External Relations & Development Committee

"LEWISHAM"

Report

External Relations & Development Committee met for the first time on 10 December using the new Enquiry format, the topic under consideration being "Lewisham".

The 3 attached papers formed the basis of the discussion. The first paper is a collection of facts about the area and sets the discussion in context; the second paper presents the Senior Management Team's view and the third paper presents the current level of community engagement of Goldsmiths' staff and students based on a recent survey.

The Committee found that there was already a significant degree of engagement with the local community both on an individual basis through voluntary work undertaken by staff and students and institutionally, for example, through the work of the Widening Participation Team and activities such as the Big Draw. But there was a lack of co-ordination and knowledge of what people were doing.

Reasons for engaging strongly with the local community were viewed as both altruistic and self-interested. As the fifth largest employer in a deprived area, with one of the lowest proportions of residents with a degree in inner London, Goldsmiths has the potential to make a massive social, cultural and economic impact, as a recent Universities UK Report (March 2007) has highlighted. But engagement with the burgeoning creative industries sector within the borough, such as Cockpit Arts, or with one of the many cultural hubs, for example the Horniman Museum, brings with it benefits to Goldsmiths too, in terms of maximising opportunities for students, keeping up-to-date with cultural trends and attracting additional funding and research opportunities.

For collaborations to work, it is essential that they are based on a shared ethos. The Committee felt the College needed to become more aware of potential partners and suggested that half a dozen key organisations sharing similar values to Goldsmiths be identified. Furthermore, developing a set of benefits with which to offer potential collaborators (for example, providing rooms for meetings) would make it easier for those attempting to forge new links in the future.

When asked what Goldsmiths stands for, engagement with the local community should be one of the ways we describe ourselves. It should therefore be firmly embedded in the College's mission and values and be made more explicit in the strategic plan. This should include clear measures and performance indicators around community engagement to enable departments to demonstrate their successes in this area and for them to receive the recognition for these activities which is perhaps currently lacking.

There also needed to be greater co-ordination of community activities. The survey showed that there was an appetite for involvement but people weren't always aware of the opportunities. A better database would help with this and is something currently being looked at by the Interim Director of Development. Case studies, for example those who have progressed through the Open Book project, could be used to give this work a higher profile as could a campaign actively promoting 5-6 opportunities working within the local community.

DH
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