UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

STUDENT SENATE

Chair: Professor Paul O'Prey, Vice-Chancellor

Summary Report on the thirteenth meeting of the University Student Senate, held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 5 November 2014 at Digby Stuart College

1.   Welcomes, apologies for absence, and introductory remarks

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed all present at the meeting, especially those student representatives new to Student Senate, and nominated for 2014-15 by academic departments or the Roehampton Students' Union Council. The purpose of the Student Senate as a forum where students could meet with senior staff had proved both interesting to all involved, and very useful to senior managers, over the three years of its existence, and students' views had certainly influenced decisions made at the University.

The terms of reference and composition for 2014-15 were confirmed, and all present introduced themselves to the meeting.

2.   Report from the last meeting

The written report from the last meeting had been presented both to the University Senate and to the University Council, and the Vice-Chancellor highlighted in particular the section on the student-led budget of £50k, and proposals for spending in 2014-15 chosen by Student Senate last year. Proposals for 2015-16 would be discussed at the next (February 2015) meeting of Student Senate.

SUBSTANTIVE AGENDA ITEMS

3.   Function and use of 'Moodle' at Roehampton

The Pro Vice-Chancellor introduced an item on the Moodle platform, following concerns expressed by students at the last meeting about inconsistency of approach on its use across the University, and a lack of appropriate instruction given to students early in their academic careers. Given that Moodle is now such a vital tool in providing material and advising key events and results in students' academic progress, further discussion with key staff present was certainly warranted.

Nicola Prime and Xavier Briche from e-Learning Services then advised on recent developments both in refining the technical aspects and in instructing staff and students in the use of Moodle. Student input at the meeting helped all to understand the impact of these developments and how effectively the changes had improved student and staff experience of Moodle. E-learning staff noted particular points raised by students, but all agreed that there had been significant improvements in the six months since the last meeting and these developments were welcomed.

4.   Flat Representatives in University Accommodation

Deputy Provost, Professor Claire Ozanne, advised the meeting that the University is seeking to allow more first-year students and overseas students to take up accommodation onsite, and enjoy the campus experience that Roehampton cultivates. Although the capital development programme will provide many more rooms over the near future, senior staff were also looking into the number of rooms currently allocated to continuing students, who fulfil the roles of Flat Representatives at each college, and whether this number could be reconsidered in relation to the balance of students on campus.

In this context, Student Senate members (some of which are themselves flat reps) were asked for views on the 'Flat Rep' system and its value to students, especially first-year 'freshers'. Student members were mostly very supportive of the current system, and generally would prefer to continue at current levels which were generally considered appropriate, given the nature of the role and numbers of students. However, there was also support from student senators for reconsidering the current process of recruitment to make it consistent across all the colleges, for defining the role and expected performance indicators more clearly, and for reconsidering the initial and refresher training for flat reps.

5.   Report on feedback on security aspects at Roehampton

RSU had recently received a number of enquiries about the role and performance of the in-house Security provision, and had recently conducted a focus group with students to ascertain current views and concerns. The results suggested that there were concerns particularly about consistency of approach – both in terms of response time, especially to medical situations, and of location. For example students at Mount Clare considered they could be vulnerable.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor agreed to talk through concerns with the Head of Security and report back to RSU and to Student Senate, and would endeavour to ensure speedy consideration of the particular concerns raised about response time and the general approach of Security staff.

SHORTER AGENDA ITEMS

6.   W.I.S.H. Project ('What is the 'Ideal Student Hub?'): update

The RSU President gave an update on progress relating to an 'Ideal Student Hub', which had recently taken account of imminent increasing student numbers to be housed in on-campus accommodation. RSU sabbaticals were in dialogue with the Pro Vice-Chancellor and estates staff about their aspirations.

7.   RAG ('Raising & Giving'): update

Molly Vingoe advised on the work of the RAG Committee, an innovation this year to spread the load on work for RAG, and the results of the first RAG week which had raised nearly £2,300. The second RAG week would take place in May 2015, and individual RAG events would take place across the year. All were invited to donate to RAG at any time.

8.   ‘Growhampton’: update

Growhampton continued to go from strength to strength with activities centred around the Hive Café now occurring every day, with a lot of student and staff support. The Hive itself had won two awards (from the Soil Association and ‘Green Gown’) and market day had proved extremely popular with staff and students alike. The associated Thrift Shop and Bike repair/sales schemes were also drawing regular customers.

A Legacy document was being written, and a move towards self-sustainability financially was now a major aim, so Growhampton could continue after initial funding.

9.   Student Intranet at Roehampton

Views were sought at the meeting on the current StudentZone and MyZone webpages in the light of proposed developments of a student intranet, and there were useful contributions from student members. The Director of Communications asked for views and comments to continue to be sent so that they could inform developments, and sample pages would be shown to the next meeting of Student Senate.

10.   ‘Top of your agenda’

Under this item, students were invited to share matters currently of importance to them.

Among items raised was student interest and excitement about the new Library development. Students were also pleased that a buddying scheme between on- and off-campus students at Digby Stuart College was attracting attention and working well.

There were also requests relating to on-campus facilities, including computer suite access and washing machines, both of which provisions were currently being addressed. Some matters relating to academic progress and employability were also raised, and would be followed up by appropriate senior members of staff. Progress on ‘Top of your agenda’ items would be reported at subsequent meetings of the Student Senate

Andrew Skinner
Deputy University Secretary
November 2014