

UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD STUDENTS' UNION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2009
MINUTES

1. President's welcome

Matt Webber introduces the two speakers; Vice Chancellor Martin Hall and the Director of Finance Simon Attwell.

He proceeds to mention that for the AGM to be quorate 2% of the student population (around 400 students) should be present but since there are only 105 present this AGM will work in an advisory capacity. The new constitution will have to go to a referendum at the upcoming Student Elections.

2. Guest speakers

Vice Chancellor Martin Hall

He makes a short introduction about a number of issues that currently concern students:

- The first issue for discussion is that of student funding and the rate of interest students will pay on their student loans in the future. He encouraged NUS and Students' Unions to take part in the upcoming debates about student loans as it is of the much importance to all students that will have to repay it in the next 10-20 years.
- The second issue is about the amount of money that students pay and the quality of teaching that they receive. He pledges that the University will do the best it can to improve what it actually does. Results from NSS will be taken into account because the feedback from students matters. He encourages students to attend the VC's Question Time next week where some of those issues will be raised.

Simon Attwell Director of Finance

His speech is about how the University's money has been spent on students over the last year. This will include the income they received last year and what they spent it on and explain the issues about non financial academic completion. There is an issue currently in the public arena and in newspapers about Funding Councils and the conditions under which they give the University grant money

University's Income

Last year our £180M came from the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) in the form of research and teaching grants. Teaching grants are funded in 4 bands, A, B, C and D. Band D was £4,500 per student. Band B was £5,600. According to the number of students, full time, part time and undergraduate level, it gives an indication of how much funding the University gets paid for students being here.

30% of the income came from tuition fees that students pay the University directly or via student loans. By the time the government funding, the money that comes out from taxes and the fees that are charged to students directly are added together, this equates to the amount that the University charges oversees students

14% comes from the NHS

26% comes from research activities of academic staff, enterprise contracts and also commercial activities, consultancy and student accommodation.

University's Expenditure

The University has spent all of its income but 2% (surplus)

- 59% spent on staff costs
- 7% maintaining the premises such as University House which cost £2.5M
- 15% was spent on income related contracts.
- Depreciation of building is another way of creating a reserve.
- 4% was spent on School or University bursaries or scholarships
- 3% on IT. £7M was spent on improving IT system. He gave the example of people having to wait longer to connect to the University's system from University than they do from home. This issue will be sorted within 18 months.
- 4% sundry items such as stationary etc.
- 2% surplus for used for investment

Since Project Headroom students are conscious of the fact that the University needs to invest in staff that can improve their academic studies. 61 new posts were created in September in areas where there were shortages.

In 2006/7 £3.9M was spent on the Students' Union grant, on subsidising leisure centre, Student Life as well as bursaries.

Since last year the spent £8.5M on the above and this year will be £9.4M - £2.5M of which was spent on University House to ensure that it provides an environment where students can be supported, can access carer opportunities and social spaces.

The Allerton Annexe was also completed at the end of last year - £1.1M – ready for the Sept 08 entry. £120M was spent on various other projects.

Now the University needs to readjust the budget for the next 3-4 years to cover for the £7M it will not get. Simon Attwell's job is to try and balance this and be able to maximise the spending on things that matter.

The University also completed four student accommodation refurbishments. £8.9M is being spent on Bramall Court . They also paid for accommodation that was later owned by Campus Living Villages. They did that by reducing the selling cost with the contractual commitment that they will reinvest it back to students with refurbishment of the facilities. He hopes that students have seen the benefit.

£120M will be spent on bursaries, on Media City, projects and a new building for AMSS, refurbishing Chapman and the Acoustics Department.

Financial non completion.

The University has to follow HEFCE definition of student non financial completion which means that they only provide funding for students who complete the exact program of study that they agreed to at the beginning of the year. If that means they have taken on additional modules at the beginning of the year that they do not actually need to progress to the next year and don't complete those modules then the University loses all funding for them for that year.

In particular, if they fail a module the University doesn't get paid for them, if they don't take the final exam of module at the first opportunity the University won't get any funding for them.

The University loses about £2M from non completion. If a student can't sit to an exam for PMC reasons they have to give advance warning. Of course there are special cases for example if a student is on their way to an exam and has a car crash and misses it, the University doesn't get paid for that student, but of course they won't refuse the student to re-sit.

Questions from students

a) A question was posed about the £2.5Million spent on refurbishing University House, was it worth spending money on a chandelier, could it not have gone to fund a student? Simon Attwell replied that the University didn't borrow money to do the University House refurbishment. It is a good question as to whether this was the right investment or not. The University tried to bring together 7 different departments so students don't have to go to many different buildings to access services. A number of private rooms in University House will also be created to make it more comfortable for people who need a quiet space to sit in. He cannot judge if it's a good investment, students will need to provide the feedback. The University is also a brand so it was to maintain a certain image.

b) A question was posed as to how much Simon Attwell gets paid and how much of the University's pay roll is spent on University staff executive pay compared to teaching pay.

Simon Attwell replied that he does not keep an eye on the exact pay of every executive member. He gets paid £110K a year. He has been in charge of accounting for many years and for those students in business and accounting this may give you an aim. His daughter is also a student at this university and he helps to subsidise her.

The Vice Chancellor provides a comment: The information on salary and expenses will be published in a quarterly basis on the audit team have approved it. . All students will have access to that info.

c) A question was posed as to where the money from fees is going to support teaching. A number of research teachers have recently come in Business School.

Simon Attwell replied that when they did project headroom they did it by actually asking each school to come up with a business plan to make sure that the staffing numbers are sufficient to deliver a good student experience. They ended up with business plan, took it to the Unions and then looked into reinvesting on students. Student numbers did not always match the numbers of academic professional staff, for example they had too few in accounting and too many in marketing. Part of the University's commitment to the Head of the Business school was to allow them to reinvest back in the areas that students were studying and they are currently recruiting more staff at the moment.

d) A question was posed about the current lack of full time staff. Many students are taught by part-time staff and instead.

Simon Atwell mentions that there will be a reinvestment on full time staff that teach, than staff that do research.

The Vice Chancellor asked the student to email him about issues with part time teaching staff.

The student who posed the previous question added that students are taught by part time staff more than full time. Some courses do not even have tutors at all. Some are taught by other students.

Simon Attwell said that the University is looking at the use of part time lecturers. They prefer people to be in permanent contracts than temporary. It is not of the University's interest to have an overwhelming number of part time staff at the expense of full time members who having been here longer have a greater commitment to university ad students.

3. Students' Union Annual Report

Presented by Matt Webber

For a copy of the presentation please click [HERE](#)

- a) A question was posed about where the money spent on Student Activities went.

Matt Webber replied that it was invested on creating a new Activities Department and two new staff members that are there to support student activity groups.

4. Students' Union Annual Accounts

Presented by Matt Webber

- a) Q1: A question was posed about how the movement of the Pav and how it will affect it financially?
- b) Q2: A question was posed about the replacement of the Pav. The student has looked at the approved university budget and there is no money set aside for the Pav's replacement even though it's been promised. How can the Union guarantee that the new Pav will be completed?
- c) Q3: A question was posed about the cash machine in Alleton charging people for taking money out.

Matt Webber replied that the Pav's outlook is not good. Commercial Services in most Students' Unions used to be a very strong department with a revenue of £120M a year. By 2008 it dropped to £60M. The times are now different and the move of the Pav will be beneficial. It will act as a multi functioning venue for activity groups to be able to use it; for example for this year's Christmas Ball some activity groups have decided to have their own. With the new Pav completed they will be able to have it there. At the moment the current Pav has a 350 person capacity is too expensive to run. The Union will keep having discussions with the University to make sure that the project is on track.

Student posing Q2 mentioned that the University said that they are investing money in social space and so is the Union. A question was posed as to whether it is irresponsible for the Union to create a new social space when the new one doesn't make any money?

Matt Webber said that the Pav does make profit but not enough. There is not a problem creating more social space on campus and gave Chapman building as an example of a bad social space where the electronics don't work properly. There is a need for students to have spaces where they can go and socialise.

Matt Webber then proceeded to answer the question about the cash machine. The Union is currently in middle of a contract which runs out in about a year. They tried to get a free cash machine but with the current recession banks are not interested. The Union believes that it should not cost money but at the moment it's better than no cash machine at all.

- d) A student mentioned that the cash machine in Castle Irwell is used regularly so why is it not worth having more around campus.

Matt Webber replied that once students come to University and open a bank account with a bank then that's it they have them as a customer and they are not interested in investing in more cash machines.

4. Motions

Jim Dale explains the rules about how the motions will be presented and voted for/against.

Motion about Constitutional Change

Matt Webber presents it.

For a copy of the motion please check the Motions section

a) Speaker against the motion:

There is a change on constitution but it is not included in the papers students were given as if something to hide. There are a few lines that could overwrite everything that is decided here. The Union's Trustee Boards can veto our decisions. The people who can do that are the President, the Vice Presidents who brought motion here, 4 other elected students trustees and 4 other Trustees who aren't elected or students.

This constitution also mentions that if a student is present at a Trustee Board meeting they still have the right to vote for the decisions even though they are not elected and shouldn't be there in the first place. NUS may have approved this but no other Students' Union in the country has a similar policy to this. He then mentions that he was a Representation Vice President last year and is saddened to speak against his successors who are arguing to take away the power of the students.

b) Speaker for the motion: Ricky Chotai

The Union is making the constitution more democratic by reducing the quorum to 1% rather than 2% so that fewer students are required for binding decisions to be made. By voting for this motion the Students' Union becomes a registered charity and will be able to proceed much quicker in making decisions on governance.

c) Speaker against the motion:

Begins by asking how many have read the constitution, and to raise their hands if they have received a copy. He points out that they are about to vote on something that they haven't even read. There are 3 clauses that have nothing to do with the charity commission one of which states that:

The Board of Trustees may override any decision and policy made by the members in a general meeting or referendum or by the Student Council which the Trustees consider (in their absolute discretion) is or may be in breach of, contrary to or otherwise inconsistent with charity or education law or any other legal requirements.

There are 3 other clauses that state that the Trustee Board can override decisions made by students if they consider it to have financial implications for the Union, that could mean anything like voting out the Vice President not present and the Union saying that they don't want to do it because it will cost them money. Another clause saying that for decisions judged not to be in the interest of the Students' Union they can do the same thing.

At the moment the Board of Trustee consists of 13 people; 5 Sabbs, 4 student trustees and 4 external trustees. If by mistake someone wandered in the room and voted then their vote still stands. If students do not vote against the motion they lose the right to vote.

d) Matt Webber summarises by saying that the Trustee Boards has 5 elected Sabbatical trustees, 4 other elected trustees and 4 who are not students but come from different backgrounds and are responsible for governance and budgets. They have experience and can help students. The Union is not trying to mislead students. The new constitution actually gives them more rights.

Votes are taken. Motion voted against – not approved

FAIRTRADE MOTION

Joe Kirwin presents it.

For a copy of the motion please check the Motions section

No one speaks against

Votes taken Motion was voted for unanimously - approved

EXTREMISM MOTION

Presented by Matt Webber

For a copy of the motion please check the Motions section

a) Speaker against the motion:

This is an AGM where there's been a lot of debate about restriction of democracy. Now the Union is refusing to allow a democratically elected party to take part. Although the speaker is not personally a member of the party and believes that they are terrible, they still have a right to speak. If one party is banned what stops the banning of others too. It is a form of censorship (censorship was an issue that also appeared the student paper about this AGM - Issue 9, page 9). These are people who are part of a political organisation. They are terrible people but they should be allowed the right to speak just as students at AGM are allowed speak out against them. Everyone should have a chance to voice their opinions which is the whole point of a meeting like this. Anyone should be allowed to speak however bad their opinions so that are people who are repressed can also speak.

b) Speaker for the motion: Joe Kirwin

If students vote to keep this party off campus other parties will feel free to come on campus and have a proper exchange of ideas and debates on issues that matter.

c) Speaker against the motion:

Mentions the article in the newspaper about 'non platform policy'. People are forgetting that even though the BNP are a racist party they are also an elected party. Next year everyone will have to vote on general elections so enough knowledge about the BNP is needed to be able to hold them into account. By keeping them away from the campus it might mean that people could be voting for them without knowing what they are all about, which is dangerous. They should be let in because they're nothing to be afraid of. They are treated as if they're something to fear when they should be ridiculed.

d) Student makes a statement:

Four years ago there was a student in Salford, Tony Wentworth, who was a leader of the BNP and went around campus attacking anyone who stood in the way of their racist plans. Students that stood for Union elections that year were assaulted and attacked. Giving them a platform to debate is completely wrong. Everyone knows what they are about and what they stand for, they are fascist and racist and are terrorising communities. Wherever they show up there's violence there's no need to debate to understand what they stand for. The priority should be to protect a multicultural University and make sure that they are not allowed to have a platform.

e) Speaker against the motion:

Mentions that she is not necessarily against the motion but there is matter of freedom of speech. One of her fellow course mates was a member of the party and was actually quite a decent person who offered some very interesting discussions. There should be a need to concentrate on ensuring the safety of students without obstruction people from voicing their opinions.

f) Matt Webber summarises:

The BNP are about depriving people from their basic human rights; they are against black people, women and homosexuals. They're also about Hitler and it's unacceptable that they should have platform on this campus.

Votes are taken. Majority voted for the motion - approved

As there was no further business the President thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed.