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Regional Board Report

Subject: Borders College Students' Association Update	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☐ **For Discussion** ☒ **For Information** ☐
Prepared by: Students' Association Support Officer	**Date of Committee:** 22/06/23
Purpose: To inform the Regional Board of the activity of the Borders College Students' Association.	
Executive Summary: This report covers the activities of the Students' Association during academic 2022/23, providing examples of student feedback and student activity captured from different areas of work. It also looks forward to the next academic year at the changes we hope to implement in order to improve. **Key items:** Surveys, Student Experience Committee, Class Representatives, Mental Health, College Visits, Plans for Improvement. **Questions that Members should ask themselves when reading the paper:**	
Linked to Strategic Ambition(s): Take a leading role in enabling an inclusive, resilient and sustainable Scotland Create high quality learning and training opportunities which are relevant, enabling and flexible **Performance Measures:** Engaged & empowered staff and student body Student Outcomes in top quartile of national colleges	
Linked to Strategic Risk Register: 1c - Learners Needs 4b - Governance	
Recommendation:	
Previous Committee Approvals: CQSE 01/06/23	
For publication ☒	**Not for publication** ☐ **If not, why not?**

Borders College Students' Association Update

Surveys

BCSA have shared two main surveys with Borders College students during the academic year 2022/23. These surveys were the Big Student Survey 1 February 2023 and the Big Student Survey 2 May 2023. Both surveys are completed online. The first survey looked at the general experience of students at Borders College and the second survey focused on the experience of student induction.

The Big Student Survey 1 Key Findings:

- Received 183 responses (increase of 186% from the previous year's survey).
- 88% of students were satisfied with their college experience, compared to 90% in 2022.
- 81% of students have enough time with lecturers in class, compared to 72% in 2022.
- 156 students (85%) knew how to contact and access support services, this compares to 84% in 2022.
- 56% of students felt there was a strong student voice culture at the college, this compares to 76% in 2022.

The Big Student Survey 2 Key Findings:

- Received 94 responses to this survey which is -89 from the Big Student Survey February 2023. However, it remains 47% higher than the Big Student Survey 2 2021-2022.
- 89% of students were satisfied with their student induction during 2022.
- 91% of students agree that it is important to receive their timetable before induction week.
- 89% of students felt it was important to have opportunities to meet other students during induction.
- 82% of Newtown and Tweedbank students agreed that it is important to visit the Galashiels campus during induction so that they are confident visiting the campus throughout their time attending college.

Throughout the year BCSA also conducts smaller pulse surveys which are completed in person. In February 2023, BCSA conducted a pulse survey asking students what was most important to students at Borders College. Some of the key findings were:

- Received 159 responses across our three campuses.
- Students felt that mental health was most important as this received 39% of votes compared to the other options which included sustainability/climate change, sexual health, healthy living, cost-of-living crisis, finances and employment, healthy relationships, study support, LGBTQ+ awareness, and drug and alcohol awareness.

- The lowest response rates went to sexual health, LGBTQ+, and drug and alcohol awareness all having only 4 responses.

Feedback from the Big Student Survey 1 was taken to the first Student Experience Committee and shared with College managers. The Big Student Survey 2 will be used to guide the planning of student induction in the coming academic year. The pulse survey helped guide the work of the BCSA as we have a better understanding of what students hope to see on campus.

Throughout the year we have received a total of 514 student responses to surveys (436 of these responses coming between January and May 2023). We also came 5th in Scotland in encouraging students to complete the 'NUS BIG Student £££ Survey 2022' out of colleges and universities as we received 113% of our expected response rate.

Student Experience Committee

The Students' Association typically holds three Student Experience Committees throughout the academic year. However, two SEC were held in the academic year 2022/23. The SEC is a student-led group that discusses the student experience and agrees on actions to improve the lives and learning of students at Borders College.

The committee is chaired by a member of the Students' Association's Executive Team. Student representatives and College Managers also attend the committee.

The first SEC of the year took place in March and the second is scheduled to take place at the beginning of June. In the next academic year there will be one held in October, February and May.

SEC Minutes March 2023

Class Representatives

October 2022 saw 50 Class Reps elected across College classes.

Every Rep was invited to sign up to one of three training dates at the beginning of November facilitated by SPARQS. An online training module form SPARQS was made available via Canvas. Live training sessions on Teams were also available for Reps to sign up to:

- 21 Class Reps completed the Canvas module
- 19 Class Reps attended the live Teams training sessions
- 11 Class Reps completed both forms of training
- 29 Class Reps received training which is 58% of those who were elected.

Throughout the year Class Reps have met with their classes to solve class-based issues and bring issues to the BCSA to solve on their behalf. For example:

- A class of students felt treated unfairly as they were unable to attend Graduation due to not meeting the criteria. BCSA took this to the appropriate Graduation representative who confirmed that departments should be putting

plans in place to ensure that students can celebrate their achievements through individual celebrations.

- We heard that numerous students were struggling to balance college life and home life. This resulted in BCSA working to increase student awareness of the study spaces available on campus. Also, we can now invite appropriate external organisations onto campuses to offer support to students.
- One class shared that they had concerns about the affordability and variety of food in the canteen. This has been shared with the current review of the catering tender.

In the next academic year, BCSA hope to review the Class Rep system. We plan to train Reps closer to the beginning of the academic year. We also plan to introduce a Student Council which all Reps will sit on and ensure that providing feedback is simpler than the current process. The Student Council will take place via a Teams channel and allow students to ask questions and raise proposals for other students to vote on to guide the work of the Student' Association. This will require the Students' Association to develop our own training materials which will be personalised to our College in comparison to SPARQS' more general training. We will work with SPARQS to evaluate Class Rep training. A new, more formalised Class Rep system would work more efficiently at supporting student feedback and encourage Class Reps to engage more in Students' Association activity.

Mental Health

From the feedback of our first pulse survey it was clear to see the student concern around mental health. This has resulted in working with Student Support to plan a month worth of activities to raise awareness for Mental Health Month May.

The Students' Association has also secured the Old Shop space on the Galashiels Campus as a student social area, shared with Heriot-Watt students. This space provides students with a social space to take time away from their studies, socialise and form connections with fellow students, and interact with BCSA activities.

The BCSA is currently working to coordinate Mental Health Training for our three Student Officers.

All BCSA Student Officers also signed the NUS Scotland 'Save Our Counsellors' petition. This campaign calls for the Scottish Government to halt their plans to remove the funding which ensures Colleges across Scotland can provide mental health counselling to students.

College Visits

Throughout January, February and March the BCSA Support Officer visited Dumfries & Galloway College Students' Association, West Lothian College Students' Association, and Fife College Students' Association. These visits facilitated the sharing of good practice and provided the newly appointed Support Officer with an understanding of the current landscape of student representation in Scottish Colleges.

Impacts from visiting other Students' Associations:

- BCSA are currently reviewing our Constitution to better reflect and represent our students.
- We are planning a new approach to our Class Rep system due to the variety of Class Rep systems across Scottish Colleges.
- Building stronger working relationships with Students' Association colleagues.
- Provided and understanding of the different stages of Students' Association development.

Plans for Improvement

Looking towards next year the BCSA are hoping to implement changes across our work to allow us to better represent students.

Our plans and hopes for next year:

- Launch our new Constitution to allow the BCSA to function more effectively.
- Launch our Student Council to capture feedback and support Class Reps.
- Become more visible among students; therefore, ensuring that we are actively representing student voices.
- Create a stronger understanding of the purpose and role of the Students' Association among staff.
- Ensure that our committees, class rep meetings, and surveys follow a more appropriate timeline and are spread across the academic year.
- Encourage members and Student Officers to actively work to encourage change at Borders College by supporting their decisions, connecting them with the appropriate staff, and working together to improve the student experience.