

Who Am I?

Hi, my name is Síofra Foley, and I am running to be your next Student Welfare Officer in UL. I am a final year Product Design and Technology student from Killarney, Co. Kerry.

Where might you know me from?

I'm typically seen running around with a little camera taking pictures of everyone, sometimes on stage in Stables, I've tried my fair share of clubs and societies over the years, and I'm often locked away in the Product Design studio. My mission is to make everyone feel heard and supported and create a stronger community in UL. I want to make student life as interesting and accessible as possible for everybody.

Food Access

Food access is a problem most students face in their college years. I want to find ways to make food more accessible and save students money. To achieve this, I would like to introduce a food pantry to UL. This would mean students would have access to free or subsidised food when they need it. Other colleges across the country have implemented this system, so why can't we? The Lidl bus was a great initiative two years ago which allowed those without access to a car to buy food at the cheaper Lidl prices. This was especially availed of by on campus students as the walk to Lidl takes around 25 minutes one way from campus and carrying heavy loads of shopping for the week is not manageable. Students often find it difficult to find somewhere to eat their lunch which they brought from home. I would like more spaces in each building to eat lunch brought from home and microwaves available for students to use. Not everybody has a budget to allow them to purchase food on campus.

Sustainability in UL

I want UL to move in a more sustainable direction as it is a very unsustainable campus. One of the issues I see in UL is takeaway containers which are given in different food establishments. I would like to implement the 2gocup initiative on a campus wide level, meaning you can return the containers after using anywhere on campus. The new Re-return system is a great initiative which is being implemented in shops everywhere and it is reflected in pricing on drink containers in shops on campus. I believe if you are having to pay the higher price for this service, it should be readily available on campus to return empty containers and claim money back. I am passionate about clothes and textile waste and conscious of how much money students spend on clothes during college to keep up with the current trends. I would like to bring regular swap shops on campus where people can change up their wardrobe and minimise their textile waste footprint.

Accommodation

Accommodation has been one of the most prominent problems for students over the past few years. With this problem, pricing is skyrocketing. On-campus accommodation for the next academic year in Dromroe is costing €7,064 whilst in 2015 for the same apartment it was costing €4,810. I want campus accommodation to be more reasonably priced and regulated. For those who choose to live off campus, it can be difficult to find houses and landlords you can trust. I wish to set up a better

system where landlords in the area can post their houses directly to students rather than it be a case of word of mouth. With this I want to ensure all landlords in the Castletroy area get accredited by the RTB as students who are paying cash in hand are losing out in the renters' tax credit which allowed tenants to claim back €750 in 2024.

Commuter Services

Commuter students make up a sizeable portion of the student body and with this comes a lot of expense on these students. Parking is a big issue in UL and seriously needs to be addressed. Parking on campus after the free car parks are full (which is all the time) costs €3 a day. This means students who travel to and from campus daily are spending €60 a month on parking on top of fuel costs. For the students that take the bus, there is not enough seating or shelter at the UL bus stop when everybody is waiting to go home in the evenings. Buses are often late, and students typically have electronics such as laptops, headphones, and tablets with them and having no shelter exposes them to the risk of water damage to their devices. For the periods of time in between classes and waiting for a bus home I would like if there were more spaces available for commuter students to go to which is comfortable and quiet. The student union is a great facility but can get quite noisy. In having these spaces, I would hope that it would encourage students to attend all lectures rather than skipping some due to the long wait in between classes.

Sexual Health

I want to keep the great work going that the current welfare officer is doing in terms of sex education and drug awareness. Free condoms and lube on campus has been a step in the right direction but I want to take this even further and expand this to include dental dams which reduce the risk of transferring various STDs through oral sex. I would like to push for more active consent workshops and posts throughout the semester so everybody can be well educated. I want to bring back shag week which I believed to have encouraged an open conversation about sex and the destigmatisation and education it brought along with it.

Harm Reduction

Drug culture is very present, and college fosters a curious mindset and for that reason I want to provide accurate useful information to encourage harm reduction. I want students to be educated on the highs, the lows, and the long-term effects each drug has on them without all the scare tactics. I want to allow students to make an educated decision before deciding to partake. For those struggling with addiction, I would like to provide an openly available service where students can seek help in a non-judgemental environment, whether this be for alcohol, drugs or gambling etc. I want the help that is needed there when you need it.

Medical Access

Everything is expensive but that doesn't mean the doctor should be. In UL visiting a GP sets a student back €30 whilst in other colleges such as MIC this service costs the student €10. Other slightly

cheaper services such as nurse and phone consultations in UL are €20, which is a free service in most other colleges across the country. I want to bring these costs down to reflect the costs of other campuses, if they can do it why can't we? The counselling service in UL is under constant pressure with students needing the services more than ever. I want to push for more staff to be hired in this division so the service can be quickly accessed by students when they need it.

All in all,

I hope that you can trust me to manage all your Welfare needs! I promise that if I am elected, my door will always be open and there will never be an issue too big or too small. Feel free to reach out to me if you have any further questions on Instagram @SiofraforWelfare.

Enjoy the St. Patrick's weekend!

Síofra