Student Focused in Everything We Do

University of Hertfordshire
Students’ Union Strategic Plan

2011-2016

“Representing and supporting you to enhance your student experience.”
Dear Students,

From February – April 2011, we spoke to more than 2,500 UH Students about what you think of your students’ union – what you like, what you want more of, and how you feel we’re adding to your experience at UH.

We’re here to represent you and to be student-focused in everything we do. So we listened to what you told us and from this, we developed our goals for the next five years. Our elected officers and our senior management team thought it was essential to develop a shared vision with you, beyond simply the sum of what any one of us can accomplish alone. The development of this plan has reinforced our belief in both the strength our students bring to UHSU and the importance of partnership and collaboration with students when developing our plans.

Our strategic plan outlines some big goals for UHSU. These may not be easy to achieve, but we can promise you that each UHSU representative and employee will work towards these objectives each and every year to deliver the students’ union and student experience you told us you wanted.

You can find out more about what we’re doing for you at www.uhsu.co.uk/plan.

Sincerely,
The UHSU Sabbatical Team 2011-2012

Erika Masefield - President
James Bowers - Vice President, Union Development
Martyn Gray - Vice President, Student Activities
Thom Palser - Vice President, Comms and Media
Yasmin Bastow - Vice President, Academic Support and Campaigns

Dear Students,

It is my privilege to lead a staff who collectively have many decades of experience in working in students’ unions. Together with our elected officers, trustee board, senior management team and most importantly, our students, we have worked hard over the past 12 months to put into place operational plans that support the development of this strategic plan and aim to make your time at the University of Hertfordshire as valuable – and fun – as possible. I can assure you that we are all determined to make our students’ union amongst the very best in the UK.

You may have already seen a few of the many developments we’ve had over the past few months:

- we’ve worked with students to create an additional 20 societies in the space of three months
- we’ve more than tripled the number of student representatives we’ve recruited and supported in the last year
- we’ve employed over 220 students in our own offices and venues and have placed a further 800 students in an assortment of jobs in the local area
- we’ve played host to a variety of live music and club nights that are unparalleled in universities around the country

We are exceptionally proud of the work we do on behalf of our students. If you would like to see more of the plans we have for the next year, visit www.uhsu.co.uk/plan. There is a comments section on this site – if you’d like to give us any feedback or find out more about what we do, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,
Phil Mackay - Chief Executive
University of Hertfordshire Students’ Union
The University of Hertfordshire Students’ Union (UHSU) aspires to be a leading students’ union in the UK, providing high quality services that are relevant to our members. We aim to be nationally recognised for our work and have a positive impact on our members whilst at the University of Hertfordshire, and beyond. Whilst we aim to be an integral part of the UH student experience, we are independent of the University of Hertfordshire and will be recognised as a credible and independent voice of students at the University.

Student focused in everything we do

UHSU has developed this strategic plan in order to prioritise our work over the coming years. Every year we will endeavour to increase participation in all our core services and activities. We will actively strive to grow participation throughout the broad student population by targeting particularly hard to reach groups and making our services as relevant and accessible as possible. Students are central to UHSU and the strategic plan recognises this through 5 core areas:

- Ensuring effective student representation
- The provision of exceptional services that meet the needs of students
- Supporting our students’ community on and off campus
- A secure and stable Students’ Union to ensure that we can fulfil our strategic objectives
- Effective two-way communications with students

We believe that student participation is essential to our success and our long term existence. We will ensure that we are proactive in seeking the views of all students in order to remain relevant to our current and future members. We will develop our services to ensure they meet students’ expectations.

Our Values

Our values are important to us and give us a direction about how we aim to work.

Student led

Our top priority is to provide innovative services which meet the needs of our students and enable them to reach their full potential. We are student led through our democratic and decision making processes. We are open to scrutiny and are accountable to students.

Independent representative

We represent our students on issues that matter to them. We are independent of the University and represent our students’ views locally and nationally in an unbiased way.

Fun

We encourage an ethos where our students and staff enjoy themselves.

Responsible

We are aware of our impact on the environment and seek to operate with regard to the world around us. We value diversity and are committed to equality of opportunity.

Impact

We aim to maximise our impact on the student experience at the University and widely communicate our achievements and the successes of our students.
Our strategic priorities are:

- Representing what’s important to you
- Independent advice and support
- Student-led change
- Supporting on issues that are important to you

Representing what’s important to you

We will develop and support high quality representative systems to ensure UHSU is the voice of UH students.

Student representation is key to the success of UHSU and is fundamental to our existence. We will develop mechanisms to ensure that students are represented effectively across the University. We will devise systems to capture, monitor and follow up on issues raised by students via the School Student Representative Organisers (SSRO) and Student Representative (SR) systems. We will develop a proactive approach to student representation and will maintain regular dialogue with students. We will support Student Representatives through thorough induction, regular briefings and frequent e-mail contact as well as developing an annual Student Representatives’ conference to share best practice and further develop skills. We will measure the effectiveness of Student Representatives and their attendance and contribution to programme committees. We will develop mechanisms to reward and recognise the work of our Student Representatives and create a community of Student Representatives throughout UH.

We will maintain positive relationships with University management in order that we can ensure the student experience at UH is maximised.

We will ensure that we continue to develop a positive, constructive and transparent relationship with the University’s staff and management. We will actively promote the role of the Students’ Union and the outcomes we have achieved for our members. We will ensure that the Union continues to grow in credibility in order that the student voice is even more central to the University’s decision making processes and ultimately its decisions.

We will constantly gather feedback from our students to ensure we are truly representing their needs.

We will gather feedback from a broad range of students about their educational experience through a variety of feedback mechanisms, including face to face contact, regular surveys and other annual research. We will ensure that all issues raised by students are logged, analysed and discussed at the relevant University committee, where applicable, and
followed up. We will also ensure that students are informed of the outcomes of their contributions on a regular and on-going basis.

We will undertake our own analysis of University surveys and quality monitoring reports (e.g. the National Student Survey) to ensure that a student perspective is articulated on each major issue. We will publish our key impacts on the educational experience on a regular basis.

Independent advice and support

We will ensure that our advice remains relevant to your needs.

We will develop our Advice and Support Centre to be responsive to the broad range of needs of our students. We will prioritise current students’ needs and develop the skills and knowledge to help students on the things that really matter to them. For example, we will develop expertise in areas including finance and academic casework. We will also make our advice services more accessible on-line to enable students to access information from a variety of sources and at different levels, when it suits them. We will track casework statistics and respond to trends in an appropriate way.

Student-led change

We will ensure that students can make positive change through our democratic processes.

UHSU will become more relevant to our members through our democratic processes. We will seek to increase the number and diversity of candidates running in our elections. We will provide more support to all our candidates to give them the best possible chance of success. In doing so, elected officers will make a greater overall impact on the student experience at UH.

UHSU will create a body of evidence from students describing their wants and needs, collected from the Union’s annual student survey. This data will be formulated and given to candidates to allow for more informed manifestos.

We aim to increase overall participation in our main elections to 6,000 per year and 1,000 votes in the Bye-elections over the next five years (20% of the total student population for the main elections.)

The Union will ensure that our key decision making processes are transparent and accessible to our members. We will develop Student Council in order to facilitate debate that is relevant to students. We will invite guest speakers to promote debate amongst the student body. We will seek to introduce an annual “Vice Chancellor’s Address” to students through Student Council. We will aim to increase the membership of Student Council to ensure each meeting is represented by students who reflect the student profile. We will continue to develop Council using innovative methods of interaction, such as web based or live chat communications. We will ensure that we communicate and give relevant feedback on Union priorities, campaigns and activities to Council.

Supporting issues that matter to you

We will undertake campaigns that students tell us are important to them.

We will ensure that we consistently collect feedback from a diverse range of students, to ensure we stay relevant to students and are able to run student led campaigns. We will communicate with the student body to make sure that any campaign priorities reflect the needs of students. We will facilitate opportunities for students to suggest and run campaigns. We will ask students to prioritise campaign activities through polls or referenda.
Societies that enrich your time at UH

We will invest in and diversify our student societies to encourage increased participation. We hope to develop space for societies to flourish. We will support society volunteers through high quality training and development opportunities and recognise their valuable contribution.

Interesting volunteering opportunities

We will increase and diversify our volunteering opportunities both on and off campus. We will support our volunteers through high quality training and development opportunities. We will develop opportunities that enhance student employability and compliment their course experience where possible. We will develop our support for volunteers along nationally recognised standards.

Training opportunities that help your studies and improve employability

We aim to further develop our training opportunities to ensure these meet the needs of students during their course and improve skills for future employability. We will develop some courses for on-line delivery in order that students can access them when it is most convenient.

Our strategic priorities are:

- Societies that enrich your time at UH
- Interesting volunteer opportunities
- Training opportunities that help your studies and improve employability
- Relevant student media opportunities
- Flexible job opportunities that build your CV and put cash in your pocket
- Quality housing for you
- A social life that meets your needs
- Convenient and good value shops
Relevant student media opportunities

We will invest in and diversify our media opportunities so that these provide high quality and relevant experience for students. We aim to continually innovate our media opportunities.

Flexible job opportunities that build your CV and put cash in your pocket

We aim to increase the number and quality of jobs available to our members through our Job Centre and ensure more of these opportunities are relevant to students’ course of study and future career prospects.

Quality housing for you

We intend growing our lettings business, UHSU Lettings, to ensure we can provide even more high quality, well-managed student accommodation to our members. We aim to be the local market leader in student accommodation in terms of quality of service to our students. We will lead other lettings agents in the adoption of a local landlord accreditation scheme. We will also increase the number of high quality houses available via our lettings service to improve living standards for students at the University.

A social life that meets your needs

UHSU is aware that the proposed changes in student financial arrangements may have a significant impact on future students’ disposable income and lifestyles. Whilst continuing to develop events for our members, we will also ensure that we have a broad range of events directed at members of the public as well as students throughout the year. We aim to run out of term events in the Forum Hertfordshire specifically aimed at local families during Christmas, Easter and summer vacation periods.

We will ensure that our term time entertainments provision is diverse and reflects the broad student population. We will include as many student acts as possible in our programme and provide other opportunities to showcase student talent.

Convenient and good value shops

We intend to extend our retail offer by developing a partnership with a High Street brand for our convenience stores on both campuses. Through this partnership, we hope to be able to offer our customers a wider range of convenience products as well as exceptional value for money. We also hope to continue to grow our on-line business to provide UH branded goods direct to customers. We aim to negotiate for increased retailing capacity on both main campuses in order that we can meet the demands as these grow.
Supporting you on and off campus

Our strategic priorities are:

• Shouting about the good work you do within our local community
• Building a sense of community on campus

Shouting about the good work you do within our local community

We recognise the importance of the relationship with our local community and will provide appropriate leadership in community relations.

We will actively promote the positive contribution students make to the local community, highlighting successes relating to student volunteering, RaG, and sporting success, amongst many others. The Union will continue to play an important role in liaison with local residents and councillors, etc. We will also encourage students to become better neighbours through targeted campaigns.

We will continue to develop our volunteering activities in the local community and more actively celebrate the success of these activities. We aim to increase the number of students volunteering in the community. We will continue to welcome members of the local community onto campus and will organise some events specifically aimed at them.

Building a sense of community on campus

We will play an active role in improving the sense of community on all campuses through the provision of services and activities that promote a sense of belonging.

The development of a sense of community on campus has a significant impact on the student experience at the University. The Students’ Union has an important role to play in developing this sense of belonging and aims to do this through supporting communities based around halls of residence, societies and volunteering, sport and entertainments.

Making living on campus fun

The Union will continue to argue for good quality but affordable on-campus student accommodation. We also aim to facilitate social activities within the Halls of Residence right from the start of each academic year. We will also coordinate and develop the work of Halls Associations.
**Sport for all**

UHSU recognises that campus sport is important to the campus community. We will play a more significant role in the development and growth of this area. We aim to have a more visible role in the leadership of the Athletic Union (AU) and work in partnership with the AU. We will actively support the development of sports activities, particularly on the College Lane Campus. We will offer to accommodate AU staff on the College Lane Campus and assist in the development of sports services and facilities on both campuses. We wish to make sport more central to the work of the Students’ Union once again and encourage social activities, such as the annual sports awards to take place on campus. We aim to support the development of intramural and non-competitive sport in conjunction with the AU on all campuses. We will promote a “Sport for All” ethos within the Athletic Union and throughout the University. We believe that sport for all is an important foundation for competitive sport, but that sport for all should be given equal importance.

**Entertainments – a social life to meet your needs**

UHSU operates an extremely diverse and rich entertainments programme from the Forum and the EleHouse. We aim to ensure that this mix is further enhanced through the development of more student led events and a wider range of non-alcohol events and day time activities. We will actively support student societies and sports clubs to host their own events on campus. We will also ensure that there is space within the events calendar to show case student talent. We hope to further cement the understanding that the EleHouse is the students’ “local”.

We recognise the need to host events where the public are also welcome and that this is important for the commercial success of our venues. We aim to ensure that students receive benefit from their membership of the Students’ Union and that the prices reflect this.

**Raise and Give**

We believe that RaG is important both on and off campus. We plan to develop our part time officer roles to include a part-time RaG Officer. We will encourage more RaG activity to take place off-campus in order for it to become more visible to the general public.

**Societies that enrich the student experience**

*We will develop our student societies in order that they fully represent the diversity of our members.*

We aim to promote the development of more course based societies and work with UH departments to deliver this. We will grow society membership significantly and aim to provide improved facilities for societies to meet and work. We will also encourage societies to develop more social elements to their activities to further enhance the sense of community on campus. We will encourage societies to consider the needs of non traditional students in order that they may participate in society activities.

**Wednesday afternoons**

We will continue to campaign for Wednesday afternoons to be free of lectures to enable all students to have a common time when they can participate in sport, societies, volunteering, and other extra-curricular activities.
Secure & stable University to also operate more sustainably.

High quality, valued staff who are student-focused at all times

We will ensure that our staff are well managed and supported to achieve their full potential for the benefit of UHSU and our members. We will develop our resources to enable UHSU to meet our strategic objectives and meet the changing needs of students.

University to also operate more sustainably.

We will work with the University to secure more suitable facilities on both campuses. We will ensure our services and front line staff are located conveniently for students and that they remain accessible to our members whether they are on campus or studying off campus.

In order that UHSU is able to deliver high quality services to our members, we aim to ensure that we maintain high quality resources and facilities through adequate investment. We will develop an investment plan to ensure we can meet these demands.

We aim to be excellent employers. We will consult with our staff where applicable and keep all staff fully informed of developments. We will train our staff to the highest possible standard and ensure that they have the skills necessary to achieve our objectives and meet their career aspirations. We will endeavour to develop our staff internally where possible in order that we are able to promote our staff to more senior positions.

Where possible, we will consider internships and placements to give UH graduates opportunities to develop higher employability skills. We will also ensure that all our services employ as many students in as many roles as possible. We will try to utilise student talents

Our strategic priorities are:

• Operating in an environmentally friendly way
• High quality, valued staff who are student-focused at all times
• Diversifying and growing our income so we can continue to invest in services for students
• Putting every penny you spend with us back into services for you

Operating in an environmentally friendly way

We will minimise our impact on the environment and undertake an annual assessment to ensure we take appropriate steps each year.

UHSU is committed to minimising our impact on the environment. We will continue to work towards a more sustainable operation and have this recognised through the achievement of nationally recognised awards for environmental impact. We will continue to lobby the

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wherever we can and offer these employees opportunities for skills and portfolio development.

**Sabbatical Officers**

UHSU recognises the importance of effective and efficient Sabbatical Officers and elected teams, including part-time officers and Student Trustees. We will regularly review all elected positions to ensure these continue to remain relevant to our students.

UHSU will support all elected officers to ensure they meet their potential as individuals and a team.

We will define the mentoring process and share this support amongst the most appropriate senior managers. The Union will ensure that the outgoing officers, with the support of our staff, provide an effective handover, induction and training period. We will introduce a week-long paid handover period for Sabbatical Officers.

The Union’s senior management team will provide structured and consistent support to Sabbatical Officers to develop and deliver their individual and team objectives.

The Sabbatical Officers and staff will provide structured and consistent support to part-time elected officers to guarantee these roles are effective and fulfilling. We will promote our successes and provide appropriate recognition of the contribution made by all officers and staff.

### Diversifying and growing our income so we can continue to invest in services for you

We will diversify our income through greater commercial activities that are relevant to the needs of our members and the wider University and local community. We will also aim to diversify our income through additional new income from charitable trust funding and other sources.

Our main income is in the form of a grant from the University. This income is supplemented by commercial activities operated by UHSU Solutions Ltd and UHSU Enterprises Ltd. We aim to grow our income where possible through increased diversification of our commercial and non-commercial income. We aim to do this by making sure all our services are relevant to students’ needs whilst being adaptable to change.

UHSU registered as a charity in 2011. We hope that this will give us the opportunity to apply for new funding from charitable grant giving organisations.

We will ensure that the Forum continues to be a well-managed, student friendly venue and that its financial contribution to the Union (net surplus) increases by 10% over the next five years. We will continuously review our costs to ensure that we are efficient whilst enhancing the quality of service. We will measure customer satisfaction on a regular basis to ensure we continue to meet customer expectations.

We will continue to diversify our income generated through our venues and welcome members of the public to events throughout the year. We will develop events focused on the general public outside of our key term time trading period.

### Putting every penny you spend with us back into services for you

We will ensure the Union remains solvent and is sustainable into the long term. We will do this by ensuring the Union is cost effective and efficient.

We will regularly review our costs to make sure we are achieving the best possible value for money. We will also be clear about how we use the grant to meet our charitable objectives.

We will simplify our internal procedures where possible to ensure that we do not duplicate our work or make things more complicated for our members. We will develop a comprehensive membership database in order to deal with students’ enquiries efficiently.

For us to plan for the future and remain solvent we need to have an active reserves policy that ensures that we are able to invest in services for our members whilst ensuring that we have sufficient reserves.
Our strategic priorities are:

• Asking, understanding and taking action on what you say
• Celebrate your successes
• Telling you what we’re working on and achieving for you

We will understand the profile of our students in order to represent and provide relevant and effective services for them.

In order to represent students effectively we will ensure that we have a comprehensive understanding of our members and their needs. A membership database will be developed to communicate tailored and relevant information to students according to their needs.

We will ask students to guide our work and comment on our activities regularly and we will act on this feedback.

We will be proactive in seeking the views of all students. We will regularly conduct comprehensive market research to gain a clear understanding of students’ needs and priorities, ensuring that this research has sufficient responses to be considered with confidence. This will ensure that students have a greater opportunity to direct the work of the Students’ Union.

We will create innovative communications solutions to facilitate a simple and effective dialogue with students. This will include the use of technology as well as face to face contact in the places where students congregate, rather than expecting students to visit us. We will make time for our staff and elected officers to talk directly to students on a regular basis. We will evaluate the type of communications we have both to and from students to ensure these remain relevant to our members. We will aim to be able to target
the information we send to our members to ensure that this becomes increasingly tailored. We will also develop mechanisms to collect immediate responses to specific issues raised during the year.

We will be as transparent as possible in order that students can hold us accountable.

The Union will aim to become more transparent. This will be achieved through promoting our successes and achievements. In addition, we will seek the most up to date communication methods, and review these annually. We will ensure that all information provided, such as published accounts, campaign material, and officer blogs are up to date and accurate.

We will publish summary financial information in a timely fashion and make this freely available via our website. We will actively seek the views of our members in determining how resources are expended. We will also ensure that we publish clear information about how the University’s grant to the Union is spent and the outcomes we achieve as a result of this expenditure. We will provide information in a clear and simple format, with consistent terminology throughout.

UHSU will ensure that awareness of the union and our services is widespread amongst the student population. We will use a variety of methods to promote UHSU throughout the University.

Celebrate your successes

We will promote the success of students to the wider community.

Telling you what we’re working on and achieving for you

We will provide regular feedback to students on the work we do and celebrate our successes throughout the organisation.

We will ensure that we close the loop by feeding back regularly to all our stakeholders (including students, University staff and the local community) our successes and achievements. We will also make sure that when we have asked students to provide their views and comments, we consistently provide them with access to the relevant information so they know what we have done with their responses. We will celebrate the successes that we achieve.

Thank you!

Thanks to all of our students, officers and staff for all of their tireless work. For more information on what we’re working on for you, visit www.uhsu.co.uk/plan
Student Focused in Everything We Do

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