



# The Big Impact

Highlights for  
2018/19

John Schless



## A word from our Chief Executive and GSU President



Henry Setter

At Greenwich Students' Union (GSU), we have regular conversations about the impact of what we're doing - how did events and activities go? How did students feel about it? Was it any good? How can we improve and have more impact at Greenwich?

These questions force us to constantly reflect and ensure that students' needs are at the heart of what we do.

Over the last couple of years, we have increased our work on how we measure our reach. We have a rich pool of data to draw on and compare to the year before to track our growth. This report shows some of our achievement and growth in 2018/19.

We are, of course, not resting on our laurels. As we head into the third year of our Big Plan, GSU has objectives to complete, as well as planning a new strategy to build on the impact that we are having. [Some of our current objectives are listed throughout the report; to see them all, visit our website at \[greenwichsu.co.uk/bigplan\]\(https://greenwichsu.co.uk/bigplan\).](#)

We are proud of how much we've achieved we have had over the last few years, and I hope you'll agree from this report, the past academic year is no exception. We at GSU look forward to continuing work with stakeholders to ensure that students' lives are impacted positively throughout their time at Greenwich.

**John Schless**  
Chief Executive

**Henry Setter**  
GSU President

September 2019

# Our Impact



## Results taken from...

**Student Priorities research and vote (December 2018-January 2019)**

Work lead by Representation team with the student community as part of our Democracy Review.

**GSU Staff Survey (February 2019)**

Internal survey run through National Union of Students (NUS); taken by full-time and part-time Union staff.

**GSU Union Survey (May 2019)**

Annual survey open for all Greenwich students to take online.

**University Stakeholders survey (June-July 2019)**

Internal survey sent to staff across Faculties, services, campuses and even other Unions (GK Unions and Kent Union).

**Student Group Leaders Survey (July 2019)**

Internal survey sent to students who run our Sports clubs and Societies.

Throughout the report, we will refer to ourselves as the Students' Union, SU, Union, or GSU.

# Representation



Over the past two years, academic advice has maintained over 85% satisfaction, continuing to be the most used Union service.

## Top three important services for students:

- Academic advice (96% agreed this was important or very important)
- Representing your academic interests to the University (96%)
- Welfare advice (95%)

This is compared to financial advice, Clubs and Societies, volunteering, social spaces and entertainment, and campaigning.



Last year we created a representation role for Medway campus. This year election turnout was up 53% from Medway students with an increase in potential candidates.



Students still believe having direct consultation with their course is the most important, listing as the top priority the past two years.

## Activity: Do a full democratic review of the SU.

In the first term, we underwent the largest endeavour in GSU history to understand what our members want and need from their representation. Over 1,200 students were consulted as a part of the research that underpinned the Democracy Review.

The research conducted was formulated into proposals, which were then put out to students to vote on in a Referendum. They could say Yes or No to the following changes:

- Change our current Full-time Officer roles to four full-time open positions. All students run against each other, the four students with the most votes win.
- Students have direct influence over the priorities of the Officers and the Union.
- Replace Part-time Officers with paid student researchers.
- Replace Student Council with a Student Assembly focusing on enhancing the power of Academic Representatives.

All changes passed with majority votes, and then began the next stage in our Democracy Review.

**the big choice**

2,446 students voted out of 18,755 registered students in the Big Choice (13% of the student population).

Research was then conducted across three campuses with over 250+ students on what they wanted to see the SU work on in the next academic year, with over 400 voting on 30 points in six categories.

These priorities formed the basis of election manifestos in our Officer Elections in March 2019, as well as work for staff and student Community Organisers in the next academic year. They're listed below.

For more information, visit [greenwichsu.co.uk/studentpriorities](https://greenwichsu.co.uk/studentpriorities)

### Academic Changes

*Top priority:* Assessment guidance improvement  
*Second priority:* Personal Tutor support

### Support To Me

*Top priority:* Mental health and wellbeing  
*Second priority:* Employability fairs and career events

### Opportunities To Me

*Top priority:* Course based social events  
*Second priority:* Socialisation and integration

### Greenwich Campus

*Top priority:* Widen activities  
*Second priority:* Social spaces development

### Avery Hill Campus

*Top priority:* Placement student support  
*Second priority:* Dome space investment

### Medway Campus

*Top priority:* University bus times and quality  
*Second priority:* Improving student spaces





## Influencing the University

- A majority of our stakeholders (87%) rated their relationship with the SU as good.
- 93% of our key University Stakeholders agree that the information and insights provided by the SU have directly influenced the University's activities, strategies and policies. The remaining 7% neither agreed or disagreed.  
*8% increase on last year*
- 94% of our key University Stakeholders agree that there is a strong working relationship between the SU and the University.  
*6% increase on last year*
- 86% rated the impact of our work as "High" and that the SU has influence on University activities (93%).

### This is proven by success from our Officers, such as:

- Our Officer team of full-time and part-time roles were present in meetings across the University and in all Faculties
- Our Officer team were instrumental in the recruitment of the new Vice-Chancellor, who starts in December 2019
- Extra space at Avery Hill as secured by the President to offer a social/bar space to the Avery Hill student community
- Vice President Welfare pushed for change with University Student Academic Services to produce a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Vice President Education (pictured left) successfully secured a scholarship for refugees to start in September 2019



## Wider Influence

- Most students (70%) want to influence, and be consulted about their course.  
*10% less than last year as a result of our representation work across the University*
- Students said they also would like to influence the opportunities that are available to them (55%) and academic organisation (51%) as the next most popular categories.  
*Against last year, 4% lower and 6% higher respectively; again, a result of the influence of our representation work*

### Activity: Promote, empower and equip students as leaders and representatives.

Meike Imberg, Union President (pictured right), ran for NUS President at the NUS Conference in April 2019. She says, "My experience as an Officer at GSU empowered me to put myself forward and I have learned a lot from this exciting and challenging experience. I hope future GSU Officers will put themselves forward and continue to put Greenwich on the national map."

# Employability

## Amongst our student staff:



- 84% of staff would recommend the Union as a great place to work.
- 17% more than last year
- 85% say they achieve a good work life balance working with us.
- 8% more than last year

## Activity: Help our members to better communicate their skills to employers.

New induction and training developed for student staff and volunteers has focused on making it easy for them to recognise and articulate the skills they gain with us.

Student staff commented they had gained and/or developed the following through employment with the SU:

- Confidence
- Customer service knowledge and skills
- Communication skills
- Time management
- Interpersonal skills

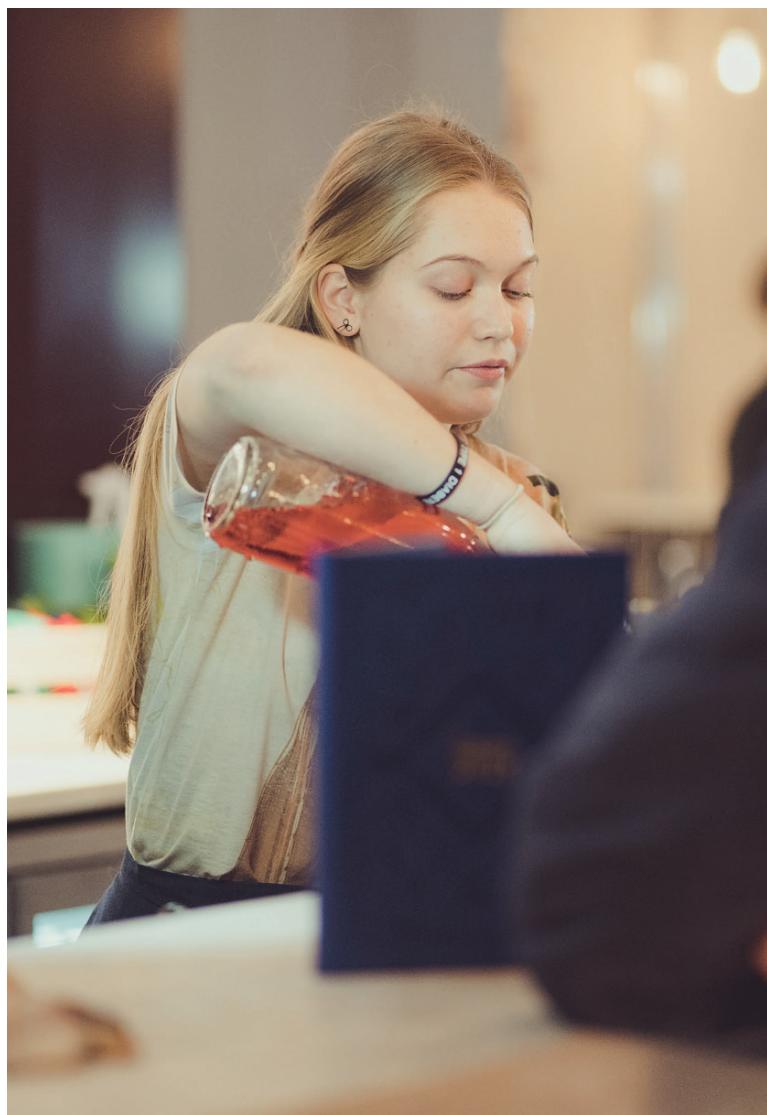


## Amongst our student group leaders:

- 60% of students strongly agree or agree that being an active member of a student group has made them more employable.
- 72% of students volunteering strongly agree or agree it has made them more employable.
- 87% of group leaders strongly agree or agree that being an active member of a student group has made them more employable.
- 67% also agreed there had been sufficient opportunities to develop in their role as a group leader.

## Students recognised they had developed the following transferrable skills:

- Leadership and management
- Development
- Organisation
- Events management
- Communication
- Managing a budget

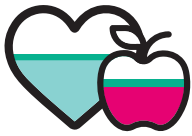




# Health and Wellbeing



75% of students agree that being an active member of a student group had a positive impact of their mental health.  
6% increase on last year



67% said being a member had had a positive impact on their physical health.  
12% increase on last year

68% strongly agreed or agreed that the food offered by the SU includes healthy options.  
14% increase on last year

Our commercial outlets sell a range of products that promote health and wellbeing. Examples include:

- Change sold a range of salads, and launched a freshly made smoothies range in Term 3
- Village Shop sells fresh fruit and vegetables as part of its grocery range
- Lower Deck food menu had dedicated healthy eating options, catering for a range of dietary requirements

## Activity: Deliver a proactive SU run student advice service.

Our Advice Service is a vital part of our work to support our members at GSU.

Our Advisers work independently to represent students across the University, and enable them to work through issues that may prevent them from completing their studies.

The introduction of an internal Advice Strategy has seen some great achievements this year, including:

- Over 1,000 students engaged with via Wellbeing Checks, compared to 600+ last year
- £64,000 financial gains for students since August 2018 (money saved)
- 432 cases and enquiries opened
- 95% of students who use the Advice Service stay on at the University



# Student Communities

## Activity: Create opportunities for members to share experiences.

Academic Communities are groups of students who are brought together by what they are studying. The project was implemented as a joint venture between the Union and University, and is supported through the University's Academic and Student Experience Strategy 2018-22.

Academic Societies are completely student-led, offering a balance of both academic and social wellbeing opportunities to their peers.

To see a list of our Academic Societies, visit [greenwichsu.co.uk/academic-communities](http://greenwichsu.co.uk/academic-communities).

### Highlights:

- Successful 3 Minute Thesis Competition in April 2019
- Secured extra funding from Liberal Arts and Sciences and Engineering and Science Faculties for their Academic Societies
- Society Awards nominations for Academic Societies
- Introduction of Academic Society of the Year award at Student Led Teaching Awards



30% rise in Academic Societies from last year from 38 to 49. There were also 98 in term one and 58 in Terms two and three, including events at Medway at GK Unions.



Nominations for our awards increased this year...

#### Societies Awards:

504, up from 103 last year

#### Sports Awards:

207, up from 89 last year

#### Student Led Teaching Awards:

922 up from 688 last year

### Student Group memberships

<b>Sports</b>	2017/18	428 in 16 Clubs
	2018/19	685 in 17 Clubs
<b>Societies</b>	2017/18	12,070 in 99 Societies
	2018/19	11,315 in 102 Societies

*Some departments withdraw automatic Society memberships due to students not actively engaging, hence the decrease Society membership numbers.*

## Activity: Offer safe and fun physical and digital spaces for students to connect together in.

GSU got a new home in September 2018. We moved from the Cooper building to Dreadnought building, the new student hub on the Greenwich campus.

The move gave us a range of new rooms, which students and groups can book for use. We also gained two new outlets - Change Coffee and the Lower Deck.

### Highlights and feedback:

- The Atrium in the Greenwich is the most used SU facility, with 32% using it every day or a few times a week
- Over 70% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that the facilities meet their needs, are easy to get to and are welcoming. A small proportion (4-7%) are dissatisfied with the facilities
- About our website, our main digital space, over 70% agreed or strongly agreed that it has the information they need, is easy to use and is welcoming
- Students told us they want more quiet spaces for eating and rest, prayer and studying - our new Officer Team have started to campaign and lobby the University for more of these spaces

Examples of events that have been put on in our spaces by and for the student community are...

- Charity bake sales, fundraising for student group activity or other charities
- Exhibitions on a range of topics including sexual health, Black History Month, mental health and sustainability
- ActiveGRE activity day with a range of physical demonstrations to promote recreational sport (February 2019)
- Our Societies Awards, Sports Awards and Student Led Teaching Awards in April and May 2019



We had 2,257 room bookings in our Ground Floor Dreadnought spaces since we opened in September 2018.



Lower Deck hosted approximately 500 bookings from students, staff, University and external clients last year (since its opening in October 2018).





## Money Management



- 93% of students thought it was important or very important we offered financial advice.
- 46% were satisfied or highly satisfied with the service.
- 2% and 8% increases on last year respectively

66% of students told us they wanted to be consulted on decisions that will affect their finances, and want to know the following from us in the future:

- Short term loans
- Finance guides
- Bursaries for mature students

### In regards to our Student Groups:

- Group leaders rated our processes for spending money as great or good most often (60%)
- 70% agreed our group fees provided a high value for money
- They want to know more about financial support to attend conferences as members of Societies
- We spent £80,000 on supporting and subsidising student group activity, saving money for our members

## Local Community

### Activity: Utilise volunteer opportunities in the community for our members.

Volunteering is an integral part of student-led activity at the SU. Our Academic Representatives, Part-time Officers and Student Group committees are all students that have volunteered their time to run activity and represent their peers, supported by our staff team.

Through our annual Union Survey, we discovered that:

- 33% of students volunteer with the SU and a further 36% have voluntary roles outside of the SU
- 94% of respondents got their volunteer roles outside of the Union or University

We will be reviewing how we support volunteering over the next academic year.



We also held a Community Fair during Welcome in September for student parents to get to know the SU and other student parents.



To see this report and last year's online,  
visit [greenwichsu.co.uk/impact](https://greenwichsu.co.uk/impact)

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