C2 Delivering Justice for Students

Proposer: Jane Baston (York)
Agenda item: C Resolutions of Executive Committee Priorities

Summary

This year has seen students pushed back into high-cost campus accommodation, left with minimal financial support from the government and a lack of wellbeing support. This resolution identifies some key areas for the Young Greens to campaign on to deliver justice for students.

The Young Greens notes:

- The FE and HE sectors are experiencing a financial crisis like never before. The effects of neoliberal marketisation is causing senior managers to push financial risk off onto students and staff.
- In light of the financial crisis, and the over-reliance on tuition fees, many universities are using metrics or hidden evaluation techniques to implement large scale changes to their courses, shutting whole departments and making large numbers of staff redundant.
- Throughout the pandemic the government has offered very little support to students, insteading leaving financial and wellbeing support to the discretion of individual institutions.
- According to the NUS three in five students say that Coronavirus has had some degree of impact upon their income.[1] Students have faced increasing financial difficulties this year with around a fifth of students have fallen into rent arrears with their landlord and a similar portion have fallen behind on utility bill payments.
- Students have been increasingly isolated due to the lack of socialising which has exacerbated poor mental health and wellbeing. Universities provide inadequately funded mental health support that is often overwhelmed
- Online teaching has been something that disabled students have campaigned for in order to improve their access to their education.

The Young Greens believes:

- That due to the neoliberal model of university funding, students are being treated like cash cows, being milked through sky high rent on student accommodation and extortionate tuition fees.
- Education should be free and accessible for all.
- That campaigning for reduced tuition fees strengthens the narrative that education is a commodity that can be paid and has a monetary value.
- That metrics should not be used to determine the worth of a course or use to make decisions regarding the employment of staff.
- That universities are institutions for the public good and shouldn't be focused on creating profits that necessitates severance of staff.
- That students deserve full living grants and proper financial support that allows them to focus on their studies while living a decent standard of life.
- That many decisions taken by university senior management have been to protect the financial interest of their institutions and not the safety and wellbeing of their staff and students.

The Young Greens resolves:

- To campaign for the abolition of tuition fees, the introduction of living rents for all, and a write off of student debt.
- To stand in solidarity and campaign with UCU against any job cuts at universities across England and Wales.
- To stand in solidarity with student rent strikers pushing back on poor treatment of students and staff.
- To campaign with disabled students to ensure that education is accessible. That online alternatives made necessary due to the pandemic are kept and that appropriate support is put in place.
- To campaign for robust academic support and simple mitigation policies for all students.
- To campaign for universities to prioritise student wellbeing by providing comprehensive welfare support and mental health services.
- To campaign for the democratisation of universities where staff and students are properly enabled to make and enact decisions at all levels of the university.

[1] https://www.nus.org.uk/articles/student-renters-face-a-financial-crisis-due-to-the-pandemic

Supporters

Billy Wassell (Cheltenham Green Party); Rosie Rawle (Oxfordshire Green Party); Daron (Brighton / Oxford)