

Candidate Name: Dorcas Akinso

Position: VP Equity and Inclusion

If elected to be your first ever Vice President for Equity and Inclusion I will strive to advocate for every student voice to be heard and supported. I will advocate for fairness and a space for all.

As Co - Founder of the MU People of Colour in Law Society, I created a space where representation, advocacy, and community could grow. As President of the Erasmus Student Network Maynooth, I have worked with diverse student groups, creating cross-cultural collaboration and support systems.

If elected as your candidate for Vice President Equity & Inclusion, I am not running to decide what students need. I am running to create the spaces where you tell us what you need and to ensure action follows.

Expanding AMLE's Speak Out:

MSU's and AMLE's Speak Out tool is an important anonymous reporting platform that allows students and staff to disclose incidents such as bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct ,coercive behaviour, stalking , and assault. It also signposts relevant university and external supports.

I will advocate for the development of Speak Out so that it not only serves as a reporting tool for serious incidents, but also becomes an anonymous space for students to:

Raise concerns about university life, highlight systemic issues affecting their issues, propose ideas and improvements , share feedback on academic , social and welfare matters.

I would look into expanding Speak Out into a broader student voice platform.

Not every concern fits into a formal complaint process but every concern deserves to be heard. By expanding Speak Out and introducing listening sessions we can strengthen representation , identify problems earlier, advocate more effectively on behalf of student. Make Maynooth a even more responsive and inclusive university community.

In addition to the Speak Out tool, I will aim to introduce structured listening sessions throughout the year.

These would:

Be informal and student led

Focus on specific themes

Provide safe spaces for open discussion

Allow students to expand on issues raised anonymously

These sessions would complement Speak Out giving students both anonymous and in person options for engagement.

If elected, I will engage with the university management to explore expanding the speak out platform .Work with IT and Support service to ensure the system remains safe and confidential

Student voice should be protected and powerful, with the expansion of the speak out tool I hope to achieve this.

Hybrid Learning Model

I will look into the Hybrid Learning Model. This model is a flexible learning model that allows students from disadvantaged backgrounds or difficult life situations to continue their education without mandatory physical attendance, while still staying academically and socially connected. This model will not only be “online learning” but its equity- driven blended learning with supports built in.

Why does this matter:

It will support students who work long hours , care for siblings’ children or ill parents, students facing housing instability , have chronic illness or disability , experience domestic violence or unsafe environments , international students, migrants’ refugees, experience mental health challenges , lack stable transportation and more. This model is equity centred , trauma informed , crisis responsive and support based not punishment based.

What I will do:

I will work closely with the equality officer, with the information gathered from anonymous student experiences through 'Speak Out'. We will work on creating trainings, workshops. The workshops will target identifying barriers, safeguards and implementing this design. We can look into contacting Advance HE, they specialise in inclusive curriculum and they provide EDI training. This model can improve belonging and withdrawal rates. I am an advocate for equity in engagement. Students should be able to learn at the pace they are able.

We can look into contacting the university's EDI office to formulate this and help with adding this system into the university. By contacting the EDI office, we are aiming to retain this model as an equity initiative and a quality enhancement project.

I will look into connecting with STAND to create an event during I.D week regarding the hybrid learning model. This event will bring awareness to the model and the various supports available like Speak Out. This event will follow a panel discussion style or an open discussion regarding issues raised and experiences regarding accessibility for various disadvantaged persons in university life. These discussions will be given by various minorities as I respect that I cannot speak for every minority.