



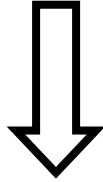
***Community  
Engagement  
Strategy***

***2010 – 2012***



***Vision...***

We will ensure our students are fully and comprehensively represented within their communities, and encourage a sense of civic responsibility which raises aspirations and encourages inclusion.



***Mission...***

We will contribute to the economic and social well-being of the local community; encourage a diverse and inclusive environment where access is based on potential; ensure every student has the appropriate support and guidance to reach the highest levels of potential, in the classroom and in the community.



***Values...***

Aspiration | Access | Inclusion

Citizenship | Advocacy | Justice

Representation | Democratisation | Cohesion

## **1. ASPIRATION | ACCESS | INCLUSION**

Numerous pieces of research over the years have consistently shown that many students fail to gain access to Higher Education based not on a lack of ability, but a lack of the necessary postcode. As such, we aim to establish ourselves as a unifying force that honours individuality and values diversity and we will fully embrace our responsibility for the provision of fair access to education for all. We seek to act as a primary provider of information, support and guidance to all those with the ability to progress to Higher Education, but face numerous barriers to entry.

To this end we will seek to be a sector leader and target work within the following areas:

### *...Care leavers*

- We will implement a mentoring programme and online forum for Care Leavers to aid the establishment of a sense of community within this group.
- We will endeavour to de-stigmatise misconceptions of care and academia to enable a sense of inclusion for all.
- USSA will conduct research with a small focus group of Care Leavers/children in Care to identify ways in which we can support them through the transition From Care to FE/HE/skills training.
- We will run a pilot project of workshops/surgeries in residential Care Homes, offering advice/first hand testimonies to future Care Leavers and will provide an opportunity for relationships to develop between these groups.
- As an organisation that provides a range of services across a variety of areas, we are comprised of a varied workforce who has innumerable skills and valuable experience to offer. We therefore hope to extend a number of work experience opportunities to teenagers who are currently in care. By inviting them to develop their skills in a Higher Education environment we hope that they will have simultaneous access to education and employment and will subsequently feel at home in both environments, having an overall positive impact on their future.

### *...Student Carers*

- We will host a focus group to identify areas where Student Carers can benefit from our support and will endeavour to respond to these needs accordingly – providing information, support and the tools required aiding the establishment of a sense of community amongst Student Carers.
- We will lobby the university to provide affordable on-site childcare provisions, available to all and not solely utilised by staff members, with mean tested fees for those on the lowest incomes.
- We will continue to work with national partners for the provision of adequate funding to Student Carers.
- We will work internally to secure an increase in the provision of childcare funds, and ensure that adequate advice and information exists for those who wish to access funds.

### *...Schools and Colleges*

- We will develop an alternative prospectus for local schools which highlights the realities and benefits of Higher Education, from a student's perspective and offers practical advice on the academic experience.
- We will lobby the University for the introduction of admissions based on contextual data, removing access based on privilege.
- We will assign a number of the most at risk schools to an identifiable executive officer, ensuring each school has a dedicated point of contact for informal advice and support.
- We will encourage each executive officer to communicate opportunities for engagement to a bank of volunteers who can make regular visits to the school in question, offering specified support as required.
- We will take "USSA on tour" to schools in order to provide student led workshops which highlight the benefits of Higher Education to dispel the myth that academia is only accessible to students from the highest income brackets.
- We will also increase our presence in colleges of Further Education within the Access Courses which are run with the specific intention of bridging the gap between college and university. We will offer surgery style sessions during which college students can ask current students any in-depth questions they might have about the realities of university life, covering issues such as accommodation, finance, employment prospects etc.
- We will develop a culture of Knowledge Exchange between the students of Strathclyde and pupils from schools in the local community. We strongly believe that those who are currently enrolled in Higher Education have much valuable information to impart to a younger generation. We value our student's potential as educators and believe that by participating in community education initiatives they have a unique opportunity to further develop their skill set. Similarly, interaction with young people enables our students to understand the shape of their community and the attitudes and aspirations of the younger generations who populate it.
- We also believe in the positive aspects of STEALTH learning and a less formal approach to education as identified in the Curriculum for Excellence. To this end we intend to run a series of innovative workshops across a variety of subjects with the overall aim of raising aspiration and esteem, whilst simultaneously promoting a positive perception of Higher Education, in areas where children are less likely to consider continuing their education beyond high school.
- We will lobby the university for the introduction of formalised articulation agreements with local colleges, ensuring that all those wishing to articulate their studies between college and university are secure in the knowledge that they will have a guaranteed place at a university.

## **2. CITIZENSHIP | ADVOCACY | JUSTICE**

USSA recognises our role in ensuring students are educated not just in an academic context within the classroom, but in a setting which contextualises their experience as a local, national and global citizen. As such we are committed to providing opportunities which allow experiences to be shared across differing demographics; which embeds the notion of social justice as an underpinning value; which values diversity and inclusivity; and which aims to provide an holistic and wider world view for our students – present and future.

To achieve this we will focus our work on the following areas:

### *...International Experience*

- Build upon our current successes in providing international and home students to “buddy” up in a bid to share experiences and provide support.
- Forge closer relationships internally and externally with key partners in order to promote the benefit of international placements to students, raising the number of students who undertake academic and voluntary activities within the international community.
- Run a number of targeted campaigns and events throughout the year which highlight pressing international issues, within a local context.
- We will continue to build upon existing links with international partners, most notably the University of Malawi and it’s students’ association, ensuring that we are both able to benefit from cross-cultural experiences.

### *...Civic Responsibility*

- Build up a network of local partners which provide opportunities for students to engage in projects and activities which contribute to a lessening of socio-economic inequalities within the greater Glasgow area.
- Work with academic departments to identify students who are able to utilise their degree programme in a local setting, for the benefit of all.

### *...Social Justice*

- We will use our position as a representative organisation to speak out against social wrongs, and provide a voice to those who often go without.
- Within the local community we will increase our presence within intervention and support programmes, utilising all available skills and knowledge to support those most in need.
- We are currently working with the university’s admissions department as they review their equality policy. We endeavour to establish greater cohesion between Union and University, with a specific focus on the relationship between admissions and our liberation groups, to provide prospective applicants with the assurance that they will be fully represented at Strathclyde.
- We will run a programme of informative and educational events throughout the academic year highlighting social issues within the local community and beyond.

### **3. REPRESENTATION | DEMOCRATISATION | COHESION**

For 22,000 students the Greater Glasgow area will serve as home for the duration of their studies – be it a permanent or temporary one. Due to our city centre location we have a vital role to play in representing students within their local community and ensuring that no barriers exist between them or permanent residents. Whilst we recognise that tensions do arise as a result of a minority, we will strive to ensure that the best interests of the majority are the focus of our work, working with local and national partners to promote the positive influence of the student body

To this end, the focus of our work will be:

#### *...Local representation*

- We will continue to oppose regressive legislation which penalises students for being students; we will work with local policy makers to represent the best interests of students on local matters.
- Work with local students' associations to redevelop the Glasgow Student Forum, ensuring students have a voice to their community representatives on matters of importance.
- Develop a student friendly introductory pack to Glasgow for all new arrivals, which places emphasis on their role within the community, ways in which they can get involved and relevant information on local issues.

#### *...Students as active citizens*

- We will take all steps to promote civic activism to our students; we will promote opportunities for students to engage with and shape their community from a grassroots level.
- We will fully and actively promote civic engagement through elections at all levels to our students, leading on the development of a “Glasgow Manifesto” for candidates to the Scottish Parliament.
- We will encourage students to engage in a proactive and positive way with their communities, ensuring they are seen as equal partners and residents during their time in Glasgow.