

Autumn Update

2010





Introduction

The Union of UEA Students is here to make students lives' better, and all of our activity should be targeted towards achieving that simple goal. This report has been written to tell you exactly what the Union has done this semester to improve your time and your experience at UEA.

The Union is run by Student Officers, who are elected by students in a cross campus vote. These elected officers run the Union with the permanent members of staff to try and ensure that we continue to focus all our efforts on you.

The values of the Union are what guide our work: Democracy, Collectivism, Empowerment, Equality, Sustainability and Quality. These ideals direct what happens in the Union and how we aim to benefit students in their time at UEA.

The report is intended to give a flavour of what we have done this semester and we are always happy to tell you more, so if you have questions or comments just shout!

Yours in Unity,

The Union of UEA Students



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Representation

Representing students is the primary function of our Students' Union. We believe that elected members of the student body who campaign for change are instrumental in improving the student experience. Union Councillors are elected from each School, Club and Society, in order to represent the needs and wishes of their peers, and these representatives are accountable to their constituents.

"Elected members of the student body who campaign for change are instrumental in improving the student experience"

A further way in which students can actively represent their peers is in their education. We believe that students should be actively encouraged to engage with their course at a committee level, in order to help shape their own education. There are a variety of structures and mechanisms already in place at UEA which allow students to do so, ranging from Staff Student Liaison Committees to student representatives on Faculty and University-wide committees.

At UEA, there have been some strong developments in representation over the last semester. Co-branding all the Union's representation support materials with the University shows that representation is becoming more of a partnership venture.

"The learner voice is essential"

We aim to work more with University to develop this further. A strong culture of student representation, or the 'learner voice' is essential so that problems are highlighted by students as they arise, and can be resolved before they become bigger issues in the National Student Survey.

Representation has strengthened significantly in the last semester. The places for student representatives on University level committees have been filled sooner than in previous years, and we have recruited and trained more student representatives than ever before. Moreover, for the first time we have offered all student representatives the chance to take part in training which will give them skills to chair meetings, of which there have been two sessions already completed.

2009/10- Union trained 49 Union Councillors
Union trained 52

2010/11 Union trained 33 Union Councillors
Union trained 83 student representatives





Governance and Finance

The Union has worked hard this semester to develop the governance structures which help us to provide the services that are integral to improving your experience at UEA. Quality is something we strive to achieve in everything we do, not just in student facing areas.

As a result the Union has been working towards becoming a registered charity, which recognises the fact that the Union is here to benefit you, our members. A stipulation of being a charity is having a full trustee board, which we have for the first time. The trustee board is comprised of Student Officers, ordinary students and external trustees. The board is designed to be balanced between the experience of the external members of the board in disciplines such as marketing, law and government, the organisational knowledge of the Student Officers and the Chief Executive and most importantly, the views of the ordinary students on the board, who help to create the uncompromising focus that the organisation is here for students and for that alone.

“The board has been designed to have external experience, internal knowledge, and an uncompromising focus on the membership's needs”

We have also been in the process of recruiting a new Chief Executive for the Union. On the 29th October 2010 the Trustee Board approved the appointment of Richard Powell OBE to the post of Chief Executive. This is a fantastic appointment for the Union and Richard's weighty experience in charity, membership organisations, environmental awareness and strategic thinking will be exceptional additions to the qualities already inherent in the organisation.

The Union has a governance and management structure which reflects that it is a charity and to make money it owns two wholly owned subsidiary companies. These two companies conduct all of the commercial trading operations of the Union and covenant money to the Union.

The trustees are happy to report to our members that at the end of the first quarter of trading the two companies are doing well, with Students Union Services (East Anglia) Ltd (SUS Ltd) doing very well in particular. Trade in the bars was judged to become very difficult this financial year, following national trends, for which we budgeted to take 5% less in turnover than in 2009/10. Given our strong trading position however we are only 2% down on last year which reflects the popularity of our services. All other services in SUS Ltd have performed in line with or above budget in the opening quarter of the year.

“Representation, Student Support, Clubs, Societies and Peer Support Groups, and Communications”

The Union spends all of the profit it makes on the charitable objects of the Union which are Representation, Student Support, Clubs and Societies and Communication. This means that any money you spend in the services we provide gets pumped back into all of the objectives of the Union. What follows in the report are examples of the things we have been doing with the money raised by the Union to further these objectives.



Democracy is another of our values which guide our work in the Union over the year. We have achieved several milestones in our focus on democracy and in giving choice to students. Much of democracy spills from one of our charitable objects, communication.

Priority Campaigns Poll

In the past the Union has received feedback from our members about how the priority campaigns have been decided upon. This year the student officer committee decided to allow the members to vote upon their priorities.

Eight campaigns were shortlisted from the manifestos of the newly elected officers. Students were encouraged to vote and four campaigns came out on top. These four winners were Fighting Fees and Cuts, Improving Feedback, Graduation Relocation & Improving buses and car parking.



This is the first time UEA students have had direct control of their priority campaigns and since this vote occurred there has been a greater improvement on our campaigns with UEA taking a record number of students attending the National Demonstration on November 10th .

Union Council

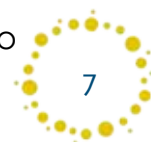
Greater involvement in our campaigns has led to a greater number of students involved with other aspects of the Union and its democratic structures. A great example of this is the record number of students continuing as Union Council reps. Changes such as electronic voting has streamlined this system and enabled councils to occur without too much downtime or confusions meaning reps are encouraged to continue in their roles.

Union Policy

The Union of UEA Students has passed a variety of policies in the last term the full details of which can all be found at the Union's website. The policies cover a range of issues from money saving incentives & streamlining the Unions policies to reaffirming the Union's stance on non-criminal direct action.

ueastudent.com/voice/unionpolicy

The Union has also opened a by-election for the SSF faculty convenor which is due to occur at the start of next term



Campaigns

This academic year sees national campaigning and mobilisation around the issue of higher education funding and cuts. As the clear winner in our priority campaigns poll, the anti-fees and cuts campaign has been a clear priority of the Union this semester.

A lot of our work was focussed around pressuring local Lib Dem MP Simon Wright to honour his pledge to vote against a rise in tuition fees. In order to do this, we've:

- Taken more than 350 students down to the NUS/UCU National Demonstration in November, on Union-funded coaches.
- Delivered more than 1,000 postcards to Simon's office, from constituents who want Simon to honour his pledge.



- Taken 120 students to the National Lobby of Parliament on the day of the tuition fees vote.
- Organised a debate, attended by more than 300 students, Simon Wright, and NUS President Aaron Porter, on the issue.
- Mobilised for, and supported the Norfolk Coalition Against the Cuts demo in December.

- Organised a series of rallies on campus as part of the build up to the vote.
- Gained more than 50 mentions on this issue in local press (since August), as well as on various TV outlets.

In the end, this work meant that Simon Wright re-signed his pledge to students (see photo), and that students at UEA were able to add pressure to MPs across the country.

Although this campaign has been the



main focus of our work this semester, we have also been working on the other priority campaigns, in particular the hungry for feedback campaign.

Hungry for Feedback

Currently, the University has no policy on giving students feedback on the exams they take over the course of their degree. After sitting an exam, the University doesn't have to give students any more information about how they did, other than a mark. The Union believes that the detailed feedback students receive for coursework should be extended to exams so that it is clear how they can improve. There are only a few occasions in the University where students receive feedback on exams. Some module organisers produce generic reports about the exam for the whole cohort of students who sat it and the School of Medicine provides information to students about which quartile their mark places them in.

The campaign for exam feedback has been a priority for our Union for the last two years. Last year, a survey showed that 81.6% of students agreed with the statement "I would find feedback on my exams useful". There have been several strong shows of support for the principle of exam feedback from students- in the summer 2009 the Union encouraged students to write 'I'm Hungry for Feedback' on the front of their exam script, and in summer 2010 encouraged students to sign an online petition calling for better exam feedback.

Together with the National Union of Students, this year our Union intends to campaign harder than ever on this issue. We strongly believe that students are being denied a chance to learn by not getting adequate feedback on where they could improve their exam performance. We also want a system where UEA students can view or be returned their own exam scripts, or the comments written on them. Students voted exam feedback as one of the four priority campaigns for the Union during this academic year, and there has been a sub-group convened by Union Council in order to focus on the issue and ensure a high profile campaign on the issue is run.

We recommend that the University should take steps to investigate how feedback on exams could be extended throughout Schools and Faculties. The University should investigate examination feedback practices introduced at other, similar Higher Education Institutions. Our campaign will focus on collating evidence from institutions where exam feedback is given and proving the benefits to students that this provides. It will also aim to pressure the University from within each school, through student representatives and at a Faculty level. We will aim to work with the University as they recognise the importance of a system where assessment and feedback are a focus for continued efforts to help improve the student experience.





We aim to empower our activists to help them improve your student experience. The members of the Union do some fantastic things during their time at UEA, and we think it's something that should be celebrated as often as possible. What is below is just a small example of what some of our clubs, societies and other members have got up in the semester.

Cathsoc made the trip to the Papal Visit at Hyde Park in September, the group travelled early to get good places, attended the vigil with the Pope and then travelled back through the night to Norwich. Richard from Cathsoc said "The vigil was just awesome, 80,000 people together, from all ages and backgrounds. It was a powerful moment in all our lives."

"It has been amazing... They have been inspired."

UEA Korfball Club have had a great season on the court with a fantastic group of freshers coming to the fore as the club aims to regain its premier status in British Student Korfball. The 1st team recently placed 2nd in the BUCS Southern qualifiers at UEA, on the journey to the National finals, which currently leaves them as a top four team in the UK. Lisa Stevens, 1st team regular said "the team played brilliantly. University teams around the country know that UEA is gunning for the top spot at nationals!"

Stop the Traffik have started going into 6th form colleges in Norwich to talk to young students about human trafficking and have had a great response. Emma, president of the society, said "It has been amazing! They have been really responsive, given us amazing feedback and they have been inspired to get involved in fighting against human trafficking."

"UEA is gunning for the top spot at nationals!"

ELSA (European Law Students Association) have had a guest speaker from the British Council in Brussels, which gave a brilliant first hand insight into what lies ahead for these students.

International Student Society has had a really amazing year thus far. The society planned and took a trip to Amsterdam a few weeks ago with 110 students, which was a brilliant experience for all involved!

UEA Squash are having a great season with the 1st team very much in promotion territory for the Norfolk league having only lost one match. The 2nd team are also unbeaten at the top of their table in the Norfolk league. Dom, the president of Squash said "It's great to see all of our teams doing so well. Thanks to some fantastic new freshers, coupled with our loyal existing squad, we are really making inroads into the local leagues. Not only that, our intermediates and beginners are improving exponentially! Well done everyone!"

UEA Indian Society put together Diwali event in the LCR where the LCR was transformed with decoration and lights. Over 200 guests were present, wearing beautiful traditional Indian outfits. DJ Raven from London played the finest selection of music and Harps, the drummer had everyone's foot tapping! Rubina, president of Indian Society was ecstatic about the event, particularly commenting on the "beautiful fireworks" to end the night!

"It was a powerful moment in all our lives."

UEA Ladies Hockey competed in the East Indoor Qualifying tournament in early December. Having played against some National Level sides and competing strongly across the board the team unfortunately didn't qualify for the National League. However the team impressed onlookers, and were invited to join the newly formed Indoor Hockey League system for next season. Hockey's president, Catherine was pleased to report that the team would likely be playing in "the East Premier Level or East Division 1 Level competition.

UEA Windsurf have run their first RYA Windsurfing beginner course this semester and signed off 8 start windsurfers after gaining RYA Recognition. Rich, President of Windsurf is looking forward to "getting some BUCS Medals in the beginner category this Easter, if not Intermediate by then." Watch out world!

UEA Athletics have been working hard to get freshers involved this season with many competing in the Northern Athletics Indoor Open meeting in Sheffield on the 20th of November. Ruth Mckellar also broke the club record for the 60m sprint at the same event. The Cross Country team has also been flourishing, Josh Entwistle in particular being in the form of his life with two 1st places and one 3rd out of three league races so far, which have buoyed the mens team to pole position in the East Anglia Cross Country League.

Conclusion

We at the Union hope we have been able to show what we have been doing to develop and improve your student experience through our four key objectives, and we certainly hope we have been successful in doing so. As always though we need your input so make sure you shout about any questions you have.

The Union of UEA Students will continue to work to achieve success in the areas of representation, student support, clubs, societies and peer support groups, and communications. In order to do this we need loads of help, and get most of it from the 13 Part time elected student officers that we work with. These Officers do a job in the Union alongside their degrees and the Union would not be able to achieve what it does without these people. The Full time officers would like to express their thanks to the Part time officers for all their hard work this semester.

If you are interested in what we do, and want to get further involved, you can email any of the Full Time Officers to ask how to get further involved, and make sure you check out the website at ueastudent.com in order to find out more of the great things that we do as we do them. We hope you continue to enjoy your time at UEA!

Yours in Unity,



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