The Phoenix back page story -

**Dan Lewis**

**SPORTS teams will be a “major ambassador” in getting the new brand of a merged Glamorgan and Newport University out to the public.**

The controversial merger - which will see the University of Glamorgan and the University of Wales, Newport combine - has been met with widespread concern by Glam students.

Head of Sport for the University of Glamorgan, Dr Tudor Williams, understands student’s fears regarding transport, financial issues and other logistical problems, but believes the sports teams can help to get this new merged university’s brand out to the wider public.

Speaking to *The Phoenix*, he said: “I believe that the sports teams will be the major ambassador of getting the new brand out there.

“As the Vice Chancellor has already said, the new brand is going to be the new university – the sport kit will be a big part of getting that name out there.

“There has to be a logo, if you look at anything from Cardiff City to Cardiff Blues, there is always a logo and it’s a case of getting it out there.

“If we’ve got 600 students wearing the kit when they play on Wednesdays, add to this all the hoodies and tracksuits, plus the people on the sports courses, there will be over 1,000 people getting this brand across.

The merger is set to go ahead in September 2013, and will see Glamorgan’s 44 sport teams combine with Newport’s 11.

Dr Williams believes that it is vital to keep the positive student experience at the heart of any decision, which may mean leaving a full merging of the two universities into one until a later date.

“Student experience really is key, not just student experience for new coming students, but also for those currently with us.

“If students are currently in the first or second year, then they will be in the second and third year respectively when this potentially goes through.

“For the first year there may not be a lot of change if we are talking about September 2013, but my understanding is that it won’t be until September 2014 that we start moving students from one campus to the other if the merger comes off.”

Glamorgan currently have around 600 students who take part in the 44 sports teams, as well as a further 1,000 students who are members of the Sports Centre in Treforest.

Likewise, students from Newport also have certain membership schemes, something that will be taken into account before the merger goes ahead next year, with both universities sports stars being at the forefront of any big decisions.

“We increased our numbers at Glamorgan by 14 teams this year from what we had last year, so there is a high number of students we are talking about.

“But there are certainly other issues here, because although we have around 600 students involved with sports teams every Wednesday, we also have 1,500 members of our Sports Centre who come in for leisure classes, health and fitness sessions and to use the gym and so on.

“So the sports teams are only about 40% of the activities we carry out each week.”

“We have arrangements at the moment for our students based in Cardiff to use Pure Gym or the Marriott Hotel and they do something similar in Newport.

“We must not forget about these gym memberships and people who want to use the classes every week, these are the bread and butter where the high use is, so again if we had a membership system it is important that the students based in Newport and Caerleon have an option to go to facilities close by rather than coming down Glamorgan to play their tennis, badminton or rugby.”

“There are two areas to look at: The Student’s Union, who have a cost to join the various sports teams, the cost of kit and also the transport to and from games.

“The second issue regards the joining of the gyms, whether that is a premium membership or a gold membership, we will have to look at facilities at both campuses to make sure it is fair for students.

“If they are currently getting a better deal at one or the other campus, then we will look at equalling that out – we want students to see that there is fair play here in terms of what is happening.”

One concern shown by sports players was the fact that a new merged university could see the loss of certain past honours won, but Dr Williams was quick to quash these worries.

He said: “I would suggest that all past honours for the various sides remain if the merger goes through.

“It’s important that the records will always be there.”