

THE BIG PLAN - Strategic Vision 2013-2016

Mission Statement

'The Students' Union exists to help students get the most from their student experience'

Vision

'Inspire communities of actively engaged students'

Values

(To follow – student consultation in progress)

The Big Plan 2013-2016

Introduction

A wide range of stakeholders were consulted and have contributed to the development of The Big Plan (see **Appendices A & B**)

Student feedback clearly identified the need for the plan to recognise that:

- **Students are the Students' Union**
- Being **actively engaged** in University life should be an important feature of the plan
- Students value being part of a **student community** but that this was not necessarily an homogeneous community but one characterised by diversity, personality and interest
- Students' Union **communications** should reflect this diversity and word of mouth is the most effective way of engaging students
- Students should be encouraged to **support and inspire other students** but receive appropriate recognition and reward.

Feedback from all stakeholders highlighted the need to ensure that effective partnerships were established, both within and outside of the University community. These partnerships would enable the Union to more effectively support student needs through agreed programmes with relevant stakeholders.

The Union should build on what it believes are its' **Unique Selling Points (USPs)**:

- The **recognised voice of students**
- Leaders in work which engage students in **peer to peer support and development**
- Leaders in work which aims to develop students' **sense of belonging** within their student and local **communities**
- The provider of **advice and support independent** of the University
- The promoter of **innovative student enterprise programmes**
- The principal **promoter of change on behalf of students.**

By the end of the planning period the Union will be recognised as one of the top five students' unions and shall have developed a reputation as a leader in:

- **Peer to peer support** - (as evidenced through levels of student satisfaction, benchmarking with other universities who run peer to peer support programmes and our profile at national conferences)
- **Academic representation** and students actively engaged in learning and broader student experience (as evidenced by the NSS (Listening University), Top Ten impact, student perception and satisfaction (SOS), number of student-led projects)
- **Student Enterprise Education** (as evidenced by levels of involvement centrally and in faculties, generation of business ideas to spin-out companies, impact in the business community and profile at national and international conferences and national awards)
- **Student-developed accreditation and recognition schemes** (as evidenced by participation, volunteer satisfaction, through University employability measures and national employer testimonials)
- **High levels of student participation** in activities (as evidenced by participation data for all student groups and impact of interventions, student satisfaction with the range and diversity of opportunities, being in the top 10% of percentage of students involved in activities (NUS Annual Survey))
- **High levels of student engagement in the Students' Union** (as evidenced by SUEI levels of engagement)

In addition the Union will continue to be recognised as one of the top five Students' Unions, as evidenced by continuing accreditation in **SUEI (Gold), Investing in Volunteering, Investors in People, and Legal Services Quality mark**. The Union will also become one of the top five Students' Unions' for **students' satisfaction (NSS)** and with the University, remain the **top listening University (NSS)**.

Strategic Aims – priorities for the period of The Big Plan

The strategy sets out 4 key themes centred on **REPRESENTATION** and **CHANGE; SUPPORT; SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY; COMMUNITY**. These pick up the considerations in **Appendix A** and set out some 'big ideas' for how they can be put into effect. In each case, the themes will have success measures to identify what your Union seeks to achieve at the end of the 3 year period. These themes will each have annual goals and indicators to measure progress and attainment set out in **Appendix C** (Action Plan)

The strategy will be underpinned by an enabling framework (**Appendix D**) covering five areas: **COMMUNICATIONS; HR; FINANCE AND RESOURCES; GOVERNANCE; STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**. These will ensure that resources are used to support the themes and that our structures and processes enable you to actively engage with, and easily access your Union.

Theme 1: Working together to change the issues that affect your student experience

In our annual Students' Opinion Survey you told us that you believe that the University sees your Union as the voice of students' opinions and needs. You also told us it is very important that your Union influences the decisions taken by the University and works on issues that matter most to students. It will be important to identify the issues that matter most to you in the University, the local community and nationally to create change. Together we can promote change through student engagement activity, student-led initiatives and campaigning, as well as through having an influential voice in local and national issues. Within the new funding arrangements you have told us it is increasingly important that your representatives are fully engaged at the highest level of decision making in the University.

Big Ideas

- Identify and work with the University on the Top Ten issues that most matter to you.
- Prioritise and extend enhanced student engagement activities through an annual internship programme and part-time student research staff, as well as further developing the Student Experience Champions Programme.
- Ensure you are able to lead on changes that affect your student experience at the University through the Ideas to Action programme.
- Ensure that individual students and student groups are supported in effective campaigning.

Theme 2: Working together to make your life easier

Advice and support while you are at University is key to your success, academically and personally. Support during your first year is especially important; transition into higher education often means having to adapt to a wide range of new challenges such as new ways of learning, living independently, making friends and successful budgeting. Throughout University you have told us the most important thing is academic success and that you value the support and advice which your Union can offer.

Big ideas

- Work with the University and local businesses to increase and broaden a wide range of student employment opportunities on and off campus, including part time work and internships.
- Continue to set up and develop peer support programmes, including peer-led study groups and peer mentoring schemes, including bespoke schemes, as required, for those of you who are international students, postgraduates, mature students, student parents, LGBT students, and students with disabilities.

- Through working within the Investors in Diversity framework, better understand why some of you find participation in clubs, societies, volunteering & other activities difficult or unappealing, and make changes to address issues identified.
- Working in partnership with the University, develop a website, resources and training, initially for those of you in your first year at University (and, thereafter as the project continues for further student groups) to ensure you receive the right support and advice at the appropriate time to help you navigate through your university journey.

Theme 3: Working together to build communities of students

You told us that being part of a community of students is important to you. Sometimes your community will be fun, sometimes supportive and sometimes just reassuringly familiar. You don't just belong to one community while at University but to a number of different communities, on and off campus. Together we will help to build communities that are important to you, to provide fun and enjoyment, advice and support and an annual calendar of events and activities.

We recognise that your level and type of involvement in University life will depend on many factors such as course demands, culture and personality. It is important to try to understand these better so that your Students' Union can offer information and support for the things which you most value.

Big Ideas

- Develop a team of Students' Union ambassadors to inspire other students, through personal recommendation and experience and to highlight the opportunities available to you through your Students' Union.
- Work with a team of Hall Representatives and Freshers' Week Captains and Crew throughout the year to support a community of students in University Halls and the city.
- Extend the programme of recreational sport for all students, in conjunction with the University Sports Department, to complement the programme of competitive sport, and continue to work with ICIA to develop an accessible arts programme.
- Partnership working with Loughborough Students' Union on a project to develop, and support communities of students with common needs, attitudes and interests.

Theme 4: Working together to improve your skills while enjoying new activities and experiences

There are over 1000 students each year who lead activities throughout your Union, as well as the academic representatives who represent your views in departments, hall representatives who enhance your time in university halls, and mentors who support you in departments. It is important that these key volunteers are well supported, trained and recognised for the contribution they make to your time at University. You have said that, at

a time when the investment you make in coming to University is a significant one, it is also important that you are given the opportunity to develop CV enhancing skills, accreditation and experiences.

Big Ideas

- Develop a centre for student accreditation, further developing schemes such as the Bath Award, D of E etc.
- Extend the Sport Recognition Scheme across the Students' Union to recognise the contribution students make to improve the experience of other students.
- Enhance the Skills Training programme to ensure you have the opportunity to develop skills so you feel more equipped to run student-led activities and support programmes.
- Working with faculties to further extend opportunities to develop enterprise and entrepreneurial skills, in addition to the programme run centrally through the Students' Union.