

Putting Students First Since 1893

We've changed the game, got there first and set the standard for others to follow since 1893.

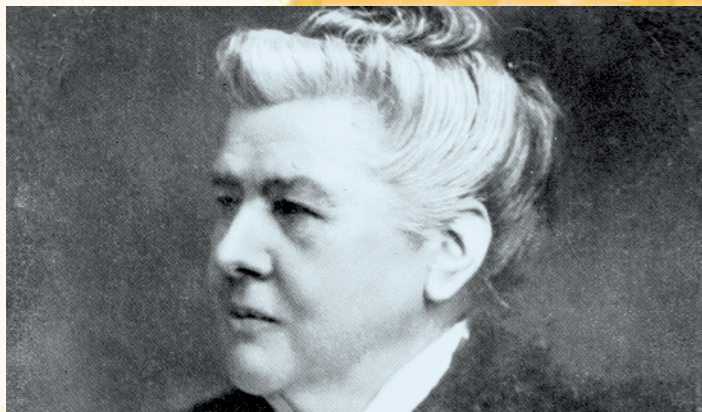
This is the journey that has taken us from our founding to today, and our ambition to make Students' Union UCL one of the best student organisations in the world.

1893

The Men's Union Society was established under the leadership of Professor Edward Shafer. Its goal was "the promotion of social intercourse and of the means of recreation, physical and mental, of the students of University College, and the financial successes of students' clubs". It was one of the first Unions of its kind. A year's membership cost £1 and 1 shilling.

1897

The Union is given its first spaces on campus with three rooms in the North Cloisters including what's now known as the Haldane Room.



1897

The Women's Union is formed, with Rosa Morison, the Superintendent of Women Students at its head.

The Men's Union acquires a sportsground at Acton, securing a ground had been a key founding aim of the Men's Union.



1900

The wooden Phineas statue is stolen from a local tobacconists as students celebrate the lifting of siege of Ladysmith in the Boar War, later to be adopted as the UCL student mascot.

1903

The Union elects its first student president; John Farcombe.

1905

The Union persuades UCL Council to suspend lectures on Wednesday afternoons to enable students to participate in sport and other activities.

1906

The Union's first drama production takes place – The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde, raising £25 for the New Union Athletic Ground Fund.

1907

The Union buys new sportsgrounds for both men and women in Perivale.



1938

The Union moves its sportsground to a much larger site at Shenley.

1940

Destruction of UCL's Great Hall and associated rooms in the Blitz means the Union loses its main space for student performances, activities and social events.

1945

The Union starts the Student Healthcare Association, which, until the birth of the NHS, ensured all students received free health care. The first university initiative of its kind.

1946

The Union Society and the Women's Union combine. The Union, as it is today, is formed.

The first edition of Pi, at the time, a student newspaper rather than the magazine it is today, was published. It was named Pi in reference to Dr David Pye, UCL's Provost 1943-51 who supported its development. Famous editors include Bel Mooney and Jonathan Dimbleby.

1947

The first Union bar is opened.

1948

The Union's Film Society is founded.

1951

UCL student opera is formed, the start of the most successful student opera group in the country.

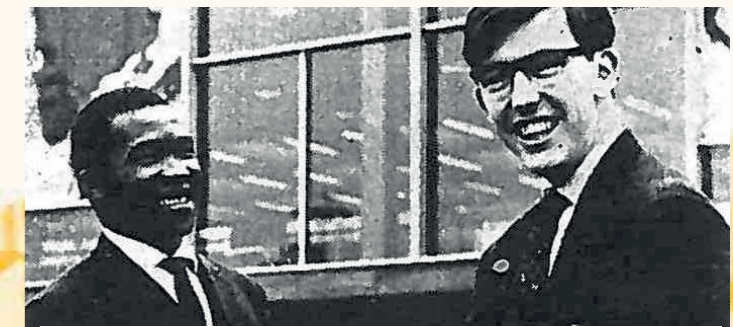
1958

Shenley Pavilion is opened with The Foundation Games. They're played in a blizzard, but UCL beat Kings 15-9.



1959

The Union moves into 25 Gordon Street on a temporary basis whilst plans for a new Students' Union were to be developed.



1965

The Union elects Nelson Mandela as its Honorary President and founded the South African Scholarship Appeal, whereby UCL would waive tuition fees for one Black South African student per year. The Union, in turn, raised funds to cover the student's living costs.

Clement Attlee, Prime Minister 1945-51 speaks at the Union's Foundation Week debate.

1968

Union President John Shipley secures places for two student representatives on UCL Council.

Putting Students First Since 1893

1969

In protest of the Conservative Association inviting Enoch Powell as guest of honour to their annual dinner, the Union and the College devote the day's events and lectures to the study of racism.

The 'Central Collegiate Building' home of the Bloomsbury Theatre opens with space for Union activities in the floors above the theatre. Students are disappointed when the plans that had originally been for a Students' Union building were amended to build a theatre and rowing tank. Two further buildings on Gordon Street were planned with new Union sports and social facilities, but these were not completed due to lack of funds.



1971

UCL students are among the 20,000 protesters to bring West End traffic to a standstill demonstrating against the Government's proposals on students' unions. Thatcher's proposal would have significantly restricted students' union's autonomy and finances. After huge student support for the campaign, the proposal was dropped.



1972

Formation of The Lesbian and Gay Society, our first form of representation for LGBT students. They successfully lobbied the National Union of Students to run a Gay Rights Campaign.

1974

Students persuade UCL to give them representation on the Academic Board of the university.

The position of Union President is abolished to make way for a new elected officer structure.

1979

The Union leads the way on calling for UCL to take more responsibility for students' safety. After a spate of assaults on campus, the Union demands that male and female security guards be put on key parts of campus; a first for UK universities.

1989

Plans are drawn up for a new Students' Union building between 25 Gordon Street and the Bloomsbury Theatre. But the project is not prioritised for UCL capital funding due to the proximity of the University of London Union and the idea is shelved again.

1990

The Union secures additional space in 25 Gordon Street, opening Gordon's Café on the ground floor of the building.

1991

The Union secures an entertainments venue and bar in UCL's Windeyer Building, this was demolished in 2011 with the Union losing its only large events space.

1998

The Union funds a large proportion of the costs of building a new sports hall shared between UCL students, pupils at South Camden Community School (now Regent High School) and the local community.

2003

Students and staff campaign strongly in opposition to the proposed merger between UCL and Imperial College. The merger was later abandoned.



2007

Students campaign for UCL to divest in the arms trade placing fake tombstones in the main quad with the words '1,000 people every day are killed by arms'. UCL would later form an ethical investment committee and divest from arms.

2011

The Union moves into the lower floors of the Lewis's Building with the opening of the George Farha Café, Richard Mully's Basement Bar and Huntley Pub as new student facilities.

2012

UCL reveals plans to knock down social housing in East London to make way for a new campus. Students work with the Union to mount a campaign against the proposal and successfully save the Carpenter's Estate.

2013

The Union elects its first BME Students' Officer.

2019

Phineas Bar and the Union offices in 25 Gordon St. are refurbished.

The Union plays a key role in UCL's decision to divest from fossil fuels and in UCL's Eugenics Inquiry leading to the de-naming of UCL buildings linked to Eugenicians.

2020

The Union successfully moves to digital service provision during the Coronavirus pandemic, with thousands of students still able to access services online.

The Union persuades UCL to provide space for it to open a new student convenience store near the centre of the campus.



2021

The Union runs its largest ever Welcome programme and the UK's largest student election, and reaches 19,000 members of its clubs and societies.

The UCL Volunteering Service is officially integrated into the Students' Union.

2022

UCL's consultation for its new strategy include the option for major investment in a Students' Union building and sports facilities....