



## **Members' Newsletter - March 2025**

### **Annual General Meetings**

Thanks to everyone who made it to one of our AGMs. It's always really good to see lots of familiar and some new faces every year and we hope you all got something out of it. We discussed the continuing crisis in higher education funding and what a new Vice-Chancellor may mean for the fortunes of our university.

Doing things differently with less money seems to be the idea, which is a pragmatic approach to things not getting better in the short term. Obviously we want to see a significant increase in funding for the sector, and not just by increasing tuition fees, so we're planning a Spring and Summer of campaigning to put pressure on the government to fund higher education properly.



In terms of short term planning at the university, it does make sense to think about the kind of university we should be and where we position ourselves, but that doesn't mean that we'll accept compulsory redundancies. We're already seeing signs of senior appointments being made, and if the new VC's plan to save money is to recruit a new layer of senior managers then we're already going to have issues. We want proper investment in those areas already struggling with workload, especially where people have gone and not

been replaced.

Spending more on an expanded UEB is clearly not what we want to happen. If anything, those with six-figure salaries should recognise the situation the sector is in and show some understanding of what it's like for most people who work at the University who are struggling with the cost of housing, utilities, travel and childcare etc.

The strategy meetings at the start of April will be a chance to explain how we want the university to be a success, but that turning things around does not begin with a new layer of overpaid managers telling us all what to do when we already know. It starts with a careful consideration of how we're going to make sure recruitment is measured, rather than panicked, and retention of students is important, because you've recruited them for the right reasons in the first place.

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UNISON has launched a UK-wide Fund our Future Campaign, which is the response to years of underfunding of higher education, leading to the financial crises that many universities now find themselves in....

*Higher education is in crisis. The combination of tuition fees, Brexit, declining international student numbers – exacerbated by the last government’s hostile environment towards immigration – and inflationary pressure has placed some universities in incredibly challenging circumstances.*

*Across the sector, we are seeing cuts and redundancies at an alarming rate, and UNISON members are feeling the devastating effects of closures, cutbacks, and withdrawal of services. Many UNISON branches and regions are running excellent campaigns in response to proposed cuts, and many more will be launching campaigns in the near future.*

*An estimated 70 institutions are reducing staffing numbers to cut costs. And even prior to the current situation, our members have seen their pay and conditions decline continuously for the past fourteen years. Since 2010, the pay our members receive has reduced by 28% in real terms, with an alarming 75% of our members telling us they are concerned about coping with the cost of living and affording necessities such as food, energy, and housing. The Office for Students expects that in 2025-26, 72% of universities could be spending more money than they have coming in.*

We’re planning a lobby of parliament in May, and we’ll encourage all members to come to London to meet their MP to demand that universities are resourced properly. Even if you accept the government’s growth strategy, universities are the obvious place to start if you want to have the necessary numbers of within a skilled workforce on the future. Surveys suggest at least 60% of the future workforce should be educated to degree level, which requires major investment, not cuts and more marketisation and wasteful competition between institutions.

We’ll let you know when we have a date set for our lobby. There’s more here:

[HE - Fund Our Future | UNISON National](#)

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