national union of students

Students as co-creators: a partnership approach to the student experience

Rachel Wenstone
Vice President (Higher Education)
NUS

Three things

1. A manifesto for partnership
2. The student experience of learning
3. Resourcing students to lead

nus
national union of students

A manifesto for partnership

nus
national union of **students**

READ THIS

(please)

nus
national union of students

The partnership video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ls7FFB7Bkl0

nus
national union of **students**

A manifesto

- A shift in focus from individual student engagement in learning to a cross-institutional partnership ethos
- Students' unions working with institutions to facilitate and extend student and staff deliberations about how to improve higher education in all its facets
- Building learning communities based on shared responsibility and that take account of a diversity of students and experiences
- Enabling students to shape things at the level of their experience – normally their course

nus
national union of students

‘Consumer power’ is insufficient

Consumer power is only…

…the power to like or dislike something – **not** change it

…the power to demand ‘more for your money’ – engaging as an individual, **not** in community

…the power to complain if you don’t like your experience – **not** take action to shape it

nus
national union of **students**

Student experience of learning

nus
national union of **students**

Students' experiences

- Learning happens in community - retention and success derives from a sense of belonging and positive relationships with peers and academics, and an academic environment that aligns with aspirations

- Student engagement practice has to cope with students who have multiple competing demands on their time and those who are not rich in social or cultural capital

- 'How inclusive is the learning community?' is at least as important as 'how satisfied are students?'

nus
national union of students

What is a learning community?

- Scheduled contact hours…AND…
- Office hours, academic support, personal tutoring and engagement with specialist staff
- Academic representation and feedback on your course
- Interdisciplinary and/or learning and teaching development opportunities
- Peer learning and co-curricular activities and support networks – some of which may be student-led (eg academic societies)
- Student activism and volunteering
- Enterprise and employability opportunities

nus
national union of **students**

Resourcing students to lead

nus
national union of **students**

In sum…

- Student experience is rich and diverse, shaped by course, context and communities
- To support it well takes effort, leadership and engagement from both staff and students – this requires a partnership approach
- Students' unions will deliver much of this better and more authentically than universities…
- …while universities have the resource in addition to specific academic and professional expertise

nus
national union of students