



reports to 1st week council hilary 2004

Helena Puig-Larrauri

President

F&F Unsurprisingly, most of my time over the past two weeks has been spent on the Finance and Funding campaign. The end of last term and beginning of this term saw the completion of the Alternative White Paper, which has since become a very useful lobbying tool. I've spent two days lobbying MPs in the House of Commons, and many hours writing emails and making phone calls to put pressure on MPs. The paper has been an invaluable asset because it coherently backs up our arguments. My thanks go to everyone who has contributed to writing it, and in particular to Omar Salem for number crunching and shared economics geekiness (you know I mean that as a compliment!). I've also prepared a brief guide to the HE Bill which has gone out to JCR presidents for information and is available on the web. F&F has also been encouraging people to email their home MPs (there is a draft letter and instructions on the ousu website), as well as to join the mass nation wide emailing of Charles Clarke and Alan Johnson (which is proving a huge success). I've been doing a lot of press on the whole issue as well, including an article for the Guardian education supplement on Tuesday and some stuff for Sky News. I also spoke at a public meeting about fees in the House of Commons. On the day of the vote, F&F will be going down to Parliament to shout, lobby and generally kick up a fuss. Everyone is welcome to join.

Rent A lot of time spent on this as well. The report into costing commissioned by the estate bursar's committee was misreported in the Times. I've read it and produced a rent negotiation pack for CR officers, as well as run a training session on rent negotiations. I hope both these things proved useful. I've also met some college bursars and CR presidents to discuss the situation in their colleges.

Clubs and Socs I would like to get this committee off the ground this term. We've just appointed a cochair, and are looking into ways of providing good quality services for clubs and societies. Database of rooms on the web, clubs and socs listings, mailboxes in OUSU, multimedia material, etc

College Inequality Again, this committee should get going in the near future. As the financial pressures on students increase - both from rent and fees - the issue of inequality between colleges becomes even more serious. Unequal grants, unequal rents, unequal opportunities. That's what we will be looking into.

City Council Towards the second half of last term I started attending Central Area Committee meetings, where issues to do with the area of the city where most students lived are discussed. They are very useful meetings - for example, I've been finding out quite a lot about the new licensing laws and will be passing that on to entz/bar reps in colleges. But I need to find a way to get student to give me their views on city council issues. I think the best plan is that when there is an issue that comes up in an area meeting that I think may be of interest to students, I'll tell CR presidents about it so they have a chance to discuss it in their CR meetings, and then bring a motion to OUSU council. I've started that with the street trading, though that is a bit last minute. I'd also like to get a few local councillors to speak at council. Support to common rooms Mail outs with posters, a guide to OUSU, rent packs, contacts, emailists, and lots of phone calls. Basically.

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New execs are so enthusiastic! Which is really nice.

Rodrigo Davies

V-P (Finance)

This vacation and first week has been largely housekeeping, clearing up and dealing with the Shop. I have had OUSU Cards distributed to pigeon holes since people were not coming to collect them from the Shop, and a last run of cards is now being produced to catch all of those who signed up late or whose applications were delayed by the huge workload involved in entering students' details onto the OUSU Live system. Thankfully it would appear that by the end of first week over 4,000 people should have their OUSU Cards which proves the overall success of what was an ambitious new initiative. I hope that the processes can be refined and thought out some more in time for next year so that the operation can be slicker and even more effective. Krasi, a resident driver, has been absolutely superb and is one of the most devoted servants to the Student Union I could have ever hoped for. With his help I have also been able to resolve logistics issues concerning delivery of The Oxford Student that, contrary to some apocryphal reports, is now more cost effective and of far better value for the students who elected me than was ever previously possible using nearly a full day's sabbatical time to drive the van.

The Shop was in its penultimate day of a sale at the time of writing, a move that has been overall a good success and was effective in raising revenue for OSSSL in order to ease the restructuring of the company and potentially the reopening of the Shop in another form later on during the term. I was pleasantly surprised to see that student press coverage of this development was reasonably accurate and fair, especially since such a decision is based on long-term thinking and is perhaps not as easy to justify given the short term consequences. The decision to restructure was not taken lightly, and in my opinion would have been a great deal more painless had it been taken two or three years ago. Unfortunately in a very competitive stationery market dominated by the big players it has been proving increasingly difficult for a number of years to run such an operation without incurring a loss to the organisation. Ultimately it was this loss that the Student Union could not justify and possibly should not have continued to justify over the previous few years. This gradual decline was also undermining the quality of service that the Shop could provide to students and this in itself contributed to the cycle of decline. Nevertheless, the obvious loss of a direct service to students is something that I regret but hope can be restored in another format. Ideas that have already been suggested are using the Shop as a space for selling FairTrade products, or possibly targeted sales of specific items. However, any such decision will have to be taken with a firm business plan in mind and following a great deal of consideration. I am very open to suggestions from anyone who wishes to give them – feel free to email finance@ousu.org.

Entz is moving along nicely in terms of planning and we're looking at more events that involve JCRs directly. Scratch will be continuing as last term, and I have every confidence that it will continue to be a success both financially and in terms of quality of event.

Among my plans for the term is a review of appointments to publications and events and our handling of 'project employees', along with preparing the Amended Budget which I think might have a few surprises but hopefully not too many nasty ones. I look forward with some interest to the findings of the Future and Finance Review which I have no doubt will be controversial but will hopefully open up debate on OUSU's structural future – an issue that ultimately holds more potential for resolving our financial position than any stop-gap solution or even impressive increases in advertising revenue as has been achieved by the current Business

resolving our financial position than any stop-gap solution or even impressive increases in advertising revenue as has been achieved by the current Business Manager.

Rosie Buckland Opportunities)

V-P (Welfare & Equal

Things have been busy, as ever, and will hopefully get even more so this term, as 5th week sees OUSU's third diversity week. Publicity for the week will be out soon and I'm hoping to pidge everyone in the university a termcard as well, so do look out for that. At the end of the week, will be Future Outlook, the alternative careers fair, which this year is incorporating for Diversity Week, stalls and speakers on equality and diversity issues related to the workplace. On the equal opps campaigns, a social was held for all the campaigns on Thursday, where regulars and newcomers alike could pick up the termcards for all the campaigns, talk to the co-chairs and generally get involved. As I said last term, it really is imperative that jcr and mcr committee members get involved themselves and encourage other people to come along, as they do exist to be run by students, for students. Disabilities Action (meeting this term in OUSU on Thursdays at 4.00,) Anti Racism, (meeting on Wednesdays at 5.30) and Queer Rights (meeting in the Northgate Hall, the LGB Community Centre, on St Michael's Street on Thursdays at 5.30) certainly all have packed termcards. Events start with Holocaust Memorial Day next Tuesday, with a service at Wadham chapel at 5.30. All are welcome.

The Living Out Guide has been delivered to all colleges (if you want extra copies, just email me) and a talk open to all on Living Out was held in OUSU on Wednesday-this was well attended and was the first in a series of Student Advice Service talks on issues we're commonly asked into colleges to speak on. On the SAS, I'm looking into ways of monitoring it/requesting feedback and am also in the process of standardising the way in which casework details are kept and the service's statistics are given to council and university committees. As for more deliveries, I will be delivering the lgbt handbook when it returns from print and also the copies of the Survival Guide which weren't given out at fresher's fair. I've also ordered a stock of sexual health supplies (extra strong condoms, lube, dental dams and non-latex), which I'll be dividing up between colleges for welfare officers to come and collect from OUSU. I'll also be dividing up the free health authority condoms in the same way. Also going out to welfare, lgbt, equal opps, swd and em officers will be HCI forms for healthcare costs and the new 'Rough Guide to Welfare and Equal Opps'. This is the most exciting thing ever. I've amalgamated the old 'rough guide to welfare' basic content with information for the whole range of equal opps officers in crs, so that as well as listening skills, confidentiality, casework etc info, it also has stuff on being an lgbt officer etc. As such, it's replaced any other officer guides. It will also be invaluable for any crs looking to change or extend their range of posts, as it contains draft job descriptions, best practice and rebuttals to many frequently asked questions, so it may well be useful reading for cr presidents as well.

I've met with Elsa Bell from the Counselling Service recently and am looking into linking up colleges for peer support with her help. We also briefly discussed college provision for junior deans and may couple some training with Dan's survey of the role of junior deans in colleges. I've also met with Judith Finch, the University's Equal Opps officer, who has assured me that the advisory panels on harassment, childcare and disability will all be meeting this term. The long term strategy seems very much to be about incorporating equal opps within existing structures, with, for example, every head of department and departmental administrator receiving equal opps training. The most positive thing is probably the imminent appointment of a Dyslexia Support Worker. In general, pressure need to be kept up on university equal opps. Since being back. I've also met with the university security services, who will now be

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Catherine Wallis

V-P (Women)

This holiday I have been mostly...

Organising Finals Forums – which will take place this Hilary and Trinity in OUSU for all women students. We will hopefully have the OUSU Student Adviser to do talks which complement these on exam stress etc. (if you know of any good female tutors who may be interested in running one in their subject, please get in contact with me).

Organising the Women's Open Day – which will be held on Saturday 12th June (7th Week Trinity) in Keble College.

Liaising with various individual women across the University who have some projects they want to set up – more about that later.

Looking into self-defence classes for women, which a physio at the University gym has offered to run, so I'll be getting in touch with Women's Officers etc. asking them if they're interested in this (which has been very popular in the past).

Doing some background work on the Women's Campaign events for Diversity Week – the fantastic Women's Cabaret and fabulous Reclaim the Night March – if you want to be involved with either, do get in touch with me.

Reading the research from No Sweat about University merchandising, getting their advice on how to proceed with the campaign, talking to people on the street about their views on sweatshop labour etc.

Getting really annoyed with the Nightbus, as usual.

Writing to my MP several times about top-ups fees (he still hasn't replied).

Visiting a school (actually for another purpose, but I took the opportunity while I was there to deliver a little talk on what a good idea it was to consider applying to Oxford etc.)

Dan Paskins

V-P (Graduates)

Apart from a week and a half over Christmas and a week's holiday just after the end of last term, I've been about in the offices. By the 22nd December it gets awful quiet in the OUSU offices, I found out. Anyway, lots of exciting new things to report:

1. International student visa fees

Campaigning to highlight the problems that international students face and getting the situation improved is going to be a big part of this term. I've produced a visa extension fees campaign pack, let me know if you would like a copy. The plan is to draw together all the suggestions for how to reform and improve the system for coming to study in Britain and renewing the visa, and then present a report to the responsible minister.

2. MCR Prescom

MCR Prescom is intended as a forum for graduate common room presidents to meet up fortnightly and discuss issues of mutual interest. Its first meeting will be next week and it will be really useful, not least as another forum to raise issues of concern to graduate students, which I for one would find extremely helpful.

3. Diversity Week

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4. Finding a successor.

The turnout amongst graduates for the elections was abysmal. I shall be bringing proposals to either 3rd or 5th week council for how to run the election for VP (Graduates) and the two new graduate executive officers which I intend will result in a much higher turnout for the election.

5. Motions to council this week

I've put a motion to council this week to set up a Graduate Funding committee. The idea of this is to acknowledge that Finance and Funding doesn't have the time or resources to consider graduate funding issues, and thus we need a new committee for that. Please support the motion.

6. Local government training event

This seems to be cursed, as every time I set a date for it, something important and exciting comes up which means that I have to postpone it. Later in term, though, I shall be organising a workshop on the local council which explains how the council works, offers a chance to meet the councillors for the central area of Oxford, and a chance to discuss issues such as late licenses, street trading, student safety in the city centre, and anything else which the council is doing that you'd like to discuss. It will be about one hundred million times as exciting as all that makes it sound - more details soon.

7. University Council

I attended University Council, together with Helena and Emma, on Monday. There were some new members there, who obviously hadn't been informed that they were meant to look disapproving and disagree with whatever the student representatives said. As a result, we got a fair amount of support for raising concerns about Oxford's proposed collaboration with IBM, the way that the Oxford bursary system will operate if top-up fees are introduced, and the effect on access if the number of non-British students at Oxford is substantially increased. The Vice-Chancellor, unsurprisingly, disagreed with us on all of these issues, but it was encouraging for us (and irritating for him) that some of his colleagues were prepared to stick up for what we were saying. Long may this last.

Louise McMullan

V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

Academic Affairs: Academic Affairs committee this term is going well. 9 college officers came to the first of our training sessions and I hope that attendance increases as the term goes on. Our remaining sessions will be with the Junior Proctor in 3rd week and with Sonia Mazey, Senior tutor at Keble, in 7th week. College acaff officers should have received information on all of these sessions in their termly mailing. If not, please get in touch. In addition, in 5th week acaff committee will be replaced by one of this term's Student Advice Service talks (revision skills). This workshop is open to all students and will be on Wednesday of 5th week at 5pm in OUSU. Acaff's new co-chair, Steve Harper, has been working very hard and has agreed to take forward the libraries campaign as part of his responsibilities. Many thanks to him for single handedly running the first meeting of this term while I was in London. Data protection forms are still available from the OUSU offices for students who wish to request examiners' comments on their scripts. Having seen some of the comments students have received I am concerned about the state of record keeping in exam schools but also heartened by the detail that some examiners go into when marking scripts. I'm still talking to the University on the issue (despite sloppy Cherwell reporting) so I should have more to report to next council. Thanks to all those who came to the QAA briefing this week. Next Wednesday the agency will be talking to a group of 10 students (selected by Dan and I) about Oxford. This follows on from the student submission that was brought

next council. Thanks to all those who came to the QAA briefing this week. Next Wednesday the agency will be talking to a group of 10 students (selected by Dan and I) about Oxford. This follows on from the student submission that was brought to council at the start of michaelmas and will contribute to the QAA's institutional audit.

Target schools: This is a very busy term for target schools. Thankfully the handbook is off to print and the co-chairs have made good progress on our open days and regional conferences. Posters will be going out to colleges soon to advertise the easter schools visiting scheme and we'll be upping the amount of publicity we have in schools and FE colleges. We haven't had our first meeting yet but there's lots to cover – as well as looking for volunteers for our events and the mailing we're going to discuss a number of issues that have been in the press recently – race and admissions, videotaping interviews and standardised testing. The target schools budget is looking very healthy. Aside from the £15000 we successfully bid for as our portion of the block grant, we successfully bid for (from HEFCE's aspiration funds) £5000 for travel expenses (for those doing schools visits), £5000 to cover half of my sabbatical salary and £1300 for schools visits by the co-chairs to run alongside the regional conferences. The Alternative Prospectus is, however, a different story. The lack of Blackwell's sponsorship means that it is missing over £3000 to cover its production. This money is difficult to acquire, especially since the project is complete and further advertising is not an option. The prospect of having to sell the AP is not a pleasant one, but unless we can get funding from the University or another source, this will have to be further explored.

Josefa Henry-Bochan V-P (Charities and Communities)

Charity

Advert:

I am currently looking for someone over 21 who has been driving for 2 years who might like to drive the nightbus for RAG trips – particularly to go to Ireland in 9th week – email me on rag@ousu.org you'd be interested.

My vacation was taken up with quite a lot of charity events – but at least they were out of the office! During 9th week we held Tour of the North which raised £1380 for the NSPCC. We then went up to Edinburgh for New Year and raised £1000 for Cancer Research UK. Following that was the RAG conference which was attended by 27 Universities and 40 charities. It lasted for 3 days was (unlike many conferences) both cheap and useful. We bid to hold the 2005 conference and won – and I think it will be a great opportunity to get Oxford at the forefront of national RAG stuff – and basically it was great to see the potential for working with other universities. The RAG term is taking shape very well. We have great college reps, most of whom turn up to every meeting and cover most of the colleges and who are being great at organising their own events – Exeter, St. John's and several graduate colleges don't have reps so if anyone is interested please get in touch.

We're also getting quite a lot of people coming along who aren't reps or exec who just think its fun – which is great. We're organising weekly socials for the reps, committee and exec this term which I think will help to get everyone to work well together. Our termcard can be found on www.oxfordrag.co.uk but briefly it comprises:

EVENTS

Zodiac gig, The Biggest Blind Date ever, Mr and Miss Oxford, Sports Day, Rich/poor dinner, The Ultimate every college bar crawl and a St Patrick's Day trip to Ireland as well as lots of college events. We are also selling college pants in about 11 colleges at the moment and are having an online academic book sale.

RAIDS

Sat 1st week The Children's Trust (Oxford)

Sun 2nd week The Children's Trust (Oxford)

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Sat 1st week The Children's Trust (Oxford)

Sat 2nd week Anthony Nolan (Reading)

Sat 4th week Wateraid (Oxford)

Sat 5th week Anthony Nolan (Oxford)

Sat 5th week Marie Curie Cancer Care (Bristol)

Sat 6th week Help the Aged (Oxford)

Sat 8th week Meningitis Research (Oxford)

9th week Meningitis Research St. Patrick's Day trip to Ireland

I have also been working on the RAG mag to be ready for RAG week (2nd-3rd week of Trinity Term). Plans for RAG week are underway...

RAG meetings are every Monday this term at 5pm in OUSU – everyone is welcome.

See www.oxfordrag.co.uk for details.

Community

The main focuses of the Community and One World committees this term are:

Getting students to volunteer in local hospitals

Organising the Alternative Careers and Volunteering Fair to be held in 5th week and producing the Future Outlook booklet.

Promoting Fairtrade with the aim of getting Fairtrade University status

Improving the Oxford get Involved website.

As well as various other community initiatives and whatever we decide to do over the coming term.

I have had great feedback from the hospitals about the help they have had from our students and I am always looking for new recruits. Community/One World meetings are in OUSU at 12pm every Thursday this term.