

**Student Council**

***13th May 2014***

**Report from Students’ Union**

**Purpose: To receive a regular report from the Students’ Union Sabbatical Officers**

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With the 2013/14 academic year winding down and this, the last board meeting of the current sabbatical team we've decided to turn this report into an end of year round up. Some of the evidence and themes highlighted in this report are yearly measurements from our 2014-17 Strategic Plan, however not all the measurements are relevant due to the timing of year the plan was introduced. There are also some areas that didn't quite fit into the strategic plan measurements that have been highlighted for information.

If you remember from our Strategic Plan, it is divided into four key areas, under which there is slightly more detail in terms of evidence and measurements. For ease of the report I have grouped them under their necessary areas.

**Better Union**

**To increase participation in SU elections year on year**

This year was the first year we ran online voting solely through the Students’ Union website, and with it some slight teething problems in terms of voter registration etc, which were overcome during the voting period. Due to this we had a slight decrease in the voter turn-out this year with less than 1% decrease in voter turnout. Whilst this is slightly disappointing we did have a shift in demographic of the make-up of candidates, which we see as a huge positive, with the candidates for both the president and vice-president student activities more accurately reflecting the gender demographic of the student population.

**Increase the numbers of clubs and societies each year & Increase the numbers of club and society members**

Joining sports and societies is important for the Students’ Union and the University not only in terms of engaging with students and personal development but also in retaining students. This year we have seen individual memberships of sports and societies increasing by 32% on last year’s numbers to 1490 students. This will hopefully increase next year with more new societies and sports being passed recently and with an emphasis on creating academic societies, with a paper recently received at the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience committee. This year with have passed eight new sports and societies, including:

* Mature Students
* Psychology
* Futsal
* Life Drawing
* Archaeology
* Uni Boob team
* Dr Who Society
* Economic Society

**To ensure our clubs and societies are transparent about future costs of membership**

Part of our strategy over the last two years to ensure students knew where their membership fees were going and how far they’d stretch was to ensure that all clubs and societies complete comprehensive budget sheets for the year, including reoccurring costs to their members. We now need to ensure that this is communicated to members on an on-going basis to alert them to any future expenditure, or absorbed by the initial membership fees students pay when joining a club. This has been adopted by some sports teams; however more needs to be done.

In terms of communicating where the costs of their membership fees go, this year we simplified the way in which students pay their insurance when joining sports and societies, as well as highlighting the benefits it. In previous years it was believed that the Students’ Union ‘took’ a small proportion of their membership fee, when this simply wasn’t the case. Therefore we simplified what this money was for (insurance) and why it had to be done. This allowed sports and societies to be clearer on what this fee was and also allow them to more accurately set their membership fees in response.

Finally, and perhaps the biggest part of this area of work was the work done to introduce the Samurai kit deal. The agreement signed with Samurai allows students to save money on kit. With the Institute of Sport and Exercise Science having mandatory kit for their students, and many sports and societies asking their members to buy kit as part of joining, it could mean a larger proportion of our members were paying hundreds of pounds for two kits. With the introduction of the kit deal with Samurai this year, the kit for Sports students can be doubled up for sports club membership and vice-versa. This helps produce a massive saving for our students, and allows students to ensure that they always are kitted correctly whether it be for university or club representation.

**To continue to work with the university and other partners to ensure our competitive sport is played at its highest level with well coached and equipped clubs**

The work of the Union and University in the Sport Development Board has started to bear fruit this year, with a highly successful year in terms of student sport. With the introduction of external coaches for the ‘performance’ teams and increases in strength and conditioning support, a more professional approach to elite student sport has had some big wins.

Some of the highlights are:

Wheelchair Basketball – National Champions

Men’s Basketball – National Champions

Netball 1st – Midland 2A Champions (undefeated) and Conference Cup runners- up

Men’s Rugby 1sts – Midland 1A Champions and playoff winners

As A University we are currently 59 out of 144 in the BUCS rankings with more some more sport still to be played.

**Advance a volunteering strategy to increase our volunteering capacity in terms of numbers and resources.**

This year has been a huge year for the students union in terms of its volunteering capacity. Last academic year we logged a total of 5846 volunteering hours from around 80 students. As you may remember from early board meetings this year we highlighted the aim of doubling voluntary hours logged this year through our v-records and as it stands we have currently logged 15000 voluntary hours through the system by 150 individual volunteers. As stated this is our current total with the final deadline for v-records to be returned being June, and with only 150 out of the 300 volunteers who currently possess a v-record having returned it.

The growth in volunteering has been down to the extra marketing and awareness we have put into promoting the v-records, the emphasis of the voluntary work being logged on a student’s HEAR. This has been due to the introduction of a part-time volunteer coordinator within the Students’ Union, who despite a limited capacity due to hours has been instrumental in focusing solely on student volunteering. We have also upgraded the way in which volunteering hours are logged, moving to an online logging system which should help next year with improved communications with students and easier management of data.

This year’s VoScAs event, where we celebrate student volunteering and societies, was the biggest we've had to date, with over 170 people in attendance. We recognised and rewarded 100 students on the night for their voluntary work with awards ranging from 20 to 200 hours, with 6 individual awards also being given including the Worcestershire Ambassador’s Community Volunteer of the Year, Outstanding Volunteer of the Year and the Headway Volunteer of the Year. The event was well attended by students and invited members of the public alike and we felt it was perfect way to recognise and celebrate student’s great work.

**Research and development of our commercial services**

One particular highlight of the year in terms of commercial service development in the Students’ Union was the Pear Tree Bar becoming the first bar in Worcester to gain Best Bar None status. The Best Bar None awards are national accreditation focusing on best practice in terms of management, health and safety procedures and customer service.

**To ensure the Board of Trustees continues to develop and remains at full capacity**

This year the Board of Trustees has had a relatively successful year. A full capacity Board for the year have overseen and passed the 2014-17 Strategic Plan, and will be reviewing this document for the upcoming year.

**To review the effectiveness and rewards for part time officers and research current trends in other SUs to ensure best practice**

As our Student Councillors inevitably know, we have carried out a much prolonged review of the part-time officer roles within the Students’ Union and had a little reshuffle for the next academic year. To reflect the ever growing need and to shift focus slightly the new part-time officer roles are:

* Womens Officer
* Welfare Officer

 We have also changed the name of the International Students Officer to the Non-UK students officer, as we were informed by international students that they were unsure of who they represented, and this should make communication with them and international students slightly easier.

We have also introduced a minimum requirement from all part-time officers to complete 50 hours of work throughout the year. This is to ensure that part-time officers at least attend meetings and engage, but also to ensure that the hours they do are recorded on their HEAR (with 50 hours being the minimum that can be recorded).

**Better Worcester**

**Work with local community groups to enhance the image of our students in the community**

Through the development of the VoScAs and V-records, we have started to make important links with local community groups and charities. This year we held a two day Volunteer Fair in the Students’ Union with over 40 local charities and organisations in attendance.

**Better World**

**Ensure our work always has sustainability in mind**

This year we were successfully awarded £171,000 from HEFCE and the NUS to run Energize Worcester, a two year environmental sustainability project looking at raising awareness of energy efficiency in student housing and in turn, improving their quality. At the end of the first year of the project, up take has been slow, but important partnerships have been made for year two of the project.

For the second year running, Worcester Students’ Union also successfully achieved Gold Green Impact, reaffirming our continued commitment to ethical and environmental sustainability.