

Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 15 December 2014
Paper Title	Curriculum and Estates Plan: Consultation Responses - Response from Glasgow Clyde College Student Association
Agenda Item	4
Paper Number	BM4-B Appendix 2
Responsible Officer	Andrew Aitken, GCRB Student Board Member Barclay McCrindle, GCRB Student Board Member
Status	Disclosable
Action	For Discussion



GLASGOW CLYDE COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION AND STUDENTS OF GLASGOW CLYDE COLLEGE RESPONSE TO THE GLASGOW COLLEGES' STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP CURRICULUM AND ESTATES REVIEW.

INTRODUCTION

This paper represents the seriously considered view of our students and includes the initial response to the Curriculum and Estates Review (CER) undertaken by the Glasgow Colleges' Strategic Partnership (GCSP).

The issues raised within this paper are taken from the responses of:

- 1,907 surveys completed by students;
- 10 focus groups, attended by over 300 students; and
- 102 email responses from students from the three campuses at Glasgow Clyde College (GCC).

Before completing the surveys, all students were made aware via clearly presented information that, in developing the CER, the GCSP have had to work within a framework and budgets provided by the Scottish Government. It is acknowledged that much work has taken place and that the GCSP have carried out the task as well as they could have within these strict parameters and timelines.

The main issues which have been identified by the students are as follows.

RATIONALE

The students feel that, whilst there are arguments for non-duplication of courses, the main reason for this proposal appears to be driven by the funding constraints and requirements of the city centre building project within the context of restricted funding to Glasgow Colleges as a whole. Indeed, it seems to the students, that provision will be increased in the centre of Glasgow to the detriment of the surrounding areas, reducing provision within the community. This naturally raises concerns that community provision and educational opportunities for students, many of whom are furthest from educational opportunities and who are in most need of a variety of access courses, would be seriously diminished.

It was made clear that the students feel there should, in fact, be an increase in access courses to improve provision within the communities out with the city centre to encourage participation from the most social and economically challenged in our society.

The students also wish to highlight urgently that travel into the city centre from areas on the periphery of the city would be costly, time consuming and a barrier.

We seek reassurance that widening participation will continue to be a priority for ALL Glasgow's colleges.

We seek reassurance that the matter of travel expenses is understood and will be taken up with urgency.

PROVISION

Our survey shows that there is a serious concern regarding loss of provision from GCC in order to 'put bums on seats' with in the new City of Glasgow (COG) buildings. There must be a parity of provision and accessibility of courses at all levels to all students and not simply certain courses available within the city centre.

There was strong feeling that Colleges are needed within all communities, outside the city centre, to help with accessibility into education and employment.

Students felt strongly that the reduction in volumes from 16% to 13% in the creative industries "is not right". The proposal fails to take cognisance that the majority of work within the Creative Industries sector is freelance and that self-employment in these areas has not been considered within the CER.

Taking into account the on-going cuts to the education sector since 2010 we seek reassurance that plans are in place to pay for students who may have to travel further for their education and taking into account that travelling further is more time consuming then childcare becomes an issue.

Students feel strongly that there is in fact no evidence base and a lack of clarity on where the figures in the review paper have come from that justify the need for changes.

Students also feel that the 1% increase in health, care and education needs to be higher. The NHS are setting the direction of care and nursing and taking into account the figures for growth of employment in NHS and care up until 2020. Students have concerns the increase of 1% will not facilitate the demand and opportunities to the future students of Glasgow and to the health concerns that Glasgow has to deal with.

CONCLUSION

The overall view of students is that GCC is an outstanding college to learn so why change what's not broken? GCC is part of the local communities and there is a fear that this will disappear with these changes. The document states that there will be a 2.5% increase in community locations and activity levels but there is no evidence to support this and no detail which gives confidence to it.

GCC students also feel that when there is increased funding to the sector in Glasgow that increase should only go to GCC and Kelvin College to bring them back on a level playing field with COG as it seems to students from the information given COG are gaining all the benefits from the start of the process.

Funding levels for students is a major concern and students feel this should be taken up by sector leaders on their behalf and more work and evidence on this would be appreciated.

Students would like to make it clear that they understand that their college management along with the GCSP are working to a framework and budget imposed upon them. It is appreciated that much work has taken place and that the GCSP have carried out the task as well as they could have within these strict parameters and timelines and feel they are being well considered by their own college staff in the shaping of the Curriculum and Estates proposal. However, the final decision is not theirs to make so all the more reason to hear this student response.

In saying this students are not comfortable with these changes and can only see it being detrimental to future students from outlying areas and deprived areas accessing FE. It just does not make sense to take something that is proven to work well and change it just to "put bums on seats".

We believe that a campaign to raise the funding levels for Glasgow Colleges needs to happen quickly and urge the regional board to do so and for all parties to be involved in it.

Below are some quotes from our focus groups.

‘The office for National Statistics show that Scotland is the best educated country in Europe yet the Government want to cut funding and close the community colleges down.’

‘Who plans to pay for students who may have to travel further for an education if colleges join up and they are no longer as near to them?’

‘Volumes from 16% - 13% in Creative Industries is not right. Self-employment in these areas has not been considered. Every person I know working in Creative Industries are self-employed.’

‘Langside, Cardonald etc. are community colleges, creative subjects are sociable and inclusive and a great way of encouraging community spirit.’

‘There are people that cannot afford to make their way to college because the campus is too far away, and why move courses or shut down campuses, then people will not even attempt to apply because it is too far away.’

‘Education is a vital right for everyone in society and I believe that it should be ring fenced and not cut any further. I believe Glasgow Clyde should continue to have a sustainable level of funding as it makes a positive contribution to the local community.’

‘Good educating and the support that Glasgow Clyde College has to offer will be lost’.

‘Funding is of importance to me as I cannot afford to pay for all of the subjects I want to study at college. I cannot see myself being in college if I did not get any help with funding.’

‘Regarding transition and support learning there should be more allocation to improve the quality and help those who are struggling or who have no qualification to get back into entry level education and gain a better future.’

‘The Scottish Government have relentlessly been waging a class war on education, more cuts for those at the bottom end of the social mobility graph.’

‘All these figures just seem to be picked out from thin air.’

We trust that the concerns of the students in GCC will be respected and considered as part of the consultation process.

B McCrindle

President Glasgow Clyde College Students Association.