

## Statement from President elect 2021-2023 Mollie Hehir

'Working with and then for the Students' Union, I found friendship, belonging and fun. It was somewhere I could be me, express my opinions, be challenged, and develop as a person. It helped me become happier and find myself as a person, this was why I stood as the President for a second term of office, because I want as many students as possible to find fulfilment at college whichever form that takes.

My key commitment to the student body this year is that I will do my upmost to ensure the Students' Union works hard to achieve an inclusive community within college, to ensure all students feel part of something, listened to and valued and most importantly feel as if they can be themselves. We aim to create an environment which is exciting, friendly, accepting, and safe and for as many students as possible be involved in some way. I am so proud to work for an award-winning Students' Union that's sole commitment is improving the lives of others'.



**This report will highlight key areas of work under the DSU core themes of work which are:**

**Representation** – we want students to get the most out of their student experience, DSU represents students, advocates, and campaigns on their behalf.

**Skills development** – we provide volunteering and training opportunities to prepare students for life and work.

**Creating community** – by offering activities, events, clubs, and social groups we support students to get the most from their social life, meet new people and make new friends.

### Representation – including campaigning, lobbying and liberation work

**Dudley SU once again flew the flag for students and staff at the annual Birmingham Pride Parade.** Partnered with Dudley MBC we walked alongside the Mayor of Dudley and members of the council EDI team. We hope to continue this partnership later in the year collaborating on Dudley's very own pride event.



The Students' Union Pride delegation at this year's event

**Black History all Year** is once again the theme for Dudley SU as we celebrate and highlight the contributions of Black people to the world. Breanna Long (Level 3 Law Student and Black History project Co Ordinator for the SU) has been heading up this project work and has so

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far arranged a Black History Book display in the college library, produced inspirational Black icon posters for display across the college campuses and started to organise an event which will take place in November in collaboration with local businesses run by black professionals.

Breanna said *'I didn't have the opportunity to celebrate black history at school in a way that I would have liked. Spending one day learning about Martin Luther King (although*



*important) didn't help me feel proud of my heritage in a general and relatable every day sense. I hope to make black history seen and celebrated all year, the opportunity to celebrate Black History at college has given me and many other students of colour the chance to express their culture with pride.'*

So far we have supported 4 students to have their preferred names formally recognised by the college and dead names removed from ID cards/Teams accounts and registers. The importance of preferred names

is paramount to the wellbeing of our trans community with one student telling us *'it feels like a punch in the stomach every time someone uses my deadname'*. We hope to further support the college on its trans inclusion work and think we are well placed to continue to advocate for the rights of our trans members.



We spotted this student with their dead name blacked out on their ID – we emailed the relevant departments on their behalf and the card was re issued

There have been some **items taken forward and actioned by the college on the recommendation of the disabled students committee**. These include a painted walkway to improve access between Inspired campus and the Independent Living Centre and for the college to review the ID card access points into buildings, as it has posed some issues for wheelchair users.

The committee are currently recruiting for new members and hope to be operational with good numbers by the end of term.



This year the SU have nominated **'Black Country Mental Health' as their charity**.

We are linking mental wellbeing across all areas of SU activity for example by **promoting positive mental health from supporting new hobbies, to developing friendships to lobbying on real issues that affect student lives every day such as bullying and the cost of living**. We've had initial conversations around the work we'd like to do with BCMH for mutual benefit to their charity and our students. Plans include

their support of the mental health ambassador project, setting up a couch to 5k group and hosting a mental well-being group on campus.

We are also working alongside the college informing elements of the mental health audit work that is taking place and making recommendations that will benefit student wellbeing.

**The SU continue to offer services to students all of which help them save money, during for many, a very financially difficult time** these include Totum discount card, citizenship Age ID cards that can be used for DBS checks and approved government ID, sexual health service SAFE offering free contraceptive and advice and guidance and hosting the period product scheme.



With the cost-of-living crisis a real concern for students we will be working on the national campaign 'Breaking Point' with Students' Union colleagues across the country to raise these concerns directly with decision makers.

## Skills development – including training opportunities, professional development, and volunteering

The SU remain committed to their offer of work experience to those on internships, school students or alumni students that require work experience. **This year we are hosting Sam Robinson, Alumni Aspire student.** Sam is volunteering for 6 hours per week working on supporting social group for SEND students 'We Socialise Too!' and general office related duties.

*Sam said 'being able to come back into college, somewhere I spent 7 years of my life, is familiar and comforting. Because of my disability opportunities are limited for me so to be able to come back to college and work with the SU is really beneficial. As an ex student that was really involved with the SU I know the difference it makes to all students lives and I'm really happy to continue to be part of that'.*



**Sam (front) and ex intern, David – packed 2000 goodie bags for the Freshers event!**

(David has now secured a full time role at Birmingham Airport at the guest lounge)



**Aldrich Gonsalves with tutor, Louise Atkins, receiving peer feedback on the last day of the course**

Congratulations are extended to Mollie Hehir, Aldrich Gonsalves and Sophia Daly who have all recently **completed the level 3 Diploma in Youth Work practice**. Ensuring staff working within the union have the skills to deliver quality youth work practice.

In addition to this good news, Aldrich Gonsalves has been shortlisted for the 'Kind to the Environment' award and Darryll Garland shortlisted for a 'Stepping Up in the Community Award' at the upcoming Dudley Community Voluntary Sector Kindness Awards. Both are absolutely deserving so we will keep our fingers crossed for a winner on the night!

We've had **over 100 students registered as class reps so far, this academic year**. The opportunity to represent peers and support the teaching and learning standards at the college is something we can collectively pride ourselves on. We have many returning reps who enjoyed their experience previously and those that have decided they'd like to take on a greater responsibility for the learner voice agenda such as Advance Student Edward Alexander (previous CAT campus class rep).

Edward is standing for Advance Campus officer role this year.

*He said 'I was a class rep at CAT last academic year and I had a very positive experience. I raised a number of issues on behalf of peers and had some really positive conversations with management about ideas I had and changes students wanted to see. I felt really respected by my peers and college management. I'm really excited to take up the position of Advance Campus officer to see what positive difference I can make this year'.*

The SU has once again supported National Citizenship Service (NCS) to recruit to a **Dudley College NCS programme**. 40 of our students started their NCS programme over the October half term. On completion, those students will have taken part in an adventure activity residential, a youth social action project in the community and received a **signed certificate from the Prime Minister**. A brilliant experience and opportunity for personal growth.



During July **Duke of Edinburgh Award** members took part in their expedition to Kinver. Continuing students completed their Silver Award a new cohort attempted the Bronze expedition. DofE is one of our important activities that helps develop our students' skills, such as teamwork, map and navigation, safety, and discipline.



Bronze team (supported by Silver member Mollie to offer peer support) ready to set off from our camp site on the second day.

## Creating community – supporting students to meet like minded people, try new things and visit new places and tackle loneliness and isolation

Freshers was a great success again. **With approximately 2000 students engaged over a tour of 3 campuses**, we saw 30 organisations attend the college to promote their activities to students, these predominantly related to health and well-being such as mental health and counselling services, organisations offering social groups and specialist interests, and youth social action organisations recruiting volunteers. **Feedback from students, staff and stall holders was overwhelmingly positive.** Once again, the SU staff and officer team are proud to have hosted a wonderful welcome to college for all.



You may remember in the last report we had a number of youth led projects shortlisted for Commonwealth Games funding Gen 22. From the 5 shortlisted projects the students and staff were invited to Birmingham to pitch their ideas. It was a tough pitch competing with over 50 other shortlisted projects for 22 pots of funding. **We are pleased to announce that 2 projects based on nature and sustainability were successful and combined secured £8000.** This funding will be spent on a College to school student peer project and developing some well-being outdoor spaces on the Broadway Campus.

Sophia Daly Student Development Officer wins Ally of the Year 2022 at the Queer Student Awards for her work in supporting students in marginalised communities

