

Andy Evans: Hello and welcome to episode 4 of The Association Conversation Station, the official podcast of the Open University Students Association. Remember that this is the place to hear about the things we do and the things that inspire us. Now, it's been 50 years since the coming together of our first student leadership team known as the Central Executive Committee, or the CEC for short. This podcast looks at the work of the CEC, why it's so important and the difference it makes to our students. You'll hear from Fanni Zombor, our current Vice President Engagement on CEC, Billy Docherty, Honorary Life Member of the Association and a former member of the CEC, and our very own Ellie Milnes-Smith, Volunteering and Representation Officer for the Association.

Before the podcast begins, by the way, we want to tell you about our fundraising plans to celebrate our 50th anniversary. We're raising money for the Open University Students Educational Trust, otherwise known as OUSET. OUSET is a grant which provides vital support for OU students in financial hardship so they can begin or continue their studies. We'd like to raise £50,000 for OUSET by May of next year so if you'd like to get involved, please visit oustudents.com/fundraising. You'll find some real inspiration there, too. Okay, on with the podcast. Our host is our President Sarah Jones. Sarah, over to you.

Sarah Jones: Hello everybody and welcome to the Association Conversation Station. My name is Sarah Jones and I am the Students Association president and I just like my guests to introduce themselves. So if I go first, to Billy.

Billy Docherty: Hi, good morning. My name is Billy Docherty and I've been a student rep for the last five or six years. I graduated last year in 2021 with my honors in psychology. I'm coming back in October to do a second degree.

Sarah: Fabulous, thank you. Fanni?

Fanni Zombor: Hi, everyone. Good morning, good evening, whenever you end up listening to this podcast. I am Vice President Engagement at the Student Association finishing my term with Sarah at the end of July and I will be going on to be a student trustee from the 1st of August.

Sarah: Thank you, and Ellie?

Ellie Milne-Smith: Hello. My name is Ellie Milne-Smith and I am one of the Volunteering and Representation Officers at the Association. I am lucky enough to work with a whole range of student volunteers, but in particular, our vice president education, our faculty reps, and all of our wonderful academic reps who sit on honorary committees.

Sarah: Brilliant, thank you very much. In a nutshell, what is the student leadership team? I know that we call it the Central Executive Committee but it's the student leadership team. What is it and what does it do? I'll go to you first Fanni and then I'll go to Billy and Ellie.

Fanni: Brilliant. The student leadership team or also known as CEC is a group of elected students who are students just like anybody else doing a degree or any kind of module with OU who are elected every two years. Our role is around having strategic oversight of the organisation, making sure we do the things that are important for students, and oftentimes also bringing the student voice into different Open University meetings like Ellie mentioned, the different committees that we sit on and appointed reps also sit on. Yeah, that's kind of in a nutshell.

Sarah: Brilliant, thank you. Billy, when you were on the CEC what was it that you did?

Billy: I was elected as the faculty there for FASS, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

from 2018 to 2020 which meant I was a student bridge between the students within the faculty and the Senior Management of the faculty. I attended a lot of the meetings with the exec dean and heads of school, I was on the board of studies for psychology as well, I was on the teaching committee, and I've done faculty assemblies. It was about being that bridge that [inaudible], the students can come to and speak to and we would raise issues where issues needed to be raised within the faculty.

Sarah: Brilliant, that's great. Thank you. Ellie, when you're working with the student leaders, what kind of things do you do with them?

Ellie: I'm really a whole kind of range. We are a student-led organisation so that really means our student leaders provide the direction, inspiration, and motivation. A lot of my work is trying to support them in getting stuff done so whether that's admin, going to meetings, linking up with the OU or providing my own professional expertise. It's often said that student leaders are the head and the heart of the organisation. We've supposed the hands, we're the one's beaver away behind the scenes, trying to make sure the student leaders can really fulfill their manifestos and visions.

Sarah: That really helps in explaining it in that way with the hearts, minds, and hands. I think that really helps explain how we all work together, doesn't it? A lot of people don't know about the hard work that goes on behind the scenes and in the national student survey. Students say that they don't know that their voice is being represented enough within the university. Bearing that in mind, what difference does the CEC make to OU students? Bear in mind that we've now been doing this for 50 years. What difference does the CEC make to OU students? Billy?

Billy: It's the face. These people are ready to become the face of the students especially if you're attending meetings within the Open University but it's really important that the feedback to students should be recognized that their voices are being taken forward, that ideas have been taken forward. Being elected on CEC gives you a certain mandate to represent students but I think the important thing here is for students to understand the difference between elected reps and who are put in place, people who are appointed and elected positions, and staff.

Because some people think the staff from the organisation, some people think the students are trying to elect but they don't realise it is a collaboration between everybody within the organisation. That is one of the main issues that I always try to get across to the students. Even in pre-pandemic when we could teach students on the campus, they were always surprised at how well things run and how much was actually going on in the background. It's not just the case when you turn up to a meeting once a month and smile and say nothing. If anybody knows me, I have acquired a big mouth and I let it run a lot, especially in meetings. Especially the students are keeping me with some issues or concerns. The CEC is that we are the face of the students but at the same time, we need the students to work with us, the staff, and the association to work with us, and we take all that forward at the actual university.

Sarah: That's really interesting isn't it? And Fanni, what's your take on it?

Fanni: As someone who, you've mentioned NSS, Sarah, and I think, when the NSS results come out and they are not as good as perhaps I would like them to be particularly working in engagement. Obviously, my main focus is on engaging students and making sure that students understand the difference that CEC members but also reps, and volunteers, what they do makes a difference to them and I sometimes sit there when the results come out and I'm like, "Well, I've put all of these hours in, worked with so many people, but you can't actually see it on the results." Which you know sometimes I'm like "Does it actually make a

difference?" But then, when I get over that and I got over. Like a couple of weeks ago, when the results came out, I went into the next meeting that was actually about student voice week, and then I realised that it actually does make a difference because just for example, through student voice week and I will talk about perhaps some achievements later on so I don't want to go too much into it that engages a thousand students at least every year. I know that there are a thousand students who have had their say in some decision-making at the OU and being the CEC member to support making that happen, I would like to thank those who make a big difference but it's also about the work that we do behind the scenes. The most that an individual students see from us is when they have an issue often on social media which is not officially within our job descriptions but I think as you become more established as a CEC member, you get to know your stuff, and then when a student has issues, you feel more confident and kind of sign-posting and passing them on and often times you end up following an individual student's journey.

We obviously don't represent individual students, we represent the collective but having those connections can really help. I would like to think that in those times particularly, students see that other kind of background work that goes on to build up the partnerships, to build up the relationships with OU staff, and to work with them on different projects really does make a difference when we can help a student resolve something that they've struggled with for quite a long while. I'm not going to repeat everything that's really said because I definitely agree with all of that, particularly on the association side of things.

Sarah: Thank you, Fanni. Ellie, from a staff perspective, what difference do you see that the CEC makes to OU students?

Ellie: The biggest thing is really being the champion of students and the champions of the student's voice. So much of the work that the CEC or indeed our other student reps do is behind the scenes but really, where the CEC have made the biggest difference is that when the OU want to make a change, they want to develop new policy, a new module, the contact that they've had with their student leaders being those champion is they go, "Maybe we should speak to a student. Maybe we should consult students." Almost every decision that the OU makes really impacts students whether it's from small module changes to really setting the educational strategy. Students have looked at that and it might not be members of the CEC who do that leg work but it's the members of the CEC who provided that real champion. Championing the voice which means that students are consulted. I think they were enormously important. They get so much done behind the scenes.

Sarah: Thanks, Ellie. It's a really interesting point you make about the CEC being champions of students' voices to allow that student voice to be accessed by the university and that leads a little bit into my next question to you all. Why is it so important for the university and the Students Association to work so closely together and how do student leaders fit into that? I'll go straight back to you Ellie on that one.

Ellie: Bringing my perspective as a member of staff, I can think about if I was a student, what would I want or what would be important? But the truth is I've not done the modules, I've not done the courses, I've not been in their shoes and if you are making decisions about the student experience and they weren't involving students, then it would be a best kind of some guess work, some educated guesses. They do not know what they're doing but without that student input, they don't have the people who are actually doing those modules, doing those courses in the room and that's why it's enormously important and all student leaders, they're able to offer those insights in a really detailed way but also having that strategic oversight thinking about, "Where do we want to be heading? Where do we want to be heading in the next year, the next few years setting the agenda, setting the strategy?" It's knowing what students want and looking forward to the future and really understanding where we need to be going and where we want the OU to be going so that they can serve students the best

way that they possibly can.

Sarah: Fanni, you've done a lot of partnership working with the OU. Can you tell me a bit about why that's been important and the difference that's made?

Fanni: I would like to think we're in a position now where almost any work that we do with OU particularly as CEC members and through the association is all partnership working because I think what I always try and keep in mind is that the staff, particularly that I get to work with in the communications team and the student voice team of the OU whoever really closely with, they have the exact same goal in mind to make a difference for students and to make their study journey more positive. I'm always going to meetings with that in mind and obviously, there are times when I feel like they might be approaching it in a way that I wouldn't approach it but they always genuinely believe that is going to make a positive difference for students. And I think, taking this approach really helps us to be valued as equal partners and it doesn't feel like I'm on the outside and I'm trying to bang on this closed door that nobody wants to listen in on and I know that's a hard balance, it can be sometimes. Because sometimes, it can be seen that you're being very friendly with the people you're supposed to hold accountable. We often say that we are the critical friends of the OU and that describes it really well because if I went in and I was completely negative about everything all the time and I was like, "It's my way or the highway," then it would be a very different and it wouldn't be a true partnership because we expect them to look at us as an equal partner but that means that we also have a responsibility to think of them the same way that they have the best intentions. But I think it leads to a place where they proactively want to seek out our views and they proactively want to understand it rather than us having to realise, "There was something going on." Or them thinking we must have a student in the room just so we can say that we've had a student in the room and I think it ends up in a, "You don't hold votes between us unless we are talking about a formal committee," in which case you do vote but in more day-to-day meetings and strategy things and different projects. You don't hold the vote between student reps and staff. We just talk until we find a mutual agreement and they have that data, we have our data that we bring to the table to help inform decision making. I would like to think that after we go after the end of this term, I know that Billy has probably kept in touch with a few OU staff members that we actually make good lasting relationships that will help both organisations and ultimately the students be better.

Sarah: It's about that relationship building, isn't it? And I think that's the bit that is important. I know that Billy, you used that when you were a CEC member. You've used that to great [inaudible], haven't you? You've built those relationships in FASS. Can you tell me a little bit about what happened because of that really great partnership working when you were the FASS representative?

Billy: I'm taking student voice as serious as we do. One of the things that was always said to me when student says they can't make contact with the senior management or they don't see the faces behind the name. I came up with an event called The Speakeasy and it was called The FASS Speakeasy. Unfortunately, the first live one was the same week that the country is closed down for coronavirus back in 2019 but we have held them online and basically what the Speakeasy was, there was a senior manager whose influence in FASS and his senior staff meeting students online and students could come up with any questions to the senior staff and they can get an answer there. Within 24 hours, there was a sheet sent out to all the students to where they'll list all the questions that was asked and all the answers. And that was again just talking to students by saying "You're the student rep, you get to see this people." We don't. We can't put a questions there. So the Speakeasy is something we've had during the pandemic and it's something that I know that FASS will take forward live next time. But then obviously, these people made time of my slight accent. I'm Scottish, so up in Scotland, we have where I started something called the Big Brother and

again, that was the same idea as the Speakeasy. It was about giving students the voice they beg to the senior members of the Scottish Open University and we've had two or three of those where there's a theme of the evening but at the same time, students can come in and talk about what is their concerns, they can talk to staff.

When you look at the importance of the CEC, you just have to look at the start of the pandemic. How quick the CEC became the voice of all students? Because all members of the CEC were suddenly doing Quizizz, we were doing chats, we were doing things online and even though I [inaudible] to make the faculty come say, "You've got to contact with the students. Can you help us get in contact with students and get more out there?" If you take the last couple of years of the pandemic [inaudible], we have had a huge presence among students and a huge presence that OU have recognised and [inaudible] for help.

Sarah: And I think that really shows the importance of having student leaders and their involvement with that partnership working with the university and the real difference of that partnership working can make. We're changing student leaders as of the 1st of August. Me and Fanni will be out of post on the 31st of July. What do you think that the new intake can expect when they form a new CEC? So if I go to you first, Fanni.

Fanni: I think they can expect a very steep learning curve because, by the nature of the post, you're elected to become a leader which sounds very fancy on the tin but when you actually get down to it, obviously we get a lot of induction and training and support but you're expected to come in on the 1st of August and have an idea which is why we do such a prolonged off. Lou, who will be taking over from me is already sick of my voice. We've done four or five meetings and we've still got a few to go to make sure we can work through everything but they can expect that steep learning curve and learning how to be a leader.

And I think there'll be a lot of exciting things for them. I always say that particularly in my [inaudible], other roles, it will be very good to have some fresh ideas and fresh thinking. I've been in this role for two terms and I've got new ideas but my vision has been the same for the four years. It will be very good for them to work out that common ground on all of their manifestos that they stood on. It will be a very exciting time for both the OU and the association as we start coming out off. We still got a pandemic but we will return to doing some face-to-face activities and we'll be a lot less restricted in what we can do. A lot has happened with over the last two years that's been spent on dealing just getting through the day because of the pandemic and all of the impact that it's had on people and a lot of things that we may have wanted to do and I've got a few pledges that had to be on hold.

So I think it will be very exciting for them to be able to dive into their ideas rather than just having to think about how do we get students through the week, so exciting times. I would like to think we've laid really good ground for them as every previous CEC tries to do for the next CEC. We did our best for them and I'll be excited to see what approach they take. I hope it's something completely crazy different that we wouldn't have thought about and probably, that's what the CEC before us would have said as well, that these people and they're whole new idea, so I think it will be great for them.

Sarah: What about you Billy? What do you think that they can expect?

Billy: It's really important that they realise, "I'm not alone." There's loads of stuff that they're going be talking about. They need a bit of advice or when they're not sure in something, they can come and ask people who [inaudible] before and the staff there. The staff are wonderful, they could help gauge it. I've had so much fun, even [inaudible] but still, I got a lot of support from the staff over these last couple of years although a year after, I started to volunteer with the association.

So it's the new CEC [inaudible], number one, it's really exciting because there are loads of faces and I'm assuming there's going to be loads of new ideas with those new faces but I would just say to them, "Don't be afraid to ask for help." At the start, I was petrified to being judged because I've been voted down and I can't do it then. But once I learnt to let down that guard on me and be able to say, "I don't know what I'm doing here, I need a little bit help" or "You've done this before, what did you do in that situation?", then that took a lot of the worry. They're going to come in with all the worries and concerns but also hold our wonderful ideas.

For me, it would be a case of saying just never be afraid to ask either somebody or another student. When you get your push, you don't vanish off the face of the earth, do you? [inaudible]. As I said, the staff are there, you have the staff keeping contact with the staff member because there's always something engaging.

Sarah: Definitely. Ellie, from a staff perspective, what do you think the new intake of student leaders can expect?

Ellie: I suppose it's two things. One is a really solid foundation of a really great working relationship cemented by the current CEC, our current student leaders who've done such a fantastic job. Then, because of that really solid foundation, a fantastic spring board where you can leap off and start to think about, "What do I want to achieve?" It's a two-year term in a way. You can start thinking a little bit into the future of, "How do I want to leave the state of the association, the state of the OU and actually the state of the student experience?" I hope they're coming in with a real sense of optimism. I've been really fortunate that I've been able to be involved in a lot of their onboarding, some of their training and there are some really fantastic ideas and initiatives which we're going to see but they're also incredibly lucky because they have inherited this fantastic foundation from our current leadership team and I'm really excited to see where as an organisation we're going to go.

Sarah: It is really exciting to see so many new people putting their hands up to do these roles and standing up to be leaders and it's really encouraging to know that that they're not going to be on their own. They're going to have great staff to support, they can have some of the people who've been around a little while that they can turn to if they need help. I remember when I first started as a CEC member back in 2018, I was really scared because I'd never done it before. I didn't know what I was doing and I didn't know where to turn to for help but very quickly, I picked up on where I could turn for help and who I could talk to and the things that I wanted to do. It's been really great this year, that even though there's been a pandemic, I've still been able to fulfil some of the things that I wanted to do at the beginning of my term and get to the end. The pandemic has taken its toll on our student leaders but they've got to the end of their terms and done amazingly so it's absolutely fantastic.

Thinking about that, we've had 50 years of student leaders which is an incredible thing to be able to say but over the last few years, what are the important milestones? What are the highlights that you can think of? If I go to Fanni first on this one, give Billy a little bit of thinking time and just thinking about the highlights for you because I know that you've been on the CEC for four years, Fanni, so what have been your highlights over those 4 years?

Fanni: I was thinking about this question obviously before we were recording and as you were just talking. When you said that because we've made it to the end, that's going to be one of my highlights. I've made it 4 years. I didn't always think I was going to make the 4 years. It's been challenging. Four years is a long time and a lot of changes and personal things happen. Things and projects go off the track and everything happens.

Making it to here where I've got, I've got nine actual working days by the time you're listening to it and probably we will be in our last week. Sarah and I are both on our new leave on the last week of July, a bit shortened to the end, but that has to be a highlight. Another highlight,

I don't want to be that person who just talks about their own achievements but I'm so proud of them. If I get the opportunity, I'll show them off. We've had a lot going on.

My biggest highlight has to be the new website which is not so new now but I will keep calling it a new website because it was developed during my term. Andy, who's supporting us with recording today and is sitting here, has done an absolutely fabulous job making that happen and turning my crazy vision into an actual website but I hope it's much better for students for interacting with us.

I've mentioned student voice week, that's one of the events that reach up there with our conference engages, the most number of people in the short space of time that we have which is a real partnership effort, the [inaudible] membership survey. That's not just [inaudible] where we are able to go and talk to and ask our students about their opinions and their feelings once a year which I think really helps in being able to be an evidence-led organisation because it's very hard. Research can sound like a very dry subject but overall besides the [inaudible] annual membership survey as well, we've done a lot to be very data and evidence-driven because going out and talking to students is great and it can temperature check but we've got real data behind us now which we worked really hard on over the last couple of years. Those are some of my personal highlights but the two different teams I've got to recruit obviously, being on the previous team, Sarah and I have been on both of the last teams that have been on. It's been a real highlight. The friends that I got to make along the way, CEC members, other volunteers as well, and I can see Sarah, you won't see cause obviously this is a podcast but take it when I say that she might be tearing up a little bit, getting a bit emotional, so I'll stop with my highlights before I make the host cry.

Sarah: Thank you. Over to you, Billy. What have been your highlights?

Billy: As a staff and volunteer in about 6 years and two of those years have been as a CEC member, my babies is my Speakeasy and my Big Brother. Getting the Speakeasy off the ground took a lot of persuasion, thanks to certain members and staff. We had to put proposals together and take proposals to the Senior Management and went to justify everything we wanted to do. But the fact that that's the [inaudible] and this is a student-led, this was a student idea and they worked with me to get that up and running. They even gave me a budget at one point which is about a surprise. The other thing was looking at the student's voices was one of the highlights of my team was when the actual skill on psychology keeping me and asked me to lead the student panel for the re-accreditation for BPS accreditation. That was the huge thing that they give up all. I pull it over and give to the student leader and said like you deal with us and the feedback from that actual accreditation board was fantastic.

This is the best part, it was actually meeting the students. I've made so many friends over my time on the CEC. Believe it or not, I'm really quite shy. My friendship base is really growing, and it's not just friends that you used to meet every other quarter and do the CEC, it's people that I can turn to with all life problems, friends I've made for life. Even just talking to students, I graduated a couple of weeks ago, and speaking to students that I've been helping for the last five to six years of graduation was very moving.

Even I had a couple of tears in my eyes at certain points when you realise, "I've done so much or I've achieved so much." But we all do. Again as I say, that's part of being part of this very unique strong team. We are a team of student leaders. We are a team of student volunteers with a team of students working with staff who are supporting students and their visions. I've had so many different highlights and I couldn't serve you through them all but first and foremost the people you meet and the life lessons you get and the people who support you have been fantastic.

Sarah: It's interesting that you both say about the friends that you meet and I think that's the one thing that I'll take away from this as well. I've got a list of highlights that this particular group of student leaders has achieved and it's massive given the pandemic. Even without the pandemic, it's a huge achievement for some of the things they've done. Big Brother features in that list, the student voice stuff, the website, the [inaudible] membership survey that Fanni mentioned and also things like redoing our values and behaviors policy, things like that are really important as well, creating a culture that students want to get involved in, being more inclusive of international students. One of the things that have just been done recently that it's just an incredible thing to happen is our online magazine, The Hoot, has now been made into a version that could go to students since coronavirus. Our students since the coronavirus can now get that as well. Ellie, are there any highlights that you'd like to mention?

Ellie: There are almost too many to mention. There are some fantastic things. Certainly, one thing which I hope the current team are enormously proud of, and as they should be, is the creation of an individual representation service for student advice. If you are a student and you're undergoing a complaint or raising a complaint, the fact that you can now receive individualised support from the Students Association is so important. Absolutely fantastic, it really is. That will transform the experience of so many students. The other thing I have to mention as well is that I've been really fortunate to work alongside particularly our student leaders involved in academic representation and watch the team of academic reps grow and expand to become more diverse, embracing groups of students who haven't been involved previously. The fact that they are really embedded into OU processes in shaping modules, shaping degrees, and holding the OU to account. It's such a strong position to finish this two-year term in and such a strong position to start the next term, but really took too many achievements to count I think.

Sarah: Yeah, it's just incredible looking back over the last two years, looking back at the last four years and for me, over the last year we've been looking back over the last 50 years of student leaders and some of the great achievements that they've made. I guess my next and probably my last question to all three of you is, we've got to 50 years and we've had student leaders for 50 years. What do you see as the future of the student leadership team over the next 50 years, Fanni?

Fanni: I've got a funny and serious answer. I feel like now's my time. I like to crack jokes particularly when I think they're going to be awkward jokes and nobody will get them. But those students who are listening and who have been around for a while may know that the association used to tour the country. Sarah's holding her head already. Over the last two years, we've been joking about an association bus. I really hope somebody makes that happen in the next 50 years. Who knows? It might be one of those wheel-less flying buses with where technology is going to get over the last 50 years. Everybody else's mic is muted and everybody's just cracking up laughing now, so there we go.

On a more serious note, kind of what Ellie mentioned about the depth and range and different students from different backgrounds that we've been able to engage with. We've started on a really good path, and I think, the OU's demographic is changing and evolving in a way that's quite hard to predict at the moment but every year, when you look at the profile of students it's very different to what it was last year. We went from a place of we are responding to the latest data to now we are trying to think ahead, and a truly inclusive association will look like we are catering to everyone, no matter what the data tells us. We won't have to be like, "We don't have a service for this particular group of students." I'm obviously being quite involved with young students and can barely call myself a young student aged 24 now. When I started at 19, I was definitely the youngest ever person to have ever been elected actually into a CEC post.

I really look forward to an association that will be able to offer opportunities to that particular group of students. It will probably also mean that the amount of time students spend volunteering with the association will get a bit shorter because people will come in, do a degree and move on. I'm also one of those who just sticks around and tries to complete a degree, does modules, [inaudible]. I hope we'll be ready for that. It's very exciting and all the strategy and the importance that we place on strategy now. Sue, who's recently left the association, if we didn't mention strategy, she might come back and be very upset with us. The strategy that we've got now as well, which is obviously still for another year or two until it develops is really future-looking as well and so is the OU strategy that's recently been developed with massive student input, so I think it will be great. I can't predict 50 years but at least a few great years ahead.

Sarah: Right. Thanks, Fanni. I'm going to go to Ellie and then I'm going to leave the last word with Billy. Ellie, next 50 years. What do you see for student leaders?

Ellie: Am I allowed to say jetpacks?

Sarah: Absolutely.

Ellie: Because I really want to say jetpacks. We can be more ambitious than a bus if we're talking about 50 years. But if I was to be very slightly more serious, seriously jetpacks. Then I think it would be being able to meet the challenge of a constantly changing demographic but also having that awareness of the association because OU students are so busy. Not everyone is going to want to volunteer. Hopefully, most of you won't be having to deal with complaints so you won't need to represent individuals representation. But that awareness that the association is there for you, is there to represent your interest, really extending that reach into all of our different demographics which would be a very fantastic vision for the future.

Sarah: Yeah, I agree. As long as there's no jetpacks, or flying buses. Billy, what would you see for student leaders over the next 50 years?

Billy: I was going to say, Billy doesn't sing, dance or do heights so jetpack is not good for me. I think we're in a really good place for a bit becoming partners with the university rather than the voice in a room, the representation of a student. As we all know, the pandemic showed us that the world changes very quickly and we have to adjust really quickly. How we worked before isn't how we're going to work in the future. We are now in a position with student voice taking over what that CEC has done. We are those partners now with the university. We are not just their student rep in the room who's there just to make up the numbers. Students are becoming more confident now. I know myself. In my first meeting, I'm being really paranoid over there. But speaking to students now, they actually know what they want and they're not always afraid to say it which I think is going to be really good because that means the students' voices get stronger and stronger. What the last few CEC have done is actually embedded a good foundation for students' voices and we just build on that to a point where students are truly our partners within the university and the Student Association as recognised as that strong leadership when it comes to [inaudible] years.

Sarah: All in all, we can see a very exciting future for our student reps and for the association over the next 50 years. I'd really like to thank you all for joining me this afternoon, this morning, or whatever time of day it is. Thank you so much, Billy, thank you, Fanni, and thank you, Ellie. Thank you everybody for joining us to listen to The Association Conversation Station.

Andy: Thank you to Ellie, Billy, and Fanni for taking part this month, and as always, our thanks to Sarah for hosting. We'd also like to say a big thank you to the CEC as they come

to the end of their two-year term. They do so much work behind the scenes for our students as you've just heard, so special thanks go out to all of them, particularly Sarah as she finishes her time as president. This has been The Association Conversation Station. It was hosted by our president, Sarah Jones, and produced by myself, Andy Evans. Thanks for listening and see you next time.

[END]