

Dan Hilton 2004-2005 Annual Report

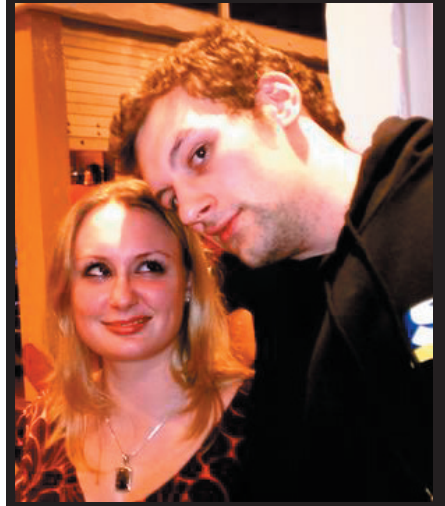
Welcome...

This report is not for the faint-hearted. It is not your 'usual' report. My aim was always to be as honest as possible, giving my frank opinion upon all subjects. You shall see as you read that not speaking out enough was one of my many failures.

This report is broken up into three core sections: The Union, the University and then the conclusions/thanks.

Yet first some background. This year's Sabb team were elected as a Slate. It was my doing I admit it. It caused a lot of resentment and a brief backlash that thankfully died down. We did what we did because we wanted to change this Union for the better. In some places I believe we have. However in others I understand we have become what I set out to change. For that I apologise. I hope that in time the remaining bits left over will be reformed. Good luck to Becki and next years crew, you'll do great.

Cheers, Dan Hilton



USEFUL QUOTES:

"INSANITY: DOING THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER AGAIN AND EXPECTING DIFFERENT RESULTS."
~ ALBERT EINSTEIN

"THE ONLY THING NECESSARY FOR THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL IS FOR GOOD MEN TO DO NOTHING."
~ EDMUND BURKE

"NOTHING IN THE WORLD CAN TAKE PLACE OF PERSISTENCE. TALENT WILL NOT; NOTHING IS MORE COMMON THAN UNSUCCESSFUL MEN WITH TALENT. GENIUS WILL NOT; UNREWARDED GENIUS IS ALMOST A PROVERB. EDUCATION WILL NOT; THE WORLD IS FULL OF EDUCATED DERELICTS. PERSISTENCE AND DETERMINATION ALONE ARE OMNIPOTENT."
~ CALVIN COOLIDGE

The Union is an organisation founded to serve the collective representational and supportive needs of students at Swansea University. It also happens to run commercial services that have a dual benefit for its students, in providing a service and also helping to fund the Union. It is not the other way around. Full-stop. End of Story. Good commercial services do this, by being useful and appropriate to their customers while also being profitable.

THIS YEAR

I'm sure Chris Harris (Treasurer of the Union) will go into more depth about the mixed bag of financial results from the individual departments but I would like to touch on a few that have impressed me.

JC's

Fantastic transition and impressive financial results. JC's has started to become the bar that everyone knew it would. Under the masterful guidance of Mike Burns, JC's has become a great asset to the Student's Union commercial services. Well done to the team who helped develop it. The planned developments to the bar will no doubt help to further increase the welcoming atmosphere.

ENTS

Yet another year where the

Key Facts.

Swansea University Students Union pays over a 100,000 pounds worth of student staff wages each year.

SUSU turns over just over £3 million pounds a year.

We are on track to achieve Investors In People award next year.

Our student night during freshers week was the biggest student night in the UK in terms of numbers of students.

department has improved and innovated. A few healthy mistakes, but very good results. Hopefully the new Research and Representation advisor, John Follet will continue to help hone the output to the needs of students. The Summer Ball owes a lot to their work and to their belief in it being viable.

NURSERY

A tough year by all accounts, however they did not falter nor stop. Delivering a service that will become more and more vital over the next couple of years. The expansion of the University, and the pressing agenda of widening access to Higher Education, requires that more childcare space is made available. A new building is required but more upon the subject of buildings later.

All in all a very good year.

The new University Bakery has caused the Union's sandwich trade a number of problems. The uneasy truce has always been the SU trades snacks whilst the University does Catering. One of the things that I wish I had done this year, was to invite every member of University Council to eat in the Refectory at the Union's Expense, and then transported them to UWIC or Southampton to compare the quality and range of food. If we are to become a world-class research led institution, then we need a world class catering output. We are, quite clearly, a long way off this aim.

Union.

Media.

WATERFRONT

The student Newspaper Waterfront has gone from strength to strength this year under the stewardship of Rachel Howells. The move to Quark and the increased level of both training and sub-editors has definitely paid off. It's great to see something I had so much involvement in as an Undergraduate go to such dizzy heights, and I am sure that the paper will soon win national awards for the output and design of the publication. The quality of the writing and the design reflects the effort students have put in. The new computers we have ordered for next year coupled with the added experience of the team can only lead to better things. I look forward to the launch issue of the new supplement, Front, and seeing the names of Gerrard, Barnhouse, Gwyllim, Lamont, Lexy and others in the national press.

The amount of press coverage that we have received this year has also improved with good links being made both locally and also nationally. Regular pieces in the Evening post have hopefully secured a balanced view of the student population of Swansea. The work that Rachael and others have done to bring the work of the Union to the attention of the press has led to us reducing

local complaints and has also done wonders for the reputation of the University as a whole. We need to deliver a far more advanced media image to the outside world if we are to correctly



represent the achievements and successes of the Students Union.

Of the little projects I have dabbled in, Xtreme is the best. Not many people within the Union believe in Student radio; I do. It's the future of media content and can play a crucial part in our member communication strategy. Innovations such as Podcasting and online streaming has the opportunity to reduce the

cost and improve the quality of our broadcast. The new CD players, the mixing desk and the computer are just physical representations of the work been put into the station. It has a new logo and a new ethos hopefully to deliver key niche student broadcasting that attracts acclaim and respect. The work of the committee this year is to be greatly commended. The visit of BBC 6 Music was a real cherry in the cake for the station. We showed that we could mix it with the best of them. It is now time to raise the stakes again, further developing links with industry and bringing up the standard of all the shows to the level of the best. The University also needs to stop sticking its head in the ground in relation to the opportunities available in supporting the station and our media in general. The media centre churns out highly experienced, battle hardened hacks of both the written media and radio. We have ex-students involved in almost every media enterprise in Wales



from BBC Wales to Big Issue Cymru and the Western Mail. We do it with limited resources, yet we enrich students experience in ways no University department ever could. Perhaps it's time that those in the shiny, ivory towers turned round and realized the true media powerhouse in Swansea University?

I've never; before becoming President, bothered much with the A.U. However this year I have developed grave doubts over whether the organization really serves the best interests of its members. The way in which health & safety is deployed has worried me in some clubs. They seem to forget a number of crucial University meetings, something that doesn't reflect well. They seem to want to concentrate on fewer 'elite' clubs, rather than systematically developing a fair and transparent funding system for all clubs. Sport should be for all, not just those who are your mates. The A.U. relationship with outside organizations have also raised eyebrows. Maybe I'm just jealous because Time didn't give me a car!

However the A.U. has developed leaps and bounds this year. The prospect of a new University team kit is very exciting. The new facilities and the upcoming British Universities Games is a real credit to the Universities investment in

Campaigns.

The A.U.

sport. I hope that as the plan for sport develops we may rival the Loughboroughs and Baths of this world.

No TOP UP FEES IN WALES

The best achievement this year has been the defeat of Top-Up fees in Wales. The culmination of the Give Wales The Edge campaign coupled with the networking the Welsh Unions has delivered for Welsh students in way few of us could have dreamed. The Rees report has reported back, giving us a system that for the want of one word (flexible Vs variable) is exactly the same as the UK White paper. Only thanks to the great work of Cardiff, Aberstwyth Guild and Swansea, did this get stopped. The combined lobbying and PR offensive showed, for once, that intelligent, motivated young people can make a difference against a larger, better resourced, Welsh Assembly Government. This victory means that over the last couple of days of my administration, we will see the introduction of a funding system that will not allow Welsh domicile students to be charged Top-Up fees in Wales or anywhere. That for me is the greatest success for the student movement in Wales, for the last five years. It also shows that we do have influence and we do 'matter' in the lives

rhoi ymyl
i gymru

give wales
the edge

of ordinary students. I said in my manifesto that I would fight top-up fees in Wales and I have; I've helped to stop them.

N.U.SELESS

Where to begin? An organisation that lacks coherent direction? A national organisation that acts as another battlefield between Palestine and Israel? A Labour party graduate scheme? A waste of money? A bizarre defender of extreme political correctness? All of this and more!

The National Union is not representative of your joe-average student. It does so little for them its untrue. NUS has one redeeming feature, that of NUSSL, the group buying organisation. The rest is in my opinion, currently, a waste of time and effort. There is some hope as this year we have seen a group of 'Independents' win office. I only hope that they pay more attention to reforming and reshaping the Union in to something that will help the modern day student rather than live in the echos of the 60's. To deliver real change and represent students on a national level we need to stop marching and get talking. The weapons and tools of old do not work any more. The organisations that do utilise direct action campaign techniques do so only to gain media coverage and to raise awareness to an issue. We need to work with more organizations across the NGO spectrum to deliver the change we require. We must also prioritize working for Students needs here in the UK before we try and change the world.

NUS WALES

NUS Wales does not represent the wishes nor the policy of SUSU. It lacks a cohesive leadership and a clear program of objectives. It is a lot further away from reform

than NUS UK. However I hope that the policy I have championed in terms of emergency council, sabbatical officer serving for only two years in NUS Wales and also the billboard campaign in Cardiff Bay, illustrate the kind of things we can achieve. NUS Wales can also reform itself a lot faster than NUS UK as the factions that exist in NUS UK are not as strong in Wales. FE colleges in Wales need to be engaged not just for elections but all year round and must not just be wheeled in to win elections. That is why I call for the FE quoracy to be altered to ensure that if they don't turn up to other NUS Wales events, the FE quoracy is removed.

The idea of NUS Wales is a good one; the practice is that it adds little to the cause of the student movement. The representative function to the Welsh Assembly government and the support for Union / Guild campaigns (what support?) can easily be fulfilled by cooperation between the Constituent members. I know that Chris Harris has looked more in-depth at the options in this area. I hope that NUS Wales survives, yet it must actually do something (anything?) to actually serve the needs of its members not just provide some with gap-year style career routes out of Higher Education.

If you gave me a quick choice tomorrow whether to leave NUS or to stay-in, I'd disaffiliate without blinking.

Thanks must go to the one redeeming feature of the NUS Wales sabbatical team in the shape of Andy Wilson. A North Walian of great experience and a guy with a real belief in change of both NUS Wales and Higher Education's view on green policy.

James Knight however is not someone who should represent Swansea students next year, his time as President of NUS Wales should end. I can only hope that a motion of no



confidence is passed next national council.

Welsh Presidents Forum

The Welsh Presidents Forum has been a good networking tool and a great support network for myself as President. The need for such vehicles for all positions is vital if we are to unite as a movement and achieve more of the objectives we hold dear. The information sharing must however continue hopefully in a more technologically advanced way. We have access to a video conferencing network in our HEI's so why not use it? Why not save time and money on travel expenses? For me it is a no-brainer, it just makes sense to utilise the tools we have around us to improve the accountability to our members.

UNION COMMITTEES

EXEC

A waste of time most weeks, with reports being non-existent. So many members just didn't understand the role and did not get on with their remit. A few did however, and delivered well in their respective areas. I hope that next year's Exec actually read the part of the constitution that states how the Exec is the implementing part of the Union.

COUNCIL

A saving grace in many respects. Council was a place that intelligent debate occurred (at times) and was pretty much full. Its membership still needs reform and the real killer should be to restructure the sub-committees of the Union that feed into Council bringing ideas and thoughts. I hope that some of the proposals that the Union Review have brought forward will amend this and create a stronger, more effective organisation.

ELECTIONS

All passed with a new level of respect amongst participants. It was some of the best natured elections I've ever seen. We still have too many elections it seems with a constant schedule of opening and closing of nominations.

SGM's

Having read through numerous previous

Presidential reports and other officers, this common theme ran through them all.

SGM's are unrepresentative of students.

In the main they are unrepresentative as they are constantly inquorate yet no one dares call it, however the one SGM we did have this year was a great success in many, many ways. Students actually felt like they voiced their opinion and they realised a better understanding of what we did as a collective. The bad motions got defeated and the good ones passed. I went to bed a happy man. However too many SGM's this year have been factional playthings designed to pander to the wants of a few. I would like to see quoracy always called, as any student can come to a council and hold officers to account.

PSC

The largest and hardest part of my job has been PSC this year. Permanent Staffing Committee has been a pain beyond understanding. It has drained the very lifeblood from my soul at times and has caused me to spend vast amounts of time doing things that had no direct relation on improving students lives or representing them. It had to be done, however and having lived through it, I'm stronger, faster and greyer. The staff of the Union must understand that in comparison with any other organisation we are a dream to work for. We give more holiday, invest more in training and provide a nice working environment. PSC is still to an extent 'firefighting' rather than dealing with the policy of recruiting, developing and promoting talent. That needs to change and I believe that it will. Talented people make our Union stronger, fill the University with fear and deliver the best for our members. We must not be afraid to change nor to look at new and innovative ways of delivering the best.

University:

One of the first things I did when coming into office was establish a regular meeting between the Student's Union and the University's Senior Management Team. The aim of this is to lobby for institutional change right at the top, allowing the pressing issues, such as the Council's lack of progress over the lights in Singleton Park, to be addressed. This forum has proved very useful in gaining an key discussion and action arena for influencing University policy.

We have agreed to the reforming of the Students Union Liason Committee to the Students Affairs committee, as it changes the focus away from complaints (for example broken paving slabs), to shaping the Student Experience (updating and improving regulations on appeals to fines imposed by the University). This reform will enable us as a Union to deliver a better student environment and get a fairer system for our students.

We have met with vast swathes of the University and I now sit on at least 16 different committees. I have seen first hand how ineffective large parts of the current committee structure are and realise why so much reforming of them needs to occur. Arguing over the name of something for half an hour is not a valuable way to spend 15 people's time which could be better spent teaching or doing something productive. If the Union is to really achieve more institutional change and improve the quality of educational experience for students then we must focus upon the University committees and become wise to their ways. It is a system like any other with rules and laws, some written some not. We can set the agenda; reforming the University from the bottom up.

DEPARTMENT CLOSURES: A BAD THING

The closure of the five departments last year was a dark day for this University. For both sides of the argument, things were done and said that weren't the cleverest. I won't get in to appointing blame as I think both sides of the ensuring debate were in the wrong at

times and also in the right. One of the pivotal points for the decision however disturbed me. The last year has seen extensive bench-marking of Swansea University against a number of other institutions. Bench-marking serves no purpose other than to render us second best, second rate. If we are to truly be 'world-class', innovation must be our watchword. The Senior Management Team needs to realise that dynamic, younger academics of vision need to be empowered to create centres of excellence in fields that may seem beyond understanding. I look across the Atlantic at places like MIT, Princeton, Stanford, et al, I see a culture of academic professionalism and innovation that I just don't see in Swansea. The 'Troubles' over the past year also haven't helped staff moral. The SMT must realise this and seek to rule not by fear (or the preceived fear) but by partnership and consultation. The increasing need for University Departments to submit Business plans is a important aid to strategic planning, if implemented correctly. Rember however that University is not a business, it has different bottom lines.

SCHOOLS: A GOOD THING (MAYBE)

The opportunities presented by schools are many. They can revitalise the academic and pastoral care; or they can be yet another shoehorning exercise, trying to put a camel through the eye of a needle. It is too early to say which it is, however I hope that it is the first. As I have said earlier this requires buy-in from all levels of the University to make it a reality and students need to feel they belong to their school. It is a unit of organisation like a school house or a divison. It creates a fantastic chance to create a intra-mural



THE CANDIDATES 2004-2005

sporting league with each school fielding a side in a particular sport and/or game; perhaps a pool league or poker competition. One of the problems with trying to lower drop-out levels is being able to integrate students quickly into the Institution. I suggested that a mentoring scheme could help in these vital first months. However, if affective school societies were in operation to run



The Future.

awesome induction events for students, even just a school social each term, this would help catch some people before they feel that Swansea holds nothing for them.

What should the Future of Swansea University Students Union be? How must we change to adapt to the coming changes?

We are in a better state than many to begin with. We currently have a very good balance of commercial services and non-commercial services. We have some great people in the organisation and we have made some fantastic advances in planning and altering our output.

However, we have one major, major flaw, one almighty weak point that causes all other problems to disappear.

Our buildings. We do not have the space or the right type of space to deliver the level of service that students are increasingly wanting. Compare our building with any of the comparable Unions across Wales and the South-West (I hate to benchmark but) Bristol, Cardiff, Bangor, Southampton, Plymouth, Exeter or UWIE even. They all have better facilities and a better ability to alter what they do far better. In my files I have endless schemes for the redevelopment of Fulton house and Union house for the Union's use. In fact in the report of the President of the Union in 1993, Haley Baddiley talks about how great it was to be presenting a fantastic handover gift of a new building development. Well 12 years on and still no new building. I understand that the constraints on the University financially are now

more than ever, however I feel I must cite a simple fact; if we want to be world class, then everything we do must be world class. That includes the Students' Union. I look at the buildings enjoyed by Cardiff and Sheffield with jealous eyes.

The other big thing for the next couple of years is the move towards a united A.U. / S.U. I know that many will hate this idea with a passion, I myself was one of them. However, listening to the tales of students, talking to my colleagues across Wales, there seems no other option. I hope that Bev will revitalise the democracy at the heart of the A.U. and that she will look to work with the Student Union when she can.

Successes:

This year the A'team and Neo the want have:

- Brought back the Mid-summer ball.
- Restarted Nightline running two nights a week.
- Distributed over 4,000 condoms.
- Changed the grant account system to make societies easier to manage.
- Stopped Top-Up fees for Welsh domicile students, ensuring generations to come will not be ladden with the debts of their English counterparts.

And a thousand little things that you will see over the next couple of years.



Conclusions:

Well, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times. But we did it, we made it through and I'm glad. I've learnt more than any degree could ever teach, about myself and about the world. I've made some people angry; good! and I've made some people happy. Trying to please everyone helps no one. I've given all I had to a very difficult job and come out the other side with scars to prove it. To anyone thinking about standing to be a Sabbatical understand that it is no easy role, no walk in the park. Our Union is Strong, because it's students are strong in their belief in it. Only from their strength can we be build a better University and ultimately a better world. However, shouting and hollering will not make it happen. Breaking windows will not make it better. Only through innovation, dedication to peaceful democratic resolution and understanding that people may or may not agree with you, will we build a world in which people understand each other.

Dan Hilton x

"It's time you proved to your friends you're worth a damn."

Thanks.

THINGS -

This year of Sabbatical service was brought to you by:

Apple computers, G5, a piece of computing genius

The Green Room's ability to quench my coffee habit

Border's ability to feed my over-active imagination with books

SABBS -

Chris

The linchpin of the team, Chris has kept us sane and been the glue that has bonded us. His reform work has put me to shame, his work against the NUS Card tireless. I just hope you find an organization far from the democratic maddening crowd.

Red

Red did what many Welfare and Ed's have failed to do for the last five years. She resurrected Night-line and watched it grow in the first year of operation. She put more condoms in people's pocket then ever before. The NHS should give you a

medal Red! Thanks for your constant brutal honesty and your powerful belief to prove people wrong. You did prove them wrong Red with flying colours!

Neo

Neo how wrong my preconceptions were. Your national work on a variety of issues is a credit to International students across Wales. Your office / party room has kept me entertained and the stories will live on forever. I hope that the world of insurance is ready for you.

Kelly

We may not have always met eye to eye and agreed on the direction of what we should be doing, but I will always respect the work you've done on drink spiking and the need for Women's representation.

FRIENDS -

Madge - Thanks for convincing me to actually campaign to be childcare officer rather than just sitting upon my behind. Thanks for everything you taught me about the Union and how it mattered. I'm sorry if this year we haven't had enough time to catch up. This will change!

Nick B - Thanks for your encouragement and guidance. Thanks for the support and for putting the - stupid - idea in my head that I could be President. I hope that you will return quickly to public office for Swansea!

Sam "President of the Vice" -

Always immaculately turned out and ready for a beer, thanks for being a star. I just wish you could have actually finished a degree! The world of PR really will not know what hit it!

Dom - Thanks for always being pleased to see me and for seeming interested in the working of the Union. Joan was so much fun, but please get a hair cut. Hehe.

Stubbs - Thanks for being the maddest cornishman I've yet to meet. I hope that as Gen Sec next year you will be harsh on the new exec, keeping them inline and on track.

Dave Cornthwaite - Mate, you're a star! From working with you on Waterfront to lazing around watching movies in the 'cinema', you're an A* bloke who's always willing to have a chat and a joke. I hope that your plan to long board to China comes off, I for one will buy the book.

Ed Knight - Your support 'back in the day' taught me how to win elections and how to be fair in the Union. Our lost was hopefully the Church's gain.

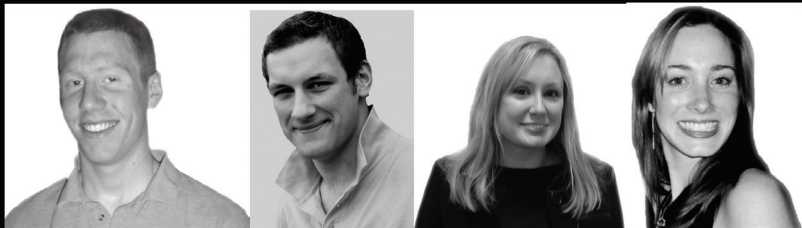
Mum & Dad & Jon - For putting up with me and my washing and always offering your opinion.

Lauz -

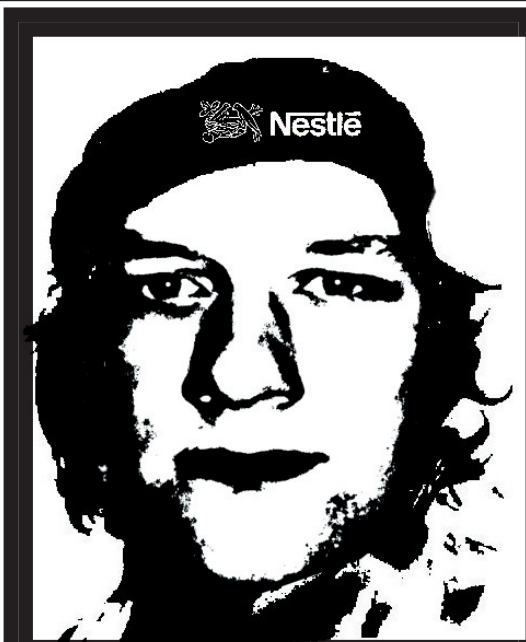
You star, who has made sure I get up in the morning, kept me sane and made going home worthwhile. I can't wait for Cardiff and next year.



THE A-TEAM



HARRIS/HILTON/RED/MCQUEEN



Viva La Evolution!

