

VOTE!

Maanya Raju

For VP Higher Education



I'm not running to be a symbolic VP. Higher education, it is too broken for decorative leadership.

I have lived the higher education system at every level and I refuse to accept it as inevitable. As an international student who completed both my undergraduate and master's degrees in the UK, I have experienced its opportunities and its inequities firsthand. I have worked my way through the Students' Union from frontline roles to senior leadership, learning how institutions operate. I believe higher education should produce confident, future-ready graduates, not indebted, cautious ones. I believe institutions must be challenged when they fall short. Student leadership must shift systems, not simply respond to them.

Realigning Higher Education

Higher education is structurally misaligned. Students sustain the system financially, academically, and culturally, yet lack clarity, protection, and influence. We are charged like customers, governed like risks, and treated as revenue streams. International students fund the model yet face the greatest precarity. Racially marginalised communities continue to experience structural inequity. Regulation prioritises institutional compliance over student empowerment.

This is not sustainable. And it is not inevitable.

The National Union of Students has defended the Graduate Route, campaigned on the cost of living crisis, and pushed for maintenance reform and equality commitments. That work matters.

I will build on it, and take it further, from reactive defence to structural reform. From highlighting inequity to correcting it.

I am running to realign funding, accountability, and future-readiness so higher education works for students, not against them.

1. Funding Integrity & International Justice

Institutions rely on rising international fees to compensate for domestic shortfalls, while maintenance support fails to keep pace with inflation. Students are absorbing systemic risk financially and politically.

International students, in particular, are positioned as financial stabilisers of the sector while facing visa insecurity, hostile rhetoric, and limited safety nets. That contradiction must be challenged.

I will:

- Demand a public breakdown of international fee cross-subsidy across institutions, using NUS research and media pressure where transparency is refused.
- Push for a binding national commitment that maintenance support rises with inflation, not political convenience.
- Mobilise unions to collectively challenge exploitative fee inflation, particularly where cost increases are not academically justified.
- Build a cross-union coalition to defend and expand post-study work rights, treating international students as contributors not bargaining chips.
- Call out institutions that increase fees while cutting student-facing services.

When the system relies on students to survive, students deserve structural power in return.

2. Decolonising Education & Institutional Accountability

Higher education cannot claim excellence while reproducing inequality. Awarding gaps persist. Curricula remain exclusionary. Anti-racism is too often reactive rather than structural.

Decolonising education is not symbolic diversification it is about power, authorship, and whose knowledge is legitimised. Tackling structural racism is not a workshop; it is an institutional responsibility.

I will:

- Push NUS to publish an annual national accountability scorecard ranking institutional progress on awarding gaps and decolonisation commitments.
- Demand formal student voting power in curriculum review structures, not advisory roles.
- Call out universities that brand anti-racism while failing to meet measurable equality targets.
- Coordinate collective union pressure where institutions repeatedly fail racially marginalised students.
- Lobby for regulatory oversight to include equality outcomes not just financial compliance.

Decolonisation without structural change is theatre. I am not interested in theatre.

3. Future-Proofing Higher Education

We cannot prepare students for a 2035 economy using 1995 rules. I strongly believe we are being raised to be academically cautious, yet professionally unprepared. Universities train us to avoid risk but fail to equip us to navigate a rapidly transforming workforce shaped by technology and AI. Students face inconsistent AI policies, and disciplinary risk while being denied structured guidance on how to use emerging tools responsibly and competitively.

I will:

- Force national consistency on AI assessment policy, no student should face disciplinary risk because their institution refuses clarity.
- Push for sector-wide adoption of explicit AI-per-assessment declarations as standard practice.
- Launch a coordinated campaign demanding AI literacy be embedded into degrees within this mandate not discussed indefinitely.
- Challenge institutions publicly where innovation is restricted without viable alternatives for skill development.
- Work to make employability reform measurable linking graduate outcomes to institutional accountability conversations.

If universities claim to prepare students for the future, they must prove it structurally not rhetorically. Students should graduate powerful, not paralysed.

4. From Representation to Power

Student leadership cannot remain consultative while decisions are structural. Too often, students are invited into rooms after the outcome is decided. Representation without leverage is symbolism. I am not interested in symbolism.

I will

- Use coordinated media strategy to amplify sector failures when necessary.
- Mobilise unions collectively where structural issues persist.
- Set mandate-based benchmarks for measurable VP HE outcomes.
- Shift NUS from reactive commentary to proactive sector strategy.
- Ensure postgraduate representation is structurally embedded in national campaigns.
- Escalate directly with regulators where institutional accountability fails.

The system will not realign itself. It will require pressure, clarity, and leadership that is willing to act. I am prepared to do that work.

Students deserve more than survival within this system. We deserve influence over it.

Let's make higher education work for students again.



The graphic features a circular portrait of Maanya Raju on the left, set against a dark blue background with orange geometric shapes. To the right of the portrait, the text reads: **Maanya Raju** For VP. Higher Education. Below this, in smaller text, it says: Find out more about who I am, what I stand for, and what I've delivered at @maanyaraju4vp.he.