



Jenny Maguire

JENNY MAGUIRE is a familiar name around the city, both inside and outside of Trinity's campus. A co-organiser of Trans and Intersex Pride Dublin, Jenny has become one of the most recognisable and influential student activists of her generation. She has just triumphed in the election for the Trinity College Dublin Students' Union (TCDSU) presidency, winning by a landslide of 1,795 votes (76%) to 481 (20%). But the journey ahead of her will not be easy. With the politicisation of TCDSU a contentious issue, she may find it hard to enact the changes she wants to make.

Since campaigning began for the Trinity union elections in mid-February, Maguire's candidacy has loomed large over proceedings. This has been true of her college experience in general, with Maguire making her presence known in Trinity since the get-go.

She has, like many budding union hacks and student politicians before her, climbed higher up the union ladder year on year. She was a class rep in her first year of college, which was entirely online as a result of that pandemic we had a couple years ago. She then became LGBT rights officer, a part-time position in TCDSU to which she, as a "proud transgender woman", gave much attention. Her most recent position in the union was as TCDSU gender equality officer last year.

Technically, there is no direct line of succession to the union's presidency but she came as close to a crown princess as is possible to get in a union.

Maguire was always a shoe-in for the high-profile student position and both major newspapers on Trinity's campus predicted a Maguire win by the highest margin in recent years. On the surface, this reflects an overwhelming endorsement of Maguire's politics by the student body in Trinity. But there is a loud minority on campus that is vehemently opposed to the increasingly left-leaning attitudes of the union.

Maguire's predecessor as president, László Molnárfi, made many friends and even more enemies during his tenure, which saw TCDSU becoming far more heavily involved in various social issues. Some say, sarcastically, that Molnárfi spun a giant wheel to decide what issue to care about week in week out, although to be fair, there was consistency to his advocacy for students' rights. A common view, however, is that Molnárfi would protest the moving of a bicycle shelter a foot to the right and would invite cameras along to capture it.

Maguire is seen as looking to continue on this more radical path, outlining in her manifesto that "the union has made great strides this year, but now is the time to push ourselves even further and not get comfortable".

Maguire's vast experience in organising marches and protests will stand to her in this new role. She is the co-organiser of Trans and Intersex Pride Dublin, a grassroots socialist group fighting for trans liberation. TCDSU has actively and consistently been a voice for trans rights in recent years, a policy that has been greatly shaped and consolidated by Maguire herself.

In her role as co-organiser, Maguire has helped to organise protests and pride marches, which reportedly have an average attendance of 5,000 people annually. These are impressive numbers and speak to her ability to garner engagement from people – a skill that is sorely needed in the college, where last year five times as many people applied for Trinity Ball tickets than voted in TCDSU elections. (This may not be the case this year,

against trans discrimination or against Israel's genocide in Gaza is not supporting students.

It is unlikely that Maguire, even though she has insisted she will not be radical just for "the sake of radicalism", could have done enough to secure their votes – not that she needed them.

The votes of this dissatisfied group on campus went to her opponent, comedian Ralph Balfe.

Ralph (pronounced 'rayf' for reasons unknowable) has an undergraduate degree from the University of Oxford and a budding career in stand-up comedy. His campaign centred around banning all tourists from Trinity's campus (a pledge that even die-hard Maguire-heads can get behind).

From day one it was clear that his campaign was likely nothing more than an overly ambitious advertisement for his stand-up career and that his left-field campaign promises were never intended to be taken seriously. However, he emerged (against his will) as the protest vote for conservative students who do not feel represented by Jenny's politics.

This likely came as a shock to Balfe, who ran a clean campaign and even developed something of a double-act relationship with Maguire, with the two frequently firing jokes at each other and acting as if they were performing in a buddy comedy movie instead of campaigning for president. Balfe even said that in the unlikely event of his victory (he was polling at a meagre 14% at one point), his first action in office would be to immediately implement all of Maguire's policies.

The reactionary nature of the anti-Maguire presence on campus was rather exposed here: they voted for a man who is pro-trans rights, pro-mental health services expansion and pro-climate justice, all because he isn't Jenny (or to be cynical about it, because he isn't transgender).

Maguire ran an efficient campaign. She consistently brought the conversation back to the rights of students – be that students who have to work, students facing mental health crises or students struggling with the cost of living. She has not shied away from her desire to keep the union radical but is approaching the situation more cautiously than Molnárfi, who oftentimes had all the grace of a bulldozer painted TCDSU blue.

Maguire's effective coronation of Trinity's union is vindication for its increasing politicisation.



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considering that the announcement of the musicians that will be performing elicited such promising reactions such as, "who?... meh" and "I'm not paying €91 for this".)

Maguire's experience enabled her to bring out those voters that would have been likely to vote for her anyway and her seemingly omnipresent campaigning probably won over quite a few undecideds. But one group that she will struggle to garner support from, regardless of last week's vote, is the aforementioned loud minority – more conservative-minded students that do not only disagree with the union's left-leaning stance but, rather, with the union having any stance at all.

The increasingly political nature of the union has been blamed by some of these students as a reason why the union has not, in their view, been doing enough work for students. They would argue that protesting

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