

MANIFESTO

ASHA #1

FOR PRESIDENT



WOODHOUSE

Manifesto: Asha Woodhouse for UCCSU President 2022/23

Let's finish what we started

#Asha4Prez

About Me

My name is Asha Woodhouse (she/her) and I have been your Students' Union President for the last year! I'm a Environmental Science graduate and was half way through completing a Masters in Environmental Law when I decided to run for President last year.

Over the past year I have loved serving as your SU President, working for students, representing you locally and nationally, and advocating for better conditions and support for students in UCC, and I would be honored to have the opportunity to continue the work I have done for another year.

Why me? And why again?

I believe that the function of a Students' Union is to put students in control of their education and student life, and I believe I am the right person to lead your Union in achieving this.

What I have learned since starting my office as President in June 2021 is that one year is not long to implement widespread and long standing change needed to improve the conditions and experience of students. Starting this role off the back of a pandemic which has transformed the lives of many has been a turbulent experience, difficult to navigate at times and overwhelming for many students. Right now, I believe what our Union needs is stability and continuity, which is what I will bring if re-elected as your President for a second term.

If re-elected as your President, I will build on the work I have started this year as a strong and effective representative and leader for your interests as a student and a member of this Union at a local and national level.

Read on to find out more about what I have done this year, and what I intend to do if you give me your support to serve a second term!

Asha for Accessibility

Over the past year I have:

- Supported the Education Officer in lobbying the University to ensure a policy around lecture recording remained in place as we transitioned back to in-person lectures.
- Engaged with academic staff and their Union to understand the concerns they have about lecture recording, while emphasizing the benefits for students through an accessibility lens.

- Advocated for increased resourcing of technology in classrooms to support lecture recording with ease, and great work has been done in UCC this year to upgrade such technology by the IT Department.
- Taken on casework with students on matters pertaining to accessibility. For example, I secured additional support hours for students registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS).
- Saw the launch of the Calm Zone, a project sponsored by the SU and funded by the Student Charges and Fees Forum.
- Supported the SU Executive Team in carrying out their mandates and roles pertaining to accessibility.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue to engage with Academic Staff and Senior Management in UCC around lecture recording, highlighting the benefits of lecture recording through an accessibility lens ensuring equitable access to academic content.
- Engage with the EDI Unit on upskilling staff to understand the diverse needs of students
- Continue to take on casework so I can perform an advocacy role for students with accessibility needs.
- Engage with DSS and Access to develop a Student Advisory Group for these services, so that they can enhance their understanding of student needs and identify gaps in the system.
- Lobby for increased resources and funding for accessibility related services and supports.

Asha for Accommodation

Over the past year I have:

- Campaigned locally and nationally to highlight the barriers our students face in accessing safe, affordable and adequate accommodation.
- Engaged with the media to raise awareness.
- Worked with tenant's unions such as the Community Action Tenants Union (CATU).
- Supported the Welfare Officer in their accommodation casework, and have taken on accommodation casework myself to directly support students such as meeting with students experiencing conflict with their landlord.
- In September 2021, I camped outside the Dáil overnight as part of the Union of Students' in Ireland (USI) No Keys No Degrees campaign to raise awareness around the accommodation crisis.
- Engaged with the Minister for Further and Higher Education on the accommodation crisis and ongoing exploitation of students by landlords and private property developers.
- Provided education and support to the general student body about their rights as tenants.
- Made a submission to the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 on behalf of UCCSU outlining the need for safe, affordable accommodation for students with adequate amenities in the surrounding area.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue the work I have done to date as outlined above, lobbying on the issue of accommodation and exploitation of student tenants locally and nationally, engaging with students directly and supporting the Welfare Officer in their role providing guidance to students.
- Continue to build a relationship between tenant's unions such as CATU and the SU, to strengthen our respective unions and provide up-to-date education to students on their rights as tenants.
- Ensure adequate support and guidance is in place for students with regards to accommodation.
- Introduce a Tenant's Rights Representative within the Equality Working Group, who will be responsible for the strategic development of the SU with regards to engaging students on their rights as tenants.
- The accommodation crisis, coupled with the increasing cost of living is hugely impeding on students' ability to have a positive student experience. I will treat these issues as interlinked and as a matter of urgency for the Government to address. We cannot wait for more purpose built student accommodation to be built which will then cost a fortune for your average student. We need a solution now, ahead of the next Academic Year and I will work tirelessly to ensure that this issue is a top priority over the summer for the SU.

Asha for Accountability

Over the past year I have:

- Increased accountability within the SU by ensuring that all information about SU Council, including documentation, was sent out to all students via an email ahead of Council so that any student could attend and engage in Council.
- Expanded engagement with students through various communication mediums, which in turn improves accountability within the SU - Students can only hold us accountable if they know what we are doing!
- Ensured that principles of honesty, accountability and transparency are upheld by all members of the SU Executive.
- Ensured open lines of communication both with the Student Body and with the SU Executive Team so as to foster an environment of discussion and debate which underpin accountability.
- Hosted a Town Hall for students with members of UCC Senior Management including the UCC President in July 2021 to provide clarity to students on the return to campus.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue the work I have done to date as outlined above, ensuring open lines of communication with students and expanding engagement.
- Establish regular Town Halls with students to create greater feedback within the SU and University as a whole. I would specifically like to set up Town Halls for specific cohorts of students (i.e. postgrad, mature, international) so that we can properly understand the issues these cohorts face and address how the SU can support them, while continuing to foster a culture of discussion and debate.

Asha for Addressing Student Hardship

Over the past year I have:

- Worked with the Welfare Officer to establish the SU Food Bank, which raised awareness locally and nationally about the hardship students experience. We raised €25,000 to support the SU Food Bank thanks to the generous donations made and made a partnership agreement with Aldi to provide donations.
- Made vouchers available to students to use in the Main Rest for meals which are supported by the funding raised through the food bank.
- Secured an additional €10,000 from UCC into the Student Emergency Fund to support students.
- Hired a Welfare Admin student staff to support administration of the Student Emergency Fund and develop a more holistic and comprehensive application process.
- In response to the national attention from the Food Bank, the Government committed to doubling the funding for the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) in all higher education institutions. This resulted in an additional €1.2 million being put into the UCC SAF which allowed all recipients of the SAF to receive a top up and supported the work of the Access Office in UCC.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue the work I have done to date as outlined above, ensuring that adequate supports are available to students both through the SU and the University, and lobby at a national level to increase resourcing and funding to financial support services.
- Oversee a research study to understand the financial hardship and cost of living UCC students experience. This data will be critical for giving us a full picture of what students are experiencing and what we need to do to support them.
- Lobby for additional funding into the SAF and SU Emergency Fund.

Asha for Engagement

Over the past year I have:

- Made student engagement a priority for the SU to increase its engagement with its members, which is all of you as UCC students! I have done this by providing various avenues for engagement, whether it be online or in person, over email or through Tiktok!
- Supported other members of the SU Executive Team in engaging with students, whether it be the Communications & Engagement Officer, the Mature Student Rep, the Welfare Officer - every member of the Team engages with students regularly and through many avenues.
- Prioritised engaging with under-represented cohorts of students such as postgraduate research students, helping to resolve issues they face and leading out on negotiations with the University on particular issues which impact research students.
- Engaged with the local community, establishing the foundations for a positive relationship between students and permanent residents within the UCC surrounding area.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue the work I have done to date. I am a big believer that a union is only as strong as its members, so bringing students together on issues that affect them will always be a priority for me as President. This to me is a key objective of a Students' Union, and strong engagement is critical to this. By doing this, I will ensure student demands are negotiated and met.
- Ensure the SU Executive Team engages with students on the ground. The transition back to in-person learning and Covid-19 measures and restrictions has been a priority for us in the SU this year, however this has taken away from our capacity to meet students out on campus and engage with the average student who does not usually cross paths with the SU. If re-elected, I will allocate a certain number of hours per week where all SU Officers must be out on campus speaking with students about the issues they face and what we can do to help.
- Work with the Communications & Engagement Officer to explore avenues for increasing engagement across the SU.

Asha for F*ck the Fees

Over the past year I have:

- Worked with USI on the Cost of College Campaign, which includes the F*ck the Fees and the No Keys No Degrees Campaigns, to raise awareness and lobby around the extortionate cost of being a student in Ireland today.
- Engaged with the Minister for Further and Higher Education, lobbying the Minister to publish the European Commission Analysis of the Cassells Report, abolish the Student Contribution Charge, reform the SUSI grant system and to stop treating International students as cash cows.
- Engaged with the media, highlighting the cost of college and exploitation of students as income generation for the University sector.
- Lobbied the University to abolish repeat exam fees, which will now remain in place for this year's Autumn repeat exams.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue the work I have done to date, lobbying the Government and Minister to reform the funding model for higher education in Ireland. The exploitation of students to prop up the current funding model must come to an end. I will do this through lobbying the Government ahead of Budget 2022 and direct action.
- Lobby the University to permanently abolish repeat exam fees which contributes to a punitive learning environment.
- Lobby the University and Governing Body to put a freeze on increasing discretionary fees (i.e. International and Postgraduate fees) which they are given the authority to do under the Universities Act 1997.
- Engage with USI to continue the Cost of College Campaign, building a strong and cohesive national campaign to end the exploitation of students.

Asha for Gaeilge

Over the past year I have:

- Introduced bilingual titles and headings into SU documentation, such as meeting agendas and minutes.
- Investigated the feasibility of an Irish Language Café with the Oifigeach na Gaeilge, which is still ongoing at the moment, engaging with the Director of Student Experience and the Governing Body Student Experience Committee on the need for a dedicated Irish language space on campus for Irish speakers.
- Supported the work of the Oifigeach na Gaeilge through collaboration and events with An Chuallacht, such as Pop-up Gaeltachts.
- Sat on the UCC Arts & Culture Plan Steering Group, through which I have ensured that the forthcoming UCC Arts & Culture Plan will be published bilingually.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue the work I have done to date, and expand the use of Irish within the formal structures of the SU.
- Continue to engage with University Management to establish an Irish Language Café on campus.
- Ensure that Gaeilge is part of the next UCCSU Strategic Plan and work with the Oifigeach na Gaeilge to develop a Scéim Teanga within UCCSU.

Asha for Sustainability

Over the past year I have:

- Sat on Green Forum and the Green Campus committee, and engaged with the UCC Sustainability Officer ensuring student input in the strategic direction of the University with regards to sustainability.
- Through Green Forum I have engaged with Senior Management on the University's responsibility as an institution and stakeholder locally and nationally with regards to sustainability.
- Supported the work of Fridays for Future and the Global Climate Strikes by mobilizing students to attend strikes.
- Engaged with key stakeholders, such as Kylemore (Main Rest) and the Student Centre, on ensuring the commitment to go plastic free in 2023 is met by the University and am in the process of establishing a working group to ensure that this commitment is delivered on.
- Secured €7,000 funding to have 3 bike repair stations implemented in UCC.
- Secured €5,000 funding to develop a Community Shed in the Community Garden
- Made a submission to the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 on behalf of UCCSU outlining the need for adequate cycling infrastructure in and around UCC, free public transport, and a climate justice approach to the climate crisis.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue the work I have done to date, ensuring that sustainability remains a key priority for UCC and that the statutory requirement to reduce our carbon emissions by 51% by 2030 is met. To do this, a comprehensive action plan is needed for the University which

is already underway in being developed by the Sustainability Officer. I will work with them to ensure that this plan is informed by the student voice, and underpinned by the principles of green campus “student-led, research informed and practice led”.

- Support the Communication & Engagement Officer and the Environmental & Sustainability Rep in their work with Green Campus, providing events for UCC Green Week, and other initiatives.
- Continue to support Fridays For Future and external groups calling for climate action.
- Support the development of the Community Garden as a space for developing positive community engagement.
- Ensure funding secured as outlined above is spent accordingly.

Asha for Welfare

Over the past year I have:

- Worked closely with the Student Health Department and the Uni-CoV team to support the roll out of free antigen testing and ensuring Covid safety measures were in place on campus to protect student health. I also lobbied the Minister for Further and Higher Education to introduce free antigen tests on third level campuses which was successful and made 5 free antigen tests available to all students.
- Re-established the Mental Health Student Advisory Group to inform mental health services and supports available in UCC.
- Lobbied for funding allocated to UCC by the Government for Mental Health to be directed into enhancing student health and counseling services in UCC by for example upskilling staff in dealing with particular traumas such as sexual assault or substance abuse.
- Worked closely with Welfare Officer, the Bystander Intervention Team and the Sexual Violence Centre Cork to raise awareness around Spiking, Sexual Violence and Harassment, to educate students and bring an end to these traumatic incidents.
- Supported the work of the Welfare Officer in their casework in responding to students, and communicating casework to Senior Management within UCC.
- Worked with the EDI Unit on the EDI Student Survey and the launch of Speak Out, the anonymous reporting tool students and staff to report incidents of discrimination, bullying, harassment and assault. The survey and tool will be critical to informing policy and decision-making at an institutional level in UCC.
- Worked with the EDI Unit, Green Campus and other stakeholders to support the roll out of free period products across campus for students and staff which is currently going through the procurement process and will be rolled out in the coming months.
- Ensured that the SU Executive Team have completed Bystander Intervention Training and Disclosure Training so that we can effectively respond to students.
- Lobbied against the introduction of fees in Student Health which will only work to inhibit students from accessing the healthcare they need.
- Commissioned a mural of a consent mindmap which was installed on College Road next to the SU Offices at 54 College Road. This was commissioned and put in place there to remind students ahead of the return to campus in September 2021 of the importance of consent, what it is and what it isn't.

- Lobbied the University to move exams online in Semester 1 in the interest of public health in light of the high number of Covid cases, which we were successful in securing.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue the work I have done to date, notably ensuring the roll out of free period products across campus with the EDI Unit, ensuring that mental health funding is directed to services that need it within UCC and lobbying for increased and sustainable funding (as opposed to once off funding) for mental health services.
- Continue to resist the introduction of charges in Student Health, and will mobilize students accordingly if the threat of this persists.
- Work with the Communications & Engagement Officer, Equality & Diversity Rep and Equality Working Group to develop an EDI Policy within the SU.
- Support the work of the Bystander Intervention Team and its roll out across campus, ensuring it is embedded into the curriculum and becomes an integral part of every students education.
- Continue to lobby for upskilling and education of staff, such as Disclosure Training or upskilling of student counsellors to respond to specific traumatic events which can present such as sexual assault.
- Work with Student Health and Student Counselling as they relocate to the Crow's Nest and Brighton Villas over the coming year. A strong communications strategy with the student body will be needed to ensure a smooth transition of these services into a new location.
- Work with the Welfare Officer, Education Officer and all relevant student services within UCC as we continue to support students in the transition back to campus. The pandemic has left many feeling overwhelmed, and students need to be supported through this transition after what has been a difficult two years through both an academic and welfare lens.

Asha for Workers' Rights

Over the past year I have:

- Introduced a pilot scheme under the Students' Union whereby Student Community Support student staff were paid the living wage. Currently across UCC the student help rate is minimum wage, and I have been lobbying for this to be increased to living wage.
- Supported the Communications & Engagement Officer in raising awareness around worker' rights for students who work.

If re-elected I will:

- Continue to lobby the University so that all students employed with UCC and its subsidiary companies (i.e. the Student Centre) are paid the living wage. With the cost of living only increasing, we must lead by example and ensure that our student staff are paid so that they can adequately support themselves.
- Introduce a Worker's Rights Representative within the Equality Working Group, who will be responsible for the strategic development of the SU with regards to engaging students on their rights as workers.

- Work with the Communications & Engagement Officer to bring trade unions onto campus to do information stands for students and encourage students to join trade unions.
- Engage with postdoctoral students around their rights as students employed by the University, ensuring adequate wages are paid to support them through their research.

Asha for Your Voice, Your Union

If I have learnt anything this year it is that my role as President is to support the SU Executive in their roles and responsibilities, ensuring that we work cohesively as a team, and I believe I have done this successfully over the past year. I am cognisant that I am only one person, and can only achieve so much, but with a strong team we can do so much more together. I have led my team through a challenging year, bringing students back to campus and working hard to reignite the student experience. There is nothing more I would love to do than continue this work; continue to defend the rights of students; continue to engage with all of you, represent you, and respond to your needs as members of this Union. I hope I have gained your trust over the past year to do this, to always work with the best interests of students at the heart of what we do in UCCSU, to always be open to criticism and be accountable which will only work to strengthen us further.

I hope I can count on your support for another year. Let's finish what we started.

Please vote for Asha Woodhouse #1 for President on March 21st and 22nd

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Asha Woodhouse xoxo

VOTÁIL

ASHA #1

FOR PRESIDENT

RE-ELECT



WOODHOUSE