

Dear UPEI friends,

I am counting on you all in my pursuit to become the UPEISU President for the 2020/2021 academic year.

I am currently a 2nd-year international student doing a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. I am from Mauritius and over the time I have been at UPEI, I have met so many different people each amazing and special in their own ways, learnt about things that were new to me as an international student and assumed positions of leadership through events such as the New Student Orientation (NSO) and the Campus Life Program where I had the opportunity to power with our student community.

UPEI has given me so much since I have arrived and now, I am determined in using my background, experience and every bit of energy to successfully represent and lead the Student Union and its main interest in mind; the students.

If elected President, I would use my position in working towards making our community more inclusive and advocating on behalf of all our students to make life at UPEI more exciting, accessible and forward-driven.

Here is engagement to you:

1. Mental Health

Mental health is an important issue within the UPEI community and often people can be unaware or not be provided with the correct tools or support to be able to power with this particular hardship. To this regard, I propose approaching the issue through three different ways:

a. Speaker Series

Opportunity to voice out is powerful in itself, and so is the chance to listen to lived experiences of visions, hardships, perseverance and determination. The Speaker series gives the chance for more people on campus to be able to hear about difficulties that they might have faced or are currently facing and the ways they have used or are using to fight these hardships. It allows students to connect and talk about issues that often our students find hard to get the necessary help for such as whether they have picked the right major or not, and if so what steps to take. To this effect, the series might even be used to create a network to encourage communication in between panel members as well as students

eager to learn more and be able to ask the questions that need to be asked with greater ease.

b. Anonymous Sharing Board

Often students at UPEI have to deal with issues that they can find extremely challenging and may want to communicate those experienced feelings with someone. Finding that particular someone who can listen, understand and share similar experiences and feelings of compassion can be hard to find. The creation of an anonymous message sharing board gives the opportunity to have us, UPEI students share with others what we have experienced and been through.

c. Breaking Down Stigma Spaces

Stigma, as much as we do not like it, is frequently part of our surroundings be it the people we meet, the teachers we take classes from and the individuals that make up even our close circle. It can be particularly difficult to express one's feelings towards situations they have been faced with when there are people that have grown up in a way different as to theirs. The small UPEI population is essential in creating spaces and opportunities for our students to break down stigma in all of its forms, be it social, cultural or others. This will be a project worked on in collaboration with the Health and Wellness Center to come up with a different theme for each month and another way of using available space to get people talking about stigma or stereotypes they face frequently.

If elected President, I will strive towards bringing forward the Speaker Series, Anonymous Sharing Board as well as spaces dedicated to breaking down stigma to reality such that the issues students are challenged with besides academics, are carefully dealt with. I will also conduct surveys with the UPEI student population to design and complete the projects primarily with our students' opinions in mind.

2. Inclusivity

Community is a great way of learning as well as thinking aside from academics and taking time to enjoy what surrounds us. For many of our fellow students, being able to feel part of this community can be quite challenging and might as such reinforce other issues they are challenged with constantly. Being able to feel part of something greater than oneself in a simple manner is often what most of our students hope for.

a. Equity Space on Campus

We have reached a crucial point whereby the need to know and acknowledge each others differences should be made the fabric of our campus community. People with various cultures, beliefs and opinions make up our student population, each as special as one can be. However, being able to express oneself and feel included can often be hard. As such, through the creation of equity spaces on campus, it is both a chance for one to share and others to learn about what they contribute to the wealth of the UPEI community.

- b.** Working with different groups to offer workshops such as consent and cultural competency

Within such a tight community such as ours, even the simplest of conversations with someone we do not know might help us learn something new. I want to set-up opportunities to break down what constitutes consent or different cultures though interactive workshops for example, such that our students are aware, accept, learn new things and even able to celebrate each others differences. These events would be organized with the collaboration of the International Student Office and the Aboriginal Student Association.

- c.** International Student Scholarships

International students currently make up a significant portion of the UPEI student community and it is also evident that in terms of fees and affordability, being able to go for education at UPEI can be quite challenging for numerous international students currently studying or thinking about UPEI as an option for tertiary education or above. Scholarships as offered by different universities across Canada can thus be a major turning point in allowing our students to work on and complete their studies. In addition, the issue whereby the number of hours for international students working being limited, I would further like to engage with the UPEI Alumni society to look into options of creating international student-specific awards based on both academic performance and the sets of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills they have been able to develop and showcase within the UPEI community.

If elected President, I commit to working towards bridging the gaps that separate our community through projects such as the development of Equity Spaces, Informational Workshops as well as International Student-dedicated Scholarships.

3. Empowerment

At UPEI, through a wide variety of classes, our students get the opportunity to learn about different skills but often do we not get to practise and polish those aptitudes past the group projects or presentations we used them in, for these classes.

a. Friendship Bench

This is an opportunity for more people to be able to get to know each other and promote conversation within the UPEI community. Friendship benches would be located around campus in particular locations and painted in different bright colours. People could come and take a seat and it would mean that they would want to chat with anyone wanting to sit next to them on the bench.

b. Getting Social 101

While the UPEI community has been working on activities to provide right skills such that our students need to be proficient within different professional positions, further work is required concerning preparing for the work environment itself. Social skills are key! Be it knowing how to engage with people, being able to empathize, listening to be listened, making compromises. There is an extensive list of social skills that are critical within any professional environment. As such, Getting Social 101 consists of a series of programs organized in collaboration with the International Student Office, Experiential Education, as well as Student Affairs, specifically aimed at preparing our fellow students in dealing with different social situations be it in terms of scenarios, group activities, and others.

If elected President, I will be dedicated towards facilitating access to opportunities for our student community to be empowered through programs such as Friendship Bench(es) and Getting Social 101, such that we as a community are and feel ready to support oneself and others in both our social role and within the work environment.