

CIARA CORCORAN'S MANIFESTO

WELFARE OFFICE, SU ELECTIONS 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THIS IS ME	2
THIS IS WHAT I STAND FOR.....	3
MENTAL HEALTH	3
PHYSICAL HEALTH	5
SEX, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOL AWARENESS	7
FINANCE, HOUSING, AND SUPPORT,	9
COMMUNICATION	10

THIS IS ME

Hello everyone!

My name is Ciara Corcoran and I am a final year Psychology student running for Welfare Officer for AY 2015/2016. I believe I am wholly suited to the job and possess all the qualities that are important in a welfare officer; I am compassionate, approachable, understanding, hard working, and always there to listen and help as much as I can.

I have been involved in University life since first year and now hope to give every student the same experience that I have had. I have had an amazing 4 years in UL and couldn't imagine a better role than that of the Welfare Officer to give back to the SU everything they have given me. Through involvement with the SU and Clubs & Societies I have been awarded the Gold President's Volunteer Award, completed SafeTalk Suicide Prevention, ASIST Suicide Intervention, and Occupational first aid courses. I have been involved with the Welfare office previously and I want other students to be aware of the help that is there for them and I want to be the one to help them.

Being a Psychology student I care about the well-being of everyone I encounter. I have spent the last 4 years studying mental health issues which I believe to be hugely important and I aim to make a big impact on campus this year. Alcohol and drug awareness, finance and accommodation, and body image awareness are just some of the other things I have set out to accomplish along with daily arising issues.

I have set goals that I feel are important to the student population, changes I would like to see across the university, and issues addressed that were brought to my attention by fellow students. This campaign and upcoming year is something I have been dreaming about and I hope you will all come out and Vote Ciara Number 1 for Welfare on March 12th.

THIS IS WHAT I STAND FOR

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is something that I am hugely passionate about and I feel always needs to be addressed. An immense amount of work has been done both on and off campus to raise awareness about mental health and its services and I intend to build upon this further. Having a psychology background, I understand how important it is to have a healthy mind and I will do anything I can to help anyone struggling with any kind of mental issue, big or small. What I have set out is most definitely achievable, simple steps and many small actions can lead to change.

Suicide awareness and prevention training

Suicide is a growing issue in Ireland and I want to try my utmost to equip as many students as possible with skills to help prevent suicide and aid anyone who may have thoughts of suicide. I participated in both SafeTalk and ASIST courses in my 4th year and I firmly believe that they are two of the best courses I have taken part in. We all understand that the counselling service work extremely hard but are run off their feet. Keeping this in mind, I want to make this kind of training accessible to all students so that no-one is left struggling and everyone has someone to go to who has the capabilities to cope with these issues. SafeTalk is one of many courses which equip people with the skills necessary to recognise those with suicidal thoughts, along with how to deal with this and help these people.

Reduce Stigma

Mental health is a serious issue in Ireland and those suffering are often looked down on. I feel that we need to reduce the stigma around mental health illnesses. Lots of celebrities are

coming out about depression and other illnesses at the moment showing a good example for us to follow. No-one should be ashamed of their mental health state; we do not ignore physical ailments, so why should our mental health be ignored? I aim to do this by carrying out and endorsing mental health awareness weeks and small acts throughout the year. I feel that one week of awareness is not enough so I will endeavour to carry out a variety of big and small campaigns throughout the year. These will take place not only in the courtyard but throughout the university, including all students. I aim to get as many students as possible involved, as well as services within the university and outside organisations.

Stress Management

Stress is something that affects us all and so I aim to strengthen the link with the counselling centre and First 7 Weeks service to inform students of the available facilities that are there throughout the year. I also aim to team with both of these services to provide awareness campaigns throughout the year, not just a one off, and help as many people as possible in coping with the stresses that come with university life. These stressors can vary from assignments and workloads to housemates and finances. I want to be there for all students no matter what their issue and by involving these two amazing services we can help as many as possible regardless of the issue.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Physical health is something that is really important but can often be difficult to maintain with a busy college workload. Clubs and societies is something we are very lucky to have in UL. With over 70 clubs and societies I want to work with Michelle and as many clubs and societies as possible to promote activities and encourage involvement to all students.

I also hope to start a fitness group where we can gather together and go for a walk/run through an organised lit up route. This will be extremely informal group and I hope it will help get people out and moving in what ever way suits them. These campaigns will get people healthy, give a much needed time out from study, help everyone's mental health, and will be an excellent opportunity to make friends!

Body Image "Love your body" campaign

Body image issues are something I feel we do not address enough in this country. I care about this topic and have spent my final year investigating how media effects our bodily perceptions and self-esteem. I want to run a campaign to combat the expectations laid on all of us by various outlets to be 'perfect'. This will deal with both female and male expectations, media ideals, and how we can learn to love ourselves. This campaign will also encompass eating disorders; what they are and how to help someone struggling with an eating disorder. I firmly believe that everyone is different and that's ok, we're all perfect the way we are. I hope to promote this way of thinking throughout the year but also dedicated time to it through an awareness week.

Disabilities

Personally, I am registered with a disability but it took me until 2nd year to find and approach the office. Disabilities come in all shapes and sizes and so I want to promote this valuable service for all those registered. Disabilities can also be hard to live with especially

when moving away from home, so I want to be there for anyone and everyone who may have a disability and is struggling with what life throws at them. I aim to do this by improving campus accessibility, including handrails along the steps by the library, and making the disability service more visible to the students that need it.

SEX, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOL AWARENESS

Sexual Health

Sexual Health and Guidance (SHAG) week is one of many extremely important annual weeks. This week addresses something we often joke or avoid talking about but we all know how important sexual safety and health is. I want to add to this week the importance of consensual relationships and how it's not always up to the men; women should also always carry a condom.

Contraception awareness is something that should always be highlighted. SHAG week does a great job of doing this and I hope to continue this great awareness throughout the year. I aim to increase the contraception doctor hours especially in SHAG week. This year SHAG week was in week 1, when there are no contraceptive doctor hours. I aim to continue to provide Durex only condoms with the possibility of extending the range of variety supplied. I also want to find locations other than the SU where condoms can be purchased, 3 for €1. Condom use is extremely important and so the benefits of such a wide availability of condoms at such a low cost cannot be denied.

STI checks are hugely important and are available at the Student Health Centre but why cure what you can prevent. I also want to make the UL population aware of the myths of sex, condom use, and pregnancy; how to put on a condom, how to store condoms, and the stories we've all heard that just are not true.

Of course things don't always go to plan but there are options. I aim to make every student aware of the services that are available in times of crisis pregnancies. These services range from friends and family to professional help and everything in between.

Drug & Alcohol Awareness

For me peer pressure is something that springs to mind when I think of drug and alcohol use. College can be great, socialising, meeting new people, trying new things but it can also be a time where we feel forced to try things we don't want to. While in office, I want to combat peer pressure issues particularly in relation to drug and alcohol use. We all know what it's like to have a night where you are not drinking and people ask 'is there something wrong?', they encourage you to 'have just one', and you subsequently get forced to come up with an excuse as to why you're not drinking or taking part in the activities. We need to tackle these assumptions. We need to eliminate the pressures present when in an environment where you might be 'the only one'.

I hope to continue to run the Drug & Alcohol awareness week currently organised by the Welfare Office. I feel this week is extremely important and so I aim to inform students as much as possible about the drinking culture surrounding us. This campaign will include drug addiction service information stands, what to watch out for on nights out, awareness of drink driving versus getting a taxi, the importance of looking out for your friends, and the risks of 'going home with someone' after a night of drinking and possible drug use.

FINANCE, HOUSING, AND SUPPORT,

Financial Issues

Finances are something us students are always conscious of. Grants are ever important and yet difficult to comprehend. I want to produce a step-by-step, simple, clear, and straightforward ‘How-To’ guide, particularly for SUSI grant applications, that will be permanently on the SU website and Facebook pages starting as early in the summer as possible. In addition, it can be difficult to know what grant is for you, and often grants are available that are not widely known about. I want to add information about these grants to this guide and make it available to as many students as possible. Grant applications are not easy and so a simple guide like this would be invaluable.

I also hope to liaise with Kemmy Business School to produce a budgeting guide on how to best spend and save your finances. I also aim to provide workshops in the opening weeks of Semester 1, in conjunction with the First 7 Weeks campaign.

Accommodation

Accommodation is a crucial part of college life. For those staying on campus, we all know it is not cheap, and the instalment element of payment does not make it easy on parents’ and students’ pockets. With this in mind, I hope to work with the Accommodation Office to provide a weekly payment scheme for those who wish to pay their rental fees on a weekly basis to avoid a lump-sum payment at times when other college fees are due.

Living off campus is somewhere where mistakes can be made but also money can be saved. There is currently a list of the private off-campus accommodation available in the Castletroy area but this list can be difficult to obtain. I want to make this list more widely available and provided in a more accessible location online.

COMMUNICATION

The Welfare Office is an immensely important service provided to all students and I feel like students need to be constantly updated on what's going on in the office and when there will be a friendly face waiting for you behind that door. I will endeavour to have as many hours in the office as possible and let students know when I won't be there. It is difficult to bring yourself to seek someone's help and I would never wish for someone to feel like there is no-one there for them simply because I am out of my office for a while. These updates will also allow everyone to know that the welfare office exists, that we're there to help, and what we do on a weekly basis. Unless it is made known that we're there to give help and advice, there may be many students suffering in silence thinking that there is nowhere for them to turn. I want these updates to keep students informed, for them to know that I'll be there for them, and to know what I will be doing for them to make their university experience the best it can be.

Most of all; I want to be there for YOU when you need it most. I am a caring person, I have a listening ear, I am committed to everything I do, and most of all, I am a UL student. I know what it's like to be lost in first year, to have trouble filling out grant applications, and to need someone to listen to you and help you out once in a while. I feel I am the person that can do this for YOU.

I hope you will come out on March 12th and Vote Ciara number 1 for Welfare!

(Issued by Tommy Noonan, campaign manager for Ciara Corcoran)