

Founding Supporter Fund Impact Report – The SU Minibus

How the fund has made an impact

The Students' Union (SU) was delighted to receive support from the Foundation Board in order to provide a minibus for student use. We are hugely grateful to have been introduced to Ian Twinley, John Grose's Chairman. They have supplied us with a fully branded 16 seater minibus. In return we are paying them back an amount of £8,000 on an interest free loan basis.

Sarah Dooley, Sport Projects Manager at the Students' Union, said "for years we have been hiring minibuses on daily or monthly deals with local companies, but our new bus gives us an identity and is something we can all be proud of. We are beyond grateful for the support of Ian and his team at John Grose in readying the minibus for use, and to the University of Suffolk Foundation Board for helping us achieve this goal."

Lending our own minibus to students and staff at the University has been less time consuming than hiring and has enabled us to keep costs down. It has given us the added benefit of being able to showcase our identity regionally and nationally.

What outcomes have been achieved?

A vital and anticipated outcome has been an **increase in ownership and pride among our competitive sports teams**, who have been able to use the minibus as a means of transportation. Competitive sports teams representing the University of Suffolk now use the minibus to attend BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) events. This offers them a cost effective way to travel significant distances. For example, our women's football team recently travelled to Newquay for the 2017 Newquay sixes, where they placed a fantastic second. Our students can be proud to represent the University and the Students' Union when they show up to competitions ready for action in branded sports kit, and in their own transportation.



Photo: Sports teams representatives and SU staff with Celia Edey OBE, Chair of the Foundation Board

Another outcome of the funding of the minibus has been **the increase in student engagement with the Students' Union; particularly with those members who are active on our sports teams.** In order to borrow the minibus, students come into the Students' Union offices. This encourages face to face engagement between Students' Union staff and our students and enables us to communicate other fantastic opportunities with them and to gain their feedback on existing projects. This is hugely valuable to us as we continually seek to be ever more student led. Engagement on social media has also been impressive.

Casey Emblem, Men's Football Captain said: 'The minibus has enabled our sports teams to travel to and from games so we can represent the University. It connects us with the other sites that form part of the University and also it has granted us an opportunity to travel further afield to our games. We now have our own equipment, our own minibus, like a proper university.'

Have there been any unexpected outcomes?

An unexpected, but key outcome of the funding of the SU minibus has been **the increased visibility of the Students' Union on campus, and of our brand.** We received press coverage in the Ipswich Star and East Anglian Daily Times when we received the bus. Our social media relating to the bus has continually received great engagement, related 'teaser' images were used to introduce the bus to create a sense of excitement and since then it has featured regularly.



Image: Teaser campaign images as used by the SU

We did not expect that the minibus would lead to **better working relationships between the Students' Union and University staff**. Members of staff from the University, along with our students, are able to borrow the bus in return for a donation to the SU. Demand for access has been high, with it used every day during March and consistently since then. The MBA cohort used the minibus for their residential, whilst the minibus has also been regularly booked by the Sports Science team. It was used for transportation during the annual staff v. students tournament.

A further unexpected outcome has been that the minibus has allowed us to **connect campuses**. For example, during the Students' Union elections, we transported all candidates to our campus in Bury St Edmunds, where they spoke with to Bury students about their SU. Previously, because of budget restrictions we would have asked candidates to make their own way and would have received a lower turnout.

Bury students were able to access transport to attend our Summer Ball held in the Ipswich Corn Exchange for a small donation. This has further improved the relationship between the SU and Bury and meant we could ensure our students were being transported safely. In addition we operated a shuttle 'donation' service between Athena Hall and the Summer Ball to raise funds, with the SU Vice-President (VP) as Chauffeur and CEO as conductor!

To see our students arriving at the ball in our fully branded minibus created a brilliant buzz, and of course was well received in person and on social media. Our students donated a total of £103.90 towards the bus fund during the Summer Ball.



Photo: VP and guests arriving at the Summer Ball



Image: Used for social media to let students know how much they had raised.

Fundraising

We have arranged to pay John Grose back **£2,857.86** at our first service and MOT on 04 July 2017. This amount is comprised of fundraising from the shuttle service, donations from the SU Quiz, support from the book stall, donations from the University in relation to their trips and funding transferred from our minibus hire budget.

We will shortly meet with John Grose to thank and update them and subsequently congratulate student members on this achievement.

Next steps

We will continue to promote usage of the bus to staff and students as well as our teams and societies and raise funds to pay John Grose. The donation shuttle bus service and book stall will run this year and we are also planning some other fundraising events.

The bus will be used in Freshers' week for the first time, introducing it to a whole new cohort. We fully expect to see demand increase and look forward to seeing the bus out and about as often as possible in the new term.

Our bus is valuable to us well beyond transportation. Identity, engagement and pride have been great results for our student members and staff. Our sincere thanks go to the Foundation Board.