

Presidential Candidates' Answers:

C/N: Brief mention of sexual harassment

You've all been on the HUS before, what do you think was your biggest accomplishment on the HUS?

Phoebe Hardingham:

As Umme and Julius will concur, a lot of the work we found the most rewarding last year does actually have to remain confidential as it directly involves students. We advocated for several students directly and had discussions with high level members of staff about weaknesses in the pastoral care system, as well as pushing for more counselling support in college. We worked a lot with students to gain an understanding of where the system and current policies weren't working. I think setting those conversations in motion, which at times felt intimidating and challenging in the face of college policies, was really valuable. At the end of my tenure, I was working directly with a sexual health company and charity after being horrified at the cuts to sexual health provision in Cambridgeshire and I worked to secure access to sexual health testing for students through this. Ultimately, it was my experiences working with and advocating for students to college staff that I feel were my biggest achievements.

Harry Convey:

The effective running and management of Quaranteam (where a team of HUS members stepped in to look after the returning quarantining students at the beginning of last Michaelmas) was probably the hardest thing I had to do in my time on the HUS and our greatest accomplishment. Something like 80 students were in quarantine and we had to make sure they were all contacted daily for welfare, fed, had parcels and shopping delivered and generally supported them for the duration of their quarantines. I had to develop entire systems and spreadsheets, basically overnight, to effectively manage this very complex problem but it was rewarding to be able to help people out! Developing the Homerton app and shutting down some of the more *questionable...* suggestions in staff meetings also jump out as highlights and accomplishments as VPI this year.

How do you think you will be able to support the rest of the HUS team effectively?

Phoebe Hardingham:

In my experience this year as President of a newly set up university society, teamwork has been absolutely vital. I would consider myself an understanding and diplomatic team leader, able to reconcile tensions that may arise between HUS team members or with members of staff. As previously mentioned, it has been through advocating for student needs that I've found my greatest satisfaction, and I'm not afraid to challenge college to ensure that the HUS team is able to collectively achieve its aims in representing student interests. I know that as Welfare Officer, it being one of the most time and emotionally intensive roles on the team, at times I found myself struggling with the load. Through personal experience, I know that you cannot pour out of an empty cup, so I would always remind students that it's ok to step back and look after themselves. More practically, our training as Welfare Officers was designed to make us

excellent and compassionate listeners, and this skill is definitely one I have carried with me and would put to use as HUS President.

Harry Convey:

I think regular meetings (ideally in person) and communication between members is very important in the effective running of the HUS, which unfortunately are things the inability to meet in person really didn't help this year. Specifically within this, I think it is very helpful to have constant communication so that people can very quickly notice if someone is burning out and jump in to help them! Less of a divide between the Support team and the HUS team is also something I would like to prioritise in running the HUS, as well as continuing the smaller groups intraHUS groups (i.e. this year the President and Welfare were in their own group etc.) so that every person in all the roles has a regular chance to talk to either the President, VPI, VPX or Treasurer more often.

What do you hope will be your biggest achievements during your tenure if you were to become HUS President?

Phoebe Hardingham:

I would love to be able to make long-lasting change to the pastoral and welfare system in college, carrying on those vitally important conversations I had as Welfare Officer, and consulting with students and improving the level of communication between students and college figures. I would consider my tenure a success if students felt that I had really represented them to college and proven to be a determined advocate. Homerton has been such a wonderful place to spend my undergraduate degree and is going through such an exciting period of change with the new hall, sports fields, and Porters Lodge plans, and new Principal (although of course Geoff will be greatly missed by all). Alongside all these new facilities, we can harness this momentum to create a change in certain aspects of college culture, creating an even more friendly and social community, and a truly effective and compassionate pastoral system.

Harry Convey:

I would be satisfied at the end of my tenure as HUS President if firstly, everyone who has so far had to sacrifice some key part of the university experience i.e. Freshers Week / Halfway Hall etc. felt like they had been 'made up to' and no one was leaving or moving on thinking they had missed out on parts of life at Cambridge that the college can easily make up to them. Secondly, if the nature of College has shifted in such a way that people can feel more comfortable in coming forward and seeking support for any difficulties they are having where the college has a duty of care, i.e. support for financial matters, sexual assault complaints, academic affairs or mental health support. Currently there are some systemic problems with the way these are handled, and I would start to correct this by publishing very clear and accessible guidance on how you can receive this support from the college. Also, the establishment of a formal complaints process about how these support applications are handled by staff so that people no

longer feel like they have no one to turn to after being mistreated in trying to seek support for these problems.

What are your plans for the current freshers who have missed out on a years' worth of socialising events?

Phoebe Hardingham:

As mentioned in my manifesto, I want to really amp up the amount of ents we put on at Homerton. I want to extent Sunday Funday beyond just Easter term, alongside library study and snack breaks, in order to promote as much interaction between students as possible. The current Cambridge SU reading week and weekends proposal is one I'm really excited about and stand firmly behind. It could provide an opportunity for students to reclaim a work-life balance, enabling participation in social events without worrying about falling irreparably behind on work, and also creating time for more fun events to be run in that period without the dread of having to wake up for your 9:00 AMs! I'd love the new Griff bar to be a more social and community-oriented space, open every night of the week and weekend, running regular quizzes with prizes alongside open mic nights. With the future of clubbing in the city-centre currently uncertain, Cambridge Junction at the Leisure Park could rise in prominence as an alternative venue. Homerton is ideally situated for this, and I would love to see 'Fire in the Griff' return as in previous years, but run as a ticketed event before major Junction nights out, with the opportunity to showcase emerging student talent from across the university.

Harry Convey:

As I speak about in my manifesto, poster and campaign video, there are a lot of plans to both catch up on what everyone (particularly Freshers) have missed out on, to make next year some of the most vibrant and lively terms in the history of the college. Specifically to the Freshers, I say that we will catch up on your Freshers week as soon as we are able to, with something for everyone to enjoy, whatever you're into. I hope that this 'Refreshers' and the events we will run in Homerton over the next year will go some way to making up for everything people have had to miss so far over the course of the year.

How do you think you're suited to work with the college to achieve the goals in your manifesto?

Phoebe Hardingham:

I would consider myself a diplomatic communicator and principled advocate. I've challenged college to rethink policies before and have had many resulting productive discussions. There is momentum to build on in enacting change, but it is necessary to be determined and not easily discouraged in the face of setbacks. As Welfare Officer I attended regular pastoral and tutor meetings and advocated directly for students, giving me an insight into how the college bureaucracy operates. I also built constructive relationships with many senior members of staff that I hope to build upon as HUS President.

Harry Convey:

This year has been very different for my role to take on, with a lot more interfacing with staff than was previously expected of the Vice President Internal. As a result of having dozens of hours of meetings over the course of the year, I have developed an excellent understanding of how the College works at the administrative level and I know exactly who to contact and how to do so for any issue that arises. As well as this, I have a good working relationship with many staff members at the college which will allow me to quickly and effectively work to bring about the changes students want to see as we come out of the pandemic.

What practical steps will you take to ensure that the harassment and discrimination procedures are actually improved and made more visible?

Phoebe Hardingham:

Highlighting the roles of Georgie Horrell and Eireann Attridge as College Harassment and Discrimination Contacts is crucially important. A fresher's week talk addressing the harassment and discrimination reporting procedure and introducing the College Harassment and Discrimination Contacts, for freshers and also all existing students, or as part of the existing consent workshops, would be an excellent first step. The process can be confusing and exceptionally hard for students to manage, so the creation of a step-by-step demystifying guide included in fresher's welcome packs, as well as being available online and outside the College Nurse's Office and HUS office would be a valuable measure. This is something I am passionate about, having been involved with Homerton for Consent, Cambridge for Consent, and also cathART, which was set up in response to frustrations with college handling of sexual harassment reporting. I've gathered student testimony before and would continue to do so, reminding college of their burden of care towards students. An anonymous feedback form for students to share their experiences with the reporting process would provide valuable information and impetus for change, ensuring that policy and measures remain under scrutiny.

Harry Convey:

In my speech and manifesto (where I also have more policies for specific complaints procedures), I talk about the relatively easy changes we can quickly make to improve people's experience with bringing harassment and discrimination complaints to College. The first is to make the process for seeking support much more transparent and accessible and I would achieve this by assembling comprehensive guides and advice on how to bring these complaints up formally with college and make these very accessible, most likely on a dedicated section of the HUS website. Hopefully for a start, this ease with which you can bring complaints to the college should help more people come forward. Secondly, there needs to be an independent process to keep staff handling these complaints accountable. This is a massive problem at the moment whereby certain cases of harassment and discrimination have been handled outrageously by College and then people are left feeling like they have no one to turn to. This will not be the case when we can formally hold people to account for their actions under a new system.

A few years ago, a brutal attack was launched upon our dietary choice, when full sugar Coca-Cola was removed from the buttery and hall. Due to a valiant letter to Paul Coleman written by a Dietary Choice Warrior, our liberties were ultimately saved -- but the enemies of choice still plot in the shadows. Will you pledge to stand firm and ensure that we are free to consume unhealthy grub and grog, and to tirelessly oppose the insidious march of the nanny state?

Phoebe Hardingham:

As a full sugar Coca-Cola drinker myself, I am much indebted to the actions of said brave dietary choice warrior. We are all adults and capable of making our own choices, dietary or otherwise. Many's the time I've nipped into the buttery for a sugar waffle mid-essay crisis, and we all need a self-care brownie now and then. Student input into catering options is really important, and I would love to collect more student input to take to the Bar and Catering Committee in order to promote a sense of community ownership over decision-making.

Harry Convey:

I, unlike Dame Sally Davies, understand the importance to people in their freedom to choose to "consume unhealthy grub and grog" and I pledge that her shadow will not loom large inside Homerton's walls whilst I am HUS President.