

2016-  
2020

# Strategic Plan



TAKING  
GIANT  
STEPS



STUDENTS'  
UNION



The page features a dark blue background with a large, semi-transparent watermark in the center that reads "TAKING GIANT STEPS". To the right of the watermark is the University of Limerick's logo, which consists of a stylized black and red wolf head with the letters "UL" integrated into it. The page is divided by a vertical dashed line. To the left of the line, the word "CONTENTS" is written vertically in large, semi-transparent white capital letters. To the right of the line, a list of contents is provided, numbered from 4 to 22.

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# Welcome

University of Limerick Students' Union is at a important stage in its history. As we approach our 45th Birthday in 2017, we can confidently say that we do more now for students than ever before. We have made a difference in the lives of thousands of our members by helping them through challenges, by creating opportunities for personal development and fun, by delivering a comprehensive range of integrated services and supports and by making sure their voice is heard on issues they have faced.

Through our close working relationship with UL management and staff, we have played a pivotal role in creating a better learning environment and student experience for all, but there is a lot more to do.

This Strategic Plan, as the name suggests is about ULSU taking giant steps over the next 4 years to achieve our vision of ULSU being an integral part of the University and overall student experience, and where we wish to see a student experience that continues to place students at the heart of all University policies and activities and where students are actively involved in and supported in creating and shaping their student experience

It has taken us time to develop this plan, its creation has spanned almost 18 months, but it is deeply grounded by the voice of students. Three consecutive sabbatical teams have contributed, we have consulted with over 15% of the student population through face to face and online surveys, and we have also consulted with staff in UL and ULSU.

We have defined our work over the next four years as four key pillars. These are Student Engagement, Student Leadership & Government, Student Centred Facilities, Supports & Services and finally Management & Finance. We have set

out 31 objectives over those four pillars of work, that are challenging, ambitious, based on students' needs and we believe achievable.

This plan calls on us to connect and collaborate more than ever before with our partners in UL. We intend to do that by creating a working group for each pillar whose membership will include student representatives and staff from UL and ULSU.

We have also set aside a Development Fund to help bring life to this Plan, to help us take those Giant Steps. The fund will be available to the Working Groups to assist them in developing and piloting new initiatives to achieve the 31 objectives we have set ourselves.

An Annual Operational Plan will be developed to implement the plan and a midway progress review will also take place. This Plan will be the daily work plan for ULSU staff and Sabbatical Teams but it has the flexibility to allow creativity and change as student needs emerge.

To students reading this Plan, we hope you see that you spoke, we listened and now we aim to deliver, to our UL partners and the wider Community we hope you see opportunities to collaborate and support our work.

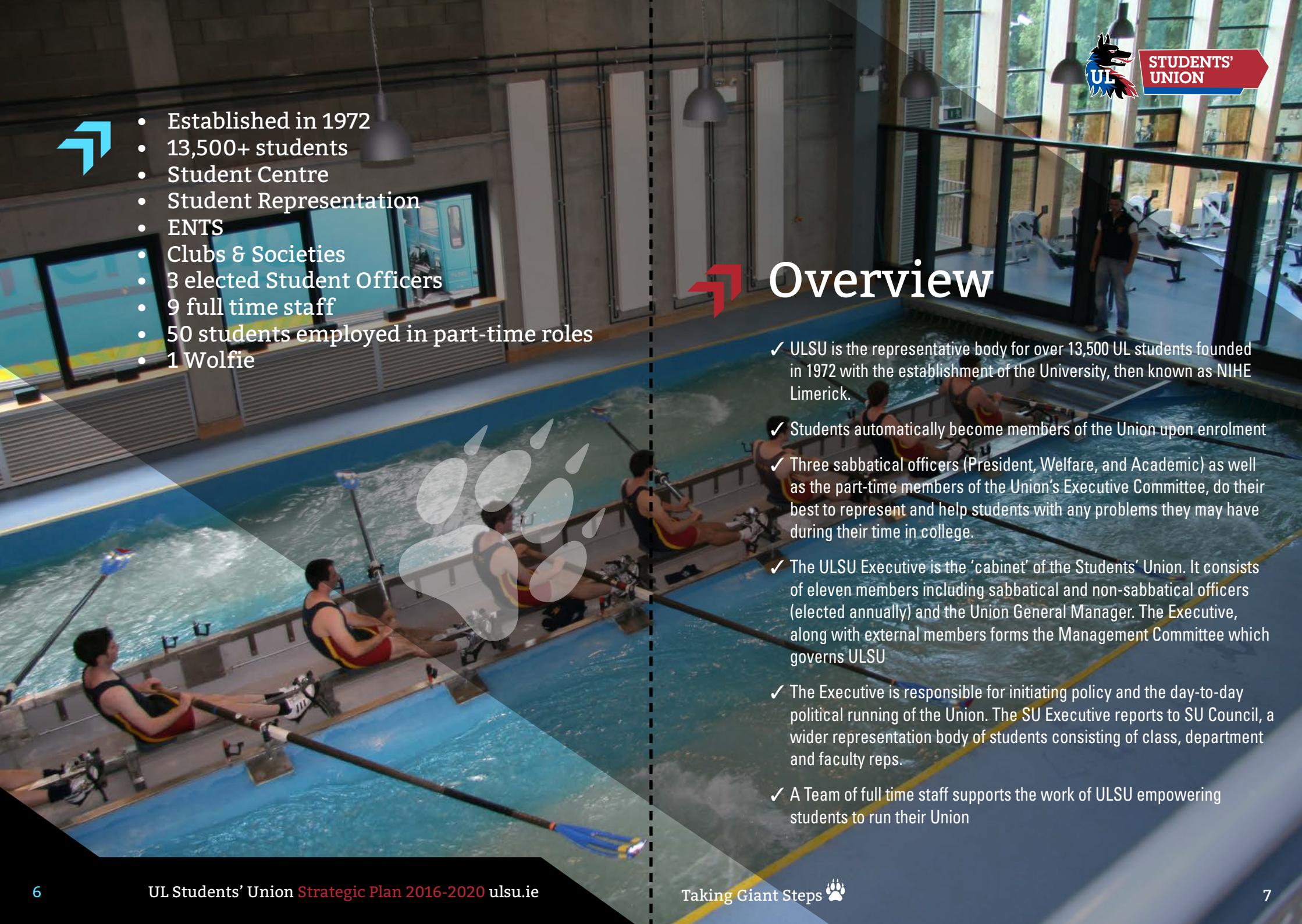
*Colin Clarke*

PRESIDENT **ULSU**

*Martin Ryan*

GENERAL MANAGER **ULSU**

This Strategic Plan was approved by  
ULSU Student Council, 14th March 2016

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- Established in 1972
  - 13,500+ students
  - Student Centre
  - Student Representation
  - ENTS
  - Clubs & Societies
  - 3 elected Student Officers
  - 9 full time staff
  - 50 students employed in part-time roles
  - 1 Wolfie

## Overview

- ✓ ULSU is the representative body for over 13,500 UL students founded in 1972 with the establishment of the University, then known as NIHE Limerick.
- ✓ Students automatically become members of the Union upon enrolment
- ✓ Three sabbatical officers (President, Welfare, and Academic) as well as the part-time members of the Union's Executive Committee, do their best to represent and help students with any problems they may have during their time in college.
- ✓ The ULSU Executive is the 'cabinet' of the Students' Union. It consists of eleven members including sabbatical and non-sabbatical officers (elected annually) and the Union General Manager. The Executive, along with external members forms the Management Committee which governs ULSU
- ✓ The Executive is responsible for initiating policy and the day-to-day political running of the Union. The SU Executive reports to SU Council, a wider representation body of students consisting of class, department and faculty reps.
- ✓ A Team of full time staff supports the work of ULSU empowering students to run their Union



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## How it works

- ✓ Governed by a Constitution.
- ✓ 3 elected Officers SU President, Academic Officer and Welfare Officer supported by the GM and the Staff Team.
- ✓ Student Executive meeting weekly.
- ✓ Student Council of Reps meeting fortnightly.
- ✓ Management Committee meeting monthly.
- ✓ A Union General Meeting each semester.
- ✓ Student Referendums for major decisions.



# Purpose

- ✓ To represent students and ensure their voice is heard and action is taken.
- ✓ To advocate on student issues.
- ✓ To engage students so they can relax, chill, party, play, succeed and live life to the full at UL.
- ✓ To assist students with services and supports they need most while in UL.
- ✓ To connect with students to advise and inform on the issues most relevant to them.

# Vision

As an integral part of the University and overall student experience, the Students' Union wishes to see a student experience that continues to place students at the heart of all University policies and activities and where students are actively involved in and supported in creating and shaping their student experience.

# 31

GOALS

# 4

PILLARS

## Strategic Planning Process



- ✓ An 18 month consultation process involving elected student officers of 2013/14 & 2014/15 and current team of 2015/16.
- ✓ Face to face surveys with students.
- ✓ An online survey with Clubs & Societies students.
- ✓ 15% of students surveyed in total.
- ✓ Several ULSU staff consultation days.
- ✓ Focussed questionnaire to key University staff.

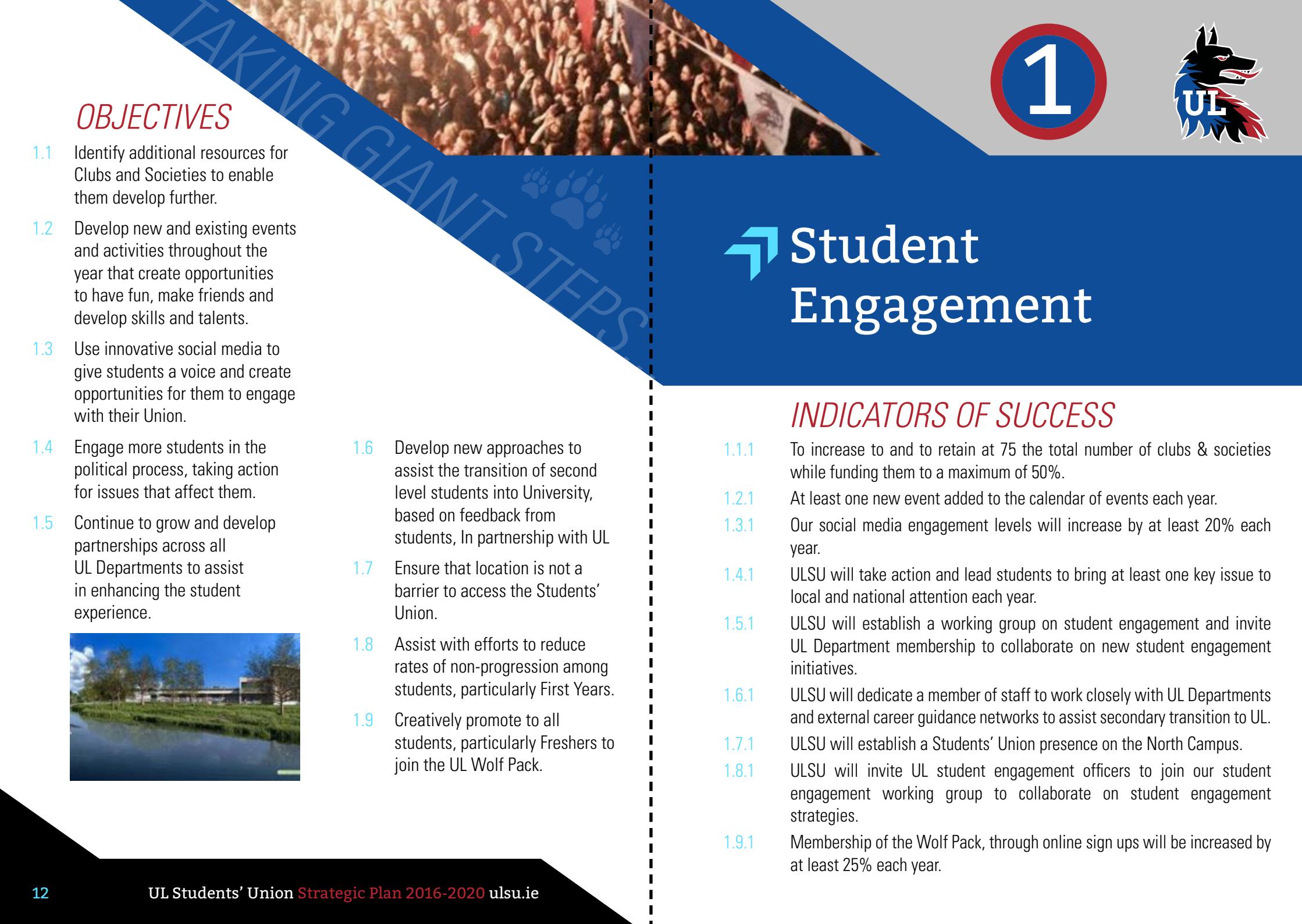
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1

# Student Engagement

## OBJECTIVES

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- 1.1 Identify additional resources for Clubs and Societies to enable them develop further.
  - 1.2 Develop new and existing events and activities throughout the year that create opportunities to have fun, make friends and develop skills and talents.
  - 1.3 Use innovative social media to give students a voice and create opportunities for them to engage with their Union.
  - 1.4 Engage more students in the political process, taking action for issues that affect them.
  - 1.5 Continue to grow and develop partnerships across all UL Departments to assist in enhancing the student experience.
  - 1.6 Develop new approaches to assist the transition of second level students into University, based on feedback from students, In partnership with UL
  - 1.7 Ensure that location is not a barrier to access the Students' Union.
  - 1.8 Assist with efforts to reduce rates of non-progression among students, particularly First Years.
  - 1.9 Creatively promote to all students, particularly Freshers to join the UL Wolf Pack.

## INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- 1.1.1 To increase to and to retain at 75 the total number of clubs & societies while funding them to a maximum of 50%.
- 1.2.1 At least one new event added to the calendar of events each year.
- 1.3.1 Our social media engagement levels will increase by at least 20% each year.
- 1.4.1 ULSU will take action and lead students to bring at least one key issue to local and national attention each year.
- 1.5.1 ULSU will establish a working group on student engagement and invite UL Department membership to collaborate on new student engagement initiatives.
- 1.6.1 ULSU will dedicate a member of staff to work closely with UL Departments and external career guidance networks to assist secondary transition to UL.
- 1.7.1 ULSU will establish a Students' Union presence on the North Campus.
- 1.8.1 ULSU will invite UL student engagement officers to join our student engagement working group to collaborate on student engagement strategies.
- 1.9.1 Membership of the Wolf Pack, through online sign ups will be increased by at least 25% each year.



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## Student Centred Facilities, Services and Supports.



### OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Enhance existing social spaces at the current Student Centre.
- 2.2 Advocate for and develop a new needs based Student Centre and additional sports facilities on campus.
- 2.3 Develop and launch a Union managed advisory service supporting and empowering students to manage their experience on campus whether it is with financial, personal or academic issues.
- 2.4 Develop and deliver campaigns on new issues and needs emerging as a result of ongoing dialogue with members.
- 2.5 Development of new income generating facilities that are student focussed and needs based.
- 2.6 Encourage students to foster positive community relations and be involved in their wider UL Community.



### INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- 2.1.1 The current Students Centre and Common Room will be refreshed, refurbished and limited space maximised.
- 2.2.1 A new Student Centre with new meeting rooms and dedicated spaces and new and enhanced sporting facilities delivered to students.
- 2.3.1 A new student advisory service in place, run by ULSU, advising and supporting students on key issues, to which the Sabbatical Team can make referrals.
- 2.4.1 At least one new needs based campaign added to the calendar of events each year.
- 2.5.1 Ongoing roll out and extension of newly introduced commercial services.
- 2.6.1 More positive community engagement initiatives, for example the MnM Student Patrol programme (Meitheal na Mac Leinn), Campus Watch and community volunteer opportunities on and off campus are developed.



## Student Leadership & Government

### OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Develop new effective mechanisms to ensure that the diverse groupings that form the whole student voice are heard.
- 3.2 Develop effective training and personal development programmes for student leaders.
- 3.3 Significantly encourage more voting in student elections and referendums.
- 3.4 Build on the solid foundations created within the class rep structures with a view to further developing the class rep and student council model so that ALL students have their voice heard.
- 3.5 Review the ongoing support needed for Sabbatical Officers to fulfil their obligations attending University meetings whilst ensuring maximum engagement with their members on a day to day basis.
- 3.6 Ensure the role of Sabbatical Officers, Executives & Councils are explained and communicated better to the entire University community.

### INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- 3.1.1 Student issues and needs are effectively identified, recorded and communicated to UL fora every year, particularly the revised Student Advisor systems as per UL Strategic Plan Broadening Horizons 1.3.2
- 3.2.1 An increase in the number of students running for representative positions.
- 3.3.1 An increase in voter participation to 40% for all elections and referendums.
- 3.4.1 Increase class representative numbers by 10% annually and to make sure every course and year has a representative and also that the needs of Union members are being transmitted in a clear and consistent manner at all levels within the University.
- 3.5.1 Additional supports identified and put in place for Sabbatical Officers to increase student access to the Officers on a day to day basis.
- 3.6.1 University staff would have a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of student representation.



4

## OBJECTIVES

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- TAKING GIANT STEPS.
- 4.1 Develop and deliver an effective, transparent financial strategy to foster growth and development including new income generation streams.
  - 4.2 Create a Development Fund, available to the Working Groups, that will assist with the implementation of the Strategic Pillars.
  - 4.3 Deliver ongoing governance training To ensure the Management Committee understand their responsibilities.
  - 4.4 Ongoing, effective marketing of the Wolf as the brand of ULSU.
  - 4.5 Develop and deliver an effective internal and external communications strategy including greater collaboration with UL Marketing & Communications.
  - 4.6 Staff and Sabbatical Officer support, training and development will be a priority.

- 4.7 UL and ULSU senior management & Sabbatical Team to meet on a structured and regular basis, as per UL Strategic Plan Broadening Horizons 1.3.2.
- 4.8 Engage in a quality review of the Students' Union by the UL Quality Unit.
- 4.9 To foster and develop key international alliances with other students' unions.
- 4.10 The Union will prepare an Annual Operational Plan that takes account of this ULSU Strategic Plan as well as the individual elected Officers mandates which will be presented to the Management Committee and the Student Council at the start of each academic year.

## Management and Finance

### INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- 4.1.1 A financially strong Students Union, enhanced by new income streams and efficient fiscal management.
- 4.2.1 Each working group will use the fund to develop new innovative initiatives.
- 4.3.1 An effective Management Committee in place, with support and guidance from at least three external members with legal, financial and human resource management experience.
- 4.4.1 The number of individual students and Clubs & Societies including the Wolf brand as part of their identity increases by at least 50%.
- 4.5.1 All students will know who we are, what we do and how to contact us and ULSU will have a stronger presence and connection with ul.ie as per UL Strategic Plan Broadening Horizons 1.3.2
- 4.6.1 New and existing peer leadership training partnerships, such as exists with Leeds University Union will be developed
- 4.7.1 Establishment of regular meetings between ULSU and UL Executive Committee.
- 4.8.1 ULSU will have successfully come through the quality review process and implement findings.
- 4.9.1 Further development of the ULSU/University of Massachusetts Students Union twinning and continue the strong partnership with Leeds University Union
- 4.10.1 Staff & Sabbatical team develop the Year 1 Operational Plan for 2016 early in 2016 and thereafter by the start of semester 1 each year.



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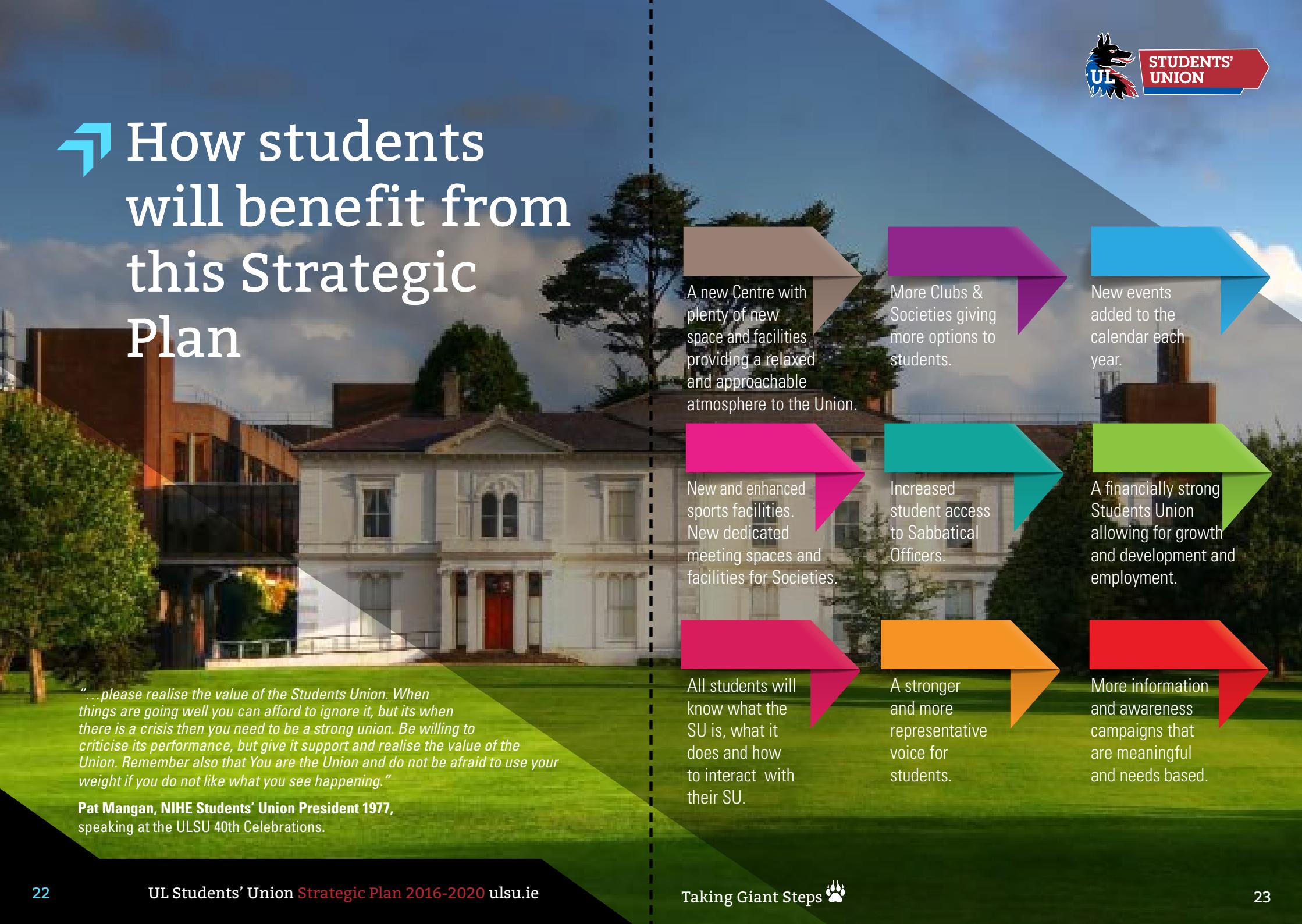
# Process to implement the Plan



# ↗ How students will benefit from this Strategic Plan

*"...please realise the value of the Students Union. When things are going well you can afford to ignore it, but its when there is a crisis then you need to be a strong union. Be willing to criticise its performance, but give it support and realise the value of the Union. Remember also that You are the Union and do not be afraid to use your weight if you do not like what you see happening."*

**Pat Mangan, NIHE Students' Union President 1977,**  
speaking at the ULSU 40th Celebrations.

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- A new Centre with plenty of new space and facilities providing a relaxed and approachable atmosphere to the Union.
  - More Clubs & Societies giving more options to students.
  - New events added to the calendar each year.
  - New and enhanced sports facilities. New dedicated meeting spaces and facilities for Societies.
  - Increased student access to Sabbatical Officers.
  - A financially strong Students Union allowing for growth and development and employment.
  - All students will know what the SU is, what it does and how to interact with their SU.
  - A stronger and more representative voice for students.
  - More information and awareness campaigns that are meaningful and needs based.



**STUDENTS'  
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