



**With our students every step
of their student journey**

BEDS SU IMPACT REPORT 2022/2023



BEDS SU
Ryan Murphy
Co-President

BEDS SU
Chidinma Akwa
Co-President

A year of meeting and succeeding our ambitions to support our members

A MESSAGE FROM RYAN AND CHIDINMA CO-PRESIDENTS – BEDS SU

Welcome to our 2022/23 Beds SU Impact Report. This report serves as a record of our achievements against the measures of our current 5 year Strategic Plan (2021–2025).

As a charity solely for University of Bedfordshire (UoB) students we represent and support our members throughout their university experience. Meaningful change, on matters affecting success in their studies and their lives as students, is at the heart of all we do.

As former students here at the University and as your current elected Co-Presidents of Beds SU we know first-hand how important having

your voice heard, understanding your rights and where to go for support is to ensuring the continuation of one's studies.

It is why we have been working so hard alongside the Co-Vice President sabbatical officers and the wider Students' Union team to encourage our students to come on the journey with us, trust us with their feedback and believe in our commitment to deliver.

We are delighted to share that this ongoing focus has continued to resonate with our students. This past year has seen an increase to 82% of students stating they are aware of the ways in which they can feedback (up from 78.9% 2021/22) and 95% of students agreed Beds SU creates positive change in the University, according to our May 2023 survey.

Throughout this report we share further feedback from our students along with statistics that support the progress we are making against the ambitions of our strategic plan and our vision for the year ahead.

Our success is not solely down to the work we do but the support we receive too. We thank the University, our external partners and – above all – our amazing student staff and volunteers.

Ryan & Chidinma

DELIVERING HIGH STANDARDS FOR OUR STUDENTS



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Silver





Student Voice

Clear and accessible feedback channels continue to drive engagement

We continued to see positive engagement from our Members that sought improvements in their course and student experiences, through consistently promoting three easy ways for students to share their feedback.

This included 103 enquiries via our *feedback online* channel and the delivery of 20 in-person Campus Forums – double our target for the year – and 78 campus visits beyond Luton and Bedford.

We delivered on our promise to be more visible across all campuses with our new in-class induction programme reaching just shy of 4,000 students across 60 sessions. The feedback we gathered led to us being able to deliver a number of key wins, alongside our Campus Reps, who were instrumental in delivering beneficial changes on their campuses. For example in Milton Keynes, Campus Rep Lynsey Rush secured a hot drinks vending machine for the communal area, 25% student discount for Middleton's Steak House and a cut-price student offer at Bannatyne gym.

Elsewhere, we welcomed the University's commitment to offer a Laptop Loan Scheme to students on outlying campuses for the first time. We celebrated the introduction of a hot drinks vending machine in London Bridge, this came on the back of last year's successful installing of a vending machine, and we supported Arts and Creative Industries students in delivering their first Green Fashion Show.

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We delivered on our promise to be more visible across all campuses.
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Student Wins:



**LAPTOP LOAN SCHEME
LAUNCHED FOR
OUTLYING CAMPUSES**



**HOT DRINK
VENDING
MACHINES
INSTALLED IN
MILTON KEYNES
LONDON BRIDGE**



**SUPPORTED
& FUNDED CATS
STUDENTS FIRST
GREEN
FASHION SHOW**



103 online
feedback



78 campus visits to
outlying campuses



Almost **4,000**
students reached
across 60 in-class
inductions



20 in-person
Campus Forums

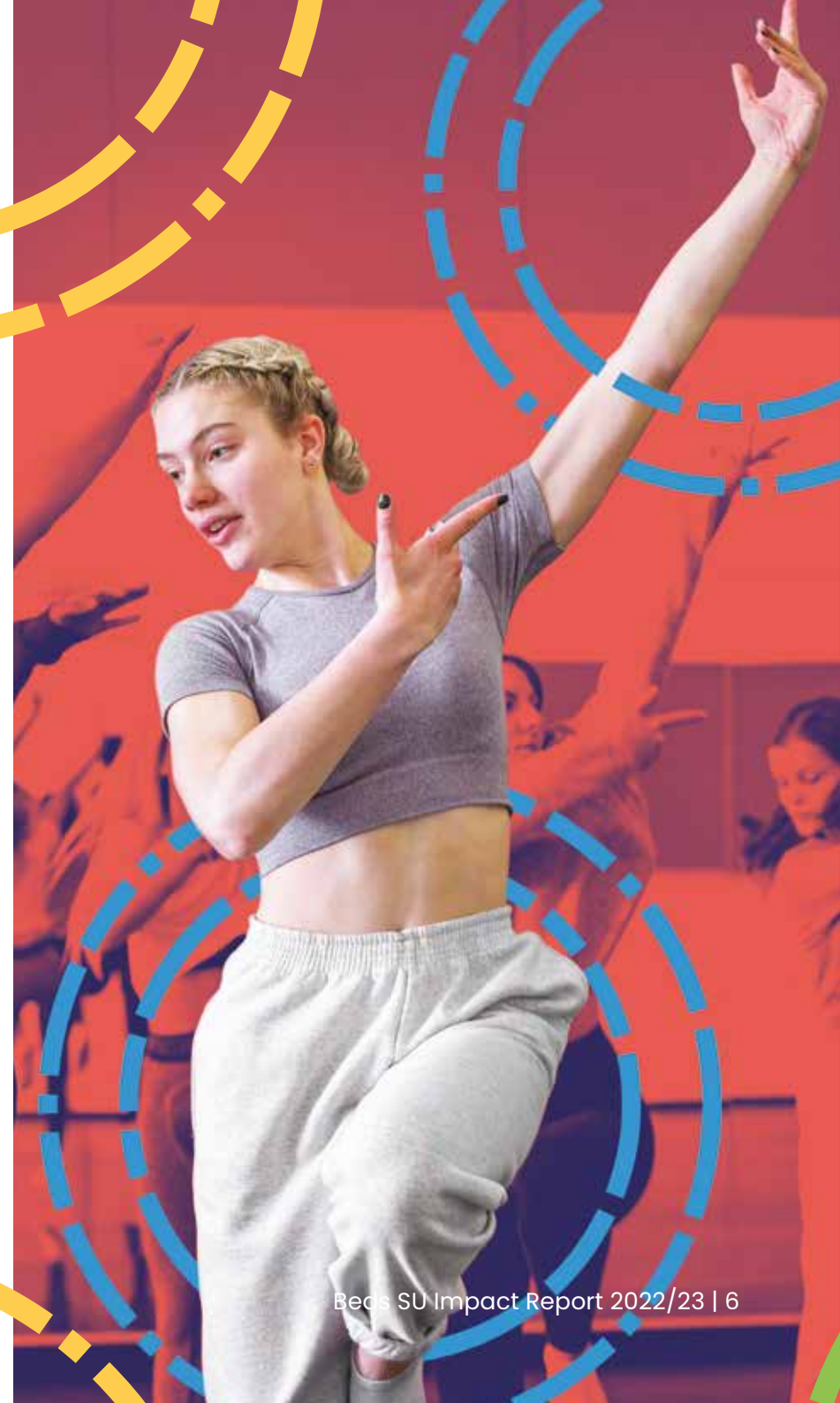


4 Campus
reps in post



Students proudly representing students

Dedication from our students stepping into representative roles reached a new high this year with 90% of our Course Rep positions filled. This equated to 406 students volunteering as peer representatives and led to 324 unique Course Rep engagements. This result was achieved through a unified effort across the SU, University and our students who gave their time to support their peers.



Course Rep recruitment per Faculty:

**Education, English
and Sport**

100%
of positions filled

**Health and Social
Sciences**

93%
of positions filled

**Creative Arts,
Technologies
and Sciences**

93%
of positions filled

**Bedfordshire
Business School**

74%
believe Beds
SU represents
their academic
interests

71.3%

of students believe their students' union represents their academic interests

The positive impact of having a greater presence of our student reps was reflected in surveys including the Beds SU NSS score reaching 71% a rise of 29% and the largest of UoBs NSS results under the new format of this survey. In addition, our own surveys saw 12.5% student participation an increase of 56% on previous year, with 88% of students agreeing they are well-represented in their course.



Helping students understand their rights

Increasing our members' understanding of their student rights was a core focus of the year, which was in part achieved through our surveys including our Cost-of-Living survey which received 1,259 student responses. Key take outs included 60% of participants expressing 'difficulties in affording travel' (and 73% of Bedford-based students). We took action on this by supporting the National Union of Students (NUS), a UK wide movement, focused on seeking change for students, Free Transport for Students campaign.

In addition, 84% of students responded to the Cost-of-Living survey stating they were worried they 'would not be able to afford basic necessities due to the rising cost of living' and 80% agreeing that the rising cost of living is having a negative impact on my studies'. We acted on these concerns by launching a Community Pantry in Luton offering basic food and hygiene products. The Sabbatical Officers took part in an 'Under a Fiver' cook-off challenge to inspire students on the ways in which they could make affordable and nutritious meals.

The Officers also met with local MPs to get their backing of a national cost-of-living campaign that resulted in an additional £15million in student hardship grants nationwide, of which Bedfordshire students received over £200k.

This year also saw us implement 'Chat for Change' forums, each focused on matters brought to us by students. The sessions allowed students to participate in informal conversations with the SU to share ideas on how we could take matters forward on their behalf. 10 sessions were delivered within the year with further planned going forward.



406

Course Reps
in post



88%

of students agree they
are well-represented
in their course



10

Chat for
Change forums



12.5%

of students
participating in SU surveys
(a 56% increase)



Elections

Our annual Student Elections are a key moment to further encourage student participation both in standing for one of four positions and voting for students they believe will best represent their needs.

Our 2023 elections mirrored the good engagement from 2022. 14 candidates stood, and again representing students from across the University's campuses, with 57% of candidates being International and 43% Postgraduate.

We welcomed voting participation across our campuses with awareness of the importance of students engaging achieved by campus-wide face-to-face interaction tailored email communications and strategic use of our social media channels throughout Elections. We received 1,908 students' votes, equating to a 13.5% turnout.

 **14**
CANDIDATES

 **43%**
POSTGRADUATE

 **57%**
IDENTIFIED AS INTERNATIONAL

 **1,908**
STUDENT VOTES

 **13.5%**
TURNOUT



Student Community

Delivering inclusive and varied social opportunities for our students

Our students' passion for creating and participating in societies reached new levels this year. We welcomed 11 new societies including the Applied Education Blended Learning Society and The Muslimah Society, with 958 sign-ups, equating to around 584 unique student members. We are proud to report we were able to grant over £1,900 to supporting society events and activities, such as the Tourism and Events Society's Festive World Travel Market.

Case Study

Tourism and Events Society

This popular society hosted a festive event as part of the SU's Christmas activities in December 2022. Students were invited to explore a host of different cultures through food, drink, games and impromptu dance sessions throughout the event, with the ambition to spark individuals' interest in planning their next overseas adventure.

It is also worth noting away from our social activities we are proud that the space we created on Facebook for our students to connect both before and during their time at university continues to grow year on year. Within the time period for this report the channel had approximately 11,880 participants an estimated increase of 2,899 on previous year. In addition our dedicated Beds SU website which offers students access to our services, events and a wealth of articles on relevant topics saw a 27% increase in unique website sessions.

65



TOTAL NUMBER OF SOCIETIES

35



NUMBER OF ACTIVE SOCIETIES

11



NUMBER OF NEW SOCIETIES

958



NUMBER OF STUDENT SIGN-UPS
(584 unique students)

TOP
3



MOST POPULAR SOCIETIES

Tourism and Events Society
ACS (African Caribbean Society)
Nigerian Society

STUDENT AWARDS 2023

Celebrating students enriching their student community

Celebrating the extra mile so many of our students go to enhance the student experience here at the University is a highlight of our year. We are pleased to report our members continue to see the importance of this event too with over 200 nominations being placed. To ensure the award ceremony could be enjoyed by as many students as possible we once again held an early evening event in the Metro Bar and live streamed via our YouTube channel for others to attend.

AWARDS

SOCIETY OF THE YEAR
Indian Students' Society

**STUDENT STAFF MEMBER OF
THE YEAR**
MD Abdullah Al-Mamun

STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR
Dr. Lena Opfermann

GO GREEN AWARD
Alisha Khanoum

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR
Akshat Bhaveshkumar
Ramanuj

**STUDENT COMMUNITY REP
OF THE YEAR**
Raj Cheema

ACADEMIC REPS OF THE YEAR

**FACULTY OF HEALTH
& SOCIAL SCIENCES**
Joanna Horwell

UOB BUSINESS SCHOOL
Nour Aldeek

**FACULTY OF CREATIVE ARTS,
TECHNOLOGIES AND SCIENCE**
Vrund Shah

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
ENGLISH & SPORT**
Savannah Dallas



Student Advice

Offering support and advice to meet our students' needs

Guided by student feedback, we have continued to review and embed how we join together our support services to deliver a more impactful blended support service.

New staffing structures within Beds SU this year have meant that our Help Desk teams and Member Relations staff now work more closely with our Advisors. This provides a more integrated approach to advising students during their time of need.

Our help@bedssu.co.uk enquiries inbox continues to be the main gateway for students to reach us. Knowing students seek prompt support, we commit to responding to queries within two working days, no matter the query.

This year, we have responded to 3,767 enquiries and the advice service have supported with 869 student cases (an increase of 436 on previous year and a percentage increase of 94%). In response to feedback from part-time students and via our Project Reach Out check-in initiative, within the year we increased the weekly drop-in sessions delivering 277 hours in total – with our professional Student Advisors to include “out of hours” availability.

Our Knowledge Hub is an online self-help tool for students seeking advice and guidance on any number of matters within their unique student experience, such as housing, finance, well-being and assessments. We significantly increased the number of articles available via the service to 73 (up from 28), and achieved near on 42,000 site visits in the year.

	No. of Cases
Academic	710 81.70%
Finance	101 11.62%
Housing	32 3.68%
Safety	7 0.81%
Mediation	1 0.12%
Wellbeing	14 1.61%
Miscellaneous	4 0.47%
Total	869

3,767

Number of Enquiries

73

Number of self-help articles published

50%

of Advice service users rated their support 10/10

91%

students agree they would seek support from Beds SU

Student Events

Bringing students together

This year we built on popular events from the previous year and furthered our focus on delivering activities that celebrate the diversity of our students. We delivered 120 in-person events – including Afrobeats, Silent Discos, Desibeats and a Eurovision party held across our two social spaces, The Metro Bar and Kitchen and The Hub.

Afrobeats remained one of our most popular music nights in Luton and at the request of our students we launched the night in Bedford welcoming 120 students to the first event.

Student feedback continued to inform our plans for Cultural and Awareness activities, resulting in an increase of afternoon and early evening events such as Diwali, Christmas crafting and a Festive Parent/Carer Children's event. As part of Black History Month we hosted a Cornrow Demonstration and Party and Paint event. For LGBT+ History Month we introduced Drag Bingo which was well received and will return as part of our 2024 events. We screened the FIFA World Cup fixtures and delivered a Varsity Party following the tournament.

Much of our multi-channel social media content complemented our social opportunities programme for students. In particular those focused on raising awareness and understanding of the cultural diversity in our university.



Examples include: 'What to Watch, Read, Listen' articles created alongside the University, ensuring pertinent resources were available for students via the library; curated sustainability content to acknowledge Go Green week and a celebration of South Asian Heritage Awareness month.

On our outlying campuses we focused on bringing cohorts together through lunchtime activities including crafting and quiz sessions.



Financials

Working for students, not for profit

Financially, 2022/23 was a 'break-even' year for Beds SU.

Whilst trading income challenges continue and The Hub saw a steep decline in bar sales with an in-year loss of £14.4k, overall commercial operations nevertheless contributed £4.4k to the SU's core services to students.

We continued supporting the University in their employment of international students, which enabled international students to earn almost £222k.

Our venues not only provide a space for activities and socialising but also student employment. We successfully recruited and trained teams of student staff for both The Metro Bar and Metro Café, The Hub and our Bedford Helpdesk as well as offering opportunities to two individuals in our communications and marketing department. These opportunities offer work designed to flex around students' studies; they are comparatively well-paid and on campus. Employing student staff across the organisation enabled us to put £80k into students' pockets via salaries. To enable us to keep our prices as low as possible for students we hired out our venues on 17 occasions. As well as giving student staff the opportunity to earn extra income our hires also generated profit of over £11.2k which helps to maintain the café and social activities available to students.

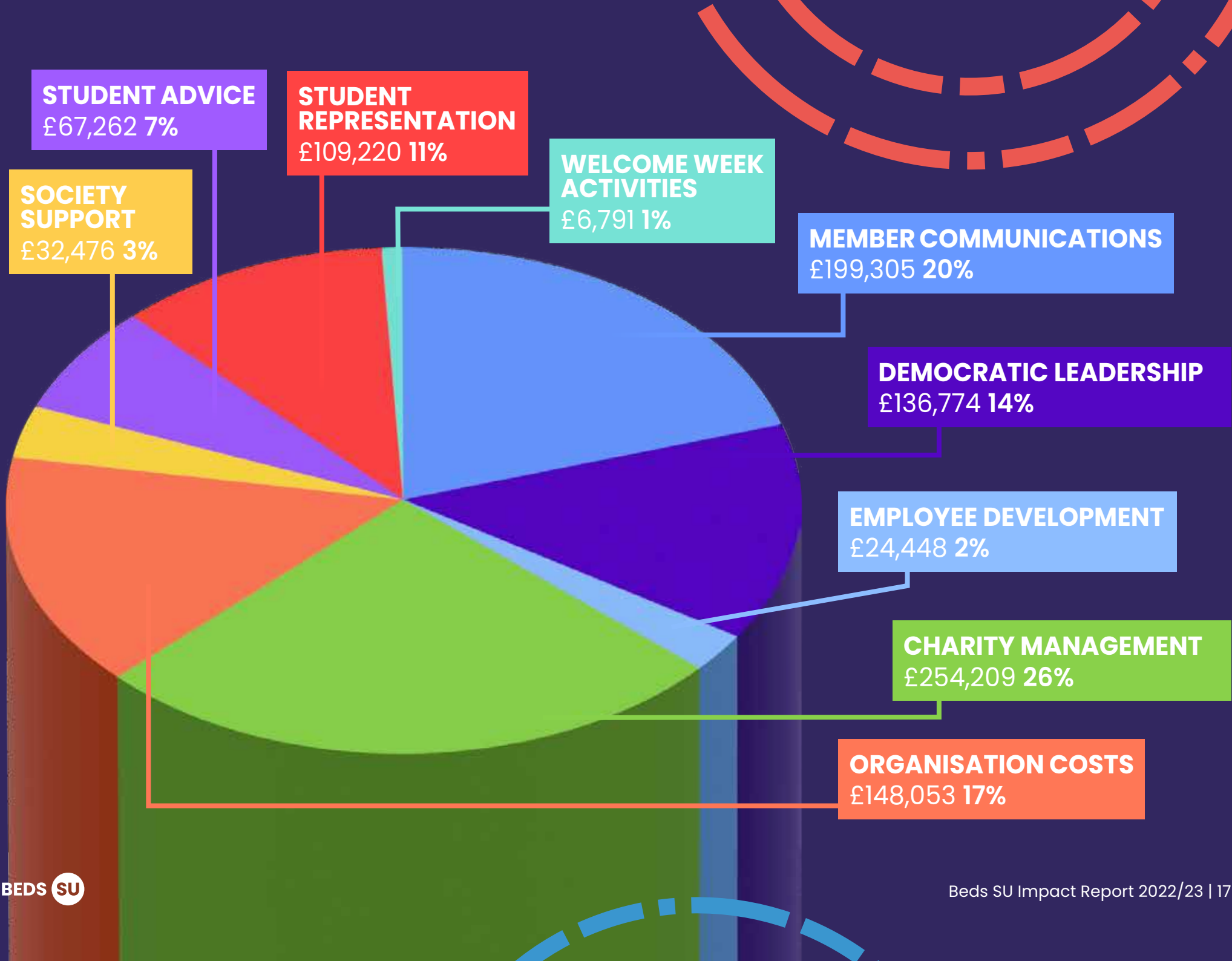


Metro is a fantastic work environment which helps provide ideal support for students looking for work during their studies. Personally working at Metro has helped manage my studies around a stable work environment allowing me to manage money better and develop and improve key social skills. Working at Metro has given me many strong friendships and ensured my time at the University will always be remembered fondly.

Matt Leaper, 3rd Year Computer Science, Undergraduate



Expenditure	2021/22, £
Member Communications	199,305
Democratic Leadership	136,774
Employee Development	24,448
Charity Management	254,209
Organisation Costs	148,053
Society Support	32,476
Student Advice	67,262
Student Representation	109,220
Welcome Week Activities	6,791
Total Expenditure	978,538





93%

EXCEEDING OUR 70% TARGET OF STUDENTS AGREEING WE CELEBRATE CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH OUR EVENTS AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

78

INCREASING OUR ON CAMPUS PRESENCE, ESPECIALLY ON THOSE WHERE PERCEPTION WAS LOW – 78 CAMPUS VISITS ACHIEVED BEYOND LUTON AND BEDFORD

95%

EXCEEDING OUR 80% TARGET OF STUDENTS AGREEING WE CREATE A POSITIVE CHANGE BY 15% TO 95%

20

DELIVERING 10+ IN-PERSON DISCUSSIONS – DELIVERED 20

Conclusion and Year ahead

We are proud that this report illustrates our progress made in the year and the ways in which we have met the four objectives we set in 2021/22:



For the year ahead we will continue to support students on the matters of greatest importance to them including: the launch of a student petitions initiative to deepen the work we do alongside students on empowering their voice and call for changes; support our members on accessing more Mental Health support; widen our Community Pantry offering to Bedford as part of our ongoing commitment to tackling the pressures of the cost-of-living; and trial a new social opportunities programme.

Maintain or exceed our target of 91% of students agreeing they would seek support from Beds SU

Increase engagement from students on outlying campuses in our Advice drop-in sessions

Seek to engage 3,000 students in our social activities and increase our reach to students through social opportunities beyond Luton and Bedford

Increase the number of students reached through the In-Class Induction Programme



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 Bedford Campus, Polhill Avenue, Bedford, MK41 9EA

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