights everyone. I feel we ought to just let people know how it went. Obviously yesterday we had Business, didn’t we, which was a big, big day for us? What did you enjoy the most? Before we go to the boring bits – no they’re not boring – but what is the bit you enjoyed the most, Steph?

Steph  What, about business?

Malika  No. I said let’s leave the boring bits till later!

Steph  Okay. I hope Peter’s not listening!
Malika  Hi Peter. No, he’s not really.

Steph  I enjoyed being DSG when we were...

Sue  What’s the DSG?

Steph  The Disabled Students Group. And we were celebrating 15 years of the group, and had cake cutting.

Sue  Is that how old it is?

Steph  15 years, yeah.

Malika  Wow.

Steph  They’ve still got their stall set up in Jenny Lee and the quiet room’s being used by students all over the weekend, so that was really good.

Sue  So, that’s the breakout room, isn’t it, with bean bags and soft cushions?

Steph  Yeah, and a separate room for medication and to lay down or whatever.

Malika  Wonderful. But cake, talk to us about cake.

Sue  I had cake. I found a cake in a box.

Steph  Massive cake. The students from the DSG were there for the celebration, but there was so much cake the cake was coming out of the building, literally people coming round.

Sue  I did have a big slice, I have to say.

Steph  It was lovely.

Sue  Because I took time out in there.

Steph  But did you see the cake stand? Oh my god, OMG.

Malika  I missed it. Are there pictures somewhere that we might be able to see?

Steph  I don’t know. The cake was going pretty quickly and there were gigantic pieces, weren’t they?
Yeah.

Danielle  I missed out cake completely.

Malika  What did you get up to?

Danielle  Yesterday afternoon I took part in the pop-up choir that happened in the hub.

Malika  I was there!

Danielle  It was brilliant. It was really, really good. And it was just so relaxing as well. Everybody was just having a really good sing-song. Yeah, I really enjoyed it. I can’t sing for toffee but it didn’t stop me having a go.

Sue  I was in the room next door and I could actually hear singing sort of through the walls and the door. And people were coming out after singing and they just seemed joyful.

Malika  Yes, it was great. I was there as well and, as you say, it was just amazing.

Sue  What sorts of songs did you sing?

Danielle  We did a run through of Hallelujah, and we did a bit of Sweet Lord Sweet Chariot, and then we did a bit of Dean Martin’s Sway as well. The choir actually sang the song for us because Peter Bell, one of the trustees that’s coming in it’s his choir that he takes part in, so they actually gave us a little demonstration as well and sang a Bette Midler song for us. It was absolutely beautiful.

Malika  It was. Do I understand we’re meant, we’re lined up to sing at some point this morning?

Danielle  Apparently we’re singing at the closing of the conference, and I believe we’re singing Sway.

Malika  So, stay tuned everyone. If you want to see that that will be broadcast live, I believe.

Danielle  Yes.

Malika  All of us singing. What’s your best bit that you enjoyed about the conference? I’m looking at you Sue.
Sue    I think from arriving on Friday and being part of Studio on Friday with sort of the anticipation of the weekend. And then going out onto campus and seeing students who had left home for the first time, and they were a bit overwhelmed with the size of campus and the number of students. Then catching up with them at various times over the weekend and seeing how some who’d suffered little bits of stress and anxiety and sort of sensory overload to actually managing to get through the whole weekend, speak to other students, immerse themselves in the student life that is conference and being an OU student, and just seeing that transformation of themselves really and what they’ve managed to achieve. And I think that’s been my highlight: the resourcefulness of an OU student.

Malika That’s a good one to share because it does mean tremendous effort from people to be able to do things like this.

Sue    And what’s been your highlight?

Malika Mine has been, well take a guess, chatting, talking. (Laughter) No, seriously it has been wonderful for me to, from the day I arrived, to be able to engage straightaway with people and go up to them, are you okay, where you’re going, and the first-time comers to get to know where they were coming from, what was their experience, what they were expecting from conference. And like you said, Steph, to get to see first hand what the conference is bringing to them in terms of, I really enjoyed meeting up with other people and I didn’t know this was there. So, that’s a big highlight for me.

Sue    I was on the shuttle bus yesterday and I sort of said good morning, and told everybody else say good morning. And there were two students sort of sat opposite each other and just through the, where are you from, they realised that they lived about 20 minutes or so on a train from each other, and they might end up going meeting for a coffee once a month or something, and they were amazed. And a couple of times over the weekend there have been students and it’s like, you live down the road from me, you know the areas that I visit, oh my goodness, I’m not alone.

Malika That’s just wonderful, isn’t it?

Sue    Yeah.

Malika It’s just connecting and bringing people together and just knowing that we’ve got something to go back to out there.
Danielle  It’s been absolutely brilliant I think meeting students, because it’s not just about meeting people that are studying the same subject as you are, and that’s great because you can then go on and complain a particular TMA or say, what was this like, and say this bit was brilliant and things. But it’s about those people that are from your areas and taking away the isolation that sometimes comes with OU study. ((Agreement)) And I saw one of the social media posts from one of the students saying, I’ve met people that are on the same module as me, I’ve met people that live in the same area as me, and I’ve just met people that share interests with me because they were fans of the Walking Dead. And that’s people that are just coming together over common interests, and the conference has provided that for them.

Malika  I was listening. And the Walking Dead, who doesn’t like the Walking Dead!

Steph  That’s a good lead in to business. ((Laughter))

Malika  There you go, the Walking Dead, it’s a business.

Danielle  Segway!

Malika  We’re not going to talk about the Walking Dead, but I’m looking at you Steph because you are our expert about business matters, so talk to us about it.

Steph  It started off with Nicci addressing the conference. And then it was followed with Mary Kellett, the acting Vice Chancellor. And she put herself in front of loads of students and opened herself up for question and answers. So, I think we were quite impressed with how she came across.

Malika  Yes, very.

Steph  The business was streamed live for the online delegates, and also over to the other theatres. The main event was in the Hub Theatre. And I helped to chair the Beryl Theatre with Cath Brown, who’s the incoming president.

Sue  When does she take up office?

Steph  1st August. She might be floating around campus at the moment. You might be able to spot her. I’m not going to say anymore.

Sue  She’s crackers though, isn’t she?

Steph  Yeah, totally crackers. The main part of the business was voting on changes for the constitution. It’s every four years you get the chance to change what is
put into the constitution, so there was deep debate over certain motions that are put forward and the voting went ahead. Everybody who attended as delegate got voting rights online as well as face to face here. And then it finished with Mary, another Mary – Kennet I think her name is.

Sue Kennet-Cook.

Steph Kennet-Cook, that’s it. She’s an OU council member and she talks about: what’s the point. And it’s a really lovely way to talk about how she progressed from being a student through to her career. And it touched home with a lot of people some of the things she said. I was really impressed.

Sue It was a very engaging speech.

Malika It was.

Steph Yeah definitely.

Danielle That bit where she talks about the not being good enough moment and I think that realisation that hits everybody where we all have that moment where we think we’re not good enough, but actually we all are ((agreement)) and there is a point to why we do this.

Steph And then business finished and there was a burst of activity all over campus. Yes!

Malika Things went on till late I understand, but say no more. It happens at conference, say no more.

Danielle And some of us got a sweat on doing Zumba on the lawn.

Malika What happens at conference stays at conference.

Sue Oh there was Zumba, wasn’t there?

Danielle I was doing the Zumba.

Sue Swingball! I haven’t seen Swingball for about 20 odd years. And people were playing Swingball, Giant Jenga.

Danielle Yes, giant Connect 4.

Sue Society showcase was on the lawn in the marquee.
Danielle: There was a marquee, wasn’t there?

Malika: The OU shop, check this out, the OU shop. Some of us bought new items from there. Say no more. But everything is available online, isn’t it?

Steph: Yes.

Malika: Anyone can order those items. We talked a little bit about elections or we talked about Cath in her new post, and I understand both of you are newly elected, is that correct?

Steph: Yes.

Danielle: We are.

Malika: Can I ask you what your roles are? First of all what is CEC, for people who don’t understand, what does that mean there’s a new CEC come up?

Danielle: The CEC stands for Central Elected Committee. And this is the team of students that are elected by students to lead the association and to represent the students in all matters that relate to them, academic representation as well as community representation, and engaging with students. The CEC there are elections every two years for that, and these elections have just happened this year, both myself and Stephanie are obviously successful candidates and we’ll be taking up our posts on 1st August. And for the next two years we will be helping to lead and shape the association coming.

Steph: It was also board of trustees elections at the same time.

Danielle: It was yeah.

Steph: So, we’ve got new trustees coming on board as well.

Sue: And I think we need to praise the students who do put themselves forward because it can be a long arduous process. And if of course they are unsuccessful but others get elected don’t be put off, keep trying.

Steph: Enjoy the experience. It was a nice process.

Sue: Yes.

Malika: And there are many ways in which students can engage with what’s going on, volunteering. We’ll talk a bit, I think we’ll touch a bit on that in a little while. In
terms of your roles precisely – I think you covered the main aspects of it – what are you most looking forward to in terms of achieving?

Steph  With the Deputy President role supporting research students and postgraduate students. Volunteering has now gone into that remit.

Malika  Yes!

Steph  That wasn’t planned. I attended a volunteering workshop this morning so I feel like I’ve already started, and doing extra projects. But mainly the main part of the role is to deputise for the president when needed, and support the CEC and the staff members as well. So, it’s quite a detailed role but I’m looking forward to getting started.

Malika  We’re looking forward to that.

Danielle  And as Area Association representative for England my main remit is to represent English students. There are other Area Association representatives elected; there’s one for Scotland, one for Wales and one for Northern Ireland. We currently have the Republic of Ireland vacant, but there will be a bi-election for that one, so if anybody’s thinking of standing for the Republic of Ireland…

Sue  Yes, come on board.

Danielle  Absolutely. And we’ve also got one for Europe as well.

Steph  Vice President Administration is vacant as well. We need a VP admin.

Malika  Right, so if anyone’s hearing us right now please consider that.

Danielle  There will be bi-elections.

Steph  Contact any of us and we’ll tell you more about the roles.

Danielle  Absolutely. My role is mainly going to be representing the English students, so it’s definitely feeding back to the university those issues that are affecting English students in particular, and working on that sense of community. It’s building really on what my predecessors have done. And Steph is outgoing Vice President Community and she’s done an excellent job with holding online meet-ups and face to face.

Steph  I was trained well. ((Laughter))
Danielle: It’s definitely building that because we really, really want to continue to build that sense of community.

Malika: Yes.

Danielle: And have students engaging more and more and meet-ups and anything that we can think of to help students meet one another and to increase that social activity.

Sue: And our voice does get taken all the way through the different levels of the university and the actual Students Association. So, you’ve all got something to say.

Steph: We’ve got our own remits, but as CEC members we also get the opportunity to go onto workstreams, working groups and other committees. And then of course you’ve got the Central Committee reps and they represent you on governance committees as well. So, the student voice is really, really important. We’ve got a new representative in a brand new role which is Vice President Student Voice, so it’s a very focused role making sure the student voice is captured and projected to the university. And the other one is Vice President Media and Campaign, another brand new role. Campaigning, wow!

Malika: Wow.

Danielle: Let’s do it.

Steph: If you’ve got any ideas send them in.

Sue: Cake.

Steph: I’m with you on that one!

Malika: It seems to me the association is moving towards more and more engagement. And as you highlighted, our voices matter.

Steph: Proactive I think as well.

Malika: Yeah. Can I ask you both, perhaps Sue we ought to ask our guests how they started? Sue, you’ve obviously had the bug from somewhere so I’d like to know where your bug came from to get engaged also. Would you mind sharing that with our audience?

Sue: My engagement started in the last millennium. ((Laughter))
Steph   I thought you were saying century then.

Sue     It was then they actually posted post with a stamp and a letter through the door.

Steph   No.

Sue     It was a letter inviting me to a social event, and I um’d and ah’d and um’d and ah’d, and I thought am I into all this. I was like it’s a couple of hours out of my time to see what’s what, and I went along and it wasn’t too scary or anything and I got chatting to other students, and I thought okay, I’ll go to the next one. So, I went to the next one, and the support that was offered on the next one, because I was a new student and stuff, on how to save your work when you’re doing your assignments, and opening pages with two documents on one page on your screen on your laptop, on your computer. And from that help and subsequent help as I progressed it was unbelievable. And then I just felt that it would be nice to give something back. So, it progressed, and my confidence progressed to the point where you can then say, you’ll love it!

Steph   I came into it because Cherry Day, we were in the same region, the southeast, and she talked me into getting more involved and attending the Assembly executive meeting, so I got co-opted on, where I met Sue who sent me to the campus for my first time. She told me about the Senate Reference Group, they need someone from the southeast, you’re it. And I said, what is this Senate Reference Group, what will I have to do. I don’t know, but it sounds lovely, you’ll enjoy it.

Sue     That’s what I said literally!

Malika  This is it.

Steph   And look where that led. If there are any complaints please direct them to Sue!

Malika  And Sue will direct them to whoever got them started. And what about you, what was your moment where you thought, I need to do something?

Danielle Funnily enough it was Sue!

Sue     This is not the Sue show!

Danielle I went to a face-to-face student consultative meeting in Newcastle. And at the end of every consultation meeting the Students Association have a spot in which they get to talk about what they’re doing after the main business that the
OU have carried out. And Sue and our outgoing president, Nicci Simpson, were both there that day and really sold volunteering for the association: get involved with this, you’ll love it. So, I went and signed up to be a graduation ceremony volunteer.

Malika Fabulous.

Danielle And I helped with the graduate ceremony in 2016 at Newcastle at the Sage in Gateshead. And from then on I thought yeah, I like this, I want to do a bit more.

Malika And the sky’s your limit now.

Danielle Exactly. Became a Central Committee Representative, and then got a phone call from the office going, how would you like to be on the Senate Reference Group and be a member of Senate, and so I’m there and now I’m here.

Malika That’s it. Actually that’s a really good note to end the show on because we have to now wrap up unfortunately.

All Oh!

Malika It went so quick. But you’ve heard these experiences, and if you are interested first and foremost can I direct you to the oustudents.com and ask you to sign up to the newsletter, because the newsletter is a fantastic tool for you to access opportunities that the Student Association can have in volunteering in many, many ways: graduation ceremonies, meet-ups which are organised in Norwich and… I know you do.

Sue Residencies.

Malika Residential, societies, groups, clubs, they’re all on it. Just go on it and just find your niche, find out what’s going to make you join us and take part in this fabulous community. And also if you’d like to attend conference it will happen in the next two years, so another way to find out about conference and come on campus, either online or face to face and do what we’ve done here. That’s it, I’m afraid we have to end the show.

Sue Have we got to go back to the rest of the conference now?

Malika We do now.

All Yay!
Malika: More fun for us. And that’s it. We’re going to enjoy ourselves, and we would really like to encourage you to take part.

Sue: Thank you students.

Malika: Thank you for watching us.

Sue: Online delegates, well done for your voting and your engagement on that and the quiz and everything.

Malika: We smashed it. Very briefly because we’re going to be cut off – we smashed it as online delegates in terms of votes, didn’t we, we are here?

Sue: Yeah, the votes, the participation.

Malika: You smashed it.

Sue: The quiz, thank you very much for the quiz.

Danielle: The Students Association staff who have been working all weekend.

Malika: Oh, the staff.

Danielle: And all the students who have volunteered to help out, the clean-up crew, everything.

Malika: Fantastic.

Danielle: It has been brilliant.

Sue: They’ve all had badges and everything.

Malika: Yeah, and they took care of us really. We couldn’t do this without them. ((Agreement))

Sue: No.

Malika: So, thank you very much everyone for watching, for listening wherever you are. Come and join us. Become part of our amazing community.

Sue: Get back to your studies now. It’s over.

All: Bye.