Policy name: Changemaker Citizen's Assemblies

STUDENT COUNCIL FACTS:

- Successful Citizens Assemblies (CA) have been held in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland. Examples of successful CA work have included Involve UK[1] and ongoing work from the People Powered University group[2].

STUDENT COUNCIL BELIEVES:

- UUSU should support students to develop a vision for society where all should have equality of opportunity, regardless of gender, race, religion, rurality or age and have equity of access to basic human needs and a sustainable future.

- Students are disproportionally affected by wider societal issues around the cost of food, rising rent and housing issues and issues of low pay.

- Vulnerable children, and older people in NI communities are suffering due to deepening inequalities. Too many are cold, hungry, and live in unaffordable homes, with inaccessible physical and mental health care, loneliness and decades of neglect of adult social care.

- The suffering comes on top of a profile of high mental health and wellbeing challenges, and transgenerational trauma following decades of the troubles, with high prescription drug for mental health dependency as a result of the conflict, alongside some of the worst hospital waiting lists in Europe.

- This comes on top of transitional justice/political failures to deliver grass roots healing, peace and reconciliation resulting in high levels of segregation in education and housing, division and peace walls, allowing potential for conflict to reignite. Civil society has a vital role and responsibility in transformation.

- Communities in NI are also struggling to defend environments from pollution and climate change, and to halt development of new fossil fuel infrastructure contrary to IPCC[3].

- UU students should be knowledgeable, confident, educated, and free to act to be make change. Students should have a role in supporting communities, where students will live and work.

- UU Students should be facilitated to build cooperation for the common good by helping communities create change to ensure implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goals of no poverty, zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, affordable clean energy, reduced inequalities, climate action, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions.

[1] Our Projects | Involve
[2] https://facultyforafuture.org/
[3] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/10/fossil-fuels-incompatible-1-5c-goal-energy-climate-change-study/

STUDENT VOICE

- Students should have the opportunity to participate in brave conversations about realities facing communities. Through such an experience of participation students can find their civic voice, develop empathy, listening, and authenticity, to enable them to choose courage over comfort and transform their reality.

- Ulster University should create and facilitate understanding of issues facing communities and provide Changemaker's Citizens Assemblies so students can influence, prepare for and determine their future.

STUDENT COUNCIL RESOLVES:

- The Union will facilitate a UU Changemakers Citizens Assembly for participatory action including forming a vision for the future, analysis of social and environmental challenges in communities, dialogue, reflection, connections, actions and the co creation of knowledge and action with communities.

- The Union runs regular Changemaker Citizen's Assembly events (supporting student led decision making, discussion, alongside) hosting guest speakers, showing films, hosting conversation, arts, network meetings with the university, community groups, unions, and NGO's.

Name of Proposer: *Dianne Little*

Name of Seconder: *Angela Rillon*

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES/RESOURCES

https://citizensassembly.ie/about/

https://citizensassembly.co.uk/

https://facultyforafuture.org/

https://www.involve.org.uk/

NUS / USI Student's Cost of Survival Report
https://www.nus-usi.org/cost_of_survival_report#:~:text=Our%20Cost%20of%20Survival%20Report,education%20system%20for%20our%20future

High prescription drugs for mental health
https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/39935/1/Drug_overdoses_and_drug_related_deaths_in_NI.pdf

Civil Society's role in transformation
https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/119210606/the_belfastgood_friday_agreement_and_transformative_change_promise_power_and_solidarity_1_.pdf

IPCC – No more fossil fuels
https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/fossil-fuels-are-dead-end-warns-un-chief

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