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Why Anti-outsourcing is Back at Sussex University

A shorter version of this is posted as 'This is why we should fight outsourcing at universities' on *Liberal Conspiracy* 1 October 2013

Sussex Uni's 13,000 students started back last week. [So did](#) the campus' formidable [anti-outsourcing campaign](#).

Private company Chartwells have taken over the university's catering. Sussex management said this was for a better consumer experience. But campus consumers have complained of a reduced service. That's putting it mildly. And international consumer [feedback](#) for Chartwells, owned by Compass, [is shocking](#).

At Miami and [DePaul](#) universities in the USA workers' are in [dispute](#) with Chartwells over poverty pay. Sub-living wage [employees](#) at [Miami](#) work second jobs to make ends meet. They've been offered a disrespectful [20 cent](#) pay rise. Chartwells say their hands are tied by the university. The university say wages are up to Chartwells. This is what happens when a university outsources.

It's rumoured that Interserve may take over Sussex's estates and facilities. The company were fined £11.6m by the Office of Fair Trading for illegal [bid-rigging](#). They had to cough up £50,000 for [exposing MoD workers](#) to asbestos. Dismissed employees discovered [holiday pay](#) they were due had been pocketed by the company. [BMA workers](#) are fighting Interserve to get the London living wage. The company's chairman Lord Blackwell spoke in the House of Lords [for the outsourcing of NHS services](#). The bill was passed. Guess who got a contract. Whether Interserve get the Sussex job or not; this is the kind of company that public bodies are outsourcing to.

It won't end here. At Sussex, IT services, sports and the library could be opened up to for-profit companies. The university plans distance learning where profiteers will be sought to provide IT and student services. The reason – it will be cheaper. How? Low wages and poorer pensions and conditions for the employees. The university is forging ahead despite widespread [staff](#) and [student opposition](#), and no consultation with them about whether to outsource.

Outsourcing to for-profits is expanding to academic areas. The [government](#) are allowing in controversial [for-profit universities](#). Last year we had none in Britain. Now we have two, and companies like [Pearson finding a platform](#) to gain access, not because of their educational values, but for a cut of the money to be made.

In the USA, [for-profit colleges](#) spend 24% of their revenue on marketing. That could be devoted to students and staff, but marketisation means it isn't. At the [University of Phoenix](#), the priority is to get fee-payers enrolled. What happens next is less well resourced. 16% of students graduate. 95% of its tutors are part-time, with little time to research on what they teach.

It's what happens when [higher education outsources](#). The companies that take over, pay poverty wages. They're accused of [corruption](#) and fraud, and a shocking record with consumers and students. The Sussex anti-outsourcing campaign is back. This is the reason why.

Luke Martell