



**Gisèle Scanlon**

# **I-CARE Vision Statement**

2021/2022



My vision is guided by listening. You paid fees but the experience did not match the promise. As President I pledge to keep lobbying, working, creating jobs and caring for our community. We will collectively reform the postgraduate experience, but we must first deliver what you were promised right now.

This has been an extraordinary year and I believe the strong team formed has the lived experience required to continue building PG Reform over the coming months and year. I am running again because **I-CARE**.

I work for postgraduates – and will ensure that you keep getting better services. Trini-Screen, lateral flow antigen testing, plus an app will be available in June 2021 and we'll continue to open College through **INNOVATION**.

I create jobs for postgraduates - a Disability Officer, Student Parent Officer and hundreds of study space jobs have strengthened community wellbeing. New HR partnerships will ensure well-funded future employment opportunities for our **COMMUNITY**.

I lobby for postgraduates – and will reverse the rise in health insurance premiums, the limitation on student visas, fight the inadequate tiered HSE/Education system disadvantaging clinical applicants/placements, counselling psychologists and PME placements and promote **ACCESSIBILITY**.

I fight for postgraduates - and continue to stand up for research, lobbying alongside PhDs for equality through the recognition of your work through fair contracts, fair pay for every hour worked and a living stipend. We will continue to pursue funders and Government for investment in **RESEARCH**.

I care for postgraduates - and want every student to feel equal and safe. I will nurture our student Ethnic Minority project, parent and LGBTQ+ community spaces, our Disability partnership, Free Hot Water and create an emergency fund to offer €100 loans. I'll push to reform accommodation, sustainability and lobby for legislation championing **EQUALITY**.

Visit [www.giselecares.com](http://www.giselecares.com) for updates  
#GisèleCares for postgrads 🤗



→ I CARE that some registered postgraduates have not even had the chance to visit Trinity campus. As postgraduate students, our thinking, energy, enthusiasm, creativity and investment is the lifeblood of the institution. After paying a considerable amount of fees, even more so for international students, many of you have started to feel estranged. I will continue to ensure that College recognises and rewards that with respect and resources. I have secured €5,000 from the Trinity Trust to help create a student experience for you which will help you regain a little of that lost student experience and I will start building this with and for you in **June 2021**

→ I CARE about decent employment for students and as well as fighting for proper pay and conditions for postgraduate workers, I innovated to create new employment opportunities during COVID-19. What started out as one GSU steward in the 1937 Reading Room in **September 2020** eventually developed into a campus wide project providing hundreds of postgraduate jobs in the Public Theatre (Exam Hall) and the Bank Building, eight computer labs and finally the Business School which opened in **April 2021**. The project is rostered, pay-roll administrated and nurtured by me the GSU President and my small team and I'd like to ensure that this postgraduate employment endures throughout COVID-19 into **2021**.

→ I CARE about the impact of COVID-19 on the social interaction which is important for students and I believe this is an area which also requires innovative thinking. We can build on the ongoing success of the GSU's **September 2020** the study spaces project and the Trini-Screen and antigen testing for researchers, also championed by the GSU, by marrying these two projects to successfully manage social bookable space and to be able to create events. I will review our GSU events, campaigns and other activities to develop a new strategy for accessibility and we will find new, positive and inclusive ways to offer testing on campus for events as well as other supports as we open up socially.

→ I CARE about the quality of online-learning and postgraduate supports following the disruption from Covid-19. According to the findings of the Irish National Digital Experience INDEX survey, before COVID, 70% of Irish University teaching staff had never taught in a live online environment. I lobbied for greater accessibility for all students to online learning and teaching training along with clear and helpful guidelines at Continuity of Learning and Student Activities Working Group (COLSAG) in **December 2020** to ensure T.A.s will have the same technical supports as staff as they provide valuable teaching hours throughout **2021 and beyond**.

→ I CARE that postgraduates may have to be subjected to online proctoring systems which





can be unreliable and compromise the integrity of assessments. Exposing our home learning environment can cause anxiety and may also be socio economic challenges or concerns around unconscious bias in lecturers who view a students' home environment during an exam. The GSU Health Sciences Officer and I had it successfully removed from postgraduate exams in **December 2020** in the School of Medicine and I will continue to ensure that the GSU be consulted on any further decisions made surrounding online proctoring for postgraduates in **2021** or **2022**.

→ I CARE about class representation as I myself started out as a class rep at the GSU. Identifying new technologies for online engagement in COVID times was challenging but Mi-Voice's voting system is robust and we have negotiated a deal with them to run class elections in **September 2021** with customised voting links which names each recipient. Mi-Voice was used for the GSU Sabbatical elections and the Provost Elections and will run all GSU elections in 2021. As GSU President, I introduced the idea at Graduate Studies Committee in **December 2020** and it has been agreed there, class representative election will take place in **September 2021**. The GSU will follow class rep elections with NStEP training in **October 2021** and top-up training throughout the year.

→ I CARE about social and environmental sustainability. Innovation is not simply about

technology or business, It is about doing things differently and better. As GSU President I will push the College to develop a culture of innovation which responds to challenges with imagination, collaboration and ambition and contributes to progress on climate targets and the UN SDGs. I will continue to support the Trinity Swift project to encourage the birds to nest on the north face of the Museum Building to nest in 2021/2022. In **April 2020** and **April 2021** I activated the swift bird callers in the Museum Building to facilitate the project for PhD Jamie Rohu and swift Conservation Ireland. I believe that wildlife belongs to no one and the wilding of Trinity as a hub for wild species and birds is something that the Union will continue to support in 2022.

→ I CARE that Trinity harnesses and maximises the societal and economic benefits from all postgraduate generated ideas and technologies and it is important that postgraduates share in those benefits. As President of the GSU I identified an idea in **December 2020** to build an App to work a postgraduate garden and café. I will be supporting this idea and look forward to new partnerships which recognise and reward the role of postgraduate experts in addressing issues of internal, national and global importance. I will also continue to lobby government to improve connectivity by ensuring postgraduates have more access to digital device schemes and Wi-Fi.





→ I CARE about the renewal and reform of the postgraduate experience which was promised in the College Strategic plan and the impact the Covid-19 crisis has had on that plan. As GSU President I attended a focus meeting with the Dean of Graduate Studies and PhDs to investigate this in **March 2021**. Upon re-election to GSU President I will immediately invite postgraduates to a meeting with the Dean of Graduate Studies to engage further with the College process and to discuss postgraduate reform and demand that progress is accelerated for all postgraduates.

→ I CARE about a union which dynamically reflects and responds to the postgraduate community. The GSU initiated a full review of the Union's Constitution in **September 2020** and in consultation with USI implemented the USI Congress framework and a raft of new and important motions were brought to an EGM. This framework has helped us to introduce the Living Wage onto campus, to add a third Sabbatical Officer for PhDs (with promised funding) and mandated the GSU to lobby for partial refunds on behalf of students. I will continue to lobby College for these and foster a postgraduate working group to review GSU policy to encourage student engagement and ensure that bringing motions to GSU Council is accessible and democratic..

→ I CARE about secure and affordable housing for students in the postgraduate community. Too many are suffering the consequences of

bad national policy and poor accommodation management, with some students pushed into homelessness and others left without correct refunds from private landlords during COVID-19. During my **2019/2020** GSU Vice Presidency and **2020/2021** GSU Presidency I actively campaigned with USI and the SU for a national policy shift on student accommodation. I have witnessed first-hand the exploitation of International students which was worsened by the pandemic. I will fight at every level for appropriate rent controls and lobby with USI to make it a reality across the country. In **February 2021** I secured a promise of sponsorship investment to develop the PG accommodation Facebook page for postgraduates to become a place of safety and sound advice.

→ I CARE about the spaces we share as a community and the fact that some students still lack full access to facilities like kitchen space or common rooms. I will be pushing for practical implementation of the Postgraduate Spaces Strategy which I secured as Vice President in **2019**. I secured microwaves for spaces across campus in **2019** and a commitment from Disability for a development of the 1937 Reading Room with a million Euro budget attached in **2020**, and extra funding from the new Provost in **2021**. I have lobbied for extra PhD desk space and have secured it both in the 1937 Reading Room with a plan in motion to deliver safe, clean study space like the hub both on and off campus. Many students are particularly concerned about the use of labs in the context



of COVID-19 and I am proposing a staggered approach to lab work which will utilise College labs on downtime over the summer.

→ I CARE about the mental health of students. Having supported many students who were already dealing with stress anxiety or depression I am acutely aware of the serious impacts the pandemic may have in relation to social isolation, disruption of plans, financial and family issues including domestic violence, emotional abuse and internet addiction. As GSU President in 2021/2022 I will ensure that the Union develops systems to actively reach and engage with students facing mental health difficulties and strengthen referral pathways to College supports.

→ I CARE that the GSU is a welcoming, encouraging and safe space for postgraduates, celebrating diversity and facilitating an enriching student experience. GSU supports an international student community from over 120 countries. 26% of our students come from outside Ireland. In 2021/22 I intend, as GSU President, to actively take every opportunity to include and integrate all our students, whether based in Dublin or abroad, as part of a GSU global community.

→ I CARE that the GSU have access to and partnership with the wider student movement in Ireland. We intend to continue working closely with the Students' Union at Trinity and it has long been the GSU stance that we wish to be a full member of USI. This is something that previous GSU presidents and activists have lobbied hard for and I will build on their work.

Our MOU with the SU expired in November 2019 and we will need to re-draft a new MOU with the SU during 2021/2022.

→ I CARE that the GSU has a Postgraduate Student Partnership agreement with the College and the Union will create an open document online in June 2021 to gather input from the entire postgraduate community on how we can improve it. The huge and ongoing shortfall in third level funding, poor student accommodation policies and precarious working conditions for postgraduate students are all issues that benefit from full postgraduate input and participation and specifically worker's rights for our demonstrators and T.As. I will continue our close relationship with the SU and USI, and the USI Postgraduate Working Group - a national platform and a coordinated voice is, I believe, what will benefit the GSU most in 2021 and 2022. We have much to contribute and to gain from Union collaboration and USI membership.

→ I CARE about the wider community. Having campaigned with others in recent referenda, I know how students can contribute to change through activism and through volunteering. I will develop a working group to promote a culture of volunteer and activism amongst the Trinity postgraduate community and partner with the Trinity Civic Engagement office to link postgraduates with local community organisations offering social and economic supports in disadvantaged areas. COVID-19 changed the landscape of this sector in 2020/21 and we will work to find innovative solutions to campaigns in 2021.





→ I CARE that some Trinity College spaces are inaccessible to students with disabilities. I am committed to working with Disability Services to publish a new long-term accessibility strategy for the whole Trinity campus. With the introduction of a GSU Disability Officer in **September 2020** we will, in consultation with the Disability Forum for Trinity staff, PhD and post-docs with disabilities, endeavour to provide a voice for the disabled community at the GSU. Our valuable new partnership with the forum will continue to build pressure for the implementation of UNCRPD and open up new opportunities in **2021** and **2022**.

→ I CARE that the University delivers a truly inclusive education to parents while taking into consideration that some have children with disability or need extra accommodation and in **May 2021** I met with AsIAM who are examining the EPSEN Act (2004) which sets out the needs of those with special Education needs. AsIAM appeared recently before a roundtable hearing of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science on the EPSEN Act's future seeking a full legislative review into the Act. The COVID-19 pandemic and the GSU Disability Officer and EMS Officer and I are pitching a creche idea in St. James's hospital to the College in **July 2021**.

→ I CARE about implementation of the EU Web Accessibility Directive and will be demanding disability friendly design in the development of

Trinity's online resources and learning spaces. I lobbied College in **February 2020** with great success to install loop systems to upgrade some rooms and theatres for a return to face-to-face learning and we have consulted and found a designer in **June 2021** to revamp the GSU website and social media channels to enhance user accessibility and navigation and improve GSU digital engagement.

→ I CARE about sustainable transport. Trinity has only 1.5% car use and as GSU president I want to improve the cycling infrastructure, pedestrian access and public transport most students rely on. I will press for safer cycling routes between Trinity campuses and extension of the Free Travel Scheme and make sure students have input into the planned pedestrianisation of College Green. As part of the Healthy Trinity Committee I contributed in **February 2020** to Dublin City Council consultations on transport and want to encourage civic/university collaboration around UN SDG 11 on sustainable cities. With this in mind, I want the GSU to co-host a Cycling Conference in **July 2022**.

→ I CARE about the challenges faced by students who wish to access services or represent themselves in Irish. I currently sit on both the Coiste na Gaeilge at Trinity College Dublin and Coiste na Gaeilge at USI. I created a GSU Officer post in **April 2021** to specifically focus on Irish language and culture and develop Irish language supports for those who already





speak it and those who are keen to learn. I will lobby the College to vindicate Irish speaking students rights in policy and practice and work with the USI and others to strengthen language rights across Ireland. I will also be pressing the college to develop policies that reflect ISL as an official language.

→ I CARE about the wellbeing of the many postgraduate students who needed to seek help from the Student Assistance (Hardship) Fund this year. In 2019 I successfully secured new donations to the fund from across the Trinity Community but more is needed. As President I will lobby the College for a substantial increase to this fund so that the Postgraduate Advisory Officer has the resources to help you when you need it, particularly in light of COVID-19 in 2021/2022.

→ I CARE about postgraduate students in the Creative Arts, Literature and the Humanities who have experienced decreased graduate and work opportunities and are less likely to attract government funding. In February 2020 I lobbied USI and the IRC to re-examine funding criteria, and I am committed to lobbying alongside other Colleges and Universities to ensure the protection of the rights of students in Literature, the Arts and the Creative Arts with more investment and funding needed for International research students in these areas 2021/22

→ I CARE about the Third-level Graduate programme (Stamp 1G), and postgraduate

students access to courses, placements and employment are now affected adversely by the events of 2020. As GSU Vice President from July 2019 – July – 2020 I recognised the challenges for students who graduated in 2019 and 2020. International postgraduates have invested thousands in fees and have been unable to secure jobs and consequently, a visa sponsorship due to COVID-19 and currently the year 2021 even remains uncertain as companies postpone recruitment and hiring. I will continue to lobby the Department of Justice in 2021/2022 to extend the visa of all graduate students for one more year to Trinity Graduates I served as GSU Vice-President in 2019/2020 and GSU President in 2020/2021.

→ I CARE that International research students have greater mobility regardless of the length of their academic tenure. In November 2020 I lobbied USI for the simplification of visa and work permit rules and procedures to allow for greater mobility and to prevent mobile students being subject to undue stress, difficulties and discrimination. In June 2021 I lobbied the Department of Justice and the Garda National Immigration Bureau to provide international (Non-EU) students in Ireland with visas that last the duration of their period of study under the course they applied to as international students studying in other countries are given student visas for the full term of their academic tenure as opposed to an annual renewed visa and we need that system here. I will continue to push for recognition of those years as counted for







Irish citizenship and residency. This will give further opportunity to International early career researchers who wish to build a life and a career here.

different cultures who rely solely on FREE Hot Water as a way to survive. 2018/19 is ongoing in College policy through 2021/22 and onwards.

→ I CARE that the International (non-EU) PhD students 7-year via limit is cumbersome and bureaucratic for those progressing to level 10. In the Third Level Graduate Programme where studying undergraduate level 8 and then progressing to level 10, a student will have reached the 7-year limit. In June 2021 I partnered with the University of Limerick Postgraduate Students' Union to write to the Minister and the Department of Justice concerning visa permission for spouses and partners of spouses of international students which is currently unclear. These decisions are impacting the mental health and well-being of International PhD students and I am lobbying to have this addressed immediately.

→ I CARE about Free Hot Water in Trinity College Dublin and in an agreement brokered by in 2019 when I was GSU Vice President I secured access to FREE Hot Water across TCD including The Buttery, the Perch, 1937 Reading Room, the Forum, the Westland, Aras an Phiarsaigh, St. James's Hospital and Tallaght Hospital. FREE Hot Water will be written into any new catering contracts negotiated by Commercial Revenue with any new catering vendors. It's a sustainability project I wish to see embedded in College forever as it is an important coping mechanism for students from





→ I CARE about fair and secure funding for postgraduate research. Most PhDs in Trinity are either unfunded or underfunded. This is symptomatic of the significant underfunding of research at national level. As President I will be lobbying for a far greater national investment in public research for the public good, including frontline, basic and applied research across the humanities and sciences. The Cassels Report in 2011 called for a new national research and development strategy, *Innovation 2020*, which expires last year without reaching its potential. The development of its replacement, the National Research Strategy has been slowed because of COVID-19 and as GSU President I intend to seize this opportunity to make sure postgraduate researchers are heard in the design of that strategy in **2021/22**.

→ I CARE about the hidden costs and challenges of postgraduate research. Currently PhD Stipends are not calculated on the living wage in the city where the researcher is based and a budget for personal equipment such as laptops, books, printing, conference attendance etc. is not included in all state scholarships. As research can take many years, it is also essential that postgraduate students and researchers have access to secure, year-round, long-term tenancies. I increased beds for postgraduates on campus in **2019/20** and will lobby again in 2021 for lease agreements and to have the rent reviewed as it is currently very high. As president 2021/22, I will continue to press for progress on both these issues as part

of a more integrated approach to PhD supports.

→ I CARE that a proposal to reduce the hourly rate for teaching practical classes on casual payroll was brought to and allowed to pass by the Finance Committee in November 2019. As part of the GSU I lobbied strongly to reverse that decision and as President in **2020**, I was vigilant this year in ensuring that rates for research, teaching and lab work were protected and conditions improved. Research students deserve certainty of hours in teaching and tutorial work and set hourly rate of pay for all hours worked – including preparatory and correction work. In February 2021 I lobbied at Finance Committee to instruct The Human Resources Committee at Trinity College Dublin to create an *Occasional Staff and Casual Pay Policy*. I've consulted with the chair of IFUT and as Unions we have met to offer further input to HR. My request was granted at Finance Committee and the draft policy is subject to approval at Board in **June 2021**.

→ I CARE about the disruption that COVID-19 has caused to our Research Community. As teaching hours could be impacted again this year, some research students may not be able to avail of them. Many postgraduates involved in externally funded research have also faced challenges in meeting previously agreed deadlines. I have lobbied for greater flexibility from funders. I am pleased that many have now given extensions but it is important those extensions come with additional resources. As





President **2021/22** I will expand the PhD focus groups built in **2020/21** which grew organically as we prepared for the Provost Elections and draft plans with PhDs in relation to how best support the entire research community during COVID-19 restrictions using what we have collectively learnt to date.

→ I CARE that placement and workplace hours are currently unpaid and it cuts across the Health and Education sectors. Placements currently need an overhaul and I will work with the National Forum, QQI, USI to lobby for fair pay for every hour worked on work placements. The inequality endured by unpaid postgraduate counselling psychologists is unacceptable and I lobbied the GSU Provost Elect at the Provost hustings in April 2021 to help us address this inequality for counselling psychologists in Trinity. I will fight for the HSE to recognise this cohort and to pay them for every hour worked on placement as well as lobbying for any teaching placements and fieldwork hours lost due to the pandemic to be replaced by College in a proposal to the Dean of Graduate Studies in **June 2021**.

→ I CARE about pay and conditions for postgraduates who work within the college. PhDs work many hours across Trinity College as part of the current structure in place. The current structure has caused me to question at every level how College would function without PhDs. PhDs demonstrate, give tutorials, grade papers, are in charge of lab maintenance. Plus,

PhDs do also work on an informal basis, such as assisting in supervision of undergraduate research projects, for which they receive no recognition – this needs to change. Many PhD students this year are struggling and are utterly devoted to a subject out of vocation and a love of research but cannot attain financial stability. Currently there are no formal contracts specifying working hours, any rights or obligations issued by Schools even though other national institutions do indeed give contracts to their part-time workers. I believe all PhDs need to be given clear and fair contracts for the essential work they provide to Schools, covering research activities as well as teaching, without which these Schools would be unable to function normally. Ultimately, this must lead to PhDs eventually obtaining employee status and the protections it entails and I have lobbied since **2019** for this for PhDs and pushed for a firm commitment on this from the Provost Elect in GSU focus groups held in **March 2021** and at the Provost Hustings in **March/April 2021**.

→ I CARE that due to the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 there may be less employment and a reduction of supports such as the Pandemic Unemployment Payment in the near future. The time period between finishing a PhD and finding a post-doc role should be streamlined to allow doctoral students who have completed all of their requirements but not formally graduated to apply for funding and jobs. In **November 2021** I investigated the various post-docs pathways, in Chemistry



doctoral students apply for post-docs before graduation but in professionally accredited jobs like psychology postgraduate researchers may face delays in securing an academic position and I intend to develop active partnerships to identify opportunities that might open up new horizons and alternative career paths for these postgraduates. I will, for example, engage with the College to look at extension, improvement and diversification of placement strategy. I will also include issues of career progression in our GSU input to the National Research Strategy. I care about your Trinity experience but I also care about what happens after you leave in 2021.

→ I CARE that in an era of escalating rents, the simple reality is that PhDs (and research masters and indeed all postgraduate) students face huge financial pressures. It was outlined at Graduate Studies Committee in 2019/2020 that many students in FAHSS are unfunded, and I am further concerned that those students that are funded, receive stipends that are well below the living wage. I have also become acutely aware that poor funding reduces diversity of the student body, as many people simply can't afford to do a PhD, particularly International students who received little to no funding or indeed people from an Irish socio-economically challenged background. I have also become acutely aware that poor funding reduces diversity of the student body, as many people simply can't afford to do a PhD, particularly International students who received little to no funding or indeed people from a socio-

economically challenged background . I have also noted that students who get accepted to pursue research face such financial pressures, it plays on the mental health of our postgraduates and invariably can impoverish the quality of the work that is being done. As rents continue to increase in Ireland, it is my real concern that this position is simply unsustainable. Current Government policy – both in terms of the core grant system dolled out to the universities and funding directed to external bodies like IRC and SFI – is such that institutions and funding bodies are co-dependent. We must then as a Union stand up for Irish research and hope that government hears the message that a restructure of funding and a re-think of the system is long overdue for 2021.

→ I CARE that the GSU President in 2021/22 will continue to lobby for proper payment for all hours worked and support PhDs in their campaign to secure recognition and rights for postgraduate workers. PhDs already have employee status in places like Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, and several other countries around Europe. Many of the arguments against this at College level have been financial to date, and the GSU lobbied the Provost Elect in March 2021 and I will continue to lobby the Provost to commit that College lobbies the government in tandem with the GSU and the PhD Worker's Rights to force this change at national level in 2021/22.



→ I CARE about PhD students, many of who have families and other financial responsibilities. Being free to earn what they need to supplement grants and stipends. I will support the raising of the earnings cap on Trinity's internally funded PhDs to €27,000 and continue to lobby the IRC and the Minister's office to re-examine the inequality in funding and other resources. After years of lobbying to equalise funding, finally on **January 29<sup>th</sup> 2021** I saw a long overdue increase for IRC stipends with scholarships raised from €16,000 to €18,500. The total value of an award increased from €24,000 pa to €27,500. In addition funding research consumables went from €2,250 to €3,250. As President I will further address this as this increase does not fully cover fees and all research consumables and is also far below the living wage in Ireland. I will lobby College to increase the threshold point at which supplemental income impacts grant awardee status. It's a further freedom to T.A.s and demonstrators and anyone doing corrections and will also offer more freedom to postgraduates who work as supervisors. These students are usually funded by bodies (such as the IRC, SFI, or the Schools themselves) that provide a stipend below the minimum wage (and far below the living wage) in Ireland.

→ I CARE that students that receive funding by private bodies have less financial pressure to engage in such heavy workload and, in contrast to some of their peers, receive the status of "Staff", with the respective benefits this entails. I lobbied the Provost Elect with several PhD

focus groups in **April 2021** to ensure that PhD students are given clear and fair contracts for the essential work they provide to Schools, without which these Schools would be unable to function normally and lobbied that all Trinity PhD researchers are given the same status of "Staff" (along with what this status entails) independent of whether their funding is public or private. We will work for this in **2021/22**.



→ I CARE about students' rights to participate fully in the life of our College without fear of prejudice, abuse or attack based on their ethnicity, race, sexuality or the other grounds identified under our equality legislation. I will be pushing for strong policies and sanctions on this within the College. The GSU has started to play an active role in the 'Love Not Hate' campaign in February 2021 which is an alliance of migrant, Traveller and LGBTQI activists and organisations looking for the long overdue introduction of laws against hatecrime in Ireland. We introduced a bi-monthly Transgender Coffee Morning in March 2021 in collaboration with Q-Soc and will introduce TANI workshops in July 2021 to gain insight into training GSU Officers and reps on how to better support members of our community.

→ I CARE about a GSU which reflects and supports the full diversity of the postgraduate student population and I established and shortly thereafter a provision for a PG Disability Officer role to exist on the GSU Executive in September 2020 which was proposed and passed at the GSU AGM in December 2020. Growing from the learning and the success of the GSU TLC (Trinity Learning with Children) support group, we introduced the idea of a PG Student Parent Officer in April 2021 which was passed at a GSU EGM and also as part of a constitutional review. In **July 2021** I intend to grow this GSU Equality Unit to capture the full depth and breadth of equality-based issues and develop new policy with these new Officers and an MOU between

the GSU and the Disability Forum in **July 2021**.

→ I CARE many members of the postgraduate community have had to deal with the adverse effects of different COVID variants being labelled according to their geographical location. Where we have large groups of people, unvaccinated, living in high density areas we will be faced with the inevitable influx of new virus variants and the naming of them has caused inequality in our community. I lobbied Racial Ethnic Equality Working Group in **May 2021** to seek a new College policy on this and will use the WHO's new system redesignating new variants of concern now with Greek letters; what was called the Kent variant will now be called the Alpha variant, the South African variant the Beta, the Brazilian variant the Gamma variant and the Indian Variant the Delta variant and I will make it policy that the GSU will not use geographic naming in **2021/22**.

→ I CARE about the concrete delivery of Trinity's commitment to "foster a more diverse and inclusive student community". As GSU President I will continue to make sure the voices, experiences and concerns of postgraduate students are heard by the new Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and reflected throughout College strategy. Postgraduate workers must also be protected from discrimination under the 9 grounds laid out in the Equal Status Act. In May 2021 I founded the Ethnic Minority Group with the GSU Vice President and the GSU EDI Officer to







tackle alienation and to shed light on the daily experiences of Asian, African and International students in Trinity from 210 countries. I will grow this as an inclusive idea with the whole GSU Executive and Clodagh Brook, Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion who will act in an advisory capacity to us and we will launch a website and our Literary Journal College Green will be published in **September 2021** dedicated to the idea of “Belonging”.

→ I CARE that the GSU continues to contribute to Trinity’s development of policy to ensure the highest standards for gender equality. In **2020/21** I sat on the Athena Swan Committee and ensured that the GSU continues to be a part of the solution to Trinity’s achievements of Athena Swan standards for gender equality. In **April 2021** I lobbied College IT Services alongside students and the GSU Disability Officer to find a solution to concerns regarding being assigned a gendered prefix when logging into Blackboard. IT has agreed to work on this and a welcome update will be reflected in the service in **September 2021**

→ I CARE about ensuring old and new spaces in our College are designed and developed with everyone’s safety and participation in mind. As part of the equality proofing of the Postgraduate Spatial Strategy, I lobbied College to deliver more LGBTQ+ postgraduate safe spaces and in June 2021 a full electrical upgrade of the 1937 Reading Room was granted to us alongside an

upgraded gender neutral set of bathrooms in the building which will reopen in September 2021

→ I CARE about fairness . Having previously secured an increase in the Student Assistance Fund in August 2019 I will continue to lobby for far more funding for this essential safety net and further resources for the Postgraduate Advisory Service. I will also be pressing for greater economic security for postgraduate workers across the college including teaching and lab assistants and commit to fight throughout my presidency to have every hour worked by a postgraduate paid for and contracted.

→ I CARE about economic inequality. I will be engaging with the College to ensure the commitment they have made in their new strategic plan to support students from ‘non-traditional’ backgrounds is reflected at postgraduate. This year students who have been unfortunate enough to leave hospital late at night more often than not find themselves without the funds to fill prescriptions or buy groceries. In **March 2021** I lobbied the Provost candidates for an interest free loan scheme for postgraduates to avail of through the President and Vice-President of the GSU and got commitment that it could be developed in tandem with the Alumni office. I have also been lobbying College since **July 2019** to establish a Trinity College Dublin Credit Union which could offer larger low interest loans.







→ I CARE about mature students and those returning to education and understand the opportunities and challenges associated with that journey. I am also aware that many postgraduates, mature students in particular may be balancing family responsibilities with their academic work. In **March 2021**, I set up the GSU TLC (Trinity Learning with Children) Student Parent coffee and support group in Trinity – a place to find support and understanding for student parents trying to study and research. I continue to commit myself to widening access and ensuring the diverse experience and needs of postgraduate students are reflected in University policy and planning and with the Disability and EMS Officer, requested a review in **January 2021** of breastfeeding pods across all Trinity campuses to provide safe breastfeeding space for student parents.

→ I CARE about the educational attainment of postgraduate student parents and that of their children. There is great work being done with Diversity in STEM and in **May 2021** I supported this work and successfully lobbied the Dean of STEM and the Walton Club to provide substantial discount for current postgraduate parents who have children who would wish to participate in STEM camps in Trinity College over **Summer 2020**. Previously student parents were priced out of participation being students themselves and I will continue to apply the same principles for other students' children across all disciplines and faculties to encourage generational equality.

→ I CARE that International research students who are keen to remain in Ireland after College to develop a career find visa inequality most challenging. Postgraduates who invested thousands in fees have been unable to secure jobs and consequently, a visa sponsorship. I will continue to lobby the Department of Justice to extend the visa of all graduate students for one more year and I have worked closely with the GSU Vice President to start to develop a jobs project in **April 2021** that will not only be beneficial for students, but also for the Irish market for retaining a qualified and diverse workforce from the Trinity College Dublin postgraduate community.

→ I CARE about fee certainty for all students but especially International students. **December 2020** brought inequity when EU students received a €250 refund but international students did not. Added to this the huge fees incurred by international (Non-EU) students and are crippling and I will insist on 0% increase for incoming postgraduate International students in the coming years. In **June 2020** I lobbied Finance Committee in partnership with the Students' Union to shelve a proposed 3% Fee increase for **2022/23** postgraduate students and postgraduate fee increases will be discussed instead when the new Board convenes in **September 2021**.

→ I CARE that many postgraduates will become alumni of Trinity before the COVID response will be fully lowered, and have not





experienced the student experience promised. I will lobby at every level regarding a percentage fee refund as I believe this to be an Equality issue as some Non-EU postgraduate students paid for an education which took place purely online while based in another country for the entire year. I will continue to raise this at the highest levels and collaborate with the student body to put forward our student experience for examination at College level in **June/July 2021**.

→ I CARE that the Provost Candidates in this year's election who garnered the support of 1185 votes from postgraduate students, demonstrated interest in and support for the postgraduate community, not simply for economic reasons but because they genuinely cared. I am excited to work with the incoming Provost and to work to develop her promises made in her manifesto and in postgraduate GSU meetings to postgraduates to fulfil the postgraduate mandate. We have a meeting requested for **July 2021 and others to follow**.