

Manifesto - Sam Galvin

for **Commercial and Fundraising Officer**
UCC Student's Union 2022/2023



About Me

Dia dhoibh! Is mise Sam, and I'm a final year BSc Architecture student at the Cork Centre for Architectural Education.

I grew up in Cork, and although I have studied and worked in Estonia and the Netherlands, I always come back to the Rebel city. While I love architecture and the built environment, **community and social justice are really important to my core values**, and I want to make a difference in the University by becoming your Commercial and Fundraising Officer for 2022/2023!

I am an **activist in Unite the Union, a member of CATU** (the Community Action and Tenants Union), and a solidarity member of the UVW (United Voices of the World) trade union for architects.

Most recently, I worked as a Researcher and Architectural Assistant in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. I **contacted magazines and publishers to arrange for articles** and photos of our projects to be published, and looked for ways to increase our reach.

I have experience fundraising for various causes, and am involved in **collecting toys and money for Cork Penny Dinners at Christmas time, as well as organising a local food drive**. I have also raised funds for Focus Ireland, and my scout group, which I have been a member of for 15 years.

Cost of Living

We have all noticed the **massive rise in the cost of living**, and for students on low (or no) -income, this is a **major barrier to participating** in student life and access to education.

The previous SU's efforts to establish a food bank for students were truly **inspiring, and show the power we have when we work together and raise our voices to highlight these issues**. The food bank has demonstrated the student body's ability to protect it's most vulnerable members through **mutual aid and co-operation**. We must protect and expand this initiative.

As Commercial and Fundraising Officer I will seek to **expand funding** for the Food Bank and **increase accessibility** for those who need it.

Rising Rents

Accommodation costs are also **spiralling out of control**, with monthly rent increasing far beyond inflation every year. As a member of CATU, I am acutely aware of these issues, and I will lobby the management of UCC to **build more university owned accommodation**, and bring **rents below market rate** in existing student housing.

I will also examine the possibilities in the **USI's policy on Student Accommodation Co-operatives**, and investigate how we can apply their policy here in Cork.

Code Red - Period Products

Implementation of a 'Code Red' initiative, for the **free provision of ecologically sustainable period products** for all staff and students who need them, will be a **priority for me in office**.

It is estimated that people who menstruate will spend more than 23,500 euro on period products over their lifetime, which represents a **significant wealth gap** between men and women.

Implementation of this policy would help rebalance this and reduce the financial burden of **essential healthcare items for students**.

Fundraising

The SU as a fundraising body has a lot of ability to raise funds for **positive organisations and noble causes**. As Commercial and Fundraising Officer I will focus the SU's fundraising capacity on issues which affect student welfare the most. This will mean supporting charitable and non-profit organisations which focus on **women's issues, LGBTQ+ rights, housing, the environment, and worker's rights**.

Economic Autonomy for the SU

Currently, the SU is **financially dependent on the University**. This relationship hinders the ability of the SU to function effectively as a Union, stripping it of its independence.

The University may withhold funding at any moment, leaving the Union **without essential resources**, and Union Officers without wages.

This reliance on University funding **ties our hands and prevents us taking radical action** to protect students and their welfare. **This exact situation occurred in 2021 at NUIG**, when the University defunded the SU, in order to assert the will of the University management over the democratic decision of students.

Commercial ventures such as sponsorships and on-campus vendors allow us a degree of autonomy and protection to assert the democracy of the student body. The more money the SU can raise for itself, by itself, the more we are able to **operate independently and democratically**. I will actively investigate further avenues to assert this independence.

Student Experience

A significant element of this role is providing a **positive and enjoyable experience for students** on campus. I will ensure there are regular and affordable food and refreshment vendors on campus and at satellite campuses. I will ensure the Union partners with **local suppliers and vendors** where possible.

I will work closely with the Ents Officer and Communications Officer to ensure adequate funding for student events.

Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building (CWB) is a concept which I believe could be a powerful framework for the SU to engage in; CWB aims to **keep money circulating in the community, so we build ourselves up, without money leaking away from students**. This would mean employing students and local people wherever possible, and avoiding outsourcing services to companies based outside of Cork.

We saw in 2020 how Kylemore Services Group suddenly laid off 30 Main Rest staff, with no warning. If the Main Rest and other University facilities were **managed co-operatively with local people and students, we would have more democratic power** as a collective to navigate challenges like the pandemic and inflation.

To achieve this, I will ensure that at every step we work with local partners, and preferably **student run businesses and initiatives**. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve economic autonomy for the SU, allowing us to fully explore our options and chart a course for the union without the hand of UCC management.

Shorter supply chains and use of local products is also a sound environmental choice, and considering the rapidly rising cost of transportation, it will be a prudent strategy for the future.

This **model has been implemented with great success** in the city of Preston, and is currently under consideration as a model for Limerick's future development. As a **future oriented and community conscious University, we must take bold steps towards a more equitable and sustainable society**.

Credit Union

To further the Community Wealth Building goal, I will investigate the possibility of partnering with a local Credit Union, for students, alumni, and staff. Unlike a bank, **all members of a CU are shareholders**, and therefore any **profit generated from interest is distributed back to its members**.

Credit unions, with their fair and community oriented approach to finance can **empower students and improve the University experience**. Students would have access to loans at a lower interest rate than that offered by regular banks, and **more control over how their savings are invested** and used.

Ethical Partnerships

As Commercial and Fundraising Officer, I would sit on boards with UCC management, and have an insight into who gives money to UCC, and how it is used. I would seek at every opportunity to **choose ethical and environmentally conscious partners who share the values** of UCC students.

For example, I would lobby for the implementation of a Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions policy against all Occupied Territories. This would mean not working with any company that profits from the Israeli military and colonial occupation of Palestine.

I will also raise concern at UCC's recent partnership with KPMG, who acted with no concern for worker's rights during the Debenhams strike of 2020.

Trade Unions

Working together to achieve our goals is paramount to tackling the challenges we face, be they depressed wages, ballooning rents, or the mental health epidemic. I am a **strong believer in the Trade Union movement**, my parents were activists with the National Union of Journalists, and now I am an activist with Unite the Union.

I will seek to **build a strong relationship** with the Irish Federation of University Teachers, CATU, and any other Union which could be beneficial for students. I will **actively engage with workers in the University**, particularly student workers, to encourage trade union membership to **protect their rights and agitate for better conditions**.

As Commercial and Fundraising Officer, I will seek to build **partnerships with Co-operatives** and unionised companies.

Conclusions

As an elected union officer, I will not only oversee the Commercial and Fundraising Office, but will also work as a **politically and socially conscious representative of the student body**. This means that I will agitate on broad issues that will affect the student body, and be a **positive voice for change**.

I will advance the Union's mandate in favour of Irish re-unification, and support for the Palestinian people and other anti-imperialist struggles around the world. I will also seek to promote and enhance the usage of Gaeilge on campus.

I will be a strong advocate for feminism and LGBTQ+ rights, and will actively struggle against racism, fascism and national-chauvinism.

Go raibh maith agaibh!