Changing the perception of colleges in the UK

David Hughes
Chief Executive, Association of Colleges, UK
Perceptions of colleges were poor & we weren’t a political priority
Ofsted: Wilshaw slams 'alarming rate of underperformance and failure' in colleges

The chief inspector also says 'radical improvement' is needed in UTCs if the movement is to survive

By Julia Belgutay
21 July 2016
Perceptions of colleges were poor

• Misunderstood, overlooked & neglected by politicians
• Generally viewed as second-best, second-rate, poor quality
• Most people in power by-passed colleges, going from school to uni
• Surprisingly large numbers of civil servants never been inside a college
• Employers didn’t feel colleges gave them ‘job-ready’ candidates
• Funding had been cut or frozen with no inflation rises since 2010
• Overall funding for colleges dropped by 30% between 2009 to 2019
• Morale was low, leaders felt hard done by, hard done to, unloved
Issues Facing Britain: 2017

What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top mentions %</th>
<th>Change since 2016:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS/Hospitals/Healthcare</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Market/Brexit/EU</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration/Immigrants</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Schools</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty/Inequality</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defence/foreign affairs/terrorism</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So we decided we needed to do something about it
We asked every college leader to get involved

• Get the facts out there:
  • 700k young people, 1.4m adults study in colleges every year
  • Quality is good or outstanding in over 80% of colleges
  • Progression to uni/higher study/jobs is good

• Target Members of Parliament:
  • Most constituencies have a college campus in them
  • Politicians love photos with flash kit & young people
  • Students are voters. With views. Particularly in marginal seats

• Seek support from the employers the college works with:
  • On average each college works with over 600 employers
  • They need colleges to be well-funded
  • Many face recruitment difficulties without more college students being trained
#LoveOurColleges
Government funding to colleges has been cut by 30% between 2009-19

collegesweek.co.uk 🖤 #LoveOurColleges
NE college principals to march on Parliament to demand fairer funding #LoveOurColleges
Colleges Week
15 to 19 October 2018

- More than 200 colleges - in every part of the country
- 3,000 students, staff and principals marching together
- 250+ press stories – National, Regional and Local - Television – Radio, newspapers, blogs
- 22,000 tweets and retweets on the #LoveOurColleges hashtag
- 40,000 signatures of a student-led petition (and still rising)
- 100+ college meetings with MPs
- An Early Day Motion launched in Parliament
- A wide range of questions asked in the House of Commons and the Lords
- 200 students singing (Chesterfield College)
And perceptions started to change
Ofsted boss backs calls for more 16-to-18 cash to combat falling standards

Billy Camden

Ofsted's chief inspector has offered her “strong view” that 16- to 18- funding should be increased in the forthcoming spending review, after inspections found a lack of cash has directly led to falling
Halfon and Milton clash over further education funding

Apprenticeships and skills minister Anne Milton admits more FE funding is needed – but she refuses to put a figure on it

By George Ryan 03 April 2019

Skills minister Anne Milton has insisted that she is making the case for more funding for FE – but would not put a figure on how much was needed.
CBI: More learners should go to colleges

The CBI will also warn against raiding HE budgets in order to fund increases in the FE budget

By George Ryan
28 February 2019

Share this

Everyone should be entitled to study or train for a post-school, sub-degree level course, the Confederation of British Industry’s (CBI) director

Exam timetables and key dates for the 2019 GCSEs

Excel hacks: 5 tips for teachers

Meet Simon, the supply teacher ignored by staff

Non-punitive behaviour approach 'ineffective'

New specialist maths schools get the go-ahead

Ros McMullen: 'I can't defend the indefensible'

Navigating divorce as a teacher: 4 things to consider

Exam timetables and key dates for the 2019 A-levels
college leaders write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State, demanding the implementation of Augar
Boris Johnson backs FE funding

The former foreign secretary was launching his campaign for the leadership of the Conservative Party

By Julia Belgutay
12 June 2019
Finally, this week, a boost to funding
£400m boost for colleges: 16-18 funding finally raised

Sixth-form funding rate raised for first time since 2013, with extra cash for GCSE resits, T levels and teacher training

By Stephen Exley
31 August 2019
So what have we learned?
What did we learn?

- Colleges are powerful when they act together
- Lots of people in power love colleges, once they know more
- A simple message about unfair funding levels can work, if it is:
  - part of a positive campaign
  - focused on students & their needs
  - showing impact on employers & economy
- The best advocates are college leaders, students, politicians
- Facts are important, but so is emotion, passion & fun
- Media is hard to win around, but very important
So where now?
We’ve made good progress…..

• ...... but there is a long way to go
• The funding announced this week is a good first step
• But is less than 20% of what is needed to restore funding to 2010 levels
• So we will maintain the #LoveOurColleges campaigning
• Get more people to see colleges for themselves
• Set out new messages for next spending round
• And think long term, with confidence & build a new vision for colleges
Independent Commission on the College of the Future

Building a new vision, consensus & support for colleges

Launched March 2019 – reports spring 2020
What do we want & need from our colleges in 2030?

- In the face of seismic shifts:
  - Demography & attitudes/expectations
  - Technology
  - Labour markets
  - Climate & environment
- How must colleges change?
- What vision, mission, purpose is right for the future?
5 key questions

1. How will learning, training, assessment change?
2. Which people will colleges support and at what ages & stages?
3. How will relationships change between colleges & other institutions?
4. What social, economic, community priorities will colleges deliver on?
5. How will colleges respond to all of this?
   • Purpose, mission, vision?
   • Leadership & governance?
   • Workforce?
   • Technology & infrastructure, buildings?
Further information

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