

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 - 2018

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Led by students, backed by volunteers and staff, the University of Northampton Students' Union exists to ensure that the students of the University, our members, get the best possible experience from their time at Northampton.

A vibrant community of over 15 thousand, our members are central to everything we do and whatever our vision for the future is, it is for our members to shape.

Over the past 12 months we consulted our students, our Committees, our staff and trustees as well as stakeholders from the University into what their vision for the Students' Union is. What they hope for the Students' Union to achieve next year, in three years and beyond. We've drawn all these threads together into what is our first ever Strategic Plan, a statement of who we are, our ambitions, goals and challenges we face in achieving them.

We believe this Strategic Plan embodies our values to its core and sets out a clear, yet ambitious direction for our organisation that is relevant, comprehensive and addresses the expectations of our members. We now look forward to implementing it.

Victor Agboola
President 2015/16

Phil Sturgeon
Chief Executive

ALLOW US TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES

Your Students' Union

Mission

To create confident, aspirational and knowledgeable people ready to influence the world around them.

Vision

- We will have a strong and coherent brand that embodies the values of the organisation, and is represented by our Membership Card that will reward both loyalty and contribution to the organisation.
- Delivery will be supported by professional and passionate staff, who are committed to supporting members to make the most of their time at the University of Northampton.
- Everything we do will be led by students, for students. Our decisions will be made by students through democratic structures and representative bodies.
- Activities will be fully funded and participating members encouraged to use our facilities and attend our events, adding to our income and ensuring the sustainability of their community as well as the Union as a whole. We will incentivise participation and recognise contribution in everything that we do.

WE ARE

Ambitious & Driven

We seek to be aspirational, to continue to be forward thinking and always strive for excellence, whilst adapting to changing student needs. We are ambitious and encourage our members to challenge themselves.

Welcoming

The Students' Union is a place for everyone. We will celebrate the diversity of the student body, ensuring all students are treated equally and feel included, valued, safe and supported.

Sustainable

We will undertake our activities in a financially sustainable, environmentally sustainable and socially responsible manner.

Student-led

We are democratic, led by students, member focussed and representative.

Dynamic & Fun

We bring fun to everything we do, providing a variety of constantly evolving activities and opportunities.

Collaborative

We will continue to work collaboratively and build relationships with The University, local community, other students' unions and external organisations.

OUR OFFER

Every student at the University of Northampton, our members, have an equal opportunity to get involved in a wide array of activities. Whatever their passion, interest, time commitment or background we have a broad range of services for them to access - including representation, sport, societies and volunteering - as well as a varied events programme.

To ensure our members can make their money go further we also offer competitively priced dining, drinking and shopping at our venues and retail stores across both campuses as well as online.

During their time at Northampton they can choose to contribute to our development and the development of their chosen communities by taking on leadership roles and involving themselves in our democratic structures. Through training and staff support we'll expand their employability skills and their understanding of society and politics ensuring they are ready for the world of work.

WHERE WE'VE COME FROM

In 2010/11

The University of Northampton was ranked 100th in the Guardian's University Guide.

377 students participated in sport.

100 students participated in Societies.

Turnout in the Students' Union Elections stood at 250. They were subsequently repeated due to appeal.

14 members of permanent staff and 80 members of student staff.

The Students' Union offered no independent academic advice service.

In 2014/15

The University of Northampton is now ranked 47th in the same guide, 3 years later.

1300 students participated in Sport and 22 Stallions Clubs competed in their first Varsity Tournament hosted on campus against the University of Derby.

Over 2000 students are members across a broad range of societies.

Over 3000 students have contributed to the Students' Union duty of representation through participation in elections, surveys and ongoing feedback.

The Students' Union employs 42 permanent members of staff and over 120 members of part-time student staff.

The Students' Union Academic Adviser has served 232 students on a range of issues ranging from academic appeals to extenuating circumstances and study breaks.



Varsity Tournament against the University of Derby



Cultural Fiesta December 2015

OUR CHALLENGES

For all the new developments over the last three years, new challenges have inevitably arisen. How we respond to them will be paramount to the success of our plan. However, first of all we must recognise exactly what these challenges are.

Ensuring we are student led

Engaging students in meaningful work in effective representational structures that create change has historically proven a challenge and is central in the shaping of the Students' Union and ensuring quality at the University.

Student apathy in our democratic structures and Officer positions has seen candidates elected to leadership roles that have failed to drive change, create impact or be truly representative of the student body at large. We are to be a Students' Union for all our members, not a select number of the most engaged.

Disperse student membership

Ensuring that all of our members are benefitting equally from our work is of great importance to us. This is not always easy with students based across two primary campuses at Park and Avenue, in addition to students based on several partner college campuses and a growing number of distance learning students.

Having a presence at local partners and ensuring a quality digital provision of service is of paramount importance.

Value of our offer

The Students' Union offers Free Sport and Free Societies to all members – 1 of only 2 to do so – and yet, students do not value our offer. Similarly both members of permanent and student staff do not value the organisation or their role within it. There is a clear need to ensure that this is addressed in our culture moving forward.

Remaining commercially viable

We must remain commercially viable and as students spend less in our bars and club nights (as is the trend nationally) and are spending less time on campus, through increasing use of online resources, shorter terms and increase in the number of distance learners we must ensure we can still generate sufficient revenues.

Widening participation

The Students' Union engages over 2500 students through Sports and Societies, hundreds every week through our bars, catering and retail outlets. However, our engagement is not reflective of the diverse student population at Northampton. The Students' Union is to be a place for everyone, as such work must be undertaken to better engage Mature, Part-Time and Postgraduate Students.



WHAT WE WANT FOR STUDENTS

Delivering the best experience possible for our members while at the University of Northampton motivates everything that we do. We believe the Union will have the biggest impact on students' lives by supporting them to do the following.

Have their say & make change happen

At the core of all we do is encouraging students to get involved in the democratic processes we are able to offer. Through the Union every student should be able to have their voice heard and implement the changes that they think will help best enhance their university experience. By supporting students to do this we can ensure they get the most out of their time while at Northampton.

Best possible experience

The Union wants to ensure that the investment each student makes in coming to the University of Northampton is one which provides them with an experience that meets their expectations. From taking part in some of the wide range of societies we offer, having a great night out in one of our venues, or working with us to get the most out of a course, there are a number of ways students are able to maximise the quality of their university experience with the Union.

Opportunities for development & personal growth

Through engagement with the Union students gain valuable skills and experiences that influence their future careers and engagement in society. 72% of employers would rather employ a person with volunteering experience - such as a Committee position - than those without. The importance of students gaining these through the Union is highlighted year on year in election candidate manifestos and student feedback.



Have their say & make change happen



Best possible experience



Opportunities for development & personal growth

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES STRATEGIES

Influence

Recognised throughout the consultation as an important area to focus on; student 'voice' is fundamental to the Students' Union. Students have told us they do not know how to get their voice heard, other than through the Course Representative system, which is in need of development and renewed focus.

The goals in this theme aim to increase engagement with our democratic structures and aid students to have their voice heard here at the University of Northampton.

Development

Our students participate in hundreds of voluntary and leadership roles every year, which facilitate the development of personal and transferable employability skills.

Through a wider variety of opportunities to enhance these skills through training, greater levels of responsibility and accreditation we seek to assist our members in achieving their potential and attaining their goals in their next professional step.

Experience

Every year our students take part in a wide range of activities that enrich their experience at University. We support them to set up and run over 60 societies, 34 Sports Clubs and a number of growing voluntary projects for the benefit of the local community. All the activities are led by students.

We will improve support for activity leaders, creating more opportunities for development and increase responsibility in addition to offering students more excellent opportunities to build friendships and communities, all of which will enhance their skills for the future.



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President

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ENTERPRISE STRATEGIES

Experience

From Day One to Graduation, every student at the University of Northampton has the opportunity to engage in a wide and quality entertainments programme, which include high profile events such as Freshers Week, Fireworks Night, the Summer Ball and Graduations Receptions in addition to our comprehensive, regular line up, which includes Comedy Nights, Club Nights, Pub Quizzes and Karaoke.

We are member-focussed and committed to providing a quality student experience for all our members and the diversity of our entertainments will reflect this.

Development

Every year Students' Union Enterprises employ over 120 members of student staff. These students are our brand ambassadors, the persons that our customers interact with daily. All our staff are comprehensively trained and inducted, a quality customer service is paramount to our activities.

These opportunities provide our students, in addition to a supplementary income to their studies, with professional work experience and opportunities for personal and professional development to enhance their future employability.

Loyalty

A quality, relevant offer to our membership is integral to every service we deliver. Through our loyalty scheme we are able to identify those products and services popular amongst our students and able to determine purchasing behaviours through which to ensure the most appropriate offer to each student.

We recognise that many of our members come back time and time again and to these students we want to reward their custom. Through our loyalty scheme every student has the opportunity to receive an advertised percentage of any purchase made back in points for future transactions, those students participating in student activities are also able to earn points for their student group ensuring that the activities and events they organise in our venues can be even greater in scale.

ENABLING STRATEGIES

People

To have a robust human resource, recruiting and retaining specialist staff who are passionate about their work and the Students' Union's mission. We'll invest in training and development for the Staff Team, creating opportunities for them to deliver excellent activities and services for students.

Financial sustainability

Conduct robust financial planning, annually and strategically, and build a strong Trustee Board to ensure effective financial oversight. The Union will aim at all times to grow its income in a prudent way to support its activities and ensure a diversity of revenue streams to minimise risk.

Communications

During our membership consultation some of our members told us they are unclear of the aims and objectives of the Union, that they do not feel that the Union is relevant to them and that they are prohibited from getting involved due to a lack of awareness. As such communication underpins every theme. Without effective communication we will not achieve our objectives.

