

UCD Students' Strategic Vision

Issues Paper for Consultation

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is the UCD Students' Strategic Vision?

The UCD Students' Strategic Vision is a student-led initiative to prepare a Vision, from the perspective of students, of what UCD and its campus could look like in the future.

This Vision will provide a comprehensive reference document which can be used by the University, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and other organisations, to ensure that the views of students are taken into consideration when making any decisions which could affect the future development of the campus. It will also provide UCD Students' Union with a clear and strategic statement of how UCD students would like to see the campus develop into the future, which will assist them in campaigning more effectively on campus related issues.

This initiative is being carried out by UCD Planning & Environmental Policy Students, with the support of UCD Students' Union and UCD Estate Services. To ensure that the Vision accurately represents the best interests of students, there will be two phases of extensive consultation, where students will be asked to provide their views and ideas, while the final Vision will also be subject to approval by the full SU Council before it can be adopted as official policy.

1.2 Background and Context

The UCD Belfield Campus is entering a period of significant change. New facilities, including the Ashfield Student Accommodation and Confucius Institute for Chinese Studies, have recently opened, while construction is making good progress on the new University Club and a large extension to the Quinn School of Business. Construction work has recently commenced on the UCD Student Residences Masterplan, Ireland's largest ever student accommodation scheme, which when complete will double the number of students living on-campus from 3,000 to over 6,000 (equivalent to the population of Westport town).

Further developments are envisaged over the coming years under the UCD Strategic Campus Development Plan 2016-2021-2026, including the redevelopment of the Newman Building and James Joyce Library, and the significant expansion of facilities in the UCD Health and Agricultural Science Precinct. A major redevelopment of the Student Centre is proposed to provide additional sporting facilities, along with a new athletics track, while a preferred design concept by Steven Holl Architects has recently been selected for the UCD Entrance Precinct Masterplan, which will guide the future development of this area of the campus adjoining the Stillorgan Road, including a new Centre for Creative Design and improved transport facilities.

With such significant changes due to take place in the near future, it is important for students to get involved and ensure that they have a role to play in influencing and shaping the future of the university. However, at present there is no comprehensive vision of how students would like to see UCD develop into the future, which makes it difficult for the University to incorporate students' views, and difficult for the SU to campaign effectively on campus related issues. Students' views are generally sought and provided on a case by case basis, in response to proposals or decisions, which can be an ad-hoc and reactive approach.

This initiative aims to take a more strategic and proactive approach instead, by producing a comprehensive reference document which can be used by the University and other organisations to incorporate students views into future policies and decisions. It will address various different themes, including the future needs and requirements of the university, academic facilities, residential accommodation, sport and leisure facilities, retail and food services, transport, environmental impact and sustainability, and urban design.

1.3 Process

The UCD Students' Strategic Vision will be prepared using a process similar to how a county or city council prepares a Local Area Plan (LAP) for a town, village or district. First, an extensive consultation process will take place to identify the various issues and challenges which need to be addressed, and to obtain the views of students on how these should be addressed and what should be contained in the Vision. Following this, a Draft Vision will be prepared, taking into account all of the information and views obtained during the consultation. Due to the range of differing views expected from students, this is unlikely to contain exactly what everyone has asked for, but will attempt to seek a balance of what is generally in the best interests of all students.

This Draft Vision will be published for all students to see and a second consultation phase will then take place, to identify what changes should be made to it and how it can be improved. Based on the feedback to this second consultation phase, the Draft Vision will be amended and refined. It is intended that the final Vision will be adopted through motion at a meeting of the full SU Council, to form part of official SU Policy. Following this, the Vision will be presented to the University, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and any other organisations which could affect the future of UCD, along with a request that this Vision, prepared by the Students of UCD, is fully taken into account when making any decisions which could affect the future development of the UCD campus.

The UCD Students' Strategic Vision is being carried out by UCD Planning & Environmental Policy Students, with the support of UCD Students' Union and UCD Estate Services. Most of the work in preparing the Vision will be carried out by UCD Planning & Environmental Policy students, who will undertake all of the consultation process and will prepare the Draft Vision. As the representative body for students, UCD Students' Union will be heavily involved in reviewing all work and ensuring that it accurately represents the views of students. UCD Estate Services will assist in providing data relating to the campus, and ensuring that what is proposed in the Vision is realistic and compatible with University and Estates strategies.

2. Issues and Challenges

We have prepared this short Issues Paper, outlining some of the issues and challenges facing UCD, which could potentially be addressed in the UCD Students' Strategic Vision. This may assist you in putting together a submission or coming up with ideas. However, your views are not confined to what is contained in this Issues Paper, and you are welcome and encouraged to submit any suggestions or ideas on additional aspects too.

2.1 Campus Environment and Biodiversity

The UCD Belfield Campus covers 335 acres and includes 40 acres of woodland, natural and man-made lakes and watercourses, wildflower meadows and landscaped areas. There are approximately 50,000 trees on the campus, with around 25,000 of these having been planted since 2007¹. These significant efforts by the university in recent years have encouraged biodiversity within the campus, and helped UCD win the National Intervarsity BioBlitz in 2016, recording 523 different species over a 24 hour period².

What are the biggest environmental issues and challenges in UCD? What can UCD do to reduce its environmental impact, and what role can students play in achieving this? How can we make UCD a more sustainable campus? What greening initiatives should be considered for the campus and incorporated into any new developments?

2.2 Waste Management

UCD produces approx. 2,000 tonnes of mixed municipal wastes per annum, of which over 20% is directly recycled and less than 10% goes to landfill, with the remainder largely used for energy generation, or in the case of food waste, composted³. In the residences, four different bins are provided to separate waste at source for recycling, however in the academic buildings of the campus, most waste is collected in combined bins and is taken off-campus to be sorted for recycling by an external waste management company.

Ideally, it would be preferable for all waste to be sorted at source, with separate bins provided across the campus for recycling. However, previous attempts to introduce this have been unsuccessful, as people have failed to put waste in the correct bins, and have ended up contaminating the recycling lines⁴. Should this proposal be revisited again, and if yes, what can we do to ensure that people use the correct bins and do not contaminate the recycling lines, as occurred in previous attempts? Should there be some form of penalty for those who fail to use the correct bins, simply out of carelessness?

¹ UCD Estate Services - Natural, <http://ucdestates.ie/about/sustainability/the-natural-environment/>

² National Biodiversity Data Centre, <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/intersivity-bioblitz-2016/>

³ UCD Estate Services - Waste, <http://ucdestates.ie/about/sustainability/waste-management/>

Overall, how can we reduce the amount of waste produced by UCD? Where is UCD's waste mostly coming from, and what areas need to be targeted to have the greatest effect on reducing it? Should we promote a culture of encouraging everyone to take their own waste with them? Could some form of leaderboard be set up between different buildings or departments, to measure changes in waste, and use competition as an incentive to reduce waste, as well as reward those who make the biggest effort?

2.3 Energy and Water

Under the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP), UCD is required to improve its energy efficiency by 33% between 2006 and 2020, and the latest figures from 2017 indicate that UCD is on track to meet this target, having already improved its energy efficiency by 30.4%. This is on top of UCD already having the lowest energy use per square metre of all universities involved in a pilot study at the beginning of the process⁵.

The UCD Energy Unit is currently challenging all students and staff to reduce their energy consumption by 100kWh each year, which would result in a total saving of 300,000 kWh or €500,000 per annum for the university. 100kWh per year can easily be saved through simple measures such as turning off computers when not in use, only filling a kettle with as much water as needed, switching off lights when leaving a room and leaving devices turned off rather than on standby mode.

In 2010, UCD commenced a major renewal and upgrade programme to conserve water, improve control, reliability, firefighting ability, water quality and monitoring of the existing water main network and to enhance surface water protection. Following this programme, 90% of all buildings are now metered, and only 14% of water supplies are unmetered or lost through leakage. The proportion of mains water usage has reduced by 30% over this period, with key water based activities such as pitch irrigation, window and road cleaning now carried out using non potable water, while white water has also been expanded to the Engineering, Library, Tierney and Newman Buildings for non-potable uses⁶.

How can we build on the achievements already made by the university in reducing energy consumption, and further promote the Energy Unit's initiative for each student and staff to reduce their consumption by 100kWh per year? Could some form of leaderboard be set up between different buildings or departments, to measure changes in energy use, and use competition as an incentive to reduce energy consumption, as well as reward those who make the biggest effort? Could some initiative be set up to check lights and devices, such as in computer rooms, on a regular basis to ensure that those not in use are switched off? Is there anything students can do to assist the university in reducing water usage?

⁴ Matthew Mollahan, College Tribune, 18th October 2018, <http://collegetribune.ie/sutherland-to-recieve-recycling-bins-as-part-of-green-campus-pilot-scheme/>

⁵ UCD Estate Services - Energy, <http://ucdestates.ie/about/sustainability/energy-management/>

⁶ UCD Estate Services - Water, <http://ucdestates.ie/about/sustainability/water/>

2.4 Transport and Movement

As of 2016, 42% of students commute to UCD using public transport, with 36% walking or cycling, and 20% travelling by car, which represents a relatively high share of sustainable travel modes. Faculty and staff commuting patterns are considerably less sustainable, with only 24% using public transport, 30% walking or cycling, and 44% travelling by car⁷. While public transport accounts for the largest proportion of people, it also has the longest journey times, with 66% of users having a journey time of over 45 minutes and 43% having a journey time of over one hour.

With over 3,000 cars coming onto the campus every morning, and approximately 14,000 vehicle movements in and out of the campus every day, UCD is one of the largest generators of traffic congestion in the Greater Dublin Area⁸. How can we reduce this number of cars and encourage more people to walk, cycle or use public transport? What improvements need to be made to walking and cycling facilities, and to public transport services, to attract more people away from cars?

While we would like to encourage as many people as possible to use sustainable modes of transport, there will always be a need for some people to travel to UCD by car, for various different reasons. How can we reduce demand for parking, to make it easier for those who genuinely need to travel by car? Increasing the number of parking spaces is not a viable option, as this would only encourage more people to drive to UCD, and lead to an increase in traffic congestion in the vicinity of the campus, which would make everyone's journey longer. Should parking fees be structured to prioritise those who need to travel by car over those who don't need to? Should priority spaces be reserved for those who need to drive?

In the longer term, it would be desirable to significantly reduce the number of cars coming onto the campus every morning, as this would significantly reduce the amount of traffic in the vicinity of the campus and the wider South Dublin area, and make everyone's journey much quicker. How can we achieve this? Should we consider relocating some of the existing on-campus parking to off-campus park & ride sites, as has been done in University College Cork⁹? Where should these park & ride sites be located?

Within the campus, how easy is it to move around? Is there sufficient signage to help you find your way around the campus? Are pathways and surfaces of a good quality, and is it easy and safe to cycle within the campus? How can we improve accessibility to make it easier for those with mobility impairments to travel around the campus?

⁷ UCD (Belfield Campus) Commuting Survey 2016, <http://ucdestates.ie/about/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/05/ucd-commuting-stats-2016.pdf>

⁸ UCD Campus Travel Plan 2016-2021-2026, Strategy Report (Opportunities and Implementation), <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/uploads.aws.dotser.net/uploads/uc/ucdplanning.ie/ucd-student-residences-masterplan/file/f249/bbcf397e6e2642dacbb737484da7caa02933/vol-5.08-ucd-belfield-campus-travel-plan.pdf>

⁹ UCC Buildings and Estates, Park and Ride, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/build/commuting/parkandride/>

2.5 Food and Retail Services

There are 13 food outlets within the Belfield Campus, 3 canteen restaurants located in the Gerard Manley Hopkins International Centre, O'Brien Centre for Science and Roebuck Castle residences, and 10 cafés located in various buildings across the campus. Opening hours in the evenings are limited, with all restaurants closed by 7pm and cafés closed by 8pm, while nearly all outlets are closed at the weekends¹⁰. On Thursdays during term time there is also a Village Market with several stalls, adjacent to the Sutherland School of Law.

The Students' Union runs three convenience stores across the campus, while there is a Centra convenience store located in the Merville residences, and a smaller one in the O'Brien Centre for Science. Other retail services on the campus include a gift shop, pharmacy, bookshop, printing/stationery shop, barber shop, bike shop, bank and a post office¹¹.

Is there a sufficient selection of food options available in the campus, or is the campus lacking in any particular options, which there is a demand for? Is food of a good quality and affordable? Do existing outlets meet the expectations of students, or can improvements be made? DCU's Nubar provides a large selection of restaurant quality food¹², is there demand for similar in UCD? Do the current shops and retail services fulfil the needs of students and residents, or is there anything missing? What additional services should be provided?

2.6 Sports and Leisure

UCD provides a wide range of sporting facilities, including 2 large multipurpose sports halls, 3 gyms, a 50-metre olympic standard swimming pool, 12 grass playing pitches, 9 synthetic pitches, tennis courts and squash courts, a sand-filled hockey pitch, water-based hockey stadium and a climbing wall¹³. Sports facilities are available for students to use, as well as to the general public through private membership. The facilities also support the activities of the 54 sports clubs based in the university, and are used for various classes and summer camps throughout the year.

In recent years, sporting pitches and facilities have been gradually relocated and concentrated into the western area of the campus, adjacent to the Sports Centre. There was previously an athletics track on the campus, but this was closed in 2011 after reaching the end of its operational life. Following an anonymous €3 million donation in 2018, a new athletics track is to be developed on the site of the existing Richview gravel car park¹⁴.

¹⁰ UCD Current Students, Food Outlets on Campus, <http://www.ucd.ie/students/guide/food.html>

¹¹ UCD Estate Services, Campus Services Map, <http://map.ucdestates.ie/>

¹² DCU Nubar Bar & Restaurant, Food Menu, <http://www.nubardcu.com/Food.html>

¹³ UCD Sport, Facilities, <https://www.ucd.ie/sport/facilities/>

¹⁴ Ian O'Riordan, The Irish Times, 26th January 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/other-sports/anonymous-3m-donation-to-get-new-ucd-athletics-track-up-and-running-1.3368919>

Are existing sporting facilities sufficient for the needs of students, and are they readily available for students and sports clubs to use? Are clubs able to reach their full potential, or are they constrained by a lack of access to any particular facilities or resources? Are there any facilities which are missing at present, which there is a need for?

2.7 Social Life and Spaces

Is UCD a lively campus? Are there sufficient places to hang out and socialise? Are there a wide enough range of events and activities taking place, and is it easy to get involved in societies and clubs? The UCD Student Centre provides several facilities for students and student societies, including a cinema, theatre, auditorium, debating chamber and meeting and seminar rooms¹⁵. Do these facilities meet the needs of societies and are they readily available for societies to use? Are there any additional facilities which could support society activities and events?

In the evenings and at night, are there sufficient places to relax and socialise with friends, without having to leave the UCD campus? Currently, there is only one bar on the campus, the Clubhouse in the Student Centre. There was previously another student bar located in what is now Building 71, but this closed in 2012 due to financial debts¹⁶. Is there sufficient demand to justify a nightclub on the campus? Is UCD a safe and secure place to be at night?

2.8 Student Accommodation

UCD currently provides 3,000 student accommodation bedspaces across the campus, in the Glenomena, Merville, Roebuck, Ashfield and Belgrove residences. The UCD Student Residences Masterplan aims to double this to over 6,000 bedspaces within the next few years, with construction commencing on phase one of this masterplan during 2018¹⁷. When complete, this will bring the resident population of the campus to that of a medium sized town, similar in size to Westport. This will result in a need for increased services for residents, as well as for the general student population, which is also expected to increase in the coming years.

The construction of student accommodation is very expensive, and has to be paid for in some way, such as through university funding or accommodation rents. What should be a bigger priority for the university in terms of funding, building more accommodation, or keeping it as affordable as possible? What quality of accommodation should be provided to meet the needs of students? Are there enough facilities and services for those living on the campus at present? Are student residences safe and secure?

¹⁵ UCD Student Centre, Venues, <https://www.ucd.ie/studentcentre/venue/>

¹⁶ Philip Ryan, Irish Independent, 9th September 2012, <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/debts-force-ucd-students-to-call-time-on-pub-26895932.html>

¹⁷ UCD Student Residences Masterplan, SHD Planning Application, <https://ucdplanning.ie/>

2.9 Academic Facilities and Resources

UCD provides a wide range of different teaching spaces, to provide for the varying needs of different courses. Five libraries are available for students to find resources and study in, while a significant volume of online resources are also available through the library website. Are teaching spaces and library services of a good quality? Are there enough study spaces available to students, during term time, as well as approaching exam periods? Is there a good provision of library books and resources?

Computer rooms and facilities are provided in a number of locations across the campus, while Wifi is available across all buildings. Open access walk-up SUAS computers were previously located in the public areas of most buildings, but these were removed during summer 2018¹⁸. Is there a sufficient provision of computers across the campus, and is Wifi of a good quality? Are there any particular locations on the campus where there is a lack of certain IT facilities, or where IT facilities could be improved? Are software provisions suitable for the needs of students and the requirements of their courses?

3. Consultation Process

Please take part in the consultation process for the UCD Students' Strategic Vision, and provide YOUR views on the future development of the UCD Campus. As previously mentioned, this document is intended only as a guide, to assist you in putting together your own submission, and you are welcomed and encouraged to submit your comments on any additional aspects of the campus too. An online survey covering many of the topics discussed in this paper is available to complete at: <http://www.ucdvision.ie/survey/>

If you wish to make more detailed comments or have any ideas or suggestions, we would also encourage you to make a written or email submission. You can email this to consultation@ucdvision.ie or upload it online at: <http://www.ucdvision.ie/consultation/>

All submissions and responses will be fully considered and taken into account when preparing the Draft Vision, which we hope to publish in early semester 2 of 2018/19. A second consultation process will then take place on the Draft Vision, to determine what amendments and refinements should be made to it, before a final version is presented to the full SU Council in late semester 2, for consideration to be adopted as official policy.

¹⁸ Brían Donnelly, University Observer, 22nd June 2018, <https://universityobserver.ie/removal-of-suas-computers-underway-across-ucd/>