

## Reports to Council

1<sup>st</sup> Week Council Hilary Term 2014

Tom Rutland

President

Hi Council,

### Strategy and Finance

I have been meeting individual key members one-on-one in the past few weeks and lobbied them extensively to support increasing OUSU's budget (to focus on the areas of academic representation for students, the Student Advice Service, greater website capacity and building relationships with clubs & societies). The University has agreed to consider our funding on a rolling 3-year basis and as a 'separate item', which means that we'll no longer be seen as part of the University's own services. Having been endorsed by the Education Committee, our request for a budget increase will be considered by the Budget Sub-committee of the University tomorrow (Thursday), so I will provide an oral update on meetings so far.

### Fighting cuts to the Student Opportunities Fund

The Student Opportunities Fund was introduced to promote fair access to higher education and support disabled students at university. The University of Oxford receives £600,000 from this fund, all of which is under threat. We have joined the campaign by NUS to save the fund, and have been using Twitter to promote the issue. Cherwell have covered story in their latest issue. We've received support from one Oxford MP (Andrew Smith MP, Oxford East) and are waiting to hear back from another (Nicola Blackwood MP, Oxford West & Abingdon). This comes soon after the government cut £150m of undergraduate access funding in the form of the National Scholarship Programme. Join the campaign by tweeting along with us, including #SaveStudentOpportunities in the tweet!

### Communications

OUSU's ability to communicate with its membership has traditionally been hampered by its under-resourcing. We have interviewed candidates for the Digital Communications Officer post, and will hopefully have made an appointment by the time this report is orally delivered. We're developing a communications and engagement strategy to make sure that OUSU makes the most of this new opportunity.

### Other stuff

I've met with lots of new JCR Presidents and have been assisting a few on issues regarding rent and other college-based campaigns. We met with CUSU before Christmas and had some really helpful discussions on campaigning for bigger block grants, proper SU buildings and much more. I've met with all new members of the Part-Time Exec that I work closely with, and we've got lots of plans for working closely with each other and with JCRs and MCRs in the coming year. More on that soon.

### Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday to OUSU (1974-2014)

Look out for more information about how we'll be celebrating 40 years of OUSU, and what the future holds for OUSU. Be a part of our future: get involved, spread the word about what we do and, as ever, get in touch with the team. You can contact me at [president@ousu.org](mailto:president@ousu.org).

Tom

**Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme (PSS)**

In 9th week MT, the University announced they had won £3m from HEFCE to be directed at underrepresented UK/EU students in entering Masters courses. This, along with £750k that the University has pledged themselves, will be spent on Masters scholarships based on socioeconomic criteria, the Springboard programme for women, and internships for undergraduates and graduates. I am pleased to say OUSU was involved in the shaping of this bid and continues to be involved in the execution of these funding programmes as part of the PSS Steering Group.

More info here: [http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news\\_stories/2013/131209.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_stories/2013/131209.html)

**Masters Survey**

In TT 13, MCRs and OUSU conducted a survey of student satisfaction of Masters courses. OUSU presented the results to the University last term who immediately began discussions with the departments where there was cause for concern. OUSU will be following up on this and, with further talks with the University, is considering undertaking another survey for TT 14. Much thanks goes to Dansie, MCR President at Linacre, for the hard work in collating student responses.

**International Festival**

Preparation of the event is going well due to early planning and getting input from OUSU's International Students' Campaign committee, OUSU's International Students' Officer, and the Student Information and Advisory Service. Promotion of the event should begin very soon.

**Immigration Bill Awareness**

Communication with common room Presidents and common room International Student Reps has led to 144 international students, so far, filling in a survey to show their disapproval of the bill.

**Student Representation**

Rachel Pickering, Vice-President (Access and Academic Affairs) and I have drafted a paper that will, in its final version, be submitted to the University. The paper requests that the departments appoint, from existing staff, one person who is the 'student rep lead'. They will be responsible for the department's supportive management of the JCC/GJCC ((Graduate) Joint Consultative Committee).

**Bike Safety:**

Following a request from a student, I've created a page on our website on Bike Safety and Security, including a student testimonial. Share share share! <http://ousu.org/advice/transport/bike-safety/>

**HIV and Sexual Health:**

After our successful testing sessions last term, I've created a survey to get feedback on this event, so that we can work closely with the GUM clinic to provide improved testing sessions in the future.

**#SafeSex:**

Sarah and I are working on a sexual health campaign, which we are hoping to launch in Trinity Term. We have lots of information and myth-busting, but would like to tie this to a permanent change we can campaign for. What would you like to see done differently for sexual health in Oxford? Let us know!

**Linking Up:**

I've met with staff from Lifeline, Terrence Higgins Trust, Students Against Depression and Thames Valley Partnership to look at exciting opportunities and ventures that we can work together on.

**Bits and Bobs:**

From meeting Chris, my successor, all of the new part-time exec and campaign chairs, to attending Mental Health First Aid training, to working on Living Out resources for next year, to interviewing the OxStu Deputy Editors, I've been keeping busy with this and that!

What do you want me to do next? Email [welfare@ousu.org](mailto:welfare@ousu.org) or tweet @OUSU\_WEO!

**Rachel Pickering**

**Vice President (Access & Academic Affairs)**

Hey Council ☺

Happy 2014 ☺ I hope you've all had a lovely festive break and collections have been ok! Here are a few of the things I'll be working on over this term. And as ever if you do want to pop in then I'd love to see you to chat about all things access and academic affairs-y ☺

### **Meet and Greet**

Over the next week or so I'm hoping to meet with all of the JCR Access and Academic Affairs reps for one-to-ones to chat about their plans, how I can support them etc. I've met 3 so far... (as of Friday of 0<sup>th</sup>) so just another 50 something to go!

### **Strategies for Access and Student Success (SASS)**

Over the course of this term the University will be filling out it's SASS, which is a document required by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). The SASS looks at:

- Evidence to support the University's approach to widening participation across the student lifecycle
- Co-ordination of activity across the institution
- Contribution to national priorities for widening participation

I will be contributing towards discussions in which we decide on our future priorities for access activity, and how we will fund these.

### **Student Led Teaching Awards (SLTA)**

Paula (our Operations Manager) and I met with Jen from the NUS last week who is helping us run the teaching awards and is the one who has granted us £1000 towards the cost of the awards. Planning is going really well, so watch this space for the opportunity to nominate soon - and if you are interested in running for the selection panel do let me know.

### **Alternative Prospectus (AP)**

The AP is very nearly there - Maeve and Laura, our editor and designer have done an amazing job and we'll be sending it to the printers in less than a month ☺ I've been co-editing and really enjoying reading all the sections - it's looking to be a great AP and resource for prospective students.

### **Computers in Exams and International Opportunities Survey**

Thanks to everyone who filled this in, I had a staggering 423 responses which I am now starting to analyse and will be writing into a report for the University. I will upload the report to the website once it's written and keep you up to date with what the University responds etc.

If you have any questions for me about this report or anything else, you're always welcome to get in touch with me at [access@ousu.org](mailto:access@ousu.org). Also you can add me on twitter (@OUSU\_AcAff) and I'll make sure to keep tweeting about access and academic affairs issues and events and that you might be interested in :D.

Rachel

Hello,

This term is when, according to my NUS training, sabbatical officers are at their most powerful - so I look forward to seeing what can be achieved over the next 7 and a half weeks. I hope that reading what I have been up to over the past 22 working days will give you a decent taste of what I'll be working in this next, powerful, term...

### Community

- I attended a meeting of local stakeholders to discuss the Christmas Light Festival that took place over three days last term. This meeting was set up because some business owners and college officials were very unhappy about the lack of consultation before the event and the significant increase in the size of the event. I made it clear to the group that, on the whole, students enjoyed the event and though some may have been adversely affected by noise the event should continue, particularly since this year 105,000 people were estimated to have attended. If any of you did have any problems last term because of road closures or noise because of this event, please let me know.
- I responded to the City Council's Draft Community Engagement Plan making it clear that I thought there should be reference to how the City Council plans to engage with students over the next few years. There was reference to the large number of students in the city, but a disappointing lack of thought as to how to engage with us.
- I attended the regular Community Safety Partnership meeting, where I discussed plans to expand the size of the Community Warden scheme, from 8 wardens to 10, and the joint work that is now going ahead between Oxford Brookes University, OUSU and the Council on a new project - the House Champions Scheme.
- I chaired another meeting of the Student Community Group in OUSU. We discussed the work of the Wardens, OUSU elected officers and other students towards creating an Oxford Tenants Union. The BIG tenants Union meeting will be happening on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February from 6.30pm in the City Council Chambers.

### Environment and Ethics

- I met with David Lawrence (bringing a motion to council this week) to discuss Fairtrade and how he, and some others, could begin to campaign on this issue
- I hope that all of the JCR Presidents in the room responded to Tom's email about the Common Room Information System because I will be using that to help compile an up to date list of E&E reps - something that we have been lacking.
- I have met with the University to discuss the Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaign and helped the campaign draw up the motion that is coming to OUSU Council this week.

### RAG

- The fundraising totals for last terms events but it looks likely that, thanks to the hard work of the RAG team and previous VP C&C's, RAG enjoyed a record amount of income last term - details will follow when accounts are finalised.
- I spent a good part of the end of last term working with the RAG Exec on planning this terms events.
- I've also been working on getting ready for the RAG Ball recruitment, applications are now open.

### Living Wage

- The University now takes the Living Wage Campaign seriously; they agreed to raise the wages of the directly employed staff to a Living Wage for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year running.
- I have been invited to speak to the facilities managers for every single department on the merits of the Living Wage and I hope this will prove a fruitful meeting, and that more departments will make the decision to increase the pay of their indirectly employed staff to a Living Wage

That's about it.



Heya council,  
Here's a brief overview of what I've been up to since last term.

### **Women's Leadership Development Programme**

I've trained the peer facilitators who co-ordinate the family group sessions in the programme - these women were all amazing, and I'm so happy to have them on board.  
I've finalised the trainers, venues and dates, and put together the workbook for participants. I'm really excited about the programme and cannot wait to get started! This was something I promised in my manifesto, so I'm really happy to be able to run it again.

### **Contraception**

We're hosting a debrief for the C Card trial schemes, to try and make the scheme successful for when the local NHS introduces it.  
Charlotte and I are working with Sexpression (a student group that does consent-positive sex education in schools) to put together information for students on less frequently discussed topics of sexual health - e.g. around the sharing of sex toys.

### **It Happens Here**

I've organised training with Rape Crisis South London for the group. Usually costs up to £800 but we got it for free! Hooray!  
I've been planning anti-violence valentine's week with the committee, which is looking like a really exciting week. Convened the grassroots group, which does work on distributing the zine, publicity and organising events in college. It's a great network for raising awareness and increasing provision for students that experience sexual violence.

### **Consent**

Worked on extending consent workshops by having new ones to run with It Happens Here and the Oxford Radical Forum, so that students that did not have an opportunity to participate in freshers' weeks can have a chance to come and take part. There's going to be one on Tuesday the 11th February in Jesus college (thanks to Leo for booking me the room) and do think about coming!  
I've been spreading the word to other women's officers in other student unions, so they can work on similar things elsewhere.  
Supported Eden Tanner, the brilliant new graduate women's officer, on getting compulsory consent workshops in graduate communities. This was a goal of her election campaign, so it's really rewarding to be able to help her to act on it.  
Finally, I've trained more facilitators this week, so they can participate in future workshops in freshers' weeks and organise workshops in their own communities.

### **Sexual Violence**

Sexual Assault Referral Centre access is currently very limited for Oxford students, so I've been working with students in Teddy Hall and staff in St Hughs to introduce the idea of a college-run taxi schemes.  
Continued working with the Equality and Diversity Unit of the university after our very successful meeting between It Happens Here and the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education to increase better provision. They've let us know that they've taken our concerns about the lack of policy very seriously and are doing work to put something together, and is currently in consultation with lawyers to make sure it's all done properly.  
They've also worked hard to provide training for sexual harassment advisors over the course of the term, which has been a priority of mine since taking office. The first harassment advisors will be being trained this term!  
I've also been in communication with the local Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) about who they can be more accessible to students - this is largely around publicising common transport routes, as our local SARCs are pretty far away.

### **Diverse Images (aka Women on Walls)**

Done preliminary work on putting together a proposal with the Equality Diversity Unit to the Vice-Chancellor's Diversity Fund to promote diverse images within the university, particularly within prestigious buildings like the exam schools.

### **Student Parents**

Writing a proposal with the Assessor to go to hardship committee about improving hardship funding for student parents, particularly those which do not get the childcare grant from the government (basically all student parents). Bearing in mind the expense of childcare, this could help student parents immensely in the future.

### **Women's Officers**

Spoke at St Johns Women's lunch with their women's officer, Siwan, about sexual harassment policies and zero tolerance, and will be supporting their work to better support students who experience harassment. Provided information and resources for St Hilda's gender equality week.

#### Finals Forums

I've supported Brasenose in getting some for their college. They're really valuable for closing the gender gap at finals, so getting them into more colleges is key. If you want one let me know!  
Worked with Eden to extend these for students on one-year masters courses, which also have a gender gap. Were thinking about piloting them this year, and assessing the appetite for these in MCRs.

Sarah

### PART TIME OFFICERS

**Dan Templeton**

**LGBTQ Officer**

Over the next term I will be working on creating a clear picture of the provision of LGBTQ Reps throughout colleges. Using this information, I will then begin work on ensuring graduate provision of reps, LGBTQ Rep voting rights, welfare training and sexual protection access. I will also be meeting with the president of the LGBTQ Society to discuss collaboration between the campaign and the society. Finally, I will be working on publicising LGBT History Month and helping in the organisation of Oxford Pride.

**Lucy Delaney**

**Women's Campaign Officer**

So far I have planned eight WomCam Monday meetings this term, including discussions on inter-wave feminism, feminism and faith and we're in the process of coupling up with It Happens Here for an anti-violence valentines day card making session, and am working with wonderful committee to put everything together.  
In addition, we are continuing to develop our Wednesday working groups started in Michaelmas, led by each member of the committee, which target specific women's issues. Among them, we have an asylum seekers group, a black women's group and an everyday feminism group.  
I have also supported the VP for Women to develop the leadership development programme by booking the rooms and organising the venue.  
Finally, I've responded to student, local and national press to raise the profile of women's issues in Oxford.

**Emily Silcock**

**Community Outreach and Charities Officer**

Hiya Council,  
Hope you all have a good Christmas.  
I've been working with Dan on the issue of homelessness in Oxford. We've been working on a campaign against the 38% cuts in the County Council's homelessness budget and I've also exploring the possibility of a further reaching campaign. I've got various meetings with people from homelessness charities and groups in Oxford to try and get a picture of what's going on and whether this is a good idea, as well as getting in contact with national homelessness charities and student groups at other universities in order to share ideas.  
I've also had meetings at the OxHub about Student Volunteering Week (6<sup>th</sup> week) and will also have had one with their Working Group on Students by the time you're reading this  
Happy 1<sup>st</sup> week!  
Emily

**Sophie Terrett**

**Rent and Accommodation Officer**

So far I have:  
- Communicated with national rent campaigns, specifically the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts  
- Continued to facilitate the Oxford Tenants Union, planning the first meeting in February

This term I hope to:

- Update the rent negotiation pack
- Investigate subsidised vacation storage
- Continue to facilitate the Oxford Tenants Union
- Update the accommodation section of the OUSU website
- Continue to work with colleges in their rent negotiations
- Update the 'Living Out' guide.

**Will Neaverson**

**Common Room Support Officer**

I have met with the OUSU President to discuss how we can improve the support OUSU can offer to Common Rooms. I'll be working to improve the regularity of contact between OUSU and OUSU reps in colleges. I'm also hoping to restart the common room database. If anyone has any feedback from the last one, please do get in touch with me to let me know your thoughts ([commonrooms@ousu.org](mailto:commonrooms@ousu.org)). Finally, if any OUSU reps feel they would like a one-on-one meeting, whether you're new, want to know more about OUSU and what it does, or have feedback from your college on how we should be doing things, please email me.

**Annie Teriba**

**Access & Admissions Officer**

I'm excited to be joining the team at OUSU and the term ahead looks really promising. This week I met with Rachel (VP AcAff) to discuss plans going into Hilary term. This term I will be focusing on four areas:

- I will be planning a mythbuster booth, which we hope to have set up for open days in Trinity
- I will be speaking to college access officers about the possibility of setting up Online mentoring schemes
- I will be meeting with Debate Mate and Rare to discuss a partnership with OUSU and will set up a student mailing list for possible volunteers
- I will be meeting with one of the co-chairs of CRAE to discuss collaboration on access work specifically for BME students and hope to foster a link over the coming term

**Xavier Cohen**

**Environment & Ethics Officer**

Hello Council. A key part of my work at the moment as E&E Officer is trying to create an E&E reps list of all those elected by JCRs and MCRs - something that the E&E campaign has been lacking recently. Having these names will facilitate the spreading of the existing E&E Divestment and Sweatshop Free campaigns - the former of which is presenting a motion to the first HT council - as support will be able to come from colleges, for example, through motions calling for the divestment of central and college investment in fossil fuels. It will also allow me to build a wider team through which we can campaign to encourage colleges to secure long-term investment in sustainable energy and energy-saving devices.

**Tessa Frost**

**Graduate Welfare Officer**

So far as Grad Welfare Officer I've had a brief orientation with Charlotte and discussed some ideas. I'm going to spend the next few weeks getting to know the existing welfare provision for grads and identify the gaps a bit better, including examining the existence/lack of welfare officers on MCRs.

**Yajing Xu**

**International Students' Officer**

Since I was elected last term, I've been giving comments for student newspaper coverage on the NHS bill by the government. Also, I've been liaising with Garlen to plan for International Festival and will continue to help.

For this term I'd also like to investigate more into opportunities for international students to adapt to the tutorial system and critical thinking, on which Garlen has provided me some material.

- Designed and circulated survey about OUSU welfare supplies to make sure that we are supplying common rooms with what they want, and will look at the responses to this shortly, to see if we can provide anything else
- Wrote a section on Health and Welfare for the Alternative Prospectus
- Over the next term I will be contributing to a sexual health campaign, aim to produce a list of welfare services in Oxford for welfare officers and work with campaigns around Oxford in putting on awareness events

I will be looking forward to working with CRAE throughout the term, particularly in terms of the Race Summit that will be happening on the 10th March. In the wake of the Mark Duggan case, I am also interested in planning an event that explores the problems of institutionalised racism in the police force, perhaps collaborating with the Oxford Radical Forum. I will look to working with CRAE in trying to have a curriculum at Oxford that is more inclusive of BME voices, perhaps through providing alternative reading lists. In terms of access, I will make an effort to contact different Access schemes for BME students and hopefully collaborate with the Access and Admissions Officer in ensuring equal access opportunities for BME students.

**Here is a summary of the work I have done in preparation for this term:**

1. Met with Nick to discuss the official handover of the position.
2. Discussed my goals with Garlen along with an update of current endeavors.
3. Set up a meeting with Mary Henes to discuss graduate involvement in the Brilliant Club which seeks to provide tutorials for gifted students, led by doctoral and post-doctoral researchers.

**My plans for Hilary term:**

1. Improve Departmental Student Representation. It is important that students communicate their programme satisfaction to their departmental (or sub-departmental) representatives in order to uphold Oxford's standards of academic excellence. The issue is that many students don't know who their representative is- or that they even have one. For these reasons, we would like to implement the following:
  - All divisional, departmental, and sub-departmental representatives should have a picture and contact email clearly visible and easily accessible on their department's website.
  - All JCC committees, comprised of sub-departmental reps within a common department, should have a constitution that includes: the purpose of the committee and a brief job description of the representatives. The minimal responsibility of the representatives should be to contact their students once a term; most already do this.
2. Improve the Confirmation of Status Requirements. The issue is that many students stay at the university well beyond their 3.5 years of funding. This creates doubt in their ability to graduate, generates financial issues, and prevents them from starting their careers. The first year transfer viva is designed to check that students are on track to graduate in a timely manner. However, some department requirements are minimal, preventing students from being held accountable for their work. The following suggestions can help students obtain the necessary feedback to graduate on time:
  - Interviews with professors. Discussing one's progress with a professor (who is not involved with their daily work) helps students to justify the importance of their work on a higher level.

This also provides an opportunity for students to prove that they understand the fundamentals of their research.

- Giving a talk. Students need to be able to communicate their research to a larger audience, and transfer talks can prepare them for more important conferences.
- Writing a Report.