**NUS-USI Regional Council |**

**Disabled Students’ Officer Report**

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| **Meeting of:** | Regional Council |

Section 1 | Meetings & Events

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| **Meeting/Event** | **Purpose** | **Outcome** |
| Disabled Students’ Campaign (individual members) | To establish a working agreement between the members of the Disabled Students’ Campaign. Introduce ideas of campaign work and gather thoughts and opinions on the work to be carried out. | Solid agreement and a plan for campaign has been established within the committee. |

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| **Overview of meeting/event (optional)** |
| The idea of creating safe spaces with regards to mental-health / physical health and all self-defining students seems a positive one. Many self-defining students have explained that there currently is a lack of support services in their institutions as well as some of these institutions not having any staff member in the role to help support them or their peers. They see the introduction of these groups as a promising idea and one that should benefit most. The introduction of these groups may also enforce staff positions in disabled student support.  Coupled with the results of the well-being survey from NUS-USI last year – 78% of students in the survey indicated they had experienced mental health worries – 46% of these students admitted that mental health issues had impacted their quality of life, 44% said that it affected their grades and studies, and 43% said it affected their relationships. Having a simple network within their student union to allow a comfortable space may help to ensure these students feel better, and at least supported.  Other ideas included workshops – namely those focused to squash the stigma, dual-stigma, multi-stigma and stereotypes. Understanding disabilities from access needs rather than labels are seen to be extremely import as a focus matter for the campaign. |

Section 2 | Campaigns

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| **Campaign** | **Overview of campaign** |
| Researching into how to campaign and create a support group in member unions to ensure that students have ‘safe-space’ to discuss well-being. | Research currently ongoing in the campaign has involved networking and meeting with charity organization – Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (NIAMH) now known as Inspire. This initial meeting is very much opening the potential for a working relationship and discussing the priorities we each have. Inspire have a channel directly involved with students that I hope to work with.  Talking with Nuala Dalcz – she educated me from a professional mental-health background on campaigns and planning technique. She discussed with me multiple campaigns she has been involved with in the past surround disabilities, namely why they were or weren’t successful. The priorities for one of their campaigns they are currently looking at is male well-being, maternal well-being and starting the conversation around mental health. I hope to get our student campaign in-line with ‘starting the conversation around mental health’ given that one of the major plans for our campaign is to set up peer support groups. Nuala explained that she can help us provide organizational contacts, as well as offering a space for these groups to meet if some of the unions cannot facilitate.  There is also an opportunity to be a volunteer ‘Change your mind champion’ – Currently only adult ADHD is supported and there are many other disabilities that can be supported.  Inspire are currently running a Change Your Mind Campaign. Nuala has explained that if the support groups are successful that we could involve them in this campaign providing extra support. There is also a mental toolkit being produced that will be signed off in September that she says we are welcome to integrate in our support hubs we are aiming to create via the Disabled Students’ Campaign. |

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| **Campaign** | **Progress** | **Plan of Action** |
| Mental Health Campaign | Initial research has been done by talking to charity organization NIAMH (Inspire). This was a rather successful meeting as outlined above. Discussion on mental health toolkits, support of focus-groups and generation of the support group in member unions was well-received. | Work in collaboration with Inspire. Reach out to other charitable organizations that specialize in mental health / physical and self-defining disabilities. |

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| **Further Comment** |
| I would be very interested in working directly with Inspire if this would be something the REC supports – at this current stage me and Nuala are simply in the discussion stage.  Other plans for the year as the Disabled Students’ Campaign are to:  Try and consider the homeless community particularly those that are students and how this links to mental health. Discovering what is the trigger perhaps between addiction and mental health?  The plan from here is to continue with the work, as well as to continue to develop relationships with charitable organizations that focus in disabled student support. |

Section 3 | Plan of Work

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| **Item** | **Progress** | **Plan of Action** |
| Student Wellbeing | Plans for research and collaboration have already begun.  A list of organizations will be contacted and we will have meetings regarding plan of work for our campaign and how our priorities tie in with one another.  Conversations around priorities for the year have been discussed and a plan of work for the liberation campaign will be drawn up. | Continue to contact organizations.  Draw up a list of key contacts.  Establish a final priority list for the campaign this year. |

End of Report