**Students’ Association and Student Voice**

Board report

february 2025

Dear Members of the Board,

Since our last meeting on 11th November 2024, many significant events have taken place at each campus, enhancing student engagement, fostering community outreach, and enriching campus life. As Student presidents, we are honoured to have played a role in these initiatives. Below is a summary of key events and our plans for the upcoming semester.

**Cumbernauld Campus Student President Report**
**Presented by:** Julie Webster, Cumbernauld Student President

**Recent Events**

1. **International Men's Day – 19th November 2024**

For the first time, the college celebrated International Men's Day. As a mother of two sons aged 16 to 25, I was especially passionate about engaging students in this age group and connecting them with valuable support networks.

Event Highlights:

* The campus was decorated with bunting and posters to raise awareness.
* Six community organisations set up stalls in "The Street," providing information and support.
* Guest speakers delivered insightful discussions in the Lecture Theatre and classrooms.
* Refreshments were available in the Wellbeing Academy, fostering informal conversations.
* A visit to the plumbing and joinery classes facilitated discussions on student progress.

Participating Organisations:

* Tony’s Safe Place
* SAMH Project
* Alcoholics Anonymous
* Carbrain Community Hub Men's Group
* Real Life Changes
* Andy’s Man Club
1. **Viewing of “Freedom to Run” – 26th November 2024**

Organised by EIS FELA, this documentary screening sought to inspire students through powerful storytelling.

Event Highlights:

* Attended by 42 individuals, including students, family members, and local school teachers.
* A post-film discussion encouraged dialogue on perseverance and resilience.
* Educational materials were distributed to Level 4 and 5 students to reinforce key themes in their studies.
1. **Opening of “The Wee Braw Shop” – 28th November 2024**

The launch of "The Wee Braw Shop" was a significant achievement for the Supported Learning Department.

Event Highlights:

* Students and staff worked diligently to prepare and stock the shop.
* Christopher, a respected community figure, officially opened the shop.
* The shop was highly successful, attracting steady student traffic until the Christmas break.
1. **Breaking the Cycle Conference – 3rd December 2024**

I was honoured to be invited as a guest speaker at the "Breaking the Cycle" conference, where I shared my personal and professional journey.

Event Highlights:

* A panel discussion featuring four speakers who shared their life experiences.
* A well-attended event that fostered meaningful discussions among students and faculty.
* Following the event, I was invited to present my talk to PhD students at Glasgow Caledonian University, as well as various classes within the Humanities Department at Cumbernauld.
1. **SPARQ Visit – 11th December 2024**

A productive meeting was held with SPARQ Development Consultant Justin walker, focusing on enhancing student engagement and leadership opportunities.

Event Highlights:

* Team discussions on strengthening student representation and support.
* A one-on-one session where I shared my experiences as a former Class Representative.
1. **Level 6 Art & Design Exhibition – 12th December 2024**

The Found Objects Sculpture class showcased an environmentally focused art exhibition, highlighting sustainability and creativity.

Event Highlights:

* The exhibition featured stunning artwork crafted from recycled materials.
* Students from various disciplines attended, expressing admiration for the creativity on display.
1. **Christmas Toy Appeal – 18th December 2024**

Now in its third year, the Christmas Toy Appeal supported the House of Bethlehem Foodbank, making a meaningful impact on local families.

Event Highlights:

* 2022: 87 toys/gifts collected.
* 2023: 134 toys/gifts collected.
* 2024: Over 200 toys/gifts collected.
* Special recognition was given to Angela Dance, our campus receptionist, for her invaluable assistance.
1. **Cumbernauld FM Partnership**

Since establishing its base at our campus in September 2024, Cumbernauld FM has actively supported student initiatives.

Event Highlights:

* £300 will be donated to the NCL Foundation.
* Regularly contributes to the Food Pantry and Clothing Bank.
* Demonstrated a strong commitment to student welfare and community development.

**Plans for Semester 2 – 2025**

1. **Development of the Wellbeing Academy Committee:** Strengthening student-led initiatives in mental health and wellbeing.
2. **Celebration of International Week (Commencing 3rd March 2025):** A week-long event celebrating cultural diversity and global awareness.
3. **Further collaboration with external partners:** Strengthening relationships with local businesses and support organisations.

**Motherwell Campus Student President Report**
**Presented by:** Chloe Sandilands

1. **Food Bank Initiative for Christmas Holidays**

During the Christmas period, I took on a key role in ensuring that essential food supplies were available to students in need. My responsibilities included checking stock for expired items, organizing supplies into food parcels, and coordinating their distribution. These efforts helped ensure that students had access to vital provisions during the holiday break.

To further support students, we provided a comprehensive list of available services via email, guiding them to additional assistance. Key contact details for emergency services and welfare support were also displayed on college screens, ensuring crucial information was readily accessible. This initiative not only alleviated financial strain for many students but also reinforced the college’s commitment to student wellbeing.

1. **Sexual Harassment Awareness Campaign**

In collaboration with fellow student presidents and the EDI Advisor, I contributed to a large-scale initiative aimed at increasing awareness of sexual harassment on campus. The campaign was designed to educate students on unacceptable behaviours, the impact of harassment, and the importance of fostering a respectful and inclusive environment.

Our efforts included organizing educational talks, interactive workshops, and awareness campaigns that addressed key issues surrounding harassment and consent. Informational materials, including posters, digital content, and online resources, were distributed to reinforce these messages and encourage active student participation.

To ensure long-term impact, we continue to work closely with college staff and external organizations specializing in harassment prevention. This collaboration is instrumental in developing robust policies, improving reporting mechanisms, and strengthening student support services, ensuring a safer campus for all.

1. **Social Media Engagement**

Since November, our social media engagement has grown substantially, enabling us to reach a wider audience and strengthen student interaction with key college initiatives. Our Instagram and Facebook platforms have expanded their reach by an additional 35.7K individuals, while TikTok has seen an impressive surge of 165K interactions.

This growth has enhanced communication with students, promoted awareness of college services, and highlighted important campaigns such as mental health support, student events, and welfare initiatives. Moving forward, we aim to further leverage social media as a tool for engagement, feedback collection, and information sharing, ensuring students remain informed and connected.

1. **AHT Competition**

Amy McLoughlan and I worked together to conduct in-depth interviews with both judges and contestants of the AHT Competition. These interviews provided valuable insight into the judges' expectations, the contestants' experiences, and the level of preparation required for the competition.

By capturing and sharing these stories, we were able to highlight the significance of the event, celebrate the dedication and skills of the participants, and showcase the competition’s impact on student confidence and professional development. These efforts contributed to raising the event’s profile and encouraging future student participation in industry-related competitions.

1. **Student Support & Wellbeing**

Student wellbeing remains a core focus of my role, and I have actively worked to support students experiencing stress, mental health challenges, and general wellbeing concerns. I have engaged with students directly, providing advice, reassurance, in addition to one-on-one support, I have directed students to relevant services within the college, such as Advice & Guidence, financial aid, and welfare support teams. I have also played a role in mental health awareness campaigns, encouraging open discussions, sharing self-help resources, and signposting external support organizations.

Through these initiatives, I strive to foster a culture where students feel heard, supported, and empowered to take proactive steps in managing their mental health and overall wellbeing. The overwhelmingly positive student response underscores the importance of ongoing investment in student support services.

1. **Representing Students on Curriculum Issues**

I have actively represented students in addressing curriculum-related challenges by working closely with college staff, academic departments, to ensure student concerns are acknowledged and resolved. My advocacy efforts have included pushing for clearer assessment criteria, and addressing workload concerns.

To make sure student voices drive curriculum improvements, I have facilitated feedback sessions, identified recurring issues, and collaborated with stakeholders to implement effective solutions. Additionally, I have organized open forums where students can engage directly with curriculum areas, fostering meaningful discussions and positive changes to the academic experience.

By promoting transparency and student partnership collaboration, we have successfully addressed key academic challenges, enhanced the learning environment, and contributed to a more student-cantered approach to curriculum development.

1. **Student Association Volunteers**

Student Association volunteers have played a pivotal role in various college projects, balancing their academic commitments while actively engaging in initiatives that enhance student life. Their contributions provide invaluable perspectives on student issues, ensuring their voices are integrated into decision-making processes.

Through their dedication, volunteers have helped coordinate student-led events, and offer peer support within the college community. Their involvement has significantly strengthened student engagement and fostered a more supportive and inclusive college environment. Looking ahead, we plan to introduce additional training and development opportunities for volunteers to maximize their impact.

1. **STEP Group – QAA Scotland**

Following a successful application, the **Motherwell Student President** has been offered a position on the **Student Transition & Enhancement Partnership (STEP) Group** within **QAA Scotland**. This prestigious role provides an exciting opportunity to represent students at a national level, engaging with key stakeholders in discussions aimed at improving the student experience and maintaining high-quality educational standards.

As part of the STEP Group, the Student President will contribute to shaping policies and frameworks that directly impact student learning and support across Scotland. This position facilitates valuable collaboration with sector-wide professionals, ensuring student representation in decision-making processes and reinforcing the importance of student advocacy in further & higher education policy development.

**Coatbridge Campus Student President Report**
**Presented by:** Amy Mclaughlin

1. **Social Media Engagement**

In recent years, one of the ongoing challenges for the Student Association has been raising its visibility among the student body. With the growing reliance on digital communication, it's become essential to adopt strategies that effectively utilize platforms students engage with the most. Social media, when leveraged properly, holds immense potential to foster community engagement, keep students informed, and strengthen the connection between the Student Association and the students it serves.

Understanding this, I’ve made social media a top priority by engaging actively that involves both students and staff in the process of content creation. By collaborating with different student groups and college departments, we will ensure our social media presence reflects the diversity of perspectives across our campuses.

As part of this project, we have invested in advanced technology, including high-quality microphones and digital tools, that allow us to produce engaging content such as interviews with students. These interviews offer an excellent opportunity to hear directly from students about their experiences at NCL. By incorporating their voices into our social media efforts, we hope to generate more organic engagement and create a space where students feel heard and represented.

One key area of expansion for this initiative involves interviewing students about their courses, academic experiences and campus life. This initiative not only provides current students with a platform to share their insights, but it also helps prospective students gain an authentic, behind-the-scenes look at college life. By sharing real student experiences, we aim to give future students a clearer picture of what attending NCL truly means and help them make well-informed decisions about their education.

1. **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) & Wellbeing**

A core aspect of my role is ensuring that our Wellbeing calendar of events reflects the diverse needs of our student population, particularly underrepresented groups. In collaboration with the Head of Student Engagement and Wellbeing, along with the EDI Advisor, we have been working to build a more inclusive environment by expanding our programming to better support students from various backgrounds.

A central focus of this effort is the upcoming events surrounding LGBT History Month. This month serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing fight for equality and the importance of visibility and support for the LGBTQ+ community. To celebrate and raise awareness, we are planning a series of educational and community-focused events that will highlight the history, achievements, and challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. We hope to create a space for students to learn, connect, and reflect on the progress we’ve made, as well as the work that still lies ahead.

Additionally, we continue to prioritize the wellbeing of all students, ensuring that our events are accessible, inclusive, and sensitive to the unique challenge’s different student groups face. Whether it's providing resources for mental health, creating spaces for marginalized voices, or fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding, these efforts are critical to building a stronger and more compassionate campus environment.

1. **Sexual Harassment Awareness Campaign**

Sexual harassment is an issue that affects individuals across all walks of life, and our college is no exception. In collaboration with fellow student presidents, the EDI Advisor, and external organizations, we are working on a comprehensive sexual harassment awareness campaign aimed at promoting a zero-tolerance policy towards harassment and ensuring students understand what constitutes unacceptable behaviour.

This initiative goes beyond simply raising awareness; it seeks to empower students with the knowledge they need to recognize, address, and report instances of sexual harassment, fostering a campus environment rooted in respect and mutual care. As a campus president, I have been actively involved in ensuring that this will reach as many students as possible through a variety of mediums, including workshops, informational seminars, and social media outreach.

**Conclusion**

These initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to improving the student experience at NCL. By prioritizing engagement through social media, fostering a culture of inclusion and diversity, and raising awareness around critical issues such as sexual harassment, we are working to create a campus that truly supports the wellbeing and success of all students.

Looking ahead, we will continue collaborating with students, staff, and external partners to build on these efforts. Together, we can ensure that NCL remains a place where every student feels valued, heard, and empowered to thrive, both academically and personally.

**Student Engagement and Wellbeing Report**
Presented by John O’Hara, Ross Brand and Kellyann McGraith

1. **Active Campus & Wellbeing Intervention to Tackle Retention – Pilot at Motherwell**

**Football Sessions Initiative:** A pilot initiative aimed at improving student engagement, wellbeing, and retention was launched at the Motherwell campus. Weekly football sessions were organized for six groups of construction students, culminating in a final tournament on January 15th. The initiative was developed after an initial meeting with Martyn, John, and myself to discuss potential interventions led by the Student Engagement team, with a particular focus on retention, relationship-building, health, and overall student experience.

As part of this initiative, the campus joined the Sparqs Learner Outcomes Project, designed to address issues such as retention, achievement rates, and attendance.

**Key Actions**

* At the beginning of the term, John and I ensured students were informed about support services and had access to essential resources like student emails, the My NCL app, funding, and free bus travel/Young Scots cards. This helped minimize barriers to attendance and participation.
* After gathering input from students on preferred physical activities, football was selected as the most popular choice.
* Weekly football sessions were organized at Ravenscraig, with games scheduled across Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday in the morning and afternoon. Occasional friendly matches were arranged with sports students.
* The initiative culminated in a final tournament, where all participating students competed.

**Outcomes**

* Students reported improved team-building skills, stronger relationships with peers and staff, and better fitness levels.
* The initiative added significant value to the student experience by offering an enjoyable and structured physical activity.
* The project also led to participation in the Sparqs Learner Outcomes Project, aimed at addressing challenges in retention and achievement.
1. **Wellbeing Walks – Collaboration with the Sport and Education Department**

A new initiative focusing on student wellbeing through structured wellbeing walks was introduced in partnership with the Sport and Education Department. These walks provide students an opportunity to engage in physical activity in a relaxed and supportive environment, promoting both mental and physical health.

1. **New Partnerships**

New partnerships were established with the Terence Higgins Trust and Social Track Wishaw, focusing on student wellbeing and engagement. These collaborations aim to provide additional resources and opportunities for students, particularly in health, inclusion, and physical activity.

1. **External Funding and Student Engagement**

Through external funding, Student Engagement has secured 10 bikes for students, available through Cycle Scotland. These bikes will be accessible via the Wellbeing Academy and the new partnership with Social Track, promoting active travel, health, and wellbeing. The initiative aims to provide students with reliable transportation and exercise opportunities.

1. **NCL Connect – Student Social Network**

The NCL CONNECT student social network was launched on January 27th. As of now:

* 64 students have signed up and are actively exploring the platform.
* While engagement is still minimal, efforts will be made to encourage greater participation through incentives and further outreach.
1. **Class Rep Meetings and Engagement Initiatives**
* The Class Rep meeting schedule for the Supported Learning and Access & Progression departments continues across campuses, with the first round of meetings concluding during the week beginning February 3rd. These meetings will continue monthly until early June.
* A new initiative has been launched involving Class Reps from mainstream departments.
* ‘Rep Conferences’ will bring Class Reps together on their respective campuses to discuss NCL matters regularly.
* These meetings will be attended by SA Presidents, Jennifer Lowe and Barry Skea, as part of the 'Getting to Know You' strand within the Retention Strategy.
1. **Be Financially Fit Student Roadshow**

The Be Financially Fit Student Roadshow is designed to empower students to take control of their finances. Through expert advice, interactive workshops, and valuable resources, the event aims to boost students' financial confidence. It offers personalized support, practical financial knowledge, and access to experts eager to help students succeed financially. There will also be similar events for staff later this year.

1. **Looking Good, Feeling Good! – NCL Triumphs at AHT Scottish Competition**

On January 23rd, NCL hosted the Scottish Regional Heat of the AHT Competition at the Motherwell campus. Organized by John O'Hara, Head of Student Engagement & Wellbeing and Scottish Chair for the Association of Hairdressers and Therapists, the event saw colleges from across Scotland competing.

The Department of Beauty, Aesthetics, and Hair Design received numerous entries from local schools and students in barbering, hairdressing, nail services, and make-up artistry. NCL was named Best College in Scotland, winning 43 medals, including 17 Golds. This success qualifies many of our students to compete in the National Heat in Blackpool later this spring.

Jane Crowe, Head of the Department of Beauty, Aesthetics, and Hair Design, commented: "This was a landmark event and the students’ achievements showcased the exceptional talent and dedication of our staff and students. We are incredibly proud of everyone involved."

**Conclusion**

The initiatives outlined above have made a positive impact on student engagement, retention, and wellbeing. The Active Campus football sessions were particularly well-received and contributed to national project participation. The NCL Connect platform and Class Rep meetings have furthered efforts to foster a more connected and engaged student body.

Additionally, our new partnerships with Terence Higgins Trust and Social Track Wishaw, along with the Cycle Scotland bike initiative, will further enhance student wellbeing and create new avenues for support and engagement. Continuous evaluation and refinement of these initiatives will ensure sustained positive impact and student satisfaction.

John O’Hara

Head of student engagement and wellbeing