



University of Wolverhampton

Students' Union

2011/12

Impact Report



www.wolvesunion.org

Over the year we

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This past year has been an excellent period, in which the Union has continued to have a positive impact on the student population.

Dan

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the University of Wolverhampton Students' Union's Impact Report for 2011/12. The report will highlight the excellent work that elected officers and staff have accomplished during the previous academic year. This past year has been an excellent period, in which the Union has continued to have a positive impact on the student population. At our Walsall Campus, our new Students' Union space was opened in November 2011, providing students with a venue to socialise, relax and enjoy events. The academic year ended with the news that further refurbishment works would be carried out in the Ambika Paul Student Union centre at our City Campus. During the summer the site has now been transformed into an engaging space that is proving extremely popular with our students.

The Students' Union has continued to evolve with the ever changing needs of students and this is demonstrated by the introduction of the Student Charter. The Charter, produced as a joint project between the Union and the University, provides clear guidelines for students and outlines their expectations of this educational institution.

We have also understood our role of enhancing the teaching experience for our students, which is displayed by the introduction of what will become the annual Students' Union Teaching Awards.

Nationally, the Students' Union was recognised for its progressive reforms, when it was awarded the Silver Green Impact Silver award. In addition to this, the Union was awarded the Co-operative Bank Most Improved Students' Union Award for our Green Impact work. The award is a result of the dedication of key staff and members of our elected officers, who have worked tirelessly toward improving this organisation.

Finally, the current Executive Team would like to thank our predecessors, Ken Harris, Ellen Marshall, Gemma Wright and Elizabeth Thomas, for the fine work they carried out during their respective tenures. The team have provided an excellent springboard for the Union to continue doing what it does best; representing students.

Thank you.
Dan Batchelor
President 2012/13



These are our
Core Aims

Over the year we

Lobbied the University to improve eVision, so it worked better for students and to **upgrade our PCs to Windows 7 & Office 2010**

Gave Money

back to students after lecturers' strikes & into a fund to support students to find employment

Dealt with **2,324** enquiries through our Advice and Support Centre and worked on 1,175 individual case files

In the first year of the NSS asking students to rate their SU

63%

of UoW students said they were satisfied or very satisfied with us

Worked with the University to create **Quiet Working Zones**

in the Learning Centre after complaints about noise

Had record numbers

of candidates standing and students voting in our elections

2

Created new graduate intern positions within our staff team

Saw 142 students volunteer **10,800** hours

Opened SU a new

on Walsall campus, complete with Squeezebox juice bar

Ensured that the University introduced a

£2.50 meal deal in its canteens





Held our first

Students' Union Teaching Awards

with over 250 nominations

Secured funding to refurbish the underutilised space in the City Campus SU and

open an evening bar service

within the Walsall SU

Received commendations

in the annual NUS Awards for our work around Equality and Diversity and Community Relations

front doors

Got the into the city SU automated for students with disabilities

Were one of a handful

of SU's to achieve Gold standard Be A Champion accreditation for our work around creating an Olympics legacy



Developed a **Charter Student** with the University around the student experience

Led **2** multi-agency 'All Out Days' in the local community

Employed **42** members of student staff who recorded 8226 hours

Held a series of **focus groups**

to test our Core Aims to and gain feedback on the SU

Had over **4,000** students attend our Welcome Week events

Were awarded

the Silver Green Impact Students' Union (GISU) standard and won GISU's 'Most Improved Students' Union'



Sold **4192** NUS extra cards, coming 10th in the country, enabling us to reinvest back into student facing services

Had **25,737** visits to our City Campus Activities Centre

Achieved Investors in People Bronze Standard



Help students acquire new skills & experiences



Volunteering

We had 142 students volunteering 10,800 hours with us, through SU projects across the University and local communities, including Best Mates, peer mentoring, Be A Champion, & Sport Relief OR through holding positions on sports and society committees and as School and Course Reps.

Volunteers were recognised for their efforts at our annual 'Vollies', attended by around 200 students and University staff. Some of the awards handed out were Society Chair of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, Course / School Rep of the Year, and New Society of the Year.

Societies

75 student societies were registered with us throughout the year, with a total of 1,426 members. Societies ranged from those based around interests, hobbies, causes, skills, sport, academic subjects, ethnicity, culture, politics, and religion. In total, they received almost £4,000 through the Society Development Fund. Some examples of the activities this funding supported are:

- Instructor costs for the Zumba Society
- Bar and Mooting Society trip to the Supreme Court in London
- London Expo visit by the Anime society
- Sikh Society football tournament
- Psychology Society annual conference
- Annual Pharmacy Society End of Year Ball

Positive aspects – getting involved in societies and events like Freshers Week

Student, NSS 2012 free text comments



- Christian Union Focus Week and Open Mic nights
- St John LINKS Scavenger Hunt
- Sign Language Society awareness event & Christmas Ball
- Military Society activities and wreath for Remembrance Day
- Student Radio Awards

Many of the above societies increased their memberships through bespoke Give It a Go sessions and larger scale events, such as 'Refreshers' Week at the end of January.

Gold in the men's indoor & outdoor 400m, whilst David Lima won Silver in the men's 200m outdoors competition at London's new Olympic Stadium.

- With Sport, Fitness and Health, we delivered a very successful Sports Awards Dinner and ceremony at Walsall FC's Bescot Stadium, with Christina Boxer as a brilliant guest speaker and around 150 students taking part. Awards were presented to celebrate individual and team performances, as well as noteworthy contributions on and off the playing field.
- We co-ordinated the Walsall Sports Relief Mile attended by 146 students and local residents in March, raising £1,530 for the charity.

Sport

- Over the year, 14 clubs (with 16 teams) with 232 members spent 748 hours training and attended 147 fixtures.
- We delivered, for the first time, an intensive 3 week early morning pre-season strength and conditioning training, open to all sports team members. It was pretty gruelling for participants so early in the morning but feedback was excellent!
- A new kit deal was signed and launched with Silver FX, enabling all teams to design their own playing kit.
- We were the overall champions in the annual Varsity competition against UCB, involving 150 of our sportsmen and women.
- We designed and produced 10,000 copies of a new Sports Handbook, in conjunction with Sport Fitness and Health, showcasing competitive and recreational sporting opportunities, as well as some of our talented students.
- We expanded opportunities for students to take part in recreational leagues in football (helped by the FA's Mars Just Play funding), badminton, squash, judo, indoor rowing, and cricket.
- Our Women's football team (pictured above) won the Midlands Conference Cup and narrowly missed out on winning their BUCS league championship, helped and supported by their brilliant coach, Adam Smallman.
- Athletics saw some great individual successes within BUCS - Tom Gregory won a gold in indoor cycling and Jarryd Dunn won

Gold Be a Champion

We were one of a handful of SU's awarded Gold Be A Champion accreditation by NUS, as well as the 'Inspire' mark, for our efforts towards the cultural Olympiad. We enlisted students to volunteer at - and take part in - our own sporting events and actively promoted employability opportunities for students to volunteer at the Olympic Games.

We also ran a project whereby student 'ambassadors' collected over 200 photographs of students and local people with statements about what the Olympics meant to them. These were then adapted into a beautiful 1.5m x 1.5m canvas montage by a UoW Art & Design student, Anthony Blood, in the shape of our SU Wolf logo (see picture above). This was displayed at Wolverhampton Art Gallery and various locations across the University campuses, before coming back home to the SU.

Towards the end of the year we created a new Student Engagement Department, bringing together Student Voice, societies, and volunteering under one team. We hope this will help us increase our future impact on our members' experiences, as well as diversify the interactions that individual students have with us.



Demonstrate Quality & Value

Elections

- We increased the number of candidates standing in our Autumn (29) and Spring (44) Elections and achieved a record number of votes at each – 866 in the Autumn (an increase of over 700 on turnout in 10/11) and 2,508 in the Spring (125% more than in 10/11).
- Our candidate and voter demographic information showed that we engaged an incredibly diverse mix of students; both candidates and voters. In our Spring elections 24% of students who voted were EU or International.
- We learnt lessons from the first year of electronic voting and developed a strategy to ensure this year's elections were as active and interactive as possible, with a high level of candidate promotion across the campuses.
- The Autumn elections centred around Part-time Executive Officer, Union Council and NUS Delegate positions, whereas the Spring elections were for the bulk of School Reps positions and our Full Time Executive Team.

Students' Union Teaching Awards

We were chosen to be part of the NUS initiative to roll out student-led teaching awards across the country. We also secured additional funding from the University and had over 250 nominations submitted from students into 11 categories, again chosen by students. Categories included Inspirational Tutor, Pastoral Care, Dissertation/Project Supervisor, and Support Staff Awards. We commissioned a UoW Art and Design student, Elliot Walker, to produce stunning, individual sculptures for the winners.

Around 200 students and staff attended the Awards in May at the Molineux stadium, which we held alongside our Vollyies Awards, allowing staff and students to recognise how they contribute to the University community. The night was a resounding success with the Deputy Vice Chancellor extolling the importance of such awards coming from students themselves. Reni Eddo-Lodge also gave a fabulous speech on behalf of the NUS National Executive and presented some of the awards (see picture opposite).

National Student Survey

In February we encouraged students to fill in the National Student Survey across the campuses, offering free meal vouchers as an incentive. That week the number of students completing the survey rose by 7% - as did the University's eventual overall score which went from 60 to 67% - it's highest ever response rate.

Q23 – for the first time final year students were asked, as part of the National Student Survey, to rate how satisfied they were with their Students' Union and its services. 63% of our members stated they were satisfied, or very satisfied with us, providing us with a benchmark to build on in future years.

Mystery shopping

We commissioned NUS Services Ltd to mystery shop our Reception, Activities Centre and Advice & Support Centre (ASC) at City Campus and our Reception and Juicebar at Walsall. The Reception achieved a score of 100% - compared to a national average of 92% across all Unions. ASC scored 100% and the Activities Centre 100% (national average of 95%). Walsall Reception and juice bar scored 97%.

NUS Awards

We received commendations at the annual NUS Awards for our work around Equality and Diversity and Community Relations.

Reasons for this include :-

(i) We secured, for the first time, student seats on the University's Equality and Diversity Joint Committee after delivering a student-led presentation at their Biennial Conference, highlighting issues of concern around the student experience. We also ran focus groups for students with disabilities to gain a better insight into their experiences on campus. We are now working with the Student Enabling Centre to promote good practice and address the problems raised.

(ii) In the community, we led 2 multi-agency 'All Out Days' in Whitmore Reans (Wolverhampton). Alongside local statutory agencies, organisations and charities we spoke to student and non-student residents and gave advice and information about local services. Our All Out Day in November focussed on safety and security (see picture opposite) whilst the April day had an environmental theme.

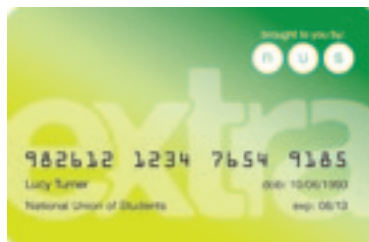


Open Days and Access work

We played a key role in ensuring another year of successful University Open Days providing officer talks, tours of the SU, and advice for prospective students and their parents on funding. We also supported the University's recruitment team in attending a number of local feeder schools, as well as HE fairs, to talk to students about the financial element of coming to University and what role the SU plays in the student experience.

All Student Meeting

Our 2011 All Student Meeting was our 3rd consecutive Annual General Meeting to reach quoracy (picture to the right). Our Officers were keen to put decision making back in the hands of students and, to this end, students were asked to vote for a 'Students' Choice' campaign, with the majority choosing 'Student Financial Support'. They also elected for The Haven in Wolverhampton to be the SU's local charity for the year, meaning they would receive money raised by any fundraising activities. The guest speaker, Usman Ali (NUS Vice-President for Higher Education) talked passionately about the future of Higher Education and, from personal experience, on the impact and lasting benefits of widening participation.



national union of students



"SU is really good – a lot more visible and more proactive."

ISS 2012 free text comment

Create & maintain fantastic social space for students

Walsall SU

Our new space on Walsall campus opened to students in November 2011, including the Squeezebox juice and smoothie bar, free PC and wi-fi access, up-to-date sound systems, a pool table and comfortable space to relax. Student staff were recruited to provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere and signpost students to the range of services provided by the SU. Students could benefit from all the same services provided at City Campus through regular drop-in sessions and external partnerships.

The space had its official launch on 24th November 2011, which was attended by around 70 VIPs, including the University Vice Chancellor and members of the University Board of Governors.

Negotiations throughout the year with the University, as well as a bidding process into the University Investment Fund, resulted in us securing funding from the University to

(i) provide an evening bar service at our Walsall SU from September 2012 - in response to high student demand and

(ii) refurbish the underutilised space within our City Campus SU (after a part redevelopment in 2010) - a huge win for students.

Welcome Week

Over 2,000 students attended the Commercial, Get Involved and Sports and Societies Fairs over 2 campuses during the week.

As well as the sell-out Welcome party, 1200 students came to our in-house evening events, including comedy, quiz, games, karaoke and open mic nights, film afternoons and a trip to Alton Towers.



I found the intro week very interesting, fun and very helpful, not to mention freshers week!

ISS 2012 free text comment



Activities Centre

We recorded 25,737 visits to our Activities Centre over the year. As well as general enquiries about societies and events and to use the computers, students came in to speak to the Executive Officers, buy NUS Cards, and use our printing and binding facilities. The busiest months for us were September, October, November, February and March.

Events

Events were held throughout the year for students on both campuses, ranging from Open Mic and Acoustic nights that showcased student talent, to quiz nights, comedy nights and games nights, along with society-led events.

Our end of year 'Beach' party at Walsall SU entertained a capacity crowd with a tribute act, acoustic soloist, and DJ, all of whom were UoW students, whilst a Casino night closed the year on City Campus.



Provide support to students

It upsets me even now to think of how badly I have been treated by some and how supportive, friendly and professional your [Advice & Support Centre] staff have been.... [it] was the only place I had visited and actually got honest and factual advice at a [very difficult] time. ...

Any pre-conceptions I may have had about the Students Union have been shattered and I will always champion the work you all do and be ever grateful.

Part-time, mature student



Advice and Support

2,324 enquiries were dealt with by Advice and Support Centre (ASC) advisers and recorded through the service in the areas of Finance, Academic, International, Housing and miscellaneous. This is almost double the number of cases referred to advisers in 2010/11 (1,308). Of those enquiries 1,175 became individual casework files.

Over 66% of students we undertook casework for were of an ethnicity other than white and 58% were over 21 years of age ("Mature").

Officers represented and provided advocacy for 125 students in individual cases - mainly related to academic misconduct and appeal hearings. We supported a further 25 students in specialist cases that either required the attendance of a member of staff or were emergency requests.

Daily Drop ins

A highly successful daily drop in and triage service was introduced by ASC - every day on City campus and twice weekly at Walsall Campus - to allow more efficient triaging of student queries, reduced waiting times, and better use of appointments. This, also, helped to free up advisors' time to attend to on-going, complex cases and service development work.

We facilitated external drop-ins each day of the week from services across the campus, including Counselling Services, IT, Study Skills workshops, The Chaplaincy, The Workplace and the Police to encourage better access for students.

We established pre-bookable "Improve Your English" linguistics sessions with a visiting volunteer which proved very popular with international students.

We co-ordinated a series of presentations by SU staff across University departments and School Offices to raise awareness amongst staff of the services and opportunities that we provide for students. We plan in 2012/13 to repeat this process for academic staff.

This year, the Advice and Support Centre has supported a diverse range of student clients, across all campuses, as follows:

77%

Undergraduate

22%

Postgraduate

76%

Home / EU

23%

International

48%

Male

52%

Female

41%

Standard age on entry

59%

Mature (21+) on entry

Finance

43% of all casework related to finance and half of that to tuition fees or tuition fee debt to the University, which was jeopardising academic progression or enrolment. We continue to work closely with the University Finance Department and sit on the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) panels, as well as a Fees & Bursaries Working Group and the International Students Personal Finance Group.

We referred a large number of students to the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) who were proven to have debt as a result of delays by Student Finance England. Over the year, just one of our advisors made 82 supported referrals to the ALF and recorded a total monetary gain for students of **£136,574**.

We also worked with the University's Gateway service to hold two Money Advice Weeks in October and February where students were given proactive help and advice on anything to do with personal finances and budgets.

Academic

33% of all casework was academic related, a quarter of which concerned appeals (where students had been discontinued on their course due to academic failure). A further 15% of all academic cases regarded Academic Misconduct (notably Plagiarism).

We continued our productive relationship with the University's Conduct and Appeals department and were key contributors in revising the University's regulations and procedures for academic appeals. We also supported a number of students who escalated their appeals or complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education, some of which were upheld as 'justified' or 'partly justified.'

"I am now able to plan my final year and establish what funding I may or may not get before the start of next term. Thank you, this was a very positive experience!"

National Student Survey (NSS) 2012 free text comments

International students

13% of all casework related to international students, with the majority concerning student Visa renewals and extensions.

We continued to support the International Centre with the University's communication and implementation of Tier 4 requirements, attending meetings around the regulations and jointly running regular Visa workshops. These enable students to gain advice and assistance with completing forms and providing evidence necessary for successful Visa renewal.

"No doubt, ASC have helped me at a time when I was in stress because of refusal of my baby's Visa. ASC make background for appeal, and as a result my baby is with me."

"I really appreciate their services and friendly staff as well." International student (30/03/12)

Housing

9% of all casework was Housing related, 13% of these being requests for support with early release from University Halls Licence Agreements for financial, personal or medical reasons.

We maintained a good relationship with Accommodation Services to resolve these issues.

Advisers continued to support students who were unable to pay their accommodation fees and had their academic facilities withdrawn as a result. We referred many students to the Access to Learning Fund for whom delays from Student Finance England were at the root of their problem. We introduced similar referral systems with our local private halls of residence, ensuring that students experiencing genuine delays in their funding were treated as fairly as those living in University halls.

After a request for help from the International Centre, we produced an information booklet for Saudi Arabian students detailing local mosques, nurseries and family homes for rent, to help them move to the Wolverhampton area.



We took over the administration and control from the University of 'Studentpad', the on-line accommodation search engine and widened its offer to include all local and private housing, as well as University accommodation.



As part of our offer to provide increased value for money and opportunity for engagement by student landlords, we held our first "Studentpad Housing Fair" as part of 'Refreshers' Week in January 2012, inviting reputable landlords to advertise to prospective student tenants on City and Walsall campuses.

Over the year, Studentpad generated a helpful profit of just over £3,000, money that could be reinvested back into student-facing services.

Overall Feedback

Throughout last academic year we continued to survey our clients on all aspects of service provision.

25% of those surveyed told us they had used the service before 23% said that they had been referred from a University Department (Finance, Accommodation Services, International Centre, School Office etc.)

33% said that they had found our information via either the University or Students' Union website

92% stated that they would recommend the service to other students. 85% believed that the service had improved for students this year with the new daily drop-ins.

Sexual Health Outreach

Through a Service Level Agreement with Walsall PCT and with student staff, we provided confidential and accessible Chlamydia screening for students who could then get the results via text, with 180 students getting tested.

Employability Support Fund

We successfully lobbied the University to agree to ring fence monies saved from striking University lecturers and give this to the SU to provide students with financial support in finding employment in their final year, whether that be for travel costs to interviews or buying a new suit.



"Housing issues were given emergency attention and resulted in accommodation at University halls for six weeks for me and my husband."

Student feedback (06/10/11)

"I wouldn't have made it without [the Advice and Support Centre], those ladies have been amazing and a pillar of strength."

Student, University Internal Student Satisfaction Survey 2012

Listen to our members
and react
to the issues that affect
them the most



The students union has been a big help during my course, there have been numerous times I have needed assistance. Their staff have helped me get my issues cleared up

student, NSS 2012 free text comments

Focus Groups

In October we held a series of focus groups, across 2 days on City and Walsall Campuses, with the help of an external facilitator from another students' union. These were to test our 7 Core Aims and obtain their views on the SU – from the space we have to the services and opportunities we offer, as well as how we communicate our messages.

The quality of information that came out of the groups was extremely useful and resulted in us revising our organisational objectives and amending the wording of 2 of our core aims to make them more readily understandable.

Other key findings included that students wanted more information about what the Officers were doing for them, more contact from us within Halls of Residence, a bar on Walsall Campus, more quiet space across campus, more skills workshops, more interaction between campuses, more IT support, and more events during the day.

The facilitator was struck by the diversity of the student participants and how the groups had representation from all years of study, home and international students, those who lived on campus and those who lived at home, student parents and mature students. They felt it highlighted the challenge that UWSU faces in engaging all of these students as they have such widely differing needs and expectations.

Student Charter

We were a key player in driving the introduction of a Student Charter across the University from September 2012. The Academic Vice President spent several months consulting with students as well as the University, on its style, format and contents. Although not a legally binding contract, the Charter has great significance to students and lecturers as it sets standards and mutual expectations around the student experience from before they arrive to after they graduate, and includes not only their academic experience but the support and development they can expect.

NUS Developing Quality Engagement Project

We were fortunate enough to become part of a Good Practice Guide which has been published by NUS. The guide takes examples of good practice from Students' Unions around the country to showcase to other Students' Unions. NUS identified UWSU for the development of our Student Voice System and how we negotiate with the various University departments and stakeholders.



Student Voice

Our Student Voice System continued to thrive and provide crucial representation for all students across the University around their academic experience.

20 School Reps and 384 Course Reps were trained across 8 Schools. Of the Course Reps, 201 were trained face to face and the rest through new and interactive on-line training. Feedback from the on-line training was very positive with students valuing the content and engagement it offered.

School and Course Reps brought about a number of key wins throughout the year, including:

- Persuading the University to agree to build a bespoke room for Film Studies students
- Having lecture times changed for Business School students to not only enable them to play sport but to also attend Friday prayers
- Ensuring that Legal Practice Course students were given a discount they were originally promised but which was then under threat of being taken away
- Securing huge financial savings for students on the British Sign Language Course after lobbying for the course to be accredited
- A Student Voice Support Fund was created for Academic Reps to bid into to promote greater participation of students in the Student Voice system. It enabled Reps to provide small incentives or refreshments at meetings which encouraged greater attendance to hold competitions to increase student feedback.

Executive officers

Our Executive team sat on all key University committees and enabling strategies emerging from the University's 5 year Strategic Plan, covering all aspects of University life from campus facilities to learning and teaching. A number of high profile campaigns and initiatives by the Officers led to direct change including a cheaper meal deal for students in University catering outlets, more quiet space for students across campus, and extended opening of the Learning Centre during vacation.

The Advice and Support Centre continued to flag issues or trends of concern to the Executive team to follow up with University management. Examples of these include support and employment opportunities for international students with the demise of Post Study Work, the with-holding of academic facilities for non-academic debt, the concern over levels of academic misconduct, particularly amongst international students, and facilities for student parents on campus.

Campaigning for Equality and Diversity

We successfully lobbied the University to install automated doors at the entrance to the City Campus SU, after on-going complaints from students with disabilities

Through developing a close working relationship with the Equality and Diversity Unit, we were invited, for the first time, to present at the University's Biennial Equality and Diversity Conference. We brought together a group of students to cover issues relating to sexuality, disability, IT, and student parents and, together with a member of the Advice and Support Centre The Advice and Support Centre, they spoke about what students feel are some of the priorities for the University around E&D.

As a direct result, we were invited to have a number of student seats on a new Equality and Diversity Committee and to deliver the same presentation to the University's Corporate Management Team. We made a number of key points relating to the parity of support within Schools for students with additional needs, accessibility of the University's facilities and website, higher rates of academic misconduct amongst certain sections of the student population, the experiences of student parents, and the rising cases of students displaying or disclosing mental health issues.

At the end of the year, we worked closely with the Enabling Centre to hold focus groups for students with disabilities. A comprehensive action plan was collated from the discussions relating to University facilities, lecture support, academic assessments, accommodation, the Learning Centre and the Enabling Centre itself, to be taken forward in the next academic year.

In June, and in partnership with the University's ILE (Institute for Learning Enhancement) staff member, Pliny Soocoomanee and the LGBT society, we organised a signing day for a petition for civil marriage and partnership equality. The petition got an astonishing 8,987 signatures from staff and students, sending a clear message in support of equal rights.

We, also, met regularly with ILE staff throughout the year and had an input for the first time into the PG Certificate for new and existing academics, around both the role of the SU and catering for the needs of a hyper diverse student population.



Develop an **involved** supportive & staff **strong** team



Working at the Student Union has been a wonderful experience. As a mature student I find the flexibility of the hours have allowed me to easily balance my time between University, work and home. I started working at the Union within a few weeks of beginning my degree, and I can say that being Student Staff really opened my eyes to seeing how the Union makes such a beneficial impact on students' lives here at Wolverhampton. The staff and officers have been a great team to work with, with a lot of dedication and time for the views and issues that face students. Without hesitation I would recommend a Student Staff position to all students within the University!

■ Dave Owen, Reception student staff



IIP

In May, we were delighted to achieve the Bronze Standard in Investors in People. We did this through a genuine team effort and by improving our induction, performance, involvement and recognition procedures for staff, as well as by developing a Leadership Framework & Group for staff with line management responsibility.

Student Staff

Over the year we employed 42 students who worked a total of 8,226 hours. As Reception, Activities, Sexual health, Squeezebox, Marketing & Events, and Graphic & Web Design Assistants, they provided a relevant and friendly front-line service and gave invaluable input into the continuous improvement of our services.

All student staff received a comprehensive corporate and departmental induction and attended team meetings. We surveyed all student staff asking what it was like working for us and a dedicated Student Staff Working Group was formed to ensure that their on-going experience within the SU is a great one.

Matt Deacon (pictured left), one of our Squeezebox Assistants, said:

"Working for the Students' Union has opened a lot more doors for me and has expanded my CV in so many ways. It has allowed me to have a more hands-on approach in the SU, including setting up nights for students and having an input into what students want. It has also helped me develop certain skills including communication and boosting my confidence, which I can transfer into the outside world. I was also interested playing American Football which led me to help set up the team and recruit players. On top of this, I signed up to be a Bestmate volunteer to help the new students settle into Uni."

Graduate Interns

As part of our commitment to student employability, we also created and recruited two new graduate intern positions – a Representation Assistant to support the Executive Officers in their campaigns and manifesto aims, and a Marketing and Media Assistant, to drive the development of our student and social media. These two Wolverhampton graduates settled in very quickly to become great additions to the staff team, with loads of ideas and enthusiasm.

Staff Consultative Forum

Our Staff Consultative Forum met at least termly throughout the year, with representatives from all services and departments within the SU, including student staff, coming together. Via their Reps, staff were consulted on many areas including new internal policies, amendments and revisions to the employee handbook, student staff contracts, flexible working, and how we reward and recognise staff.

Staff Recognition and Development

Staff were rewarded and recognised throughout the year for excellent work and making a difference for students. Bespoke gifts and thank you letters were given to individuals, as well as 'all staff' celebratory events taking place.



Be financially, ethically, & environmentally responsible



Green Impact Students' Unions

This year saw our second submission in the NUS Green Impact Students' Unions programme and we progressed from a Bronze to a Silver standard for our efforts. Projects and actions that helped us secure silver included: installing water fountains in SU buildings, using recycled paper in SU printers, fitting water-saving devices in SU urinals, serving Fairtrade hot drinks, monitoring business miles, supporting the Student Switch Off campaign and lobbying the University on a number of environmental issues.

At the national awards event in April, we were presented with the Co-operative Bank Most Improved Students' Union Award for our Green Impact work. This award recognised the individual Union that had increased its Green Impact score the most from the previous year.

Despite our 2012 Green Week falling during a week of heavy snow, resulting in a decrease in footfall campus, we still engaged many students in the varied activities we put on alongside the University. Activities included a mobile phone charging energy bike, a green tea party, workshops to make bat and bird boxes for campus and an environment and ethics information fair.

Dig-in project

In May we heard from NUS that we had been chosen as one of 18 Unions across the country to be part of a lottery-funded project, Student Eats. The project funds and facilitates allotment plots on campus, encouraging increased biodiversity, healthy eating and community links. We began preparatory work on the project to get it up and running for the 12/13 academic year.

Sustainability, Environment & Carbon Management Group

We secured 3 places on the University's new Environmental Committee. Going forward, this will ensure a direct line of communication to support the University to become more sustainable and affect lasting change in the 4 key areas of Community, Campus, Culture and Curriculum.

Fairtrade Fortnight

As part of our commitment to our own Fairtrade status and to that of the University, we were involved in a number of events around Fairtrade Fortnight, including hosting a quiz in our space, supporting a Fairtrade Football Tournament, and bag-packing in a local supermarket to raise money for the Fairtrade Foundation.

We supported the local YMCA in their 'Sleep Easy' in March. Students were sponsored to sleep a night outside on campus in a cardboard box (provided courtesy of the YMCA!). We also enabled students to sign up to the Anthony Nolan Trust Bone Marrow Register and worked with the British Heart Foundation to encourage students to donate and recycle clothes and shoes for the cause.

How we spent our funding

In 2011/12 and in line with recent years, we received a slight decrease in our funding and our overall headline surplus for the year was £8,856. We generated target income through the sale of NUS Extra Cards and from external advertising and commercial fairs. We also received reserved funding for Welcome Week activities and for the NUS Student Led Teaching Awards programme.

2011/2012 saw the SU ensure that engagement funding was prioritised. The issue of our impending satisfaction rating from the National Student Survey strategically informed our spending and this thread continues. Resourcing of our first Students' Union Teaching Award ceremony and another successful Sports Award Ceremony demonstrated an SU that celebrated greater levels of student involvement.

Seed funding for the Student Voice programme continued to expand an engaged group of students and meet our charitable aims and objectives of forming a truly representational student body. The look and feel of our physical space continues to improve with further investment in maintaining the quality of space and moving the Union away from providing a social learning environment and into pure social space as an identifiable unique selling point.

Our income position remained in flux with further cuts to our block grant position. Our first reintroduction to trading activity started in November at our Walsall Campus with the opening of a "Squeezebox" Juice and Coffee Bar. Despite opening halfway through a term due to construction delays, the Squeezebox showed strong sales and costs were managed well. The product mix was also shifted to address local demand.

November also saw the first formal Budget Review for the Executive Team. A strong surplus and confident profiling going forward allowed the team to expend on projects that had been un-resourced in the first term, namely:

- Advice and Support Centre – re-branding materials for schools and college outreach work
- Representation – new Student Voice Development Fund
- Activities department – Inspire mark project funding
- Radio Project – Miriad Radio play-out system, licensing costs and soundproofing
- Part-funding for a graduate internship position (Representation Assistant).
- Installation of Sage HR package
- New Ballot stations
- Seed funding to support set up costs for the new American Football team

Our policy of creating student staffing positions continued with over 8200 hours of student employment opportunities paid in the year, as compared with 2300 hours in 2010-2011. The year-end saw the creation of our first 1 year paid internship opportunities, one in student media and marketing and the other in student representation, supporting the work of the elected officers.



Next Year

We will use our strategic reserves to refurbish the development of our under-utilised space on City Campus (following the opening of the Ambika Paul Student Union space in Sept 2010) and minimise any expected reduction in the block grant, bearing in mind the national HE picture.

Moving forward, we will work towards securing a 3 year funding cycle, potentially involving performance targets around delivering results for the University on things that matter. We will continue to allocate as much resource as possible to student-facing services by reviewing contracts, investigating ways of sharing resources with other Student Unions, and seeking additional sources of funding, although this is still proving difficult within the current economic climate. We will, also, seek to increase our trading and commercial activity to enable reinvestment that further enhances our offer and, therefore, the student experience.

"The Student Union is excellent."

National Student Survey (NSS)
2012 free text comments

Plans for next year

- Review and adjust our opening times in accordance with student need
- Develop our student media channels through investment of resources and the recruitment of energetic and talented students
- Become a primary provider of on and off campus volunteering opportunities for UoW students
- Improve the experience and impact of our societies and further integrate them into all aspects of the Students' Union.
- Define and communicate more clearly our offer to Telford and Burton students
- Move more services on-line to increase ease of access, including society support
- Improve how we demonstrate the impact our advice service has on the lives of students and ensure all student staff receive basic advice and support training within their induction
- Implement more effective monitoring and showcase systems to establish the advantages that Student Voice brings to the student experience
- Establish an annual Student Reps' AGM to better engage this cohort of students in the Students' Union
- Increase student engagement in participatory and recreational sport, particularly on Walsall Campus
- Improve on the performance of our sports teams within the BUCS leagues from 2011/12
- Provide presentations to as many academic staff as possible to raise awareness of the services and opportunities the SU provides
- Achieve Best Bar None status for our bars
- Be a key influencer in the University's green agenda around facilities and the curriculum
- Deliver 'Student Eats' allotment project on Walsall Campus
- Maintain our Silver Standard Green Impact and look to obtain gold in 13/14 when we will be able to demonstrate a decrease in our utility usage after refurbishing the SU in 12/13.
- Further embed our brand and improve how we communicate with our membership
- Commence work towards Investors in People Silver Standard
- Increase our satisfaction rating within the NSS

Our Leadership team

External Trustees

Jane Nelson

Pro-Vice Chancellor
Student Affairs



Mike Ager

External Trustee



Lee Smith

Student Trustee



Part Time Officers

Laura Jones

Postgraduate
Students' Officer

Abhishek G. Dicholkhar

Events &
Activities Officer

Iwuese Nyager

Communications
Officer

Sue Webster

Environmental
Officer

Gurjit Rai

City Campus
Officer

Joanna Zielinska

Walsall Campus
Officer

Anshul Allen

International
Students' Officer

Officer Trustees

Ken Harris

President



Ellen Marshall

Academic VP



Gemma Wright

Welfare VP



Elizabeth Thomas

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