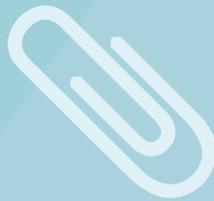


# **2018+** **The CUSU** *Strategy*



**An introduction to CUSU's strategic plan**



# Introduction

In summer 2017 a number of fact-finding and vision-setting workshops took place with Officers and staff. The workshops horizon-scanned CUSU's immediate and long-term future:

- we reviewed available research and data-sets;
- we considered financial information and commercial analysis;
- we undertook a collective assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and of PEST considerations (political, economical, sociological and technological factors); and
- we assessed the environmental forces CUSU operates in, compared to its organisational capacity to achieve, improve, adapt or change.

Once drafted, an all-student survey provided rich qualitative feedback. When we asked students what they wanted us to focus on, much of what students wanted was already being worked on and much was included in the drafted Plan. Many students felt they were still not seeing the work of the SU; students supported the vision and mission of the SU and wanted CUSU to be characterised by these. There was strong agreement to the objectives CUSU presented: they were considered bold, relevant and necessary to both Members and the institution. Interestingly, nearly all respondents encouraged CUSU to prioritise effort to those students most in need of support, which for most respondents, did not include themselves.

The Plan was reviewed at each stage by the trustees, and has received strong endorsement from the 2018-19 Sabbatical Team who are already helping to deliver the plan. 2018+ isn't time-bound: we expect it to be reviewed annually, with buy-in from successive elected teams helping to evolve the direction in future years.

# Drivers of 2018+

CUSU's Members recognise that Cambridge is, on the whole, a good place to study: a world-class institution. Its strengths are its supervision system and lecturers, welfare support, access to careers and the sheltered learning environment. Yet much of the experience is inconsistent and there is a lack of choice/limited control from students in their learning. The Union feels representation and student voice aren't properly supported, and that experience problems (e.g. pressure, stress, expectation, short terms, learning styles; cost of living) and structural problems (e.g. attainment gap, retention of traditions and privileges, physical access and diversity) aren't addressed progressively.



On the horizon, CUSU will need to adapt to an environment where students want demonstrable value for money in its work; it must navigate funding uncertainty, political unpredictability and a changing student population; and must pioneer the student voice in new digital learning experiences and a new age of social media. At the same time, new senior decision-makers and a prospective relocation are key opportunities the Union will want to turn to its advantage.

In responding to these challenges the Union recognises that it has breadth and depth of influence, and networks and connections; it is able to see trends and gauge the student experience like few other bodies, which are all valuable resources.



## Our vision...

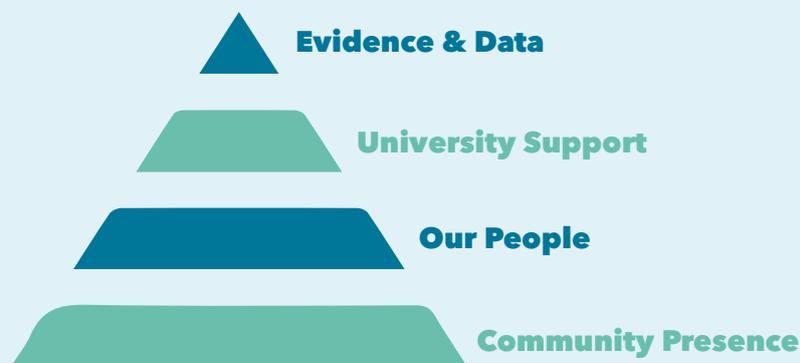
...a student-led union recognised by its Members, the University and other unions as change-making locally and nationally, and vital to the Cambridge student experience.



## Our mission...

...to cultivate a university community where Cambridge students can motivate progressive changes to their student experience, and to level the opportunities available to all wanting to study and achieve here.

# Enablers of 2018+



## **Evidence and Data**

The Big Cambridge Survey, SUAS and our regular consultations provide invaluable insight into the student experience. This insight informs campaigns by highlighting positive and negative aspects of the student experience, and provides a valuable tool to affect change at decision-making level of the institution.

## **University Support**

CUSU's aims for students exist parallel to those of the University. Without institutional support, CUSU cannot initiate change for Members. Maintaining constructive engagement with the University is central to a positive working dynamic between the Unions, however to do so the Union needs to continue to promote its value to the institution.

## **Community Presence**

We'll need to build on the Unions' presence in the student community (online visibility, highlighting work, greater ways to meet representatives). A communications strategy will consider new ways of communicating; take a proactive approach to leading the public conversation about the unions; and will complement the GU.

## **Our People**

CUSU's staff provide a support-base and consistency that helps elected students achieve; and talented officers, supported and developed, can achieve more and enjoy their work. Both Officers and Staff need to be maintained; officers and staff need to be attracted, retained and developed in a productive and positive working environment.

# 2018+ Strategic Objectives

**Challenge barriers to opportunity**

**1**

Through its Members and led by democratic mandates, CUSU will advance parity in student experiences within the institution; we will seek to redress key issues that undermine all students' opportunity to perform as well as they can.

**Make the case for better resourced central students' unions and a respectable student space**

**2**

Develop the case for a fit-for-purpose, attractive space for the unions and continue to see the central unions supported by stable funding from the University and Colleges.

**Take the initiative on resolving funding concerns and removing the funding 'distraction'.**

**3**

Show CUSU's value to Members and the wider institution, find new ways of engaging members in the union's financial management and plans for a student space.

1



## Challenge barriers to opportunity

### Strategic Objective a)

Campaign-orientated goals that seek to improve the quality of all students' experiences:

**Quality and accessibility of learning support** - bring-about change in students' learning experiences from both welfare and academic perspectives, ensuring the student voice informs how learning support and welfare services.

**Access and Success** - continue CUSU's role in attracting more students from less privileged backgrounds to Cambridge, whilst also promoting change in the studying experience to ensure it is equally supportive of all hoping to study here.

**Workload and Structure** - address imbalances in levels of workload such as how it is spread through the year; the consistency of workload across disciplines; and the structure of assessment and supervision.

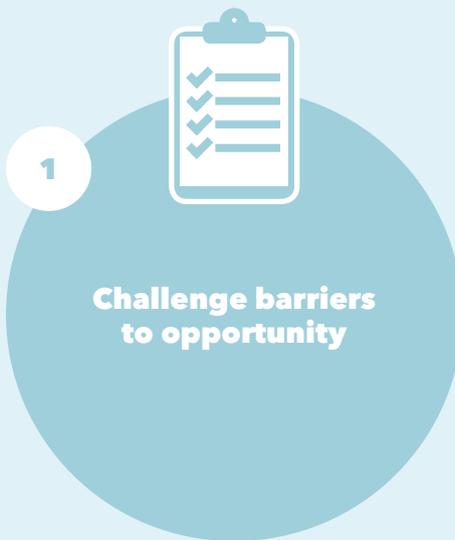
### Strategic Objective b)

Build a community of representatives.  
Improve:

- our role in the Academic Rep scene as formally accepted co-partners in the Rep system;
- our support for Liberation in change-making campaigns; and
- the profile of existing reps and in providing a better support programme for reps.

### Strategic Objective c)

Utilise SUAS as a resource for improving the student experience and improving transparency to students.



## We'll do this by:

### Quality and accessibility of learning support

- Disseminate information on student rights to students.
- Monitor and pursue the implementation of changes in the learner experience, agreed by the Uni in 2018, that aim to ensure greater flexibility in learning.
- Raise awareness of SLTAs among students and the Collegiate University. Gain funding for the event from the Collegiate University.
- Actively promote CUSU's SLTA-informed agenda on inclusive teaching in order to change behaviours in the University, e.g. via Teaching & Learning Reviews and through Academic Reps.
- Gain formal centralised support from the University on decolonising the curriculum across the Faculties.
- Actively support efforts from University welfare bodies to receive greater funding to increase the quality and exposure of welfare support and that for disabled students.

### Access and Success

- Promote SU-led guidance and recommendations within the institution on BME outreach and 'success after admission'.
- Lobby the University to be more ambitious and transparent in its Widening Participation work.

### Workload

- Develop and promote CUSU guidance on workload via Academic Reps.
- Use LTR's to challenge Departments and Faculties on: Academic Rep recruitment, engagement and impact; workload strategies; and decolonisation efforts.
- Work with GU to improve graduate workload and assessment.
- Use workload data to raise awareness of issues and promote across the Faculties; support Academic Reps to raise concerns.
- Pressure the Uni to improve frequency and quality of events that support students in workload management.
- Statement of intent and published guidance from the University on acceptable workload.

1



## Challenge barriers to opportunity

### We'll do this by:

- i. Our role in the Academic Rep scene as formally accepted co-partners in the Rep system;
  - Seek centralisation of Academic Reps: Academic Reps (at every level) are elected at the same time of year; Faculties must monitor participation; CUSU receives Academic Rep details within two weeks of election; and Annual public evaluation of Rep satisfaction to help evaluate student representation.
  - Define the role of student representatives at every level; promote definition; and gain support across the institution.
  - Establish regular communications and develop a community of Academic Reps at Cambridge.
  - Monitor and pursue the implementation of changes that aim to ensure greater flexibility in learning.
  - Raise awareness of SLTAs. Gain funding for the event from the Collegiate University.
  - Actively promote CUSU's SLTA-informed agenda on inclusive teaching in order to change behaviours in the University.
- Gain formal centralised support from the University on decolonising the curriculum.
- Actively support efforts from University welfare bodies to receive greater funding.
- ii. support for Liberation in change-making campaigns;
  - Support Liberation Campaigns to have greater exposure; promote their importance.
  - Report annually on Lib. Campaign impact.
- iii. Improve profile of existing reps and in providing a better support programme for reps.
  - Improve confidence in perceptions of CUSU Council as the democratic Student Voice.
  - Consultation exercise to review College representation at CUSU Council.
  - Introduce programme of support for student representatives, campaigners and volunteers.

*SUAS will produce annual recommendations on improvements that could be made.*

2



**Make the case for better resourced central students' unions and a respectable student space**

**Strategic Objective a)**

Develop the case for a fit-for-purpose, attractive space for the unions and central unions supported by stable funding from the University and Colleges.

**We'll do this by:**

Be, and be seen, to be allied and partnered with the GU in the development of union-run student spaces at Cambridge.

Define what 'fit for purpose' means for the unions in regards to space allocation.

Consult students, but be more innovative in how we do it, such as showcasing other unions.

Improve the look and feel of the existing space.

Gather qualitative and quantitative data to support the case.

Run a campaign to get students on board with the unions' need for better space. Garner vocal student support for change to the unions' space allocation.

3



**Take the initiative on resolving funding concerns and removing the funding 'distraction'**

**Strategic Objective a)**

We'll show CUSU's value to Members and the wider institution by distributing regular reports on how CUSU impacts upon the student experience at Cambridge.

**Strategic Objective b)**

We'll find new ways of engaging members in the union's financial management and share more with Council with regards to resources and big plans for a student space.

**We'll do this by:**

Own the narrative on CUSU finances by being front-footed and change the way we communicate about our finances to allow better participation from students.

Talk more about the Union's wider impact, both with the University and in member communications, such as:

- Periodic videos or documents, which help promote the achievements of the SU (incl. 'stories' of the Sabbs' year) to students in each year.
- Communications or events that seek to increase awareness of how the SU is funded and its key aims in regards to resources.
- Review the delivery and content of Sabb reporting to members.
- Produce three-year forecasts alongside a risk register, which is actively shared with the University.

Produce welcome packs to J/MCRs when they are elected to increase awareness of CUSU as a representative body and as an organisation.

# The organisational values behind 2018+

