

**Student
Submission
to Council**

16th December 2005

Introduction

Council, we ask you to listen to students and staff, and to make the change that is needed. We love Sussex. We want to see it prosper. We want to see it fulfil its potential. We care and feel passionate about the student experience, but we are very concerned by the University's recent, current and future provisions for both students and staff.

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Timeline

Week 3 Spring Term

Meeting with Chair of Council and independent members of Council with USSU and student representatives. To clarify any of the specific issues and to discuss progress.

Friday 10th February (end of Week 5)

Council response to Student Submission. To include progress and timelines for the completion of all action points listed in this document.

University Management and Finance

Proposed new management structure

Areas of Concern:

- A new management structure was introduced as part of the school restructuring in 2003. Its aim was to make the institution more effective by streamlining its management. Staff were told it was the answer to their problems. It didn't work. It resulted in more levels of management and bureaucracy. Academics had more paper work to do and therefore saw students less, thus impacting students directly. It also created a gap between administrators and academics. If an academic wanted an administrator to do something for them, the administrator had to go right to the top (the registrar) to get permission. This created more bureaucracy and a wedge between academics and support staff. Last year a review of the structure was completed but it wasn't acted upon.
- The Vice-Chancellor is becoming Chief Executive. There has been a total breakdown of faith and trust between the student body and the Vice-Chancellor. A vote of no confidence in the VC was held in 2002, and nothing has changed since.
- The Vice-Chancellor's Executive does not appear in the diagram detailing the management structure.
- If the new structure works, it will resolve some problems but not all of them.
- The student experience embodies what the University is all about, and yet there seems to be no pro-vice chancellor and support staff for this huge and important remit.
- Only one student representative is currently sitting on the new Strategy and Resources Committee.
- Student representation on committees.

Actions Required:

- A robust management structure that has a better process of holding people to account and a clearer reporting structure.
- A structure where people are aware of their responsibilities.
- A comprehensive analysis on how the structure will impact students.
- Details of checks and safeguards that are in place to ensure that the new management structure works.
- Details of when the first and subsequent reviews of the structure will take place and when the review will be publicly published. Assurances that Council will act on the recommendations of the review.
- Details of the strategic plan and staffing structure for the 'student experience', which needs to be centrally embedded into the University.
- The President and the Finance Officer of the Students Union to sit on the Strategy and Resources Committee
- Current levels of student representation on committees should not be reduced.
- Confirmation of the relationship between academics and administrators in the new structure. If this relationship is to stay the same, this should be reconsidered.
- Where does the Vice-Chancellor's Executive fit into this new structure?

The University's Financial Position

Areas of Concern:

- Current forecasts from the University indicate a deficit of £3.8m, £1.6m worse than the figure indicated in the Five Year Forecasts to HEFCE in July.
- The University faces rising utility cuts and the risk of spending £12m unnecessarily over next 10 years if it does not take effective action. The current levels of emission will require £32K of carbon units to be purchased.
- The University is increasing the scrutiny of post requests, i.e. freezing academic posts, stating, and "Given the University's financial position it is vital we make the most of every opportunity to challenge requests for posts."
- The University continues to lose money on catering.
- The Vice-Chancellor's salary in 2004 was £143,359 (representing a 0.5% increase), in 2003 was £135,821 (representing a 0.6% increase) and in 2002 was £128,141.
- In 2004, 7 members of staff were remunerated between £70,000-£110,000 (compared to 3 in 2003) and 2 members of staff were awarded over £130,000 (2 in 2003). This represents an increase in salary expenditure on Higher Paid Staff of at least £430,000. This represents an increase of 116%.
- The University has stated the need to find at least a further £2m of savings in 2006/2007 onwards, which will be addressed as part of the Strategic Planning Round in the Spring.

Action Required:

- Student representation on any committee making decisions on University spending.
- Energy efficiency should be one of the Universities main priorities.
- A radical shake up and strategic plan should be initiated for the University's catering department, including comprehensive consultation with students and staff. There is a huge potential to increase revenue through catering if the University listens to the demands of its population.
- Reasons why the President of the Students' Union was not invited to the University Council annual 'Away Day' held in September.
- Details on where the top-up fee income will be distributed. If not already decided, student representatives should be involved in the decision.
- A reassessment of the pay of members of staff, making sure that all staff are given the increases in pay they were promised.
- A strategic plan for recruiting and cutting posts, so decisions are made on whether the post is needed rather than how much the University will save.
- A commitment to recognise the very important work the Students' Union does and for the Union to be funded appropriately.

**Specific Issues
in Need of
Urgent Attention**

Education

Contact Time

University Statement:

'For most students the workload will involve a combination of lectures, seminars and tutorials (plus laboratory or practical classes and fieldwork in the sciences), as well as time for private study. The number of teaching sessions will vary according to your subject, but you will likely have contact time most days of the week'.

Current situation:

Seminars form an integral part to any student's degree programme, providing the opportunity to interact with other students on their course, ask any questions they may have about their reading for the week and raise issues within the topic. Seminars are needed as motivation for students; especially for those who find it hard to be self-disciplined and need focus for their reading, small groups are a stimulating forum for debate and discussion. Currently, contact time and seminar sizes are suffering due to budget cuts. Suitable alternatives are not being offered: several Arts courses are being run on a lecture-only basis, and for many more students a one-hour seminar is standard, yet insufficient to cover the material. Large seminar groups are ineffective but the funds required to put on more seminars with fewer pupils seem not to be available.

Case Study 1: English Literature

'My core course for the Autumn Term, 'The Novel', was taught by 2-hour lecture only with no seminars. With over 300 students, it's next to impossible for the course to be taught effectively, and without seminars students lose motivation. I wasn't the only one who was very worried and disappointed by this, especially as it counted towards my final degree. The worry is that this won't be a one off and that it will continue into other courses further into our degree. I created a petition, helped arrange a meeting between students and the department and also took the matter to the VC, writing him a letter and including a copy of the petition. So far there has been no response.'

Case study 2: Geography and Development Studies

'I'm a final year student and only have 5 hours per week, 2 hours for Geography (just one seminar and no lectures) and 3 hours for Development. These fall on Monday and Tuesday afternoons. I have no contact time on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays. I am not receiving what I expected out of University and feel that I should have gone to the Open University, which is a far cheaper option.'

Action Required:

- All students should be given both lecture-style learning and seminar-style learning per course per week, to cater for different learning styles.
- Each week, all students should have two hours of close-contact teaching per course.
- Where changes are necessary, steps are taken to ensure there are suitable replacement teaching methods.
- The students affected should be consulted and informed in advance about any changes to their course structure.

Associate Tutors

University Statement:

'Right now your major concern is probably with the quality of teaching we offer. But choosing a research-led university like Sussex has advantages...who better to teach you than experts working at the forefront of their field?'

Current Situation:

- The University relies too heavily on Associate Tutors (ATs) for course delivery, of which there are over 1,000 at the University. ATs are most often graduate students doing research degrees.
- ATs have a maximum of one office hour a week, and may be difficult to contact outside of that as, of course, they have their research to focus on.
- Some ATs either do not have the appropriate training (less than 100 have been fully trained by TLDU), or effective supervision in their teaching role, which limits their effectiveness.
- ATs are paid for contact time, office hours and assessed marking only, not for preparation time. Relying upon ATs means that, once teaching ends, advice or supervision from the AT is unpaid.

Case Study 1: Biochemistry

'I've found [ATs] to be inexperienced in leading tutorials, lacking in knowledge of the subject areas and often too busy or unwilling to offer further help. ATs help as demonstrators in lab sessions; however, they usually have not done anything similar since they were undergraduates. They are also expected to lead tutorials, but as they are often inexperienced they can be less than successful in explaining complex information, leaving students more confused than before. ATs often take on too much, meaning they do not read up on what they are teaching in preparation, and are not in a position to offer further help or explanation when it is requested. Lecturers do not have time to explain to everyone what should be explained in tutorials. Students are therefore missing out on what can be a very important way of learning.'

Case Study 2: Associate Tutor

'I'm an associate tutor for the sciences, and feel that the training I received was not adequate. It was based purely on theory and there was no opportunity for work shadowing or practical sessions. Also, some ATs had already started teaching before their training was complete, and were unprepared. We do not get paid for preparation, which takes 2-3 hours, so there is little incentive to do it. We are not given the same resources as faculty; I was not allowed to access students' timetables like other staff to work out the best time to have a tutorial. Therefore, I had to email each student individually to ask for their availability, resulting in a lot of wasted time that could have been spent on better things.'

Action Required:

- All Associate Tutors should have completed the 6-week training before they can teach. This training should include both theoretical and practical sessions.
- ATs should be paid for preparation time as well as teaching, and have two office hours per week, to mirror faculty.
- ATs should complement teaching at Sussex, not provide core teaching.
- ATs should be given the same access to information and resources as members of faculty.

Library

University Statement:

'We provide a well-stocked library and extensive computer network...you will be well supported, whatever your subject...The University Library is the main resource for all the information you will need during your studies.'

Current Situation:

The University under-invests in the library, causing severe issues in terms of resources. In the 2004-7 Library Strategic Plan, one of the main challenges noted is to 'explore with the University how the information needs of researchers can continue to be met in the context of a declining Library budget in real terms.' In the Library Users Survey Report of February 2004, the two issues that received the lowest satisfaction rating were the availability of course material, and availability of computers. Arts students complain there are insufficient texts, so Arts courses increasingly use e-journals while Science students rely solely on them. This passes the financial burden onto the students in the form of printing costs. Many books are left on trolleys, as there is insufficient staff to ensure they quickly are placed in the correct location, and staff can rarely afford the time to help students individually. Students continually call for longer opening hours to fit around their part-time work.

Case study 1: Sociology

'For one of my essay reading lists the library only had half the books on the list.'

Case study 2: Environmental Science

'I would like to see enough books in the library and [for the University to] stop cutting spending on journals. How are the poorer students who are encouraged here from the widening participation scheme supposed pay for books if core readings cost £10-£20 a week in photocopying and printouts?'

Case study 3: Biochemistry

'As far as I'm aware the majority of science students use the library very rarely. The textbooks recommended to us by lecturers are either not available in the library, or are older editions that are no longer fully relevant. If the correct books are in the library, then there are so few copies of them that students generally end up buying them themselves. I personally have spent hundreds of pounds on over 11 textbooks over my two years here because it was so difficult trying to get them from the library.'

Action Required:

- If e-journals are to be used for essential readings, the University should pay for them to be printed out. This money should be credited onto the students account.
- The Library should be considered an academic unit for budgeting purposes, and that the budget should be increased so that more staff can be employed and more resources purchased.
- A commitment needs to be made that there will be no more budget cuts for the library.
- The University should look at later opening; e.g. the ability for students to use the self-service checkout machines at any hour, around part-time work.

Computers

University Statement:

'IT services provide a range of computer facilities that are available to help you study successfully, including approximately 500 PCs for easy access, 40 per cent being available 24 hours a day.'

Current Situation:

- There are insufficient computers for the number of students on campus during the day.
- Teaching means the Arts clusters are frequently unavailable
- There can be queues of up to an hour in the library during busy times.
- Although you should not need a computer to come to University, and the university is responsible for maintaining computer facilities, computer failure is not regarded as a legitimate reason for late submission.

Case study: Science buildings

'In the JMS building there is only one computer cluster, with relatively few computers in it (about 40 to serve the entire building). It is often booked out for teaching, meaning the entire room is closed, often for a class only consisting of a handful of students. When the room is available, computers are often not working, and even when they are, the network can become so slow that it is impossible to do anything on them. When so much of our course information has to be researched ourselves, not having access to computers can be very frustrating.'

Case study: Library and residences

'Why can you never find a spare computer? I know that many students have PCs at home but the current system is far from satisfactory. We should not have to wait an hour for one to come free — mainly and especially in the most important places, like the Library or York House, near the residences.'

Action Required:

- The students who are employed to replace printer and photocopier paper should also regularly check computer rooms so that faulty PCs can be reported and fixed as soon as possible.
- Small and medium-sized computer rooms should be advertised more widely.
- The University should look into the possibility of more computers around campus and the University should look into a scheme whereby students can buy computers from the University in installments, to alleviate the pressure on existing resources.
- Failure or fault with University computers, software or printers should be regarded as legitimate grounds for late submission.

Communication

University Statement:

'We take your feedback very seriously, and use it to improve what we offer.'

Current Situation:

Course and assessment changes are not communicated fully or clearly to the people who will be affected.

Case study 1: Cultural studies

'Cultural Studies is currently at serious risk of dropping the entire program due to lack of tutors and resources. It cannot be taken as a single honours degree course, so it is therefore reliant on other departments, including Art History, Anthropology, English, History and Music, running different modules. Because of this it is not given serious support or attention, both academically and financially. History and English are withdrawing their Cultural Studies courses, as they don't seem too keen to support the interdisciplinary ethos of Sussex. This is mainly because it is not financially tenable to plough what little funding they have into undergraduate 'Mickey-Mouse' courses, instead of research, which is more effective at making the University look good on paper. As a result, the number of modules available in Cultural studies is declining rapidly, resulting in less choice for students and the redundancy of associate tutors who have put lots of work into courses at risk of being axed. 3rd years, in particular, are heavily restricted as to what they can research for dissertations because there are only 3 options. This is undoubtedly symptomatic of the problems of Sussex as a whole.'

Case study 2: Psychology

'In the second year the psychology students have on average 8 exams to sit, all in the last few weeks of the Summer Term. We've asked the department to have our examinations for the autumn courses at the very beginning of the Spring Term, and the department took this to the University. The University says that they're not willing to resolve the issue of the poor heating in Mandela Hall for the duration of the exams, and the Sports Centre will not host the exams. So, if this is not possible how about not having 100% exam assessment? This applies to many other departments apart from Psychology, where students have similar grievances.'

Action Required:

- Students affected should be consulted about changes to their course. Faculty, before department meetings, should personally brief student reps, in good time for them to canvass their peers.
- If the University's mission statement includes a commitment to a flexible curriculum, this should be reflected in the course delivery.
- The University should put central heating in Mandela Hall and all areas of Falmer House to enable a more flexible examination timetable.

Personal Tutors

University Statement:

'At Sussex you are allocated a personal tutor who can provide advice on your academic progress, help you select courses and options and adjust to new ways of working, and review progress throughout your undergraduate career.'

Current Situation:

- Many students do not know who their personal tutor is or what they are there for. The University has formulated minimum criteria for personal tutoring to avoid the great disparities that currently exist across departments and schools.
- Some students feel a lack of progression or development across the years; personal tutors are vital in ensuring this.
- Many students need testimonies from personal tutors for graduate employment or postgraduate courses; personal tutors who have a relationship and knowledge of their students would greatly benefit the employability and future of these students.
- Increased personal tutoring would aid student retention, particularly those from a widening participation background.

Case Study 1: Geography

'My personal tutor hasn't been in contact with me this year. I've never met him and I don't know what I'm allowed to see him about, or how many times I'm allowed to contact him. I've never been told what personal tutors are for. In my second year my personal tutor was in South Africa!'

Action Required:

- Students should be informed more fully of the purpose of the personal tutor scheme. If they know when they should be visiting their personal tutor, they are likely to be more proactive about seeking advice.
- The University should ensure that all students are receiving the minimum personal tutor provision by the end of the next academic year before advertising to prospective students that it exists.
- In such minimum specifications, personal tutors should make every effort to meet their students and keep a record of students' "academic progress".
- Students should be afforded the opportunity to meet and review progress with personal tutors.

Non - Academic Provision

University Accommodation: Basic Services and Maintenance

According to section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, tenants should expect from their landlords to keep in good repair the structure and exterior of the property, installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation, installations for heating and hot water.

Current situation:

- Currently, some students in East slope do not have the basic provision of hot water between 11 and 4 to clean either themselves or their residence.
- Other students have reported it taking a month to eight weeks to get things fixed such as general repair.

Action Required:

- Students in residences such as East Slope are not disregarded because it is planned to pull this building down.
- A larger pool of university employed maintenance staff should be employed to prevent the length of time and expense currently taken to call out contractual staff for each incident.

University Accommodation: Host Family Students

Due to an unforeseen number of students applying to Sussex to avoid top up fees last year, over 200 students this year were housed in host family accommodation.

Current Situation:

- Many of the host families used were not CRB checked or vetted in any way, and facilities they provided did not meet the university's minimum specifications, such as having a study area, telephone or Internet access, and cooking facilities.
- Host family students were faced with increased travel costs. They had to pay for bus or rail transport daily, sometimes living two bus rides away, and many residential areas are not served by public transport after 10.30pm. Students had to rely on taxis if they wanted to get involved in campus activities after the last bus, and had high food costs as they either lived too far to return to make food, or had no food-making facilities. If they were lucky enough to be catered for, students had to choose between going home for a meal, or staying on campus and trying to make friends.
- There were increased security concerns for students living off the night bus route and having to walk home alone, there were reports of one girl being attacked as she walked home.
- There were also concerns regarding isolation, as students found it much more difficult to make friends than their on-campus counterparts.
- Two RAs were provided but many students did not know about them.
- Students staying with host families do not have the same rights as normal tenants because they live with their landlord and so tenancy agreements do not apply. This leaves these students extremely vulnerable.
- Students were charged between £70-90 per week, up to £36 per week more than those in University accommodation, for far inferior facilities.

Action Required:

- The availability of RAs should be communicated much better to host family students
- An email list must be created so that students can contact each other.
- A specific host family social event should be funded by the University and carried out early on in Freshers' week.
- The Students' Union must be informed early on about these problems so that they can offer support to affected students.
- All houses must be checked to ensure they meet the minimum specifications agreed by the University.
- A shuttle service should be funded by the university to run during Freshers' week to take students home that want to stay on campus for Freshers' events.
- Given that students staying with host families do not have any tenants rights because they are living with their landlord effectively, rent should be lowered, as conditions are inferior to University managed accommodation. If rents were decreased students would have more money to spend on food, security and safe transport.

University Accommodation: Rent

Current Situation:

- According to the 2005 prospectus, rent on University properties is currently between £56 and £76 per week.
- The University plans to build a number of new residences. The Vice-Chancellor has remarked that such new accommodation will cater for top end university accommodation with en suite facilities, so that the University can make more money from conferences.
- Because many students will not be able to afford premium rents, if there is not a range of prices and facilities, students will be obliged to live in shared rooms, with host families, or in substandard, non-University accommodation, and this poor accommodation ruins students' performance.

Action Required:

- That with all new accommodation, a wide range of affordable housing is provided, not just a range in relation to the more expensive housing being built.
- The Students' Union should be fully involved in negotiations for new residences, as representatives of the tenants.

Equality and Diversity

The Vice-Chancellor Alasdair Smith has said “The University is committed to promoting equality and diversity, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all.”

Current Situation:

- Over the past six months the Equalities Unit have trained all Students' Union staff and sabbatical officers, equipped the Union to train all clubs and societies chairs and captains, provided guidance for the USSU Equal Opportunities Policy, helped formulate an action plan for the Union, been instrumental in coordinating Diversity Week, and set up structures and frameworks to embed equality and diversity into the University.
- All of this goes a long way to making equality in the University a reality, however whilst there is still discrimination, the job is not done. Look around you: how many Council members are black? How many are lone parents? How many have a disability?
- The Equalities Unit needs increased support and personnel to carry out its vital agenda, yet, due to the University's financial cuts, one Equalities Officer accepted voluntary redundancy and the other has resigned, as yet without replacement. Currently, there is no longer a functioning Equalities Unit.
- The University meets its basic legal compliance, but there is concern that the equalities agenda will be less proactive, and lose its student focus and exemplary track record if moved back into HR.
- Cutting back on committees has led to concern that student input into the process will be lost.

Action Required:

- The Equalities Unit must maintain its independence from Human Resources, and a renewed commitment to the training of staff must be made.
- Funds and support must be made available to maintain the current focus on consultation and cooperation with all parts of the University, including the Students' Union.

Accessibility to USSU Activities

University Statement:

'Sussex is proud of its reputation as a cosmopolitan community. We actively encourage international students, mature applicants and students from backgrounds with no tradition of university education. Sussex has a diverse student population, enriching the experience of all who study here.'

Current Situation:

- Not all students have equal access to the opportunities provided by the Students' Union, whether through high costs, inflexible timetabling, physical barriers, real or perceived cultures, childcare requirements or other barriers to participation. Activities do not reflect Sussex's diverse student population and whilst this is something we are committed to tackling, for example through training for club and society committees, but this is an area that needs additional support and resources.
- There have been some improvements in this area, for example the negotiation of a more flexible timetabling policy for Wednesday afternoons and work with the Equality & Diversity Unit. These are only limited successes however as the timetabling policy still means many students are unable to combine sporting and other commitments with study and the planned changes to equality and diversity issues within the University threaten the positive developments made over the past few years.

Case Study 1: Timetable conflicts

Though students who wish to take part in sports competitions and activities on Wednesday afternoons can do so after 1pm. Many matches, particularly those taking place at more distant institutions, require students to leave much earlier than this. This leaves some students unable to balance extra-curricular and academic commitments.

Case Study 2: Disabilities

A student recently visited the Activities Centre to enquire about sport at Sussex. The staff was unable to offer an activity, which would accommodate their visual impairment.

Action Required:

- Fund a participation audit to assess where the strengths and weaknesses of student activities lie in terms of participation by a broad range of students
- Increase the University block grant to USSU to allow for training and additional resources and modifications to enable all students to access the opportunities provided by the Students' Union

Sport

University Statement:

“If you take your sport seriously, you may want to join one or more of the specialist clubs organised through the Students’ Union Sports Federation. Sports Fed is the largest and one of the most active student groups on campus, supporting a combination of over 30 different teams and sports clubs [also quoted as 35 sports clubs elsewhere]” – Undergraduate 2006 prospectus

Current Situation:

- Unfortunately the number and range of sports clubs has actually *decreased* at Sussex recently as the Students’ Union was forced to cut a men’s football team, canoe, rowing and swimming clubs as we couldn’t afford to provide the necessary support and resources for the clubs and teams to run fully and safely.
- Sport has also been affected by increased facility costs, stretching an already tight budget. As a result of cuts to their budgets, SussexSport has increased the cost of facility hire for the Students’ Union and any additional bookings (such as two of our dance societies’ use of the dance studio to safely practice more complicated moves) are charged at the full public rate rather than the reduced student rate.
- Sport is a core part of the Students’ Union and there is considerable student enthusiasm for this area; in 2004/5 USSU Council passed a motion on sport calling for more funds and support and this year sport was part of the motion about activities passed unanimously by the AGM.

Case Study 1: Women’s Football

The Women’s Football team recently had to organize a fundraising event to buy gloves for their goalkeeper – an essential piece of kit that could not be covered in their club budget.

Action Required:

- Increase SussexSport budget to allow USSU student hire rates for all facility usage.
- Increase the University block grant to USSU to allow for investment and development of sport to provide a safe, enjoyable and broad range of sporting opportunities for students of all abilities.

Drama

University Statement:

The University prospectus proudly features a photo of a student production.

Current Situation:

- Almost all other Universities, regardless of whether they offer a drama course or not, have a suitable performance space that students can use.
- Student drama has suffered from problems gaining a license for the Debating Chamber under the new licensing laws. In previous years this space has hosted around three plays per term plus numerous film showings and speakers. Whilst we are still hopeful that this beautiful venue will be able to legally host these events in future it is still ill equipped for the high standard of productions organised by students. More investment is required for additional equipment to complement the plays organised by our students.
- In recent years, SUDS (Sussex University Drama Society) have had to stop performing plays in the Gardner Arts Centre due to the prohibitive cost of using this venue. Without further concessions from the Gardner Arts Centre or additional funding students will not be able to perform or watch drama in this purpose-built venue.
- It is not only drama students and those involved in producing plays that benefit from student drama. Student productions are the most affordable way for students to access drama in Brighton and provide another area of culture and entertainment on campus.

Case Study 1: no venue

SUDS currently have few venue options, none of which are ideal. They raise health and safety concerns when installing and removing the necessary equipment, financial problems when hiring in equipment which could be permanently fixed and/or paying venue hire charges, artistic limitations due to space and layout restrictions, limited audience seating and/or vision of the stage area and access limitations for rehearsal time to name just a few.

Case Study 2: no drama

A motion submitted to the USSU AGM by drama students and SUDS members states, "That student-led drama is being stifled by the lack of a suitable and affordable performance space on campus [and] that all students, regardless of whether they are drama students, members of Drama Federation, or neither, are having their opportunity to watch, learn from, and enjoy affordable and accessible drama blocked by the University's lack of investment"

Case Study 3: no consultation

SUDS were not consulted about the proposed redevelopment of the Gardner Arts Centre despite the implications this would have on them potentially using it in future and possibly diverting investment and resources away from Falmer House and Debating Chamber refurbishment proposals.

Action Required:

- Assist in negotiations with the GAC for further reductions in hire charges.
- Invest in refurbishing Falmer House, particularly Mandela Hall and the Debating Chamber, to provide specific spaces for performance.
- Increase the University block grant to USSU to allow for investment and development of drama (both academic and extra-curricular).

Funding & Resources for student activities

University Statement:

'[The Students' Union] also supports, and helps fund, a number of societies. Run entirely by students, these range from Amnesty International to conservation, photography and the rugby club. However you like to fill your spare time, there will be a club or society on campus for you. Joining a society is a good way of getting to know people, particularly from outside your year and subject area. Many societies have a thriving social programme in addition to their main activities.'

Current Situation:

- The block grant to the Students' Union from the University is clearly insufficient to provide all of the services require, request and deserve. We are forced to increasingly rely on the contribution from our trading company (SUSUS) to fund core activities.
- We should not be in a situation where services are maintained rather than developed, let alone reduced. The national trend towards lower Union trading incomes presents a worrying possibility that we may have to cut further services in future, services which are a vital part of student life and succeed in attracting prospective students.
- Not all the support the Students' Union requires is financial; in many cases it is simply the desire to be consulted on and informed of decisions that affect its services.

Case Study 1: University rooms

A recent example of the lack of consultation with and information for the Students' Union is the decision to reduce the number of rooms available to clubs and societies after 7pm. We only found out about this decision when the Stop Aids society were told they had to host a prestigious speaker from Botswana in the grey, prefabricated, supposedly temporary Russell building.

Case Study 2: Societies budget

This year, without the addition of the company contribution the budget allocated to societies and campaigns was half that of previous years. Even though we were able to return the funds to their previous levels we still have to reduce or refuse funding applications from societies to ensure that money is spread as far as possible.

Action Required:

- Increase the University block grant to USSU to fully reflect the breadth of services required by students and to acknowledge the benefits these provide to the University and its students
- Put consultation with students, principally via the Students' Union, at the heart of all decision-making. This could be through representatives on committees and at meetings, updates on projects with the opportunity for feedback and through greater communication with the Students' Union on developments within the University

Social spaces and entertainments

University Statement:

'With so many people living and working together, socialising is, not surprisingly, of paramount importance. There are a number of bars on campus, all of them busy, and each with its own particular vibe. So if you like your tipple in a straight glass or with a cherry on top, if you want live sports on TV or a quiet drink to unwind after a hard day at the library, you'll find somewhere that suits your mood, and your pocket.'

Current Situation:

- Perhaps one of the most common complaints from Sussex students is that there's nothing to do on campus despite the large number of events organised by clubs, societies and more centrally. This is an area the Students' Union is focusing on this year and we hope to provide and publicise more events. One of our major limiting factors however is a suitable venue. Many social events and spaces are focused around alcohol, as our bars are currently the easiest and most cost-effective location to host an event.
- We have explored refurbishing Mandela Hall to make it suitable for a range of events. This would reduce the high cost of holding events here and allow us to provide more diverse events including non-alcohol based occasions. This is a particularly important factor given the changing and increasingly diverse student population and would give a wider range of students the chance to meet their peers in an inclusive environment.

Case Study 1

Any group wanting to organise an event in Mandela Hall currently has to pay approximately £200 to hire sound and lighting equipment. For many this is too much of a financial risk and cuts into any potential fundraising profits from the event.

Action Required:

- Commit to investing in the refurbishment of Falmer House, particularly Mandela Hall, to provide adequate spaces for social interaction for all students, including those who prefer non-alcoholic spaces and events

Food Provision

University Statement:

'The University Catering Service provides a wide range of food and beverage services to the University community from early morning to late night, seven days per week (term-time)'

Current Situation:

- The University should provide a diverse selection of good quality, value for money, healthy food. It's failing to do this.
- Food provision after 4pm is minimal.
- The University has recently re-opened the Pitstop, having been closed for over a year. While this fills a gap, it is not good enough. The Pitstop is opened five nights per week offering burgers and fish and chips. There is now a notice on the University's website saying that 'Due to staff shortage this unit will be closed until further notice.'
- In the evenings The Laines Restaurant is opened only in term time and only on Tuesdays and Thursday from 5pm to 7.30pm.
- Last year Catering Services made a substantial loss. It is unacceptable for catering Services to be losing so much money while simultaneously not catering for a gaping need on campus.

Case Study 1

'I have often felt ashamed and embarrassed when we invite speakers down and they ask if they can get some food. I am at pains to point out that there is nothing around. Students don't always feel like cooking. The volume of food that gets ordered onto campus is astounding. There have been numerous requests by various external-catering establishments to set up stalls on campus to tap into what they perceive to be a very 'healthy' and untapped 'market'. I find the disregard, neglectful and complacency of the University in sorting this problem out to be profoundly frustrating.'

Action Required:

- A radical shake up and strategic plan should be initiated for the University's catering department, including comprehensive consultation with students and staff. There is a huge potential to increase revenue through catering if the University listens to the demands of its population.
- The food provision must also reflect the diverse range of students and staff we have on campus.

International student treatment

Current Situation:

International student fees are not capped and often increase on a yearly basis that is normally above the rate of inflation. The University offers the Chancellor's International Scholarship, which is great. There is also a very small international hardship fund but this is only available to students who encounter emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances and to this extent, and in the amount of funding that is normally granted, it is very restrictive. This could also be better advertised. The sense of injustice among international students is quite palpable. There seems to be an inherent exploitation that is augmented by the often inadequate academic, cultural and social service facilities that are provided to them.

Case Study 1

'The University's priority seems to be establishing more and more links with Universities around the world, in order to attract more international students to study here. However, this is done so quickly that full information is not given to students wishing to travel here, and when they arrived they are not adequately supported or provided for. The University seems to prioritise getting students here rather than ensuring those that come have a quality student experience'

Case Study 2

'International students should not be used as a tool to raise funds for the institution. I feel like the University is ripping off international students. I can't help but wonder where my fees go.'

Action Required:

- The University should set aside a reasonable percentage of the total income in fees from international students to reasonably increase the discretionary hardship fund that is administered by the International and Study Abroad Office.
- International student fees should only increase at the rate of inflation.
- International students should not be expected to pay for course packs and other essential resources once they are here. They have just spent more than 4 times the UK student to study at Sussex and additional costs must be absorbed in the tuition fees they pay.
- There must be honest recruitment of international students.
- There needs to be a better support system for them, once they realise they are at a university, far from home.

Conclusion

In order to turn this around, please see this student submission as a comprehensive collection of all the areas in need of urgent attention. We implore you to re-ignite confidence and accountability into this organisation; thereby re-igniting belief and passion in staff and re-igniting faith and trust in the student body.

Thank you.