



The University of Surrey  
**Students' Union**

[www.ussu.co.uk](http://www.ussu.co.uk)



# President's Report 2011/12

Students' Union Sabbatical Team 2011/12

Version : 0.6

The University of Surrey Students' Union is a private limited company, registered in England & Wales with registered number 07470232, and a registered charity, registered with charity number 1142479. Union House, University of Surrey, Guildford GU2 7XH. ©University of Surrey Students' Union 2012

## Contents

Report Purpose.....	3
Summary .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> -4
Key Achievements .....	4-6
Challenges.....	6-15
Pressure on student finances .....	6
Time bomb squeezed in the middle .....	6-7
Student financial wellbeing .....	7-9
Cost of campus .....	9-11
Accommodation rent increases .....	11
Pace of change at the University .....	11-12
Consequences of new regulations.....	12-13
Campus cultural balance .....	13-14
Students with complex needs .....	14
Union re-focusing on representation.....	14-15
Team Surrey .....	15
Societies - Room Bookings and Space Allocation .....	17-20
Students' Union Building .....	20

The purpose of this report is to outline the key achievements made this year by The University of Surrey Students' Union; identify the challenges faced during the year not just by the Union, but by those whom we represent; and set out a possible way forward into next year and the long term future. It is hoped that the University's Executive Board will find this report a useful summary of the year at the Students' Union. The Sabbatical team have each contributed to this report, overseen by the President.

## Summary

Key achievements:

- Registering as a charity with a brand new constitution, rules, committee structure and memorandum of understanding
- Strengthening of the strategic relationship between the Union and University
- Taking part in national accreditation schemes to enhance Union legitimacy
- National award for the quality of training provided to student staff and also now graded as 'Outstanding'
- Positive trends seen from the annual Students' Union survey and recognition of Student Union activities in I-grad survey outcomes
- Use of technology to increase transparency at the Students' Union
- Collaboration with SSP to create Team Surrey

Challenges:

- Pressure on student finances
- Time bomb squeezed in the middle
- Student financial wellbeing
- Cost of campus
- Accommodation rent increases
- Pace of change at the University
- Consequences of new regulations
- Campus cultural balance
  
- Students with complex needs



The University of Surrey  
**Students' Union**

- Union re-focusing on core activity

Way forward:

- A genuine learning partnership
- A shared commitment to continuous improvement
- Student Union working to aid change management
- A new Students' Union building

## **Key Achievements**

### **Registering as a charity with a brand new constitution, rules, committee structure and memorandum of understanding**

The Students' Union's charity registration has brought into focus the purpose of the Union and what being a 'strong' Students' Union means in reality. We have welcomed new external Trustees to the organisation and we are already seeing the benefits of their involvement. The experience of our Trustees will empower us to move forward and make sure that everything we do is for the benefit of our members. However, being independent should not be regarded as meaning 'separate'.

### **Strengthening of the strategic relationship between the Union and University**

We have continued to see the benefits of the formulation of the new Students' Union and University Strategy Committee. This meeting provides us with an opportunity to formalise our strategic relationship with the University and ensure that one central University meeting retains an overview of the Students' Union developments. This will continue to be essential in the years to come.

### **Taking part in national accreditation schemes to enhance Union legitimacy**

Over the last two years we have been working intensely on the Students' Union Evaluation Scheme (SUEI) and recently received our draft audit report. Although we do not yet know the outcome, we are proud of the moves we have made since we began the SUEI project to become a more member focussed Students' Union, and this has been recognised in the draft report. We



have also been recently assessed in Investors in Volunteers (IIV), which, if achieved, will go alongside our existing Investor in People status and recognise our commitment to volunteering at the Students' Union.

### **National award for the quality of training provided to student staff, now graded as 'Outstanding'**

This year we received a British Institute of Innkeepers (BII) award for the training we provide to all of the students who work at our venues within the Union. We are incredibly proud of this achievement. Subsequent to this, we were reassessed as a training centre and we are now rated as 'Outstanding' on a national level.

### **Positive trends seen from annual Students' Union survey and recognition of Student Union activities in I-grad survey outcomes**

Our survey trends have shown a huge improvement in our members' views of their Union over the last year. Over 80% of our members feel we make a positive impact on their lives while at University and questions such as 'is the Students' Union easy to understand' improved by 20% and more. The University's I-grad results also showed our impact on the student experience, with Surrey once again scoring highly for its welcome and entertainments.

### **Use of technology to increase transparency at the Students' Union**

Our new website has been a work in progress this year which is now having a real impact on our members and the way they see their Union. Our live streaming of events such as election question time and the Student Awards have helped us to connect with our members in new and innovative ways, and our live website polls have enabled us to understand more than ever about student opinion. The ability for all students and staff to see live reports on club and society finances, and very soon all Students' Union finances, has lifted the mystery on 'where the money goes'.

### **Collaboration with SSP to create Team Surrey**

This year, Team Surrey entered its first year of operation. Team Surrey is, in the first sense, the sports brand for the University of Surrey and secondly it represents a sporting partnership between Surrey Sports Park and The University of Surrey Students' Union. The University of Surrey had forty three sports clubs this year. This has gone a long way to professionalise student sport at Surrey, and we are only just beginning a journey that will take us to the top ten

of the BUCS league. However, Team Surrey has not been without problems - the transition for clubs in moving to the new finance arrangement has been overly bureaucratic and inflexible. There now appears to be duplication in work between the Union and SSP for no benefit and streamlining back office should be a priority for sports admin.

## Challenges

### **Pressure on student finances**

“The advent of £9000 fees” is one of the frequently heard phrases among those working in universities today. This phrase has become a collective warning for any area that does not come up to scratch, and that students will be comparing what they receive against an imaginary price list. In reality however there is no evidence from the introduction of the £3000 fee that this will happen and our own students have told us they regard the fee loan as a graduate tax and not as ‘real debt’ (this should not however be taken that students are not worried about future debt - they are). The real legacy of the new fee structure is the marketisation of higher education. However this is also a dangerous mind-set to enter, as higher education is not a true market because it is almost impossible to switch provider and it is a onetime purchase. The University of Surrey must have the confidence to forge its own path and to do what it is right for Surrey students, not what is acceptable according to a benchmark of the 1994 group. It is no comfort to a Surrey student that they are paying less rent than a student at Reading.

### **The time bomb in the squeezed middle**

We asked a representative sample of students about their own experience of financial issues during their time at Surrey.

- Less than 10% of our students are only children, and of those with siblings, almost 70% are the first to come to University
- 78% are financially supported by their parents while at Surrey
- 57% receive cash direct into their bank account
- The average value of this support through semester one was £1,065, with support ranging from £100 to £4000
- 65% have a part time job to support them while they study, 16% have more than one part time job. The average hourly wage was £6.97 per hour

- 11% undertook something they regarded as immoral, illegal or unethical for money to support themselves

The average household annual income in the south east in 2011 was £42,120, which puts the average household beyond all but the smallest maintenance grant of £523 in 2012. These households will then be expected by the government to contribute around £1300 per annum to support their son or daughter at university. The response to our survey already shows families are not able to support to this level, with current parental financial support averaging £1,065. It is these households, outside of the zone of support for grants and bursaries, who will struggle in the coming years.

The immediate problems on the horizon are:

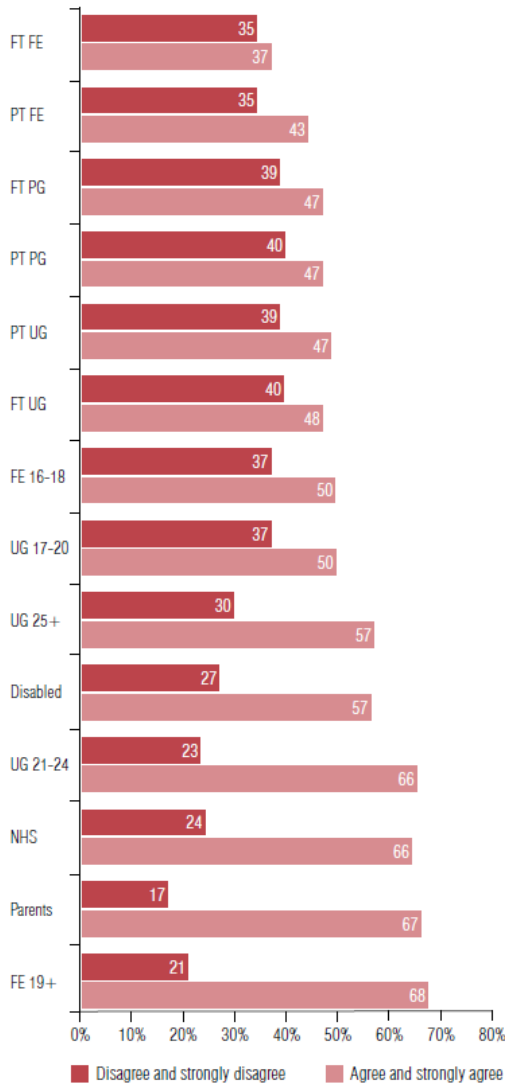
- Families of home students are unable to support their second son or daughter in coming to University
- Continued recession making part time work for new students scarce
- A collapsing Euro giving EU students less spending power
- A depressed economy, combined with rising inflation, making income scarce for supporting children at university.

These factors are of course outside the control of the University of Surrey but they should be included in any future discussions or lobbying regarding student support with the government. In the latest national survey on student finance, 66% of respondents believed support should be in the form of a cash bursary with only 13% opting for a fee waiver.

### **Student financial well-being**

It is commonly understood that most undergraduates on commencement of their studies underestimate the cost of living, and are unable to sufficiently manage their loan instalments through the term. This has been reinforced by the most recent NUS survey on Student Finance, "The Pound in your Pocket".

When asked if they agree with the statement "*I regularly worry about not having enough money to cover my basic living expenses*", every subgroup had more respondents reporting regular worry than not (see figure, left).



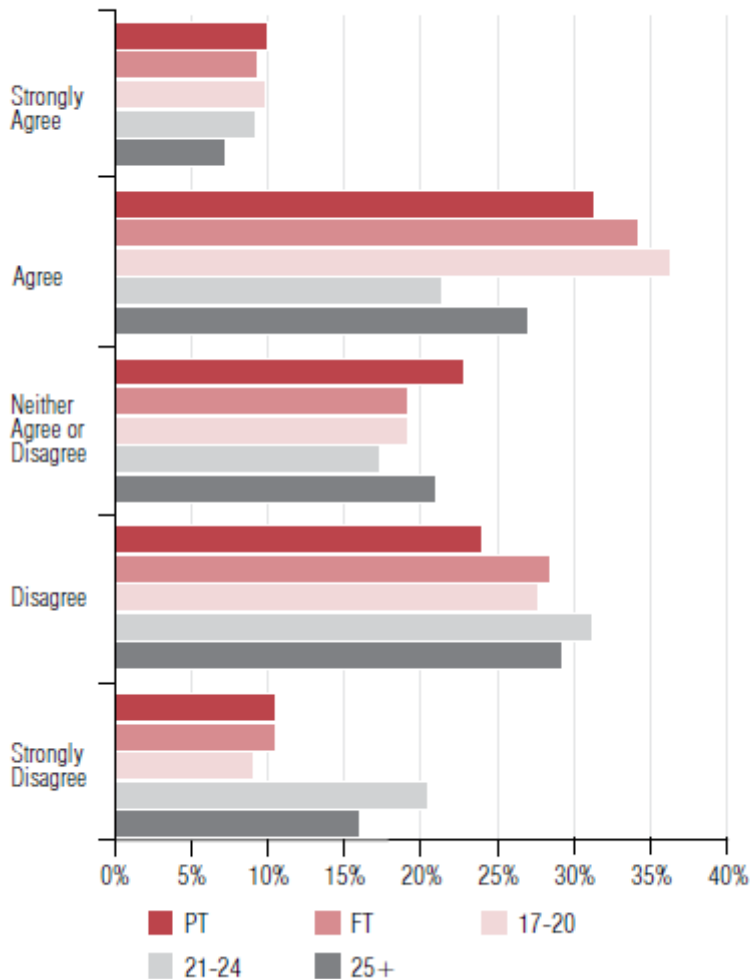
We wanted to use this survey to understand more about how different groups of students felt that worry about their financial situation affected their studies. We asked students to reflect on the following statement and indicate the extent to which they agreed with it: '*I feel able to concentrate on my studies without worrying about finances*' (see figure overleaf) The group that reported the least interference on their studies overall were young FE students, one in ten of whom strongly agreed that they were able to concentrate on their studies without worrying about their finances. 42% of respondents agreed with this statement and 9% strongly disagreed - being one of the lowest proportions of respondents in the survey. Respondents who considered themselves to be the most distracted by financial worry in relation to their studies were undergraduates in the 21-24 category, more than half of whom indicated that they did not feel able to concentrate because of financial concerns (53% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement above). This figure includes

approximately one in five who selected the strongest negative response in this category (21%). Also strongly affected were student parents and NHS respondents, where almost half reported that they felt unable to concentrate on their studies because of financial worry (both 49% disagreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement).' (NUS 'Pound in Your Pocket' report).





### I feel able to concentrate on my studies without worrying about finances – Undergraduate



Understanding the student support system in itself can be a worry for many students and we are proud to have such excellent finance advice available to here at Surrey. We believe the new Student Support Centre will be a tremendous help to students seeking financial support and advice.

#### **The cost of campus**

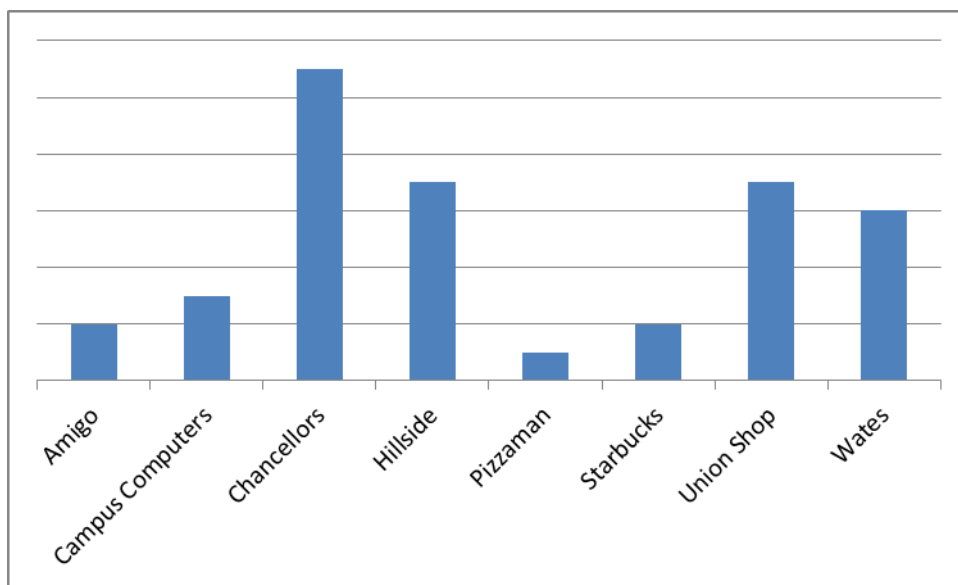
Although the cost of services on campus is a perennial issue, it has been put into sharp relief this year with the arrival of the full Amigos store. Where there was a general discontent among some students regarding the price of entry to Union events, or eating in Hillside, Amigos has become the focal point for all complaints regarding prices. The reputation of Amigo is now so low, it may be irrevocably damaged - it is on this subject more than any other we receive student feedback. Compounding the problem of price, Amigo is also



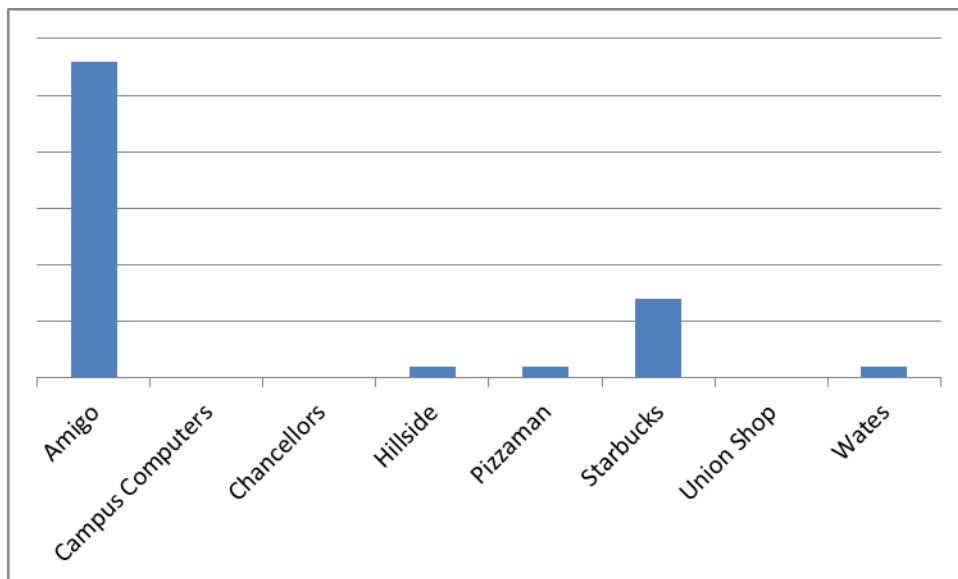
regarded as the campus inconvenience store, where there is an endless choice of grab-and-go food and confectionery, but very little in the way

of grocery and it is not possible to construct a varied evening meal from what is on sale. We do know from other University campuses (e.g. Essex, Warwick, Reading, and Bath) that it is possible to run a successful, popular and profitable convenience store, managed either by the Union, University or in partnership.

We asked students what service on campus they regarded as 'best value' and this is what they told us the following:



It is important to compare this to the question, *Which do you regard as most expensive?:*



Amigos contributes a significant guaranteed sum to the campus finances; however their presence is now so toxic and damaging to the reputation of campus services that drastic action should be considered. What the University is making financially, it is losing in its reputation and this income comes at a cost. We do know from other Students' Unions who operate campus convenience stores of a similar size, that it would be possible to generate the same bottom line contribution from a store run in house.

### **Accommodation rent increases**

Discussions regarding proposed increases to the rent prices of University residences have been a drawn out process, failing to move from a stalemate situation. We accept that as costs rise, so too do rent prices need to. However, it is felt that this year, rents are simply being raised to keep in line with national inflation, rather than being linked to an increase in the cost of maintaining the residences.

The average rent price at Surrey is largely skewed by the low cost of Band A accommodation, which are either in poor condition or unfavourable locations - over half of Surrey students in residences will pay over £115 a week for their rent at proposed 2012/13 prices.

Prices cannot continue to rise without justification or improvement of the provision of services. As rents have risen over the past few years, with increased costs being the justification, the level of service provision has dropped. As examples, toilet paper is no longer provided in en-suite rooms, cleaning has become less frequent and the weekly laundry service has long since ceased.

This is not an argument to stop raising rents altogether, that is unfeasible. This is a challenge to the University to be more creative in regards to covering costs of rents. Rather than applying a blanket cost increase on all residences, there is scope for 'pay as you go' and value added services, such as providing a standard package to all residents, with additional costs for extended 'luxuries' (Wi-Fi, connectivity for a games console etc).

### **Pace of change at the University**

The Students' Union is all too conscious of the fact that things are changing and developing quickly at the University. These positive changes have presented a challenge this year and



will continue to do so as they come into force and we see the real outcomes of this work.  
The Surrey

Learn project faces the challenge of ensuring that academics treat the new system in the same way, so that our student members each take the same benefits from Surrey Learn. The risk to the University is that academics will see this new software differently and use it to varying extents – this could possibly disillusion students who are all too aware of the experiences of their peers on other courses across the institution. When one module leader begins to use new and innovative features now available on Surrey Learn it will not take long for students to expect this experience from all modules. Students who did not use Ulearn did not see this as a disadvantage, as Ulearn is regarded as a 'necessary evil' - but students deprived of a high-fidelity experience on Surrey Learn will expect more. This could have the effect of actually decreasing satisfaction with learning technology.

Recruitment drives for new academics will bring many new faces to the campus, and restructures will bring people together from different administrative teams for one common purpose – for example in the new Student Support Centre. Students will benefit greatly from all of these support services being under one roof, but working culture and leadership will be essential if this move is to be a success. We are very excited about the new Student Support Centre and are ready to work with the new centre manager to deliver an excellent service in this new resource.

The Union is often privy to discussions and debates happening at ground level on campus – our wide ranging team of student representatives bring back a ground swell of opinion – from what tutors are saying in lectures, to comments made in academic integrity meetings. **It is crucial to the University that staff have a positive opinion of their place of work.** The Union has long been the home of the dispossessed and disgruntled, whether student or staff, and it is much better that steam is let off in private than in the lecture theatre. The University's recent successes in the league tables have instilled students with a sense of pride in their institution which needs to be reflected in the attitudes of all staff at Surrey, from academics through to professional services.

### **Consequences of new regulations**

This academic year saw the application of the new academic regulations and at the Union, despite knowing that there would be an increased workload, we could not have predicted the



400% increase we have seen in student casework on a monthly basis. The new academic integrity

regulations now provide the student with an opportunity to attend an introductory formal meeting to discuss the allegation in order to establish whether or not there is a need to have an academic misconduct panel. On the whole, these meetings have been positive and provided a good opportunity for students to discuss academic integrity and their understanding of good research practice. We have been challenged, and continue to be challenged, by a variance in attitudes towards the Students' Unions assistance at these meetings and at any subsequent panels. We have taken a key role in the training of panel members to ensure the aims of the Union are not misunderstood.

We have seen an increase in academic appeals owing to the bridge between the old and new sets of academic regulations and the number of students who were unable to progress during the transition year of 2010/11. Comparatively small numbers of students were affected by this problem, but the impact on them has been huge (termination of their studies) and thus their need for Student Union support has been greater than other students we see.

The new OSCAR, which replaces the Office of the Dean of Students, is a positive move which the Union fully supports. The acknowledgement of a need to increase staff resources in this area, and the recognition that the regulations do not require that academic staff administrate the appeals process, are both important conclusions which the University has drawn and will benefit students in the long term. The advent of the new office will be a crucial time for the University and the Union is keen to continue to uphold the strong working relationship we have been pleased to maintain with this area of the University in the past. The Union is also looking forward to seeing the benefits of extra staff resource in the area of representation, which will enable us to monitor trends and pick up on patterns much easier in the coming years. With this new resource, we can improve our ability as a Union to connect with our members on academic matters and encourage our members to have a better understanding of the new regulations.

### **Campus cultural balance**

International recruitment is important to the University and will become more important in years to come. It is equally important that cultural integration on campus remains at the



heart of the University's priorities. The Students' Union continues to host a popular International Festival during March each year which provides students with the opportunities to celebrate their own culture and learn about the cultures of others on campus – opportunities like this will need to

continue at the same pace as international recruitment. We also need to ensure that a 'Surrey student identity' continues to emerge on campus, uniting all of the students, regardless of their cultural background, as Surrey students. There has already been acknowledgement that the overly large student recruitment from China will have an impact on cultural integration on campus. We now need to move beyond simple international events and work harder with Student Care to prevent cultural ghettos from being created within accommodation.

### **Students with complex needs**

We are experiencing an increasing amount of casework relating to a small number of students with various and complex emotional needs, requiring a large resource for what may begin as a seemingly small issue. These students require a multitude of services and will be receiving support from the University's support services, ALS in the library, the Students' Union, alongside their GP and other local services. The University has initiated effective case management processes to support these students and enable them to deal with the difficulties that they encounter, however without an effective electronic case management system which can be shared by all relevant services, it is possible for students to slip through the net. This year the Students' Union has been managing its casework via Microsoft Dynamics CRM which enables correspondence to be tracked for auditing purpose and allows us to recognise that a student under investigation for a disciplinary offence in one of the Union's venues, and a student subject to an academic misconduct allegation, may be one and the same person. Trends are showing that the University can expect many more complex cases during the next academic year and mechanisms will need to be reinforced to ensure that all the relevant services have brought into the management system. **A joined-up approach must be taken to appreciate the full picture of the students' needs.**

### **Union re-focusing on representation**

The national trend for all students' unions today is to be refocusing on true representation. This principle is enshrined in the SUEI process where accurately representing your members' views is central to the audit (which we completed in February 2012). The key to SUEI is the question of how well we understand our members and how much we positively



influence their experience at University. Having a good understanding of our members means having well informed student representatives who are fulfilling the purpose for which they were elected – representing member views, not their own agenda. Over the course of the SUEI audit – which began in February 2010, the Students' Union has experienced a shift in culture – from being a slightly introverted

organisation more inclined to act first and ask the membership later, to an organisation which listens to the membership views before it acts.

## **Team Surrey**

This year, Team Surrey entered its first year of operation. Team Surrey is, in the first sense, the sports brand for the University of Surrey. Secondly it represents a sporting partnership between Surrey Sports Park and The University of Surrey Students' Union. The University of Surrey has forty three Sports Clubs this year.

Team Surrey has been an overall success in terms of sporting performance in British University and College Sport (BUCS) league tables in comparison to previous years and the partnership approach has played a major part in achieving this. However, looking ahead; Team Surrey will require more support, resources and consideration to increase its performance for the University, as well as students. However, if the University is happy with sport as it is and does not require reaching the top 10 in the BUCS league, then it is adequate to keep investing in sport at the current level. To put our performance into perspective, out of eighteen Universities in the '94 group, we are only 10<sup>th</sup> best in BUCS.

### **Relationship between the Union and SSP**

The relationship between the Students' Union and Surrey Sports Park has improved dramatically over the last year and a half. An important aspect to this has been the relationship building that the Union VP Sports and Union Sports Coordinator have made with SSP staff, and how this has been reciprocated. The new management at SSP has shown a real commitment to partnership working. There is a sense of working collectively in sport now and more channels have been open- such as involvement of more staff expertise from SSP.

### **Team Surrey Strategy – the way forward**

It has been a year of set up, transition and administrative change. It is now time to work on a set of longer term strategic goals in line with the overall University strategy.

- Finance

Despite Team Surrey moving forward in many aspects for student sport, the biggest step backwards has been moving club finance to SSP. This has caused many problems for both staff working within sport as well as the club committees throughout the entire year. Clubs are unable to run effectively because they cannot access full breakdowns of their club budgets. Similarly, even staff are unable to see financial breakdowns easily. This makes the process of establishing where mistakes have occurred very difficult from both a staff and a club perspective. Naturally human error does happen and this can be appreciated, however, because of the financial system it is not easy to identify where any errors lie.

This is a frustration to staff and clubs as it creates extra work and wastes valuable staff time on what could be a simple task. With the time that could be saved through having a more easily accessible and dynamic financial system (which is suited more for student sport rather than a business), staff could achieve more in terms of development work for our sports.

We now find ourselves in the position where the finance work of Team Surrey is duplicated in SSP and the Union, with no benefit.

- Achievements and improvement of BUCS league table position

Over the past two years, the University of Surrey has increased its BUCS position from 75<sup>th</sup> (2009-10) to 53<sup>rd</sup> (2010-11) to currently 47<sup>th</sup> (2011-12) - the highest position Surrey has ever achieved. The main contribution to this increase has been the arrival of the Sports Park, an increased sports budget which has resulted in equipment and coaching, and better club administration. The next phase is to improve the performance and training of clubs.

- Resources

For the time being financial support is adequate, however, as Team Surrey hopefully rises up the BUCS tables, further investment is needed to meet the requirements of higher performance sport. This is the experience in any sporting league, where advances further up the table get exponentially more difficult.



- Facilities

Space at the Surrey Sports Park has become limited for student sports clubs. There is always a concern every time a new club or new team is mentioned as the facility is approaching its limit and there is significantly less space for student clubs to operate due to budget/income targets which the Surrey Sports Park have to meet. This is understood by the majority of club committees, however, any further development and training opportunities for clubs are decreasing and there will be a point where Surrey will go down the BUCS league table - this could be next year depending on our circumstances.

- Timetabling conflicts

The 'Keeping Wednesday Afternoons Free' campaign needs to be consistent across all faculties as it is vital for all our sports clubs. It would be extremely beneficial for lectures to finish at noon on Wednesdays, thus keeping the afternoon period free. We receive messages from about 2-3 clubs each week asking for their fixture to be moved (which is not always possible) because they are struggling to field a team. As we get higher in the BUCS tables, the importance of this issue increases as being in a higher club leagues requires the highest standard of student players consistently each week.

## **Societies - Room Bookings and Space Allocation**

Within the Students' Union, one category of society appears to be growing and evolving much more quickly than any other, and that is our Arts societies. Societies such as Musical Theatre and MADsOc (Music and Drama Society) are putting on regular productions, and therefore requiring regular rehearsal space. Outside of this grouping, but requiring similar resources, is the Ballroom and Latin Dance Club.

Over the past year, the Students' Union has recognised the need to expand the available space to these societies and other clubs for performance and rehearsal spaces in order to achieve their desired aims. With University Hall, the Ivy Arts Centre, PATS and GSA available, all arts students and the societies they are part of should be able to have ample availability to the space. The University has seen a rapid expansion in arts space, yet student groups still are not able to access it as easily as we'd like them to. We believe that this should change, and therefore propose an 'opening up' of arts venues to student groups,



as well as an easier booking system for the venues currently in use. The Students' Union has had several experiences with the room booking system this year for

arts space, all of which has led to what has appeared to be a 'standoff' between the University and the Students' Union. We recognise the need for there to be a simplified room booking system due to the complications in the current way this operates:

- Bookings from the Students' Union clubs and societies currently go through our Student Sports Coordinator. For all central timetabling rooms, they are then sent to Timetabling (or Conferences for out of term dates). For University Hall, they go through the Dance Department for bookings during weekdays. Within the Dance Department, bookings are not always communicated, which has led to complications with our bookings, which have always followed the protocol detailed to us.
- Bookings for GSA go to GSA and initially come through the Student Sports Coordinator.
- Bookings for Ivy Arts Centre and PATS do not go through the Students' Union, and instead student groups must organise these themselves. This often leads to a barrier to obtaining rehearsal space and there doesn't seem to be a clear-cut process for booking.
- Weekend bookings for University Hall go through Conferences. Bookings made here are not always relayed to the Dance Department.

Over the past year, the Students' Union has faced several difficulties due to the different methods in how rooms are booked. A few examples of these are:

- The annual iGala performance was scheduled for the 9<sup>th</sup> March in University Hall. Having booked during the summer, we believed it had all been arranged ready for March. However, due to the complications in the system, we were unaware that it had to be booked twice – once for the weekend bookings and once for the weekdays. Once this had all been arranged, we were then informed by Registry that the stage could not go up the weekend before due to incoming Nurses registration on the Monday that week. Although this was resolved, this was an unnecessary complication one week before the performance date and a day before the stage was due to be constructed.
- The Musical Theatre Society had booked University Hall for their performances of *Guys and Dolls* which went from the Sunday to the Tuesday. On the Tuesday, the



Students' Union received a message to say that the Society had not booked the hall and therefore had been performing in the hall without permission. Upon further investigation, it transpired

- that the society had successfully booked the hall through the Dance Department, yet this had not been communicated internally.
- Because the Dance Department is in charge of all bookings during weekdays, we have faced constant problems when it comes to rehearsal space for our Ballroom and Latin Dance Club. It often arises that the space has been block-booked by the department in case students wish to rehearse during that time. Due to this, the club is not able to block-book rehearsal space for more than three weeks at a time, leading to uncertainty of whether the club can rehearse on a weekly basis. We find it an unfair system that University Hall may often be empty due to no take-up of the space by Dance students, yet as a result of this, the Ballroom and Latin Dance Club is unable to rehearse.

These are just a few of the complications that have arisen over the past academic year for our student groups. It is important for both sides to recognise that student groups are run by student volunteers, and therefore the system should be as easy as possible for them to obtain some form of rehearsal space. These groups do not have the possibility to go elsewhere other than University spaces and we should embrace that. We believe that there are several ways that these problems could be easily avoided next year:

- An end to the 'block booking' of rehearsal space

The culture of block booking University Hall means that it is often going unused, solely with the expectation that Dance students may wish to use it. If Dance students go through the same system as the Students' Union, it would mean groups such as the Ballroom and Latin Dance Club should easily be able to get their four hours of weekday rehearsals, while Dance students should also be able to rehearse due to the amount of free space still in the Hall.

- Opening up other Arts spaces

If spaces such as Ivy Arts Centre and GSA are also 'opened up' for student groups, it would alleviate the burden on University Hall. Spaces such as the Ivy Arts Centre have



purpose built rehearsal space, which often goes unused at evenings. If societies such as the Musical Theatre Society could use this, it would mean that University Hall has fewer bookings, and therefore less contention over the space between the Students' Union and the University. This is a desired outcome.

- Change in booking system

Currently, the booking system for University Hall is confusing and convoluted. Due to it being administered by different departments at different times of the week, often bookings are not communicated. If a new, central booking system was created for University Hall, it would lead to fair and equal opportunities to access for all students – both Dance students and Students' Union groups.

Ultimately, we believe that there are simple ways to make sure that all students who need access to arts rehearsal space have this made available to them. By working together, we should be able to create a solution to the problems faced this year, and ensure that spaces such as University Hall can be used by all.

## **Students' Union Building**

The working group for the new Students' Union building has met a number of times, and some ideas are beginning to take shape. There is a sense of frustration among our members that Union House is now not fit for purpose, with limited capacity and limited relevance to the needs of Surrey students – however there simply is not the capital funding available to replace it.

We must all consider the place that the Students' Union will occupy as part of the University, and what part it will play. With no central space that students can regard as their own, the campus community becomes disparate and disjointed. One of our absolute key aims as a Union is to build a community, both physically and virtually. Our biggest difficulty is that as the virtual community strengthens, the physical community suffers and students regress into their en-suite accommodation mixing with fewer of their peers. The campus community is one of the unique features of Surrey, and it is gradually weakening as a cumulative result of most of the issues we have discussed in this report.



The University of Surrey  
**Students' Union**

There is no need to repeat here the work covered in the discussions of the working group. What must be understood is that this is not a simple building project - this is the final link in a chain that has seen the Students' Union transform itself into an organisation that belongs to its members, that its members can believe and trust in, and a Union that its University can be proud of.