**Civic Engagement Forum Strategy Session** Date: 02/02/18

***DCU Volunteer***

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DCU Volunteer is a relatively a new branch of the Office of Civic Engagement, which itself is a greatly established pillar of the university. With the introduction of a Volunteer Champion, which then evolved into a Student Volunteer Coordinator, a home was required for voluntary work being done across the board in DCU. Hence, the creation of DCU Volunteer, a revised branding of the original ‘DCU Volunteering’, took places with the aim to be a patron, ally and advocate for all voluntary, civic and charitable opportunities ongoing and moulding themselves in DCU.

Coming from a background of DCU in the Community, with great support via our community links and outreach, an established and rich history, elevating DCU Volunteer and its objectives has been a fulfilling task. A workforce of passionate people and an embedded philosophy surrounding social responsibility among DCU staff, students and community, has meant that engaging our university in the civic realm is a continuous and growing sector.

Upon looking at the statistics surrounding DCU’s volunteering student body, the present survey data indicates that approximately 20% of students engage in volunteering. In our ‘Engaged Students’ section of the DCU Engagement Strategy for 2017-2020 we say we hope to double this number. Using analytics from our championing national platform StudentVolunteer.ie, our numbers showcasing students registering or utilising the site are very low in comparison to other partnering HEI’s i.e. a total of less than 250 students from DCU online.

However, whilst this data provides a poor reflection the reality is that the number of students volunteering and engaging civically with our communities locally, nationally and internationally is quite high. For instance, DCU’s charitable and civic societies have been honoured with awards from inside and outside our campus, many going on to gain national and international recognition including BICS and World Cup competitions. Ground-breaking projects such as HeadstARTS and Raising and Giving society amongst multiple others have paved the way to a hive of activity surrounding civic engagement within DCU. This strong ethos of charitable and civic endeavors is in need of recognition and reward on a standard scale, for those pioneering on a smaller level particularly in an individual capacity.

As in Strategic Goal 1 and Strategic Goal 9, the integration of external engagement via either a module or an extra-curricular engagement award would stimulate and encourage student volunteering across our DCU campuses. The implementation of an engagement measure of this nature would greatly improve the standpoint of not just volunteering and DCU Volunteer itself, but of Civic Engagement as whole within the university. It is vital that this goal is kept to the forefront of all agendas and expansions of student lead engagement and volunteering in DCU. It is immensely achievable by harnessing the incredible energy of our civically engaged student population and branching outwards to fresh faces and faculties.

Apart from this, increasing communication between schools and partners of External Strategic Affairs and strengthening the links DCU Volunteer has with our Students Union (most importantly the Engage & Development Officer) will allow for growth of not just student volunteering but civic engagement as a whole in DCU. We must continue to assist and cater for our students who are the beating heart of our university, and who will go on to use the knowledge and experience they have gained from their time here to further benefit the world - a path we want them to pave whilst in DCU.