Student Council Officer Updates – 28th Nov

➢ President – Rohit

1. **Catering Paper**:
Conducted a survey with Aramark during Freshers' Fair on both campuses and submitted a proposal to the Vice Chancellor, aiming to improve catering services for students. The Vice Chancellor has initiated focus groups to gather further insights into students' catering needs. The proposal specifically advocates for affordable meal deal options, including vegan, vegetarian, and non-vegetarian choices, as well as a wider range of "grab-and-go" items. The aim is to introduce diverse, cost-effective food options that cater to students' dietary preferences and financial constraints.

2. **AI Policy and Guidance**:
Reviewed current AI policies with WonkHE, finding they were not adequately student friendly. Shared an AI policy draft with the Vice Chancellor. With Pro Vice Chancellor Charmagne's support, the policy draft gained traction at the ESEC committee. As a next step, we are drafting a more comprehensive paper for the Assessments Expert Group, aiming for implementation-focused discussions.

3. **Student Communication**:
Identified weaknesses in ASK Herts' communication strategies. Collaborated with university teams to make communications on ASK Herts more student-centric and user-friendly.

➢ International Students' officer – Santosh Gottapu

1. **Virtual Work Experience Scheme:**
Initiated discussions with the International Department to develop a virtual internship programme. Received verbal confirmation that the programme will launch in Semester B 2025 for Hertfordshire Business School and School of Physics, Engineering, and Computer Science students. The scheme is set to offer a structured, 60-hour unpaid internship, providing international students with essential professional experience.

2. **International Alumni Support:**
Reached out to the MarCom team for initial information, later connecting with the Alumni Relations Manager. Currently liaising with Estates and relevant contacts from past officers to clarify and potentially expand support options for international alumni, aiming to improve resources and maintain alumni engagement.

➢ Mature Students' Officer – Anas Khan

1. **Pregnancy Support Policy:**
Identified that the university's pregnancy policy lacked supportive measures, adopting a more cautious approach. Conducted a comparative review of policies across 15 similar universities, concluding that Herts' policy needs a more supportive approach as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. Currently drafting a proposal recommending a compassionate framework for pregnant students.

2. Facilities for Student Parents:

Began collaboration with Estates to assess breastfeeding and baby-changing facilities. Working to identify specific gaps and needs in available facilities and signage. Plans are underway to ensure accurate and visible information is provided on ASKHerts, improving accessibility for student parents.

➤ Women Students' Officer – Kesar Dave

1. Sanitary Products Access:

Conducted an initial review of accessible toilets, identifying gaps in the availability of sanitary products. Prepared to collaborate with Estates to develop a distribution plan for accessible, free sanitary products in key campus locations, aligning with student welfare needs.

2. Facility Hygiene Review:

Assessed hygiene levels in accessible washrooms to determine areas for improvement. Completed a hygiene analysis across both campuses and now preparing for discussions with Estates, with the goal of upgrading hygiene and accessibility in essential facilities.

➤ Campus Based Students' Officer – Krishna Singh

1. Campus Security:

Focused on fixing broken door locks in campus accommodation to enhance safety. Successfully addressed lock repairs, improving security across campus housing. Continuing to assess additional security needs to bolster on-campus safety.

2. Student Wellbeing Drop-In Sessions:

Proposed regular wellbeing*g check-ins with ResLife to monitor students' welfare in halls. Actively coordinating with ResLife to schedule drop-in sessions and lobby for frequent checks, ensuring a more supportive environment for students living on campus.

➤ LGBTQ+ Students' Officer – Zhora Jasper

1. Substance Misuse Policy Review:

Began evaluating the SU's substance misuse policy, aiming for inclusive revisions. Currently drafting policy recommendations aimed at shifting from a zero-tolerance stance to a harm reduction approach. This framework would focus on education and support over punitive measures, providing a compassionate alternative for students struggling with substance misuse. The revised SU policy will serve as a model to advocate for a similar harm reduction approach within the university's policies, promoting a more student-centred and inclusive environment.

2. Event Support and Community Engagement:

Led Transgender Day of Remembrance events, including a flag-raising and poem reading. Actively supporting the LGBTQ+ society to re-establish student support groups, addressing a previous lack of activities due to delays in forming the committee. Identifying events and initiatives that align with LGBTQ+ student interests to strengthen community engagement.

➤ Placement Students' Officer – Ameer Hamza

1. Advocacy for Paid Placements:

Raised the national issue of unpaid placements and suggested collaborating with other student unions to lobby for change. Continuing to advocate for policy reform that would either outlaw unpaid placements or enforce minimum wage requirements. Exploring partnerships with other unions to enhance lobbying impact.

2. **Weekend travel support for Nursing placement Students:**
Engaging with UNO bus team to arrange weekend transport for nursing students commuting to placements Watford hospital, aiming to reduce logistical challenges and improve placement accessibility.

3. **Wellbeing Checks and Placement Quality:**
Highlighted the need for regular wellbeing checks, particularly for students experiencing workplace challenges. Currently advocating for structured, on-site wellbeing checks by placement leads and promoting part-time placements for financial flexibility. Initiating assessments across schools to address quality gaps in placement support and expand resources for students.