

#### INTRODUCTION FROM CHRIS OLDHAM

Many thanks to everyone who came to our first staff ECS Breakfast Club held in January. More than 150 people turned up to enjoy a coffee and pastry and mingle with colleagues from other areas of [Estates and Campus Services](#) to learn more about Essex Food and the wider ECS section.

We really appreciated your contributions and comments in the 'You Ask, We Listen' session. We asked 'What Do YOU need from us to help YOU support our growing student community and enhance the student experience?' and, as promised, here are the responses to a sample of your questions. We will ensure that all comments and suggestions are taken on board, and fed into the strategy development process.



*Essex Food quiz winners of a £50 Essex Food Voucher at ECS Breakfast Club*

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#### YOU ASK, WE LISTEN

**Q: We need to increase the number of car parking spaces in Colchester and work with transport providers to improve transport links. What are we doing to address this?**

A: We are currently reviewing the University's travel and transport infrastructure and people movement. The findings and subsequent plans will aim to improve both the experience and the infrastructure. A new car parking area has opened on the North side of Campus, which we trust is helping in the short-term.

**Q: Can we refurb the bathroom pods in Manningtree accommodation, as they are very tired and grubby looking?**

A: We have a number of priorities for the Long Term Maintenance (LTM) programme and these are reviewed annually. We are currently focussing our attention on the North Houses and the LTM will move to South Courts once that work is completed. We will assess the condition of the Manningtree bathroom pods at the end of the academic year to see if any work needs to be escalated.

**Q: We need more affordable accommodation, not necessarily ensuite, for students on lower incomes and monthly payments rather than termly to reduce debt stress. Is this feasible?**

A: We are planning to offer a wider price range of accommodation in Meadows Phase III. We will consider whether a monthly payment option is feasible.

**Q: Catering facilities are excellent but could The Hex be used as a lunch area – bring sandwiches or takeaway food from outlets – particularly in winter months?**

A: We recognise that social space is at a premium currently, while The Hex is probably not a space we could currently use, other catering outlets and social spaces are being considered for this purpose.

**Q: Feedback from internal and external clients comes back average/good for the range and quality of food on offer at conferences. There are not enough vegan choices in particular. What can be done?**

A: We are currently revamping all conference and delivered catering menus. These will be launched in the next month with a large range of new vegan and vegetarian options.

**Q: Could we maybe have a troubleshooting guide to the Essex Food App or be shown how to set up the app to better help students/customers?**

A: Did you know we have our EFR App helpdesk on Square 4 every Thursday to assist anyone having problems?

**Q: Are there any plans for more communal space for students?**

A: This will form a major focus for the ground floor of the new academic building. In addition, some of our recent refurbishment upgrades have provided student common rooms.

**Q: We need better facilities for staff/changing rooms.**

A: We have various existing facilities including shower rooms for cyclists. We will consider more and better changing facilities alongside all of our other priorities.

**Q: We need better maintenance on existing stock and a faster turnaround on reported faults.**

A: Fault reporting/rectification has been a key area of focus and we have seen dramatic improvements over the last two years. However, we are not resting on our laurels and are striving to enhance this in the future.

**Q: How can we better utilise existing space?**

A: A project is currently well underway, led by the Capital and Development team, to maximise the effective use of space around the University.

**Q: We need more investment in up to date IT software and hardware.**

A: In conjunction with IT services, we are currently investigating potential resourcing solutions to provide additional IT support to Estates and Campus Services. A core element of this support is to assist us in developing and implementing a long-term maintenance and procurement plan for IT systems and associated hardware.

**Q: What about data storage? Do you have any plans to increase data storage for professional use?**

A: You will have recently received an email about using the cloud based Box service. This provision gives everyone one Terabyte of data storage space. We have also developed a departmental Box structure which provides unlimited storage space and we are currently completing some testing and reconfiguration of this data storage system. Over the coming 12 months we will be supporting each area to transfer data storage from their current server based storage drives into the new Estates and Campus Services Box 'drive'.

**Q: Are there any proposals to try to increase the number of students who choose to live in University Square in Southend?**

A: Yes, we currently have an ongoing project looking at this. We are also hopeful that the Southend Campus will benefit from the continuing planned increase in student numbers.

**Q: We need a larger security team to do more checks throughout the grounds and buildings.**

A: We have recently increased the deployment of patrol officers, with a focus on patrolling buildings and accommodation for a greater campus presence.

**Q: We need more CCTV for greater safety on our campuses.**

A: We have just completed a review of our CCTV coverage. On the back of this, £100k investment into the infrastructure has been approved. This includes many new cameras, including for the entrances to campus, together with increased storage to allow better quality imaging.

**Q: We need more of a 24/7 approach to managing campuses and more flexible working arrangements.**

A: The University has a flexible working policy. HR policies are regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and balance both the needs of the business and our employees.

**Q: Can we have a buddy/mentor system for new starters?**

A: Excellent idea, this will be fed into the induction project about to start.

**Q: Can we be more open about strategic changes and updates?**

A: This is recognised and we hope initiatives like the ECS Breakfast club, the all staff meetings and the monthly ECS newsletter are helping with this.

**Q: Is there any scope for more professional development courses for staff?**

A: There are many courses provided by Learning and Development. We recommend staff regularly review the upcoming courses. If you have any specific requests, they should be discussed with your line manager.

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## AWARD NOMINATIONS ARE IN

The nominations for the 2019 [ECS Staff Awards](#) are in! With a 50% increase on last year's nominations, it looks set to be a fantastic evening. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted this month, and complimentary tickets will be available (on a first come first serve basis for all ECS staff) from 4 March. Watch out for further details of how to get yours to come along and support your colleagues.



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## FESTIVAL OF SUSTAINABILITY

From 11-15 March, the Colchester campus will come alive with the [Festival of Sustainability](#).

Come along and learn about how you can make a difference. Enjoy a single origin coffee from a reusable cup in the Ethics Food Café whilst enjoying live cooking demonstrations, pop into get your bike up to scratch with Dr Bike or learn more about how the University is making strides to

reduce their carbon footprint. From cycle to work schemes to enhancing the biodiversity of our beautiful campus, we can work together to make a change.

#littlechoicesbigchanges



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## **CHUMS IS BACK FOR EASTER**

Our popular CHUMS holiday camp for children aged 5 - 14 years is back for Easter and you can save 10% if you book before 28 February.

Mini CHUMS, for ages 5-8, will include a range of games, sports, and arts and crafts. Junior CHUMS, for ages 8-14, will include favourites such as basketball, football, climbing and tennis.

**Week 1: Monday 8 April - Friday 12 April**  
**Week 2: Monday 15 April - Thursday 18 April**



[Keep your little ones fit, active and healthy with a fun-filled Easter with Essex Sport](#)

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## **INCLUSIVITY MATTERS AT WIVENHOE PARK DAY NURSERY**

The [Nursery](#) is excited to announce that they are now an official affiliated sing and sign nursery. Children of all ages will learn Makaton throughout their Nursery day with the skill being incorporated into every day learning and playing activities. Sign language is a great way to boost confidence in children, helping them to express themselves when their words can't quite explain what they mean. As a Nursery with a large international cohort, Makaton also increases inclusivity across nationalities.



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## **ETHICS FOOD FOCUS GROUPS**

[Essex Food](#) invited staff and students across the University to become Ambassadors for Ethics Food and take part in focus groups throughout the week beginning 28 January. Four separate sessions took place each focusing on a different subject; Food information & labelling, Customer

service & experience, Sustainability within Food on campus and Healthy food & dietary requirements. Many great points were raised and discussed as a group and the Essex Food team will now look into ways of developing these areas further.



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### ACCOMMODATION ESSEX RAISE £50,000 for CHARITY

[Accommodation Essex](#), working with our students, has helped raise more than £50,000 for the British Heart Foundation. The British Heart Foundation's Pack for Good campaign has been running at Essex since 2015, encouraging students at the Colchester and Southend campuses to donate goods they no longer need.

Angie Flynn, deputy head Accommodation (Operations) said: "Towards the end of each academic year we promote the campaign to students who are about to leave our accommodation. The scheme really captures their imagination and this year, between April and September, we collected an amazing 3,643 bags."

The scheme also has a positive environmental impact, diverting the equivalent of 29 tonnes of items from the waste stream, saving 70,264,776 kgs of CO2 greenhouse gas emissions. Angie said: "Our thanks to everyone involved. We are already looking at ways to make this campaign even better this year."



## UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR

Due to the announcement last December that The University of Essex have been named University of the Year by Times Higher Education, all staff members employed by the University on the 14th December 2018 are entitled to an additional day's annual leave.



Full details can be found [here](#)

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We hope that you enjoyed the latest Estates and Campus Services newsletter. If you'd like to contribute to the March edition, please send your story to [ecscomms@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ecscomms@essex.ac.uk) by 25 February 2019