

Student Council Officer Updates – 14th May

➤ President – Rohit Mahadevu

✓ Enhancing Campus Catering Affordability and Choice

Following a student-led paper on food affordability and choice, Rohit engaged the Campus Commercial team in reviewing the pricing of Grab and Go meal deals. He is also examining the current university catering subsidy to understand its breakdown and advocate for stronger financial support. These efforts aim to make campus food more affordable and ensure that subsidy structures are transparent and impactful.

✓ AI Policy Reform and Student Literacy Development

As part of his strategic action plan, Rohit undertook a critical review of the university's AI policy. Recognising the growing role of AI in education, he advocated for clear, student-friendly communication around its responsible use. Drawing on best practices across the sector, he reworded key policy elements into accessible language and compiled them into a two-page HSU Recommendations Paper, presented to committees including ASAC, ESEC, and AEG. His lobbying helped influence a revised AI policy set to launch next term, aimed at building student confidence and literacy in AI tools. Currently, Rohit is working closely with the UH Class team as changes are made to the academic UPR, ensuring that HSU recommendations are meaningfully incorporated into the updated framework.

✓ Improving UNO Bus Services and Student Experience

Following significant student concerns raised via emails, PVC meetings, and forums, Rohit, in collaboration with Pavan – Commuting Students' Officer – launched a UNO Bus Survey, receiving over 490 responses. The survey highlighted issues such as inconsistent shuttle services, driver conduct, and unreliable app updates. Findings were shared with the university, prompting calls for improved communications, real-time app tracking, and enhanced digital signage at bus stops. Considering the upcoming January 2026 ticket price changes, Rohit is now working to educate students on commuting affordability and has urged UNO and the university to explore potential subsidy options. He also proposed enhancements to the UNO app for better tracking and live data accuracy. Student concerns around overcrowding and safety continue to be raised regularly, with accountability remaining a key focus.

✓ Launched TEDx Event to Inspire Students

To celebrate alumni achievements and inspire current students, Rohit secured a TEDx licence and led the organisation of a TEDx event at the university on 25th April at the Weston Auditorium. The event featured seven distinguished alumni sharing their journeys, drawing over 100 in-person attendees and 450+ online live stream viewers. Students expressed a strong sense of connection and inspiration, marking the event as a meaningful step toward building a culture of storytelling, aspiration, and community engagement.

✓ Strengthening Partnerships with Local Councils and MPs

As part of a wider civic engagement strategy, Rohit initiated dialogue with local council representatives and invited them to the university for collaboration discussions. He contributed to policy conversations by submitting a position paper on the Renters' Rights Bill, advocating for stronger student housing protections. Currently, he is working with the local Councillor and Mayor to secure a meeting with Andrew Lewin, MP for Welwyn Hatfield, to present the Herts Unfiltered data. The aim is to highlight key issues such as student employment and employability, while also discussing other insights from the data to strengthen ties between the university, the Students' Union, and government bodies.

➤ International Students' officer – Parsha Kella

✓ Assessing Employability Support for International Students in the UK

Parsha has successfully completed the first stage of the research, which involved gathering detailed information from Career Services about their existing employability support for international students. This

was done in collaboration with the Careers and Employment team. The groundwork is now complete, including the drafting of structured survey questions and preparation of the form, which is currently awaiting approval from Herts SU.

Once approved, Parsha will move on to the next stage, which includes conducting one-to-one interviews and peer discussions with international students to explore their experiences, challenges, and views on the UK job market. These qualitative insights will be analysed to identify recurring themes, barriers, and service gaps. The final findings will be compiled into a structured case study and shared with relevant stakeholders, including next year's officer, to inform long-term improvements in employability support for international students.

➤ **Mature Students' Officer – Deepak Vishwakarma**

✓ **Enhancing Pregnancy Support for Students: Policy Review and Advocacy**

Deepak has reviewed pregnancy policies at comparable universities and identified key gaps in Herts' current approach. He has drafted recommendations to improve academic accessibility for pregnant students and submitted them to the Advice & Support Team for feedback, ensuring they reflect real student experiences. Once feedback is received, Deepak will refine the proposals and prepare to discuss them with the Dean of Students, advocating for a more supportive and practical policy framework.

✓ **Enhancing Mature Student Engagement: Understanding Needs and Shaping Future Events**

Deepak has completed initial research and is currently engaging with a few mature students to explore their event and engagement preferences. Based on these early insights, he is now developing targeted questions to gather in-depth qualitative feedback. These responses will help identify key themes and inform a case study highlighting challenges, opportunities, and recommendations. The case study will be shared with next year's officers to support the design of more inclusive and appealing events for mature students.

➤ **Campus Based Students' Officer – Krishna Singh**

- ✓ Krishna has taken some time off to focus on his studies, so there have been no new updates since the last council. He continues to focus on three key areas: improving food options and affordability on campus through collaboration with Aramark, addressing safety concerns by working with ResLife and other partners on repairs and patrols, and tackling loneliness in halls by speaking with students and developing plans to build a stronger sense of community.

➤ **LGBTQ+ Students' Officer – Zhora Jasper**

✓ **Improving Access to Sanitary Products and Gender-Neutral Toilets**

Since the last Student Council update, Zhora is still awaiting confirmation from Estates on the exact locations of the new period product vending machines. She is actively following up to ensure the placements align with student needs. Once the information is received, she will assess the suitability of the locations and continue lobbying for further improvements if necessary.

✓ **Advocating for a Harm-Reduction Approach to Drug Policy**

Zhora is in the process of getting her recommendations reviewed before presenting them to the University. She has identified best practices from other universities that take a more supportive approach and is finalizing her research to present a well-supported argument for her lobbying efforts.

✓ **Strengthening LGBTQ+ Society and Pride Representation**

Zhora is actively working with EDI and the LGBTQ+ Society to coordinate their participation in the London Pride Parade, with the University's involvement confirmed. She is helping to facilitate communication regarding the reserved places for the society members and will continue to keep students informed on all updates related to the event.

➤ **Commuting Students' Officer – Pavan Polimuri**

✓ **UNO Bus Forum and Student Feedback**

Pavan launched a UNO Bus review earlier this year in response to widespread student concerns, receiving over 490 responses highlighting issues such as inconsistent shuttle service, driver behaviour, and unreliable app updates. While a UNO Bus Forum was initially planned, the recent quiet period has led to a significant drop in student queries. Given this, Pavan has decided to pause the forum and is now compiling a report summarising this year's feedback and complaints. This report will be shared with the incoming officer team, who can revisit the idea of a forum in the new academic term when engagement is likely to be higher.

➤ **Black Students' Officer – Hassan Wasswa**

✓ **Celebrating Black Culture and Addressing Mental Health Needs**

Hassan has been actively collaborating with societies such as the East African Society, Ghana Nigeria Society, and African Caribbean Society to celebrate Black culture and heritage. Initial efforts have focused on planning cultural meet-and-greets to promote cross-society engagement and unity. Additionally, he is engaging in ongoing discussions to advocate for more culturally sensitive mental health and wellness events and pushing for the recruitment of more diverse counselling staff to ensure mental health resources meet the cultural needs of Black students. He also supported the formation of the Mature Black Students Society and is now working closely with them to run events that strengthen the Black student community on campus. In parallel, Hassan is exploring the types of events that resonate with mature Black students to inform future planning.

➤ **Disabled Students' Officer – Lorena Navea**

✓ **Update on Accessibility and Inclusion Work**

Lorena has concluded her involvement with the EDI team regarding the disability allyship scheme, as they no longer require further support. Due to low responses on her assistive tech poll and timing issues, planned events and focus groups will now be continued next year. Most of the DVAS committee will also carry on next year, except for one member. Separately, Lorena has been working with the LCS team to create a sensory room on College Lane to match the one on De Hav. A room has been reserved, and she plans to visit it with a student ambassador, but no budget has yet been allocated to equip the space. Despite attempts to contact Estates and EDI, the responsibility remains unclear, and funding support is still needed to move the project forward.