WP Student Network

First meeting 6th March 2019 – Helen Martin Studio

Programme

4:00pm	Registration
4:05pm	Introduction to Network and icebreaker
4:20pm	World Café
	Questions around the WP Journey
4:50pm	**Feedback on questions**
5:20pm	Strategy Update
	WP Strategy Consultation
5:30pm	Pizza and Networking

Feedback and thoughts

Total attended: 43 (plus the three WP Faculty Coordinators and the WP Lifecycle Officer)

A brief overview of the network was given to attendees, however this was also discussed to allow the students to form their own views on how the network would best work for them.

Attendees:

There appeared to be a good mix of students from across the student population including some mature students from CLL and a strong ethnically diverse representation. There was also good representation from across the faculties and subject areas.

Written responses to set questions during World Cafe:

Students were given flipchart paper with set questions on. In total there were 13 questions. Each question was seen by two groups and each group had approx. 5 mins to discuss and answer the questions.

Q. What ideas do you have to encourage a more diverse student population and how could this be carried out both locally and nationally?

- The SU should recognise classism on campus as discrimination.
- Going in to underperforming schools and working with students and parents to understand the misperceptions of University.
- Share information about bursaries and financial support.
- Mentors – for deeper outreach at schools but they must be relatable i.e. similar backgrounds

Q. Who were your biggest influencers and supporters when making decisions about university and how did they support you?

- Teachers – encouraging
- Myself
- Parents – supportive
- Student Finance – accessibility
- Friends
- Pressure from relatives

Q. Did many of your peers come to Warwick/a competitive university? How was your application journey different to those around you?

- One or two people came to Warwick with me.
- There is a difference between people who went to a Grammar School (compared to State) in terms of ambition.
- Depending on the subject, some deadlines for applications were more rushed.
- School/colleges not very helpful for some people.
- Warwick is not much of a popular choice of Uni where I came from.
- I came alone but bumped in to someone here.
- 6 other people.
- Application prep seems to be very similar across schools, but exam prep is very different.
- No, most people were encouraged to apply for non-Russell Group Universities.
- There should be Access and Participation Ambassadors across every department – paid role.

Q. What were/are the challenges (if any) faced when applying to Warwick and during your studies?

- Society Fees e.g sports teams
- Cost of societies trips (tours very expensive)
- Outsider Syndrome/Imposter Syndrome
- High Student Finance Students not understanding vs others
- Uni Balls are very expensive.
- Accents! Feel like an outsider and not able to be myself due to my accent. Can hear that I stand out.
- Unprepared for the STEP paper – no support from school or college.
- Feeling like an outcast and being embarrassed about circumstances.

Q. Did you find applying to University easy? Why yes/no?

- Funding to visit Uni's made it difficult and too expensive.
- Parents – didn't want me to go abroad.
- Not enough prep or support for applying to University inc Oxbridge.
- Yes – easy to use UCAS to find Uni's on UCAS – my sixth form had a lot of brochures.
- Student Finance was difficult to understand.
- Importance of visiting Universities.
- Yes – ranking of Uni's was easy to find out

- Difficult to find out the importance/difference between your preferred course and Uni rankings.
- Lack of academic support from Teachers – teachers underestimating potential of students primarily in low-socio economic schools or students from low-socio economic backgrounds at Grammar/Private Schools.
- Intimidated grades and reputation of Uni.

Q. Do you think you have enough access to information and opportunities on work experience and postgraduate study? Do you feel confident in knowing what routes are available?

Work Experience:

- Emphasis on corporate jobs.
- MyAdvantage – advertised here.
- Term 2 smaller companies should be brought on to campus.
- Teach people about networking, perhaps term 1.
- Importance of LinkedIn and how to use it.
- Most affluent students can get work experience from family which we don't have access to.
- More information and clarity on 'networking'.

Postgraduate Study:

- Inaccessible due to funding.
- Not enough advertised on how WP students can access a Post Grad course,
- Some courses are too expensive.

Q. Do you think there is a difference in experiences between students who commute and those who live on campus?

- Off campus accommodation allows you to be more responsible in terms of managing life skills e.g utility bills management.
- People who commute may miss out on the social aspects of Uni.
- People who commute miss out on building friendship groups.
- Commuting costs hundreds of pounds per year.
- Bus overcrowding – resulting in being late to lectures.

Q. Do you feel that all students have equal access to extra-curricular activities such as societies and study abroad?

- NO!!!
- Finance costs
- No time
- Inadequate support – disabled students.
- The feeling of not fitting in.
- Lack of cultural capital.
- Lack of previous experience e.g. sporting.
- Discrimination/racism.
- Having a part time job.

Q. Do you feel a sense of belonging at Warwick?

- Yes because you can join any society without being judged on background.
- There's something for everyone to do.
- Freedom to start a new society if you feel like there's something lacking.
- Yes because of the campus life.
- Can be harder when friends leave for a year abroad or graduate.
- Found making friends to be quite easy as there are lots of people my age and you can find those with similar hobbies by going to societies.
- CLL being on Westwood leads to isolation.

Q. Should students have more influence around the widening participation agenda at Warwick and how?

- School visits – a lot more schools not just Cov (no one came to my school ☹)
- Yes – we're the most recent people to take part in WP so we can help.
- You get told you can go to Uni but when you get here it's not fine. (*Someone also commented 'very true' next to this one*).
- Not feeling supported – academically, socially, emotionally.
- Not having our own social networks disadvantages further.
- Maybe could meet the WP students before they start University.
- Not everyone is aware of the Warwick Scholarship Programme (WSP) especially at Grammar/Private schools for bursary recipients.
- WSP should be opened up to all years so that those who missed it or didn't know about it in first year, could apply.
- Opportunities e.g Warwick in Africa inaccessible due to funds.
- Accommodation system for WP returning students poor: Lakeside, Tocil and Claycroft all start at £5000, no cheaper options. Also when allocating for first years, affordability should play a part – can WP/low income be an option for those allocating?

Q. What are the good things about being a student at Warwick?

- Educational experience.
- Broaden your horizons.
- Support from the staff.
- Campus – Green spaces and Ducks!
- Range of different sports clubs and societies.
- Internships.
- Bursary for low income students.
- Good reputation.
- Job opportunities.
- Jobs on campus.
- Hardship fund.
- Tiered accommodation, however not guaranteed.
- Location – shops etc

Q. Did you see yourself represented when you came to an open day/visit day? Or when looking through marketing materials? What would you like to see?

- Official marketing materials weren't very representative, rather it was personal blogs, social media accounts of students that helped.
- Societies should advertise a more realistic picture of their clubs and include events such as the Balls and Conferences in their materials and costs should be up front.

Q. What advice would you give your 15 year old self?

- Gain some work experience.
- Make sure that you pick the correct GCSE's and A Levels.
- Don't let anyone stop you from doing what you want to do.
- Do something you enjoy.
- Be more ambitious, believe in yourself more.
- Only visit relevant universities, the ones that you are considering applying for and for the right reasons.
- Consider life after applications and admissions. Will you actually like it there?

Verbal responses to questions:

Q. Discussion point – WP Network

The feeling in the room was that this type of network was very helpful but they would have wanted it to be have been set up much earlier to allow for them to meet people from similar backgrounds to them.

A discussion was had around introducing the network during Welcome Week and this was met with a very positive response. The students also talked about having peers from this group to support students early on in their University journey.

Some students felt happy to be 'labelled' as WP students if it meant that extra support or information was available to them. For example being able to meet other students who were of a similar background or being given access to further opportunities for development. They felt that their personal tutors knowing their background wouldn't be a problem.

Q. Discussion point – Sense of belonging

There was a discussion on a 'sense of belonging' took place, and building on the written responses some students felt that they were isolated in comparison to more advantaged peers especially in first year and in halls. Other students talked about feeling left out of conversations due to not having any similar backgrounds or knowing areas of London.

Further discussion was had on the regional recruitment of Warwick and that many students were from the south of England, not the north. Students talked about feeling isolated and not fitting in.

Students from different parts of the campus, for example Westwood, discussed a sense of belonging being placed there but felt very 'different' when coming on to main campus. Also that working with younger undergraduate students could be difficult.

Q. Discussion point – Commuter students/parking

There was also a discussion around the experience of commuter students and the lack of social areas for them or to meet other commuter students. Parking on campus was also a big problem for them.

Q. Discussion point – Contextual/lower offers

A discussion took place around contextual offers – and it was felt that the perception from some Warwick students (outside of the Network) was that those who got in on lower grades, didn't deserve to be at Warwick and that it was unfair that due to their background they had been made a lower offer.

Q. Discussion point – Accommodation

Another discussion was accommodation, in particular views on the pre entry accommodation application process. Students commented that they liked the tiered pricing structure that allowed them to choose the cheapest accommodation. But there was some difficulties with allocation of halls and being given more expensive options, as well as difficulties for returning students after their year aboard.

Q. Discussion point – Societies

Some students felt that money played a big part in not allowing students to take up extra-curricular activities. Joining fees and expectations to take part in socials through societies were costing upwards of £300, which was unaffordable to most, especially if wanting to join more than one society. These costs should be made more visible especially at Welcome Week and when joining societies.

Overall it was felt that the Network had been a very successful event. Students expressed that they felt very positive and were looking forward to the next one.