

Advice from Emma Porter – 2013-2014, SU President

Is it worth doing is simply yes. It's unlike anything else any other graduate is going to experience after they finish. In class, you'll get to experience so many different areas that it'll really help you in your choices for after college, and it can also give you a serious extra edge on your CV and in interviews. But that shouldn't be why you do it. That's the most important thing I'd say about it, make sure you're doing for the right reasons (which is the right reason for you, not anyone else). If you decide to do it, it's an amazing year and an amazing experience but I'd also describe it as horribly fantastic (my year anyway). The situation in the Union can fluctuate year from year – my year I had to re-establish the Board of Trustees for the Union and deal with a lot of HR stuff that I shouldn't really have had to deal with. It took up huge amounts of my time but Martin seems to be good and that shouldn't come up much next year, but it's an element of the job I definitely wasn't expecting to deal with. (Shouldn't affect Welfare much but they do sit on the Board too so they'll be aware of it if it is going on.)

There'll be a lot of things you wouldn't expect, if you run for either position. I had everything from "what can the SU do to help reduce the number of feral cats" (I am not joking!!) to working with the Gardaí on organising search parties for missing students. No two days will ever be the same. You'll meet EVERYONE in the University and sit on a mountain of different committees. If you're on the fence about it I'd attend a few Council meetings next semester to see what's being discussed. Also talk to Liz Gabbett in the Union, she won't tell anyone you're running (including the Sabbats if you ask her not too). A good question for her would be how many and what committee's you'd sit on, that list will give you a good idea of what you'd be getting in to. I'll try suss out if Colin/Ciara are running again next week, if they aren't you should talk to them both to get a more in depth feel for both roles.

It's a tough job if you do it right. I had weeks where I'd have 28 meetings (the average week is probably 12) so this is tough to try and prepare for them all, plus actually make progress on things relevant to the students. I regularly had days where I'd be in at 8:15am and didn't finish in the office until 10pm. The job goes through phases where it can quite tough on your mental health too. Spending so much time in offices and eating from scholars because it's closest and easiest, and not getting the same kind of running around time has its effects (it did on me anyway so make sure you look after yourself if you do run!) But it's brilliant, the staff in the Union are fantastic! They're lovely to work with too.

Another thing that can make the job very tough for anyone who runs is the relationship you have with the other sabbats, especially if you run for President. Another thing to be aware of is that a lot of the time you might not get to see the difference you make. I found that one of the hardest part. When we sat down at Xmas and had an all staff meeting and we listed EVERYTHING we'd done that semester I couldn't believe it. And a lot of the stuff we did was policy type work tbh, working on the constitution etc. to make the place better for the next year.

And the last thing then is, people know you. Which is fine until you've been it's November, you're wrecked and you're working 50 hour weeks, and some randomer who's hammered in the stables wants to know exactly what you're doing for them. This really annoyed me at one point but it's actually not too big a deal, just giving you an honest opinion on the cons.

Anyway, it'll encompass so much more than you'd expect. Getting a list of the committee's will help but there's still things like USI, whatever the prevalent issues are in UL that year, and whatever is going on in national politics effects the Union too. You will not be bored. Ever. Welfare is deputy President so if you run for that you might experience a small bit of the President's role too but that bit is mostly just being a second signature on the cheques, and making sure you back each other up at Governing Authority and the likes, and working together and planning over the year.

But Welfare does a lot behind closed doors, student assistance fund decisions, dealing with Landlords, listening and trying to help students who may have mental health issues etc. So, ya... They're both tough positions. But, you'll get to advocate for UL students at every level of the college, you'll get to plan all sorts of campaigns, you'll get to help plan charity week etc. you'll meet so many cool people, you'll get management experience, bits of HR experience, some PR experience, teamwork, leadership, you'll get to be creative, go to some University functions, enhance your communication and presentation skills... there's feckin' loads of pro's. It's a cool job, but make no mistake it can be tough if you do it right. Oh and one last point is, if its students you want to deal with day in day out you should be considering Welfare/Academics. Unfortunately the President doesn't (well didn't in the past anyway) spend much time meeting individual students. I hope that helps!