



reports to 1st week council trinity 2004

John Blake

President

The summer is obviously a very long time, and a great deal has happened, but I will try to keep this as short as possible. If I forget things, I will report them orally in Council.

OUSU Finance

The success of numerous revenue-making projects, which I am sure Laura will discuss, has altered significantly the financial position of OUSU over the course of the summer. Whilst I think we should all remain firmly with our feet on the ground and be careful in our use of this money, and judiciously ensure that our on-going projects are successful, the situation for OUSU is rosier than for some years. Many people have worked a great deal harder than I have to achieve this outcome – not just the other sabs and the Business Manager, but also those without full-time status or nice titles. In particular, the heroic time and energy commitment of Gareth Lloyd should be acknowledged, as well as the above-and-beyond involvement of Exec officer Chris Allan in the organisation of parts of the Freshers' Fair. I personally am particularly grateful to Kim Hardman, who has been an excellent Press Officer, whilst also putting time into other OUSU projects. OUSU owes a big thank you to all of them, and others whom I haven't named, for putting us where we are now.

OUSU Affiliation

I am in the process of preparing a new paper regarding the OUSU affiliation situation to the Joint Committee of Council with Student Members. I will be consulting with Common Rooms over the course of the next few weeks to try and put together something which argues the case well, and with which we are all happy.

The University

Within the University, much has changed in the course of the summer. The arrival of Dr John Hood, our new Vice Chancellor, seems set to herald quite seismic shifts in the management, particularly financial management, of the University as a whole. Of particular interest is his chairing of a review into the governance of the University, about which a motion appears in this Council. Whilst OUSU should be careful in its approach to these possible changes, they do represent a chance for students to voice their opinions directly about the orientation of the University over the next few years, an opportunity I think we should seize eagerly.

NUS and Aldwych Group

As President, it is my responsibility to manage our relationship with the wider student movement, and ensure Oxford's view is represented nationally. I have to report that I am not very happy with either of the two organisations through which we achieve this. The Aldwych Group, the Student Unions of the Russell Group, is an inherently elitist concept and one which I am extremely uncomfortable with – as far as I can see, it is not a group that OUSU has ever formally endorsed through Council, only through the attendance of the OUSU President and latterly, the Vice President (Access and Academic Affairs) at its meetings. Its original purpose, of driving overground the Russell Group and its agenda, seems achieved, so what is it supposed to do now? Certain members of the Group seem to want to use it as an alternative to NUS (of which more below), as a campaigning tool, although one for polite lobbies, rather than demos – although at least one member seems to want to use it as a faction *within* the NUS, which seems even less palatable to me. At any rate, its purpose seems questionable and our involvement with it suspect. I have not had a great deal of time to consider the issue yet, amidst other pressures, but I will be looking at it over the coming weeks, and would appreciate the opinions of others who take an interest in these matters before making any firm recommendations to Council.

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The NUS has irritated me greatly over the course of the summer. I will give a full oral report to Council on the events of the Reform Conference which I attended in Leeds, and highlight my disquiet with the moves being made within the NUS over its structures and direction. On a related note, the co-ordinated affiliation strategy remains in place in Oxford, but, it would seem, has yet to filter through to the NUS – I was to have had a meeting in Freshers' Week with the NUS President, but she was delayed in Wales, so I have been unable to discuss what is going on with her face-to-face. All of this raises in my mind serious questions about Oxford's position within the NUS – personally, I remain passionately committed to the idea of a national union for students, but serious questions must be asked about whether the one we've got is the one we want.

Elected Officers' Resignations

OUSU's Vice President (Graduates)-elect, Roland Enmarch, was so successful in his academic work that he was offered a post-doctoral placement at the University of Liverpool. He therefore resigned, and the Executive have co-opted Siobhan McAndrew in his place. I wish both Roland and Siobhan well in their new roles. Ian Caddy, a member of the part-time Executive, has deferred for a year on health grounds, and has resigned. I'm sure we all wish him well soon. Frederik Herzberg has also offered his resignation as a Graduate Executive Officer as a result of academic commitments. Possibly, by the time you read this, all of the Executive will have resigned, bought an island in the Bahamas, and be living it up, drinking badly-made cocktails out of coconuts. But I doubt it.

The Fourth Estate

Congratulations for getting this far in the report. As President, I'm also responsible for press management, and I keep a close eye on the press for stories regarding Oxford. Of note over the summer was the release of the information that more than half of Oxford's colleges are in the red, including its wealthiest, St. John's – these figures are something of a red herring, although when examined properly, they offer further conclusive proof of our College Inequality Report. The animal research centre will continue to go ahead, despite one construction company pulling out as a result of intimidation – OUSU is committed to ensuring that none of its members experience harassment as a result of the construction of this building: if you do feel worried in any way, please contact advice@ousu.org and speak the Student Advice Service. Our HATs (History Admission Tests) apparently favour those who can be coached for them over those who cannot – OUSU has policy regarding the introduction of admissions testing, and we will be following this issue closely. Michael Beloff has managed to instil in the minds of everyone that Oxford will be private by the end of the next decade – I firmly believe OUSU should beg to differ, so see the latter motion. In the student press, OUSU has once again received its customary kicking from the *Cherwell* – plaudits are due to Louise Radnofsky for having written the story "OUSU successfully has advertising for dangerous organisation removed from welfare diary" in a tone to imply that we had done something wrong. Still, you can't win them all.

Laura West

V-P (Finance)

This summer I have spent my time working on the following projects:

Survival Guide – Currently printing, the Survival Guide will go directly into the pigeon holes of all new students extremely shortly. The mammoth efforts of Nicky and Linsey cannot go without mention here.

DA Guide – The DA guide is expected back from the printers imminently. Upon its arrival I shall work together with the Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) to ensure its effective distribution.

LGBT Handbook – The LGBT Handbook suffered from quite substantial technical difficulties. However, it is now being printed and will be available shortly.

Graduate guide – I am confident this publication will be of a high standard. Due to the efforts of my predecessor, we will be able to individually pigeon hole each graduate student their copy of the graduate guide in coming weeks.

Oxford Handbook – The release of the Handbook has been delayed in order to coincide with the fabulous new website, oxfordhandbook.com, I am confident that this comprehensive new service will be of great use to students. Peter Cardwell, Patrick Foster and Will Brown, thank you so

Oxford Handbook – The release of the Handbook has been delayed in order to coincide with the fabulous new website, oxfordhandbook.com., I am confident that this comprehensive new service will be of great use to students. Peter Cardwell, Patrick Foster, and Will Brown, thank you so much for your charismatic and brilliant editorship. Mention must also go to Charlie Brendon, Tom Raynor and Mary Morgan for their time and effort for the sake of the handbook.

The Oxford and Cambridge Careers Handbook – Unequivocally the largest project OSSL or OUSU has ever taken on, the OCCH this year stands as our flagship publication and a testament to our standards and abilities as a publishing house. This 350 full colour A4 book is the best careers resource anybody could hope to find. It is stunningly comprehensive, interesting, and packed with information and references to further resources. It is also beautifully designed and laid out. I can say all of this because its success is really nothing to do with me. The OCCH ‘team’ (and when I say team I really mean family) must take all the credit. Dan Finley was at all times the motor behind the project. Helped along by Zoe Flood, Nick Anstead, Patrick Foster, Gareth Lloyd and Kim Hardman, Dan has shown himself to be not only an excellent business man, but also an editorial and production genius. Those who tirelessly strived for perfection, even in the middle of the 21st all nighter in a row include Charles Brendon, Tom Raynor, John Dant, Mary Morgan, Rachel O’Brien, Rowenna Davis, Stefan Smith, Alex Beecroft, Anna Maybank, and Vish Srivastava. Much of the charm of the OCCH stems from the beautiful photography, by the lovely Matthew Bryant. My respect for this group of people is enormous. THANK YOU.

Termp planner – The termp planner has resurrected itself this year. A profitable publication and worthwhile service, it has suffered from the sheer quantity of publishing we have undertaken this summer. I am working it being distributed before the end of second week. I have no doubt that it will take pride of place on the walls of most students, despite its late release date, as it features an amazing panorama of Oxford, courtesy of photographic genius Matthew Bryant. However, rest assured, that the Hilary and Trinity termp planners will be ready for 0th week.

The OUSU Card – The interest the card attracts from potential advertisers is enormous, and as such this year will see the card grow. It will be pigged automatically to EVERY SINGLE OXFORD STUDENT. This includes graduates, mature students, international students, those at unaffiliated common rooms (like Oriol) and those at PPH’s. It carries more benefits than ever (including discounts at loads of shops in the city, thanks to Dan Finley), and thanks to the sublime Patrick Foster (and Matthew Bryant) it looks absolutely stunning.

The OxStu – The OxStu last week was a bumper 52 page edition, with lots of lovely colour pages and a fabulous 8 page OUSU pull out section to introduce the SU to the freshers’. We have also upped to quality of the paper so as to improve the quality of the paper. I am confident that the OxStu will continue to grow in stature and quality this term, and is in extremely safe hands with Patrick Foster and Peter Cardwell (editors), and Anna Maybank, Jennifer Adam, Emma Byrne (Deputy Editors) and Mary Morgan (Associate Editor). The OxStu team should be extremely proud of the results they have already achieved. Congratulations also to editors (and publishers) past and present; the OxStu has been nominated for Guardian Student Newspaper of the year.

Freshers’ Guide – The Freshers’ Guide went out just after the announcement of the A level results. This year’s guide was spot on, put together almost single handedly by editor Rachel O’Brien. I am extremely pleased with the standard of this year’s guide, particularly when it is compared to last year’s. Mary Morgan and Patrick Foster also deserve credit for the success of this publication.

Freshers’ Fair – Went beautifully. Thanks to all the stewards for their help. Steve and Alison did a fantastic job and their report will yield more details.

Entz – Zoo. How it has grown. Freshers week saw very nearly 7 thousand students attend Zoo entz events, which took place at four different venues, Park End, The Studio, The Bridge and Jongleurs. Zoo Entz is provided solely for Oxford Students. This term sees a line up of four very different nights.

Zoo @ Park End (Wednesday) – Having already got off to a fabulous start in freshers’ week, Zoo went on to prove itself to be a regular crowd pleaser in 1st week. Offering cheap, quality checked entz with good drinks deals, Zoo has clearly found a place in Oxford Student life already.

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Filthy Friday @ The Studio (Friday) – Bringing Oxford Students the cheesiest cheese around, Filthy Friday is a great night out. We have also been able (thanks to the kind folk at Ben and Jerry's) to bring you free ice cream at the night up to now, and we hope to continue this as a regular feature.

Scratch @ Thirst (Sunday) – With a fabulous new trio who specialise in Latin Jazz, Zoo continues to bring Oxford the premier jazz experience. Not forgetting the cheap and delicious cocktails

Taboo @ Thirst (Tuesday) – Taboo offers a chance to do something a bit different. Alternating between speed dating nights, and a cappella, all the profits go to Charity RAG. We have already matched the fine folk of Corpus, Christ Church and Hertford, and hope to offer lots more students the chance to have a little fun and meet people from other colleges over the course of the term.

Its Zoo o'clock.

Gowns – The brain that is Daniel Finley suggested that we sell cost price gowns to our students this year. We have been able to supply nearly 2000 students with the cheapest cap and gown around, offering a massive saving when compared with the high street price. This is a great service that I am confident will from strength to strength in years to come.

Champagne – We were approached by a company this year who asked us if we wanted him to make personalised bottles champagne and to then make them available to our students. Up to now, we have only offered special commemorative magnums for students matriculating, We are planning to offer 75cl bottles for finalists over the coming year. Yet another service which we feel enhances the work of the SU.

Finance – Various commercial projects have meant that the budget this year looks better than previously expected. We do have a slight cashflow problem at present however. My next report will focus more on finance when I have more time to assess our position.

IT – There a number of IT issues in the SU at the moment. We may need a new server incoming months. The present plan is to keep the IT ticking over until Christmas when a full audit can be carried out and a long term IT strategy effectively developed.

The work of the Vice President (Finance) is never done. The current workload is staggering. The team of people who provide our key services have worked the most ridiculous hours this summer, on average 100 or 130 hours a week on a regular basis. The current situation is intolerable and something needs to be done immediately.

The Business Manager currently has chronic fatigue and 'flu, and yet is still working 22 hour days, as he did on Wednesday. (5am until 3am). This is unsustainable and needs to be rectified now. The workload of services, advertising, entz, finance and IT, which the VPF and Business Manager share is simply too great, if each is to be done properly.

My utmost thanks go to this year's Business Team, Daniel and Gareth particularly. The lengths that the business team went to, even where they have a minimal stake in the SU when compared with elected officers staggering. Thanks also to Alex, Steph and Dan, who were a joy to work with (except when Patrick was around!).

Finally, thanks to Bex, Linsey, Nicky, Siobhan, Ian and John. Massive hugs and wet sloppy kisses for Chris Allan and Dan Simpson, without whom I would certainly have died in freshers' week.

Nicky Ellis
Opportunities)

V-P (Welfare & Equal

I have just deleted the somewhat misleading paragraph about the importance and beauty of short reports, which I wrote in good faith two hours ago.

The Student Advice Service (SAS).

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The Student Advice Service (SAS).

Much of the summer has been taken up with casework. I have been very surprised by the amount the service is used, and it has certainly gone up in the past couple of years- our predecessors' good advertising and general excellent handling of the Service has much to do with this. We've also got a big advertising campaign underway ourselves, and I'd really encourage JCR welfare and Academic affairs reps to use us as a source of support- the sooner we get cases, the more we can do.

It's one of the things we're paid to do and we have the time to handle cases, which can be difficult for common room officers with degrees to worry about.

At the beginning of September Annily Campbell, our student advisor, who had worked part time on a permanent basis as a part of the student advice service, resigned. She has moved to Southampton and so is now too far away. I was sad both to see Annily go before I had had the chance to work with her (she did not normally work during holidays), and that this happened so late in the summer (Annily gave slightly more than her full month's notice; it was not her fault that the past month is one of our busiest). I wish Annily every success in her new job and would like to thank her for the work she did for us. We have not yet appointed a new advisor, first because of timing- the end of the summer is the busiest period with all the preparations for freshers week.

Had we advertised properly, we would have been interviewing in freshers' week or thereabouts, which would have been deeply irresponsible, and secondly because the SAS sabs (the VP's Welfare & Equal Opportunities, Access & Academic affairs, Women and Graduates) felt they needed to work a full term and see for themselves how the service operated before being in a position to appoint another permanent member. As is standard practice after a resignation, we will now re-evaluate the service thoroughly; it has changed a great deal since Annily was appointed (something she herself said). Rosie proposed a motion overturning the policy in favour of a full time student advisor; her proposal was to keep the position part time, and get in other specialised caseworkers in to work with us where necessary. This is a pressing necessity; some of the case work we have seen even over the summer invites a level of technical and legal advice that we are not in a position to provide. However, the implementation of this policy has proved extremely difficult; Rosie hoped to see the new set up in place after the summer and this has not been possible; however, I'm confident that we can accomplish this transformation over the course of our time.

In line with this, I'm keen to get in specialists to provide trainings this year- to a certain extent we've done this before, but I'd like to develop it and build up long lasting relationships with outside organisations. I'm confident also that by doing things like this, we can make sure that students don't lose out in the term before we sort out our lack of student advisor.

I am also looking in to ways to set up an anonymised feed back system, both for the SAS and for the trainings sessions I organise; in the meantime, comment and criticism is always appreciated.

Publications

The other large chunk of my work over the summer. These were all finished in good time, but there have been some technical hitches with publication. As far as the survival guide goes, although we didn't intend this to happen, it means that we'll distribute it in a more rational manner- we're going to pidge it directly to the freshers, which I think will be more successful than handing it out along with everything else at freshers' fair. The LGBT guide and the Disabilities Action guide are both on their way. I'm so pleased with these; their quality and range is brilliant, and I hope that they'll be read by all sorts of people, like proper books. I'm really sorry both to the editors who worked so hard and to the common room officers that they're not here now; however I don't think this will do any long term damage. I'm compiling lists at the moment of who wants what; students are welcome to contact me directly for them; we can pidge out to college addresses, or send me an SAE for delivery to a postal address.

All the hitches with publications were avoidable; we need a permanent member of staff with technical expertise and a knowledge of the procedures that grows from year to year; this would also mean that we can take on editors with no publications experience, but great knowledge and ability in the relevant subject (I will remain always impressed with Mat Paskins, who marched in with a Quark manual and learnt everything from scratch, but sadly I think he's an exception!).

Please read the suggestion in the report we've asked council to look at, and help us come to a rational solution.

I'd also like to gather suggestions and criticisms of the survival guide throughout the year- I think some of it could do with a re-consideration, but I don't want my successor to be faced with a massive project on taking up office- some of it would better work as a rolling project across the year. Information on the Minorities Career guide is in the section below as it reflects on our handling of wider Equal Opportunities issues.

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Campaigning and Equal Opportunities-

Please read the Equal Opportunities section of the report. I apologise to council for not ensuring that term cards have been produced for the relevant campaigns; I take full responsibility for this myself- however, the decision stemmed from the complete lack of interest and energy associated with the campaigns. I do not wish to prolong this stagnation any further; I think it gives OUSU a bad name, campaigning a bad name, and risks alienating the very people it is meant to help, and, if we believe in any sort of society, risks damaging the lot of us. I have put forward proposals myself because we have tried consultation without inspiring any concrete suggestions- the F&F2 report confessed complete bewilderment where the equal opportunities campaigns were concerned, and in talking to people over the summer, I have encountered only paralysis and disillusionment where reform is concerned. I have an excellent set of proposals for the disabilities action campaign from Mat Paskins; Queer rights still has some energy. We need to wipe away this outdated bureaucratic set of structures so we can get on with these things.

I want to talk to and hear from as many people as possible- read the report, talk to me, email me, come in and see me. I do not have an inflexible (or even fully formed) idea of what ought to be done -this is the time to put forward new ideas. But we have to do something a little differently.

We were under mandate to produce a 'minority careers guide' to replace 'careers for queers' (a really successful publication which used to run before new legislation [the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003] made most discrimination in the work place on grounds of sexuality illegal; it was both a useful publication and a campaigning tool; much of the premise was to questionnaire companies on their policy re LGB employees. Once the legislation came into force this approach had to change- asking 'do your policies reflect the law' is no longer an exciting and useful exercise). When we started to do this, we stumbled (and thanks to the appointed editor Anna Maybank for having the nerve and good sense to point out the difficulties) – which groups, in this context, should we consider to be minorities? Members of a certain races and religions and sexualities, people with disabilities, women? But we have a genuine problem in certain professions- such as teaching- where men face equally serious bars and prejudice. Could you put men in a minority careers guide? Interesting and thought provoking as this might be, how then to get anyone to read it? Would men pick it up? Would most women even? Would you pick up a publication called 'the minorities career guide' even if I convinced you that you were in some sense a minority? This is not in any way to belittle the very real and dehumanising discrimination that many people still face through the prejudice and ignorance of others; however we ourselves must both avoid tokenism and make sure that we produce things that people will read. In the end we decided to produce a guide to the equal opps legislation, which can be a powerful tool, if and only if people understand it and know their rights. We decided in addition to vastly expand the 'minorities' section in the Oxford and Cambridge Careers handbook this year-

In there went the sort of articles that were perhaps expected to appear in the Minorities career guide. I think this sends a very important message: these are issues for everyone; 'diversity' whatever that might mean, is an issue for everyone (and if people could think carefully about what they think and want those difficult words, 'diversity' and 'multiculturalism' to mean, then we could make a lot more progress in our campaigning and our interaction with the university, even it meant that some people had to disagree). People belonging to a 'minority' group deserve to have the difficulties they face placed alongside the vast array of difficulties that everyone faces when looking for employment. Again, it's a society thing. I will note that this was not a unanimous decision, and if people think that the original mandate has been broken, then I will take responsibility for the decision and respond to any concerns and criticisms. Part of the reason I felt no qualms in interpreting the mandate liberally was that it was not at all clear. Please please can people, when bringing motions, be quite explicit about what they are instructing us to do- we can't read minds! Also, when something comes up for debate, don't vote for it until it is clear, and it makes sense.

Even if it's sabs proposing it!

And finally-

OUSU suffers from being composed of at most yearly elected representatives. It has to be; that's what it is. But given that, we need to find ways of ensuring continuity. Handovers are an essential part of a sabbaticals year. I think they need to be made a more important part of the part-time execs' job also. I am sure that the current full time sabbaticals will all be here for the full two week handover, as our own experiences have so highlighted the difficulties that occur when people are not there. But I would urge council to keep an eye on this, and to demand of its officers full commitment to the end of their term. I also want to get some display boards put up in meetings

handover, as our own experiences have so highlighted the difficulties that occur when people are not there. But I would urge council to keep an eye on this, and to demand of its officers full commitment to the end of their term. I also want to get some display boards put up in meetings room; I am convinced that if we stick up a record of our activities on the walls, then we can create enough of an illusion of collective memory. We can also cover up the nasty gaps in the paintwork. Other people have suggested a board on which we write the mandates we are under which require action- this is a very good idea and would allow a greater transparency and accountability. We're doing really well with entz and commercial activity in general. We really are at a turning point. We need to make sure that these activities keep growing, and that we provide entz and services that not only make money for students and stay cheap, but actually provide something better because they are student run. Entz can be safer and a lot cheaper. We can facilitate things that you lot want but can't do by yourselves. We can also make sure that we keep Entz free from sexism, homophobia and all these things, and we can prove ourselves capable of doing this without making them any less enjoyable. I'm very optimistic about our ability to do this.

By the end of this year, I want to see the Student advice service reach the level of expertise that Rosie anticipated for it, able to handle complex casework, including the legal and technical side of advice, which is often sadly lacking for students. If Entz and commercial activity keeps growing, we will be in an excellent position to expand and publicise these services.

I want OUSU to stop campaigning for the sake of campaigning and start campaigning as and when necessary, when students want it, in a focused way, without stagnation. If we can do this, I think we will be able to convince people that services and campaigns are not in conflict, but that they need each other- there is little point us spending many hours assessing and sympathising with the difficulties that a student with disabilities is facing within the university if we do not also exert pressure on the university to change it's policies and provisions so that the situation does not keep arising (that, believe it or not, is campaigning). To do this successfully we need to be brave enough to abolish long running campaigns that aren't working, establish new ones where necessary, and to focus our efforts on specific goals.

We also need to provide proper representation through structures designed for that purpose.

Thanks to anyone who is still reading, to the president, for creating with his election the most amazing surge of optimism, which we shouldn't forget throughout this year, to all the sabatticals, to the business manager, for working more hours than is humanly possible and still showing the patience of a saint, to all the part-time exec who have shown up or in some way maintained their interest and support, and Chris Allan and Gareth for an excessive amount of help and good temper, to the freshers' fair organisers for an impressively smooth operation (and for letting me have a walkie talkie for a few hours), To Jamie Frew, to all those Oxstu people and Patrick in particular, who fielded our queries and solved our computer problems way beyond the call of duty, to the editors of the publications and to all the people in colleges who have expressed their support and appreciation. Thanks especially to those college reps who have taken the time to feed me- keep it up and I might just survive my pitiful salary...

Read that report.

Rebecca Wilkinson

V-P (Women)

Hello council

Well this summer has been rather hectic, and I'm bound to have forgotten stuff, so please ask for clarification or just general questions.

SAFETYBUS/NIGHTBUS

Most of my thought process, and a lot of my time has been spent on the Nightbus scheme. I inherited a scheme which promised to run 7 nights a week, and was already sponsored for the forthcoming year. However, it lacked the drivers and was on dodgy insurance grounds. Following numerous meetings and emails with the University proctors office, insurance office and clubs/societies office, the general university view of the scheme was that it was untenable, an insurance nightmare waiting to happen and possibly steering itself towards the illegal.

3 options were then proposed to the full time executive –

A] get rid of the scheme, thus losing a valuable welfare source and putting ourselves on dubious legal grounds with our sponsors.

B] look into running a Brookes style scheme ourselves.

C] look into merging with the Brookes scheme.

A] Was initially my preferred option, however, I was convinced that the scheme was too valuable to simply abandon.

B] was not really a viable option, as it had a potential loss of close to £50,000. plus we would still have the problem of having no drivers to run the service.

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Since then I have had numerous meetings with the Deputy President General Secretary of OBS, who runs the scheme from their end.

The conclusion was that OUSU would buy into a third of the Brookes scheme, eg. Finance a third Brookes bus, and thus allowing OUSU students to use the Brookes scheme. This would allow us to tap into their pool of established drivers, use their insurance scheme and contacts at the bus hire company. It also allows us to have a fully mobile scheme at the start of term.

Of course this solution has its own problems. Not least the fact that the majority of drivers and navigators are Brookes students and are consequently more familiar with Brookes routes and pickup points. It also holds a potential loss greater than has been budgeted for. However, the budget made no account for the fact that the scheme was to be run seven nights a week rather than three, and last years scheme ran to almost double its allocated budget. I am also looking into asking for money for the scheme from the University and from the City Council.

The scheme has now been running for 3 weeks. It is not perfect, but it seems to be working. I have been driving twice a week and have been trying to recruit new drivers [I have 2!]. It has also been taking a large amount of donations, and the potential cost looks vastly reduced than that which was originally envisaged.

The scheme will only work to Oxford Student's advantage if: A] they use it and B] they help run it. We need more drivers and we need more navigators. It's a great experience, a lot of fun and a good way to give back to the community.

Please also remember that ALL the drivers and navigators are VOLUNTARY. They are giving up their time to help you.

WOMEN'S HANDBOOK

I spent the beginning of the summer gathering the text for this, and the second half quarking it. It's 3/4 finished and very pretty. However, we are now waiting on sponsorship. Dan seems convinced he can get the sponsorship for it and hopefully it will be out by Christmas.

STUDENT PARENTS

The new student parent guide is out in paper document. I am applying to the university for some money to produce a professionally printed version, however, they want me to postpone until Christmas when a new network scheme will have been set up. I am in the process of submitting my id.

Sadly due to various data protection issues I am finding it close to impossible to get the names of "student parents", if anyone has any ingenious ideas please let me know. This means that there will not be a student parent welcome this term as I have no one to invite!

I have also been in discussions over the university childcare system, and am hoping to petition the housing department for priority housing for student parents.

WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN

I have prepared a termcard for Michelmas WomCam which involves various women's charity events and speakers. I have been looking into self-defence classes. Sadly there appear to be no female instructors in the oxford area, so we will have to do with female only classes and a male teacher. I have also liaised with other university wide self-defence schemes in order to promote general awareness of availability.

I have also met and been liaising with Jo Read [CUSU women's officer] and Amy Thomas [OBSU women's officer] and am looking into joint projects with both.

PROMOTING CHOICE

I have produced the unplanned pregnancy guide, updated with the new Alec Turnbull details. I have also had numerous phone conversations with the Family Planning clinic and the Harrison GUM clinic, in the hope of providing as comprehensive a guide as possible.

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

I have taken on the role of sabb responsible for clubs + socs, and have given up the Ethics portfolio to John. John and I both felt we were better suited to the others floating portfolio. As former head of a university I felt I had a lot to offer to this portfolio. Over the summer I have been unsuccessful at setting up the new resources room, due to the rest of the sabbatical team using it as a dumping ground and general storage room. I have however, managed to change the sign on the door and sent out an email demanding the room is cleared by Sunday night.

I have also discussed with Dan the possibility of getting the room sponsored, allowing us to complete our mandate from council to stock the room without dramatically breaking budget. [contrary to popular belief £400 does not go far when buying electrical equipment]

GENERAL

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I have helped with freshers fair [which Alison and Steve should be very proud of] and did door-work at the freshers week entz nights. I have produced all my mandated publications and wrote the "introduction to your sabs" in the OX Stu pullout last week. I have battled with my computer and Headporter, and have written to all Women's Officers and Tutors for Women. I have also spoken at St Hugh's and Teddy Hall, and will be visiting Balliol on Friday and St. Anthony's next week.

I would like to congratulate Dan and Laura on an excellent entz programme during freshers week, and their tireless dedication to ZOO. I would also like to thank all the ABM's who worked crazy hours over the summer and all the editors who gave up their time to produce the OUSU publications. It was appreciated, even if we didn't say it enough. I would like to especially mention Gareth whose commitment to the OUSU cause has gone above and beyond any call of duty.

Siobhan McAndrew

V-P (Graduates)

Handover:

It has been a privilege to take over from Dan Paskins who had done a sterling job, as the first VPG in some time to complete a full term of office. He worked well with university officials and was an extremely effective campaigner, especially against visa extension fees. He has encouraged me to contact him for advice at any time, and we meet from time to time, which means that there has been good continuity. He has been especially helpful in training me in the visa extension application process, which forms a large part of my case work.

International students – visa extension fees:

The government is 'consulting' on increasing charges for the immigration service, including visa extension fees which affect international students whose visas do not last the length of their course of study. I have sent all MCRs a copy of the Home Office feedback questionnaire, together with a summary of the consultation document, as a campaign pack, and will send it to JCRs next week. The proposals are for the basic visa extension fee to increase from £155 to anything from £195 to £380. International students, who are often on fixed loans or scholarships, will find it extremely difficult to adjust their budgets to this, which is planned to come into effect in this academic year, in April 2005. Real hardship will ensue. I urge all common room officers to fill in the questionnaire – in their capacity as student advisers – so that international students are not used to fund the immigration service more generally, and thus damaging student welfare, and UK higher education in the long run by this short-sighted policy. One service that could be initiated is a proof-reading service for students whose first language is not English, which would be part of the proposed study skills centre. Commercial rates are not cheap; it is a cottage industry made up of friends and academic hangers-on, and this is certainly a service which should be made available to international students by the University, but conceivably by ourselves.

Mature students:

I am working with the University Club to make membership available to all mature students, as it currently is for graduate students. This has happened on an *ad hoc* basis hitherto but formalizing this provision would benefit both the Club and mature students. Responses to mature students' questionnaires, issued about eighteen months' ago, reveal a demand for 'civilised' social events and also for civilised housing. I am planning a social event for 3rd week, and also hope that the sports and dance classes and wine-tasting organized by the University Club will fill that gap. I am also planning to lobby the Accommodation Office with regard to University-wide mature students' housing. Too often, mature students are encouraged to attend Harris Manchester as if that relieves other colleges from their duties of provision. However, Harris Manchester – a wonderful college – does not suit every case and does not provide teaching in the full range of subjects; about half of all mature students are scattered across the University. If a University house could be earmarked as specifically mature student housing, it would alleviate the isolation some mature students have reported, when living in a block with eighteen-year-olds, subject to disciplinary rules designed for undergraduates.

Graduate issues:

One issue which is becoming significant is the M.Phil. thesis failure rate. There is no right of appeal against academic decisions, but the rapid increase in failure rates suggests that supervision is not effectively targeted, and this is likely to become a campaigning issue – together with the ongoing campaign for vacation provision of facilities, and against fourth-year fees.

Traditionally, the VP (Graduates) may or may not organize a 'graduate entertainment' with cheap wine. My aim this year is to work with existing models and with what works for undergraduates. Many graduates are too busy to get involved directly in the student union and may prefer that new services be provided to them as consumers rather than that they are required to be active as

wine. My aim this year is to work with existing models and with what works for undergraduates. Many graduates are too busy to get involved directly in the student union and may prefer that new services be provided to them as consumers rather than that they are required to be active as student citizens. For example, I have talked with RAG about extending their speed-dating nights to specifically graduate or over-21 events, and am consulting MCRs about this.

I am also working to communicate more effectively with MCRs. Clearly, MCR presidents are overburdened and I am trying to work through MCR OUSU Reps; however this is an MCR post which is often unfilled and it is difficult to find out who is in the job, especially given that some MCRs change personnel termly. I am visiting MCRs to promote OUSU services, and working to secure reaffiliation of LMH.

I am in contact with the Association of University Teachers to see how union membership could best be promoted to graduate students who teach – and we are exploring creative options.

I helped finish updating the Graduate Guide – which still advertised a stationery shop – and it should be available for graduate freshers shortly.

Student Advice Service:

The casework load has been much greater than I expected – and revolves predominantly around academic issues, visas, funding and maladministration, together with a deluge of requests for information from applicants. The casework has been a particularly rewarding part of the job. They are highly specific and time-consuming and highlight why the advice service is best provided by a university-wide union – common rooms simply do not have the capacity to deal with them. The cases thrown up illustrate, in the vast majority of cases, that systems, rather than individuals, are not working efficiently. It is frustrating when bad practice persists, but very rewarding when we can show that it can be easily remedied.

ISIDORE and Graduate Admissions:

I have begun sitting on the Consultative Group which reviews ISIDORE. The ISIDORE project involves modernizing the student administration system - standardizing applications, registration, exams and conferral of degrees. The Oracle Student System –the new electronic database – is due to go live in November. This is part-way through the graduate admissions process with backlogs likely. The new graduate admissions system will mean that applications are considered together in five gathered fields, rather than ongoing throughout the year – which means that applications will be compared more directly against each other. This is fairer academically but the change to the new system will be a challenge for departments and colleges, who cannot deal with applications on an ad hoc basis any more. Furthermore, the database design is still incomplete – for example, at the moment one college can enter another college's admission decision. Hopefully, the system will be perfected by Michaelmas 2005 to deal with UCAS.

Overall – there is a lot for me to do. MCRs are apparently not fully aware of the services we provide, and communication lines sorely need to be improved. This is a chronic problem. Furthermore, it is clearly difficult to co-ordinate graduate involvement - graduate students tend to get involved on a flexible basis and from a personal motivation; there isn't the same community among graduate activists and this means that one-to-one relationships need cultivating. However, the breadth of the job means that it shares remit with those of almost all of the other sabs, and the sheer variety is fascinating.

Linsey Cole V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

I'm writing this report after the first Zoo Wednesday night at Park End – well done Laura, Dan and everyone else involved in OUSU Entz behind the scenes – the hard work over the summer has paid off...long may it continue!

Access

Since last council, lots has gone on in the world of Target Schools. The September open days were a huge success: unlike previous years, we decided to do two open days instead of one, to try to cope with the huge demand from prospective students at this time of year. Both were booked to capacity very quickly. Holding events at this time of year is vital for those who have exceeded expectations with A/S level results – we're now looking into the possibility of holding an event later this term to cater for those students who could not be accommodated. Thanks to everyone at SPC, Merton and Corpus who helped to make the open days possible and to all those who volunteered on the day itself. Thanks to Charlyne and the new co-chairs who are planning how they want to take things forward this year, with meetings on Wednesdays at 5pm in the OUSU Offices

volunteered on the day itself. Thanks to Charlyne and the new co-chairs who are planning how they want to take things forward this year, with meetings on Wednesdays at 5pm in the OUSU Offices.

Resources for widening participation work in the university have been hit by the loss of HEFCE Aspiration Funding, of which Target Schools bid for £11,000 last year (including £5,000 for half of the VP Ac-Aff salary). In the light of these changes, Target Schools has to defend its position as a student-led access initiative more than ever before; from the feedback we receive from both students and teachers, the role of current Oxford students in encouraging people to apply should not be underestimated. Target Schools is something OUSU should be proud of and I will continue to defend the work we do, on both a university and a national level.

In terms of access policy, I attended a conference organised by the Social Market Foundation and the Sutton Trust about Admissions Testing. The motion for this week's Council about Post-Qualification Application (if it passes) will give me a clear mandate to take to the University on an issue that can only make admissions fairer and more transparent. This year, I hope to take OUSU's policy forward, in light of the Schwartz report and the Tomlinson Review. More to come at future councils!

Academic Affairs

This has taken up the majority of my time over the summer. I've revised the Guide for Academic Affairs Officers, the JCC Reps Guide and the Divisional Board Reps Guide – these are all in the process of being distributed. One of my major aims for the year is to keep a close track of all the student representation across the university. I spent several days (or it might have been weeks...) chasing up faculty administrators for JCC Reps details and now have a list of over 120 reps. There will be a JCC Forum later in the term, so keep an eye out for details if you're a rep! I'm also trying to sort out the Divisional Board Representation that we have – some of the vacancies are being filled by elections in Council today, but if you're interested in any of the other positions, please get in touch!

Along with the other Student Advice Service sabs, I've helped to produce lots of publicity for Freshers and Common Rooms about what we do. I was sorry to see the Student Advisor resign and wish Annily all the best for the future. My casework has mainly been related to examination issues over the summer. Several issues have continually arisen which I hope to take forward to the University over the course of this term. I wrote to the chair of Senior Tutor's committee about exam failure and the variance in support across colleges for those who fail and will continue to lobby on this issue.

The QAA's report on the Institutional Audit of Oxford University was published over the summer. To summarise – it's a mammoth document, but if anyone would like a copy, let me know...- the student submission written by my predecessor was viewed positively by the auditors. There is a lot of stuff that OUSU can work with over the next few years, including a recommendation to improve study and generic skills and lots of material related to student representation, which the President and I will be working on over the next few weeks.

At the end of last term, we passed policy against the National Student Survey – I'll be working in conjunction with the university to make sure that completing this obligatory survey causes as little inconvenience as possible to students. I'm also talking to my counterparts at other Russell Group Student Unions about the possibility of working together and writing a joint response.

OPEN TO CHANGE CAMPAIGN – since Michaelmas 2002, OUSU has had policy to lobby the university for improved library opening hours. Last term, Academic Affairs Committee decided to raise awareness of this with a postcard campaign. The postcards need to be pigged to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Services and University Collections) – all you need to do is fill in your name and college and put it in the internal post. We have 5,000 postcards to distribute and need to get as many as possible to be sent back. I'll be distributing them via Academic Affairs Officers and have lots with me in council today. Please encourage people to fill them in and I'll keep you updated on progress on this issue.

Sorry this report has become a bit epic, but when summer is over 3 months long, it's hard to know what not to include! I've also done lots of general VP-ness things, including unloading gowns of a Hungarian lorry, looking after walkie-talkie central at Freshers' Fair, stuffing lovely bags and processing endless gown orders. Everyone in OUSU has worked extremely hard over the summer

what not to include! I've also done lots of general VP-ness things, including unloading gowns of a Hungarian lorry, looking after walkie-talkie central at Freshers' Fair, stuffing lovely bags and processing endless gown orders. Everyone in OUSU has worked extremely hard over the summer to set things in place for this term – the full-time jobs have evolved over the last few years and the workload for all sabs has increased. OUSU needs to look at its structures now and implement changes recommended in the Futures and Funding Report and in John's reform paper that is presented to today's council. The position of VP (Access and Academic Affairs) today is dramatically different to the way it was conceived to be seven years ago, but I'll save this for a debate in council.

To finish, a few thank-yous to those who've worked over the summer in OUSU. The rest of the full-time exec; the fantastic business team – Mr Finley and his lovely bunch of interns Gareth, Steve, Dan, Stef, Alex and Ben; and all those who sat in pubs room for what seemed like an eternity working on the OCCH and other things – thanks for your dedication and commitment. To Alison and Steve – congrats on a fantastic fair...lets have a wombat sometime!! To the part-time exec who helped with the Open Days and Freshers' Fair. To Chris Allen for always being willing to do what is needed. It's been fantastic to watch what has been happening in the office over the summer and even better to watch it all come together over the past few weeks.

Here's to the rest of the year...

Dan Finley Business Manager

This summer has been one of massive commercial expansion and tremendous success for Oxford Student Services Limited (OSSL) and OUSU more generally.

Entz. An enormous amount of my time this summer has been spent determining the Entz program for this forthcoming term and year. Entz will be an extremely important and vital source of income for the student union. The highlight of the line up is undoubtedly Wednesday at Park End. The Freshers' Week Entz went off really well – putting on ten club nights over the course of four days at the biggest clubs in town and during the busiest week of the year for the Student Union provides irrefutable evidence of our ability to put on high quality nights for our members.

Entz this year are being administered through OSSL and under the Zoo Entz brand. Considerable time and effort has been spent promoting the Zoo brand – raising awareness and ensuring that it becomes a brand recognised by all students of the University and one which is immediately associated with the provision of high quality nights out for students, run by students, and the profits for which are all reinvested in students. The Entz line up for Michaelmas Term consists of Scratch on Sunday at Thirst, Taboo at Thirst on Tuesdays, Zoo at Park End on Wednesdays and Filthy Friday every Friday at the Studio. Wednesdays at Park End came about as a result of lengthy negotiations with the club, which I initiated very early on this summer and over the course of the next few months a deal was struck that will ensure that it is the members of the student union who will be the chief beneficiaries of this venture. So far, we have hosted three nights at Park End – Tuesday and Wednesday of Freshers' Week and then Wednesday of First Week – all three nights were completely sold out and full to capacity. Check out www.zoozoo.org.

Publications. I have had to take a very active and hands on role in all of the publications this summer by virtue of my position as Managing Director of OSSL – the commercial arm and publishing house of the student union – and also because of a general lack of publications experience amongst others on the full-time team.

Since early in the New Year, I have been overhauling the Oxford & Cambridge Careers Handbook – both commercially and editorially. This year's edition is the result of the nine months of very hard work by an enormously talented group of people. It is due out imminently and this year will be 350 pages in length, full colour and A4 in size. The design and format have been completely overhauled but there is no doubt in my mind that the Oxford & Cambridge Careers Handbook is the premier careers resource for Oxbridge students – superior to any other product on the Oxbridge market. I have almost doubled the commercial income for the publication this year and I am certain that on the back of the publication that we are putting out this, I will again increase income by similar figures this year for the forthcoming edition. The tremendous commercial and editorial success of this year's publication is the result of the outstanding efforts of many. For six weeks, beginning in early August, a team of more than twenty-five people, led by a core ten,

income by similar figures this year for the forthcoming edition. The tremendous commercial and editorial success of this year's publication is the result of the outstanding efforts of many. For six weeks, beginning in early August, a team of more than twenty-five people, led by a core ten, worked round the clock on this publication. I mean round the clock. Such was the commitment and dedication of the team to the project that we were working 24 hours a day / seven days a week – stopping only to take it in shifts to sleep for twenty minutes on the office floor. I tried to calculate the collective number of hours put into this project but the calculator could not handle the numbers – no joke. Many many thanks to those who repeatedly went above and beyond the call of duty and indulged my musical tastes – Zoe Flood, Kim Hardman, Nick Anstead, Patrick Foster, Rowenna Davis, Charlie Brendon, John Dant, Tom Raynor, Mary Morgan, Gareth Lloyd, Louise Radnofsky, Rachel O'Brien, Anna Maybank, Vishesh Srivastava, Matthew Bryant, Alex Beecroft and Stefan Smith.

In terms of the other publications, the strategy pursued has been to invest time, effort and resources seeking commercial income in those that are most lucrative and for this in which the marginal return of extra effort is the greatest. The idea behind this is that we will make money where we can and where the money is there to be made and use those extra monies to subsidise publications for which there is little commercial interest or potential of success. Commercial income is up significantly across the board with, for example, the Freshers' Guide income increased by more than 50%, the Careers Handbook income almost doubled, the Oxford Student for Michaelmas Term is already up more than 50% on all of last Michaelmas and it is still only First Week. The Term Planner has been reintroduced – both because it is a great service for students and because of an instinctive feeling that it would prove to be commercially lucrative. It has proved to be extremely lucrative. The OUSU Card, soon to be released, looks extremely impressive this year and boasts three principle sponsors. I have doubled commercial income on this project. Freshers' Fair went extremely well, although was preceded by a chaotic day and thanks must go to Allison for all of her incredible work and to Chris Allan and Gareth Lloyd for their sterling work that is hugely appreciated.

The Oxford Student – Oxford's premier student newspaper and just nominated for Guardian Student Newspaper of the Year. Important and necessary investments have been made in the paper this year and it is all the better for it. Thanks to Peter and Patrick for their exceptional work, patience and diplomatic tact.

Gowns. I came up with the idea for the gowns initiative about nine months ago now and I am delighted to report what a great success that it has been. We are able to offer high quality products at low prices – initially undercutting all of the high street retailers by about 15. There has been a massive uptake by the Freshers and high street retailers have been forced to lower their prices.

Champagne. I have also taken us into the champagne market. Basically, there is no risk for us whatsoever and it is proving to be a lucrative venture for us. We have so far supplied magnums of champagne to commemorate Matriculation and will be supplying similar products to commemorate finishing finals and graduation too.

Much time has also been spent working on other, longer term projects, such as oxfordhandbook.com, which will launch in the next few weeks and serve as a one stop website for everything that anybody needs to know about living life as a student in Oxford. Other initiatives, whilst not ready for unveiling now, will be brought to OUSU Council, OSSL Board Meetings and OSSL General Meetings as appropriate in the coming weeks. A more detailed report of our commercial activities this summer will be soon presented to a meeting of the OSSL Board.

Since Monday of eighth week Trinity Term I have worked no less than 100 hours a week and on average I work about 120 hours a week. Yet, there is still more to be done and more that can be done. The number of Business Interns and Assistant Business Managers were significantly increased this year – but more we needed and more people working during term time on our commercial ventures are definitely needed. Ensuring that we have enough personnel for our commercial ventures is something that I will soon turn my attention to.

Thanks: the Business Team – Dan Simpson, Steve Burn-Murdoch, Gareth Lloyd, Alex Beecroft, Stefan Smith - for all of their exceptional hard work, dedication and commitment. In particular, to Steve for working his magic on the Careers Handbook and to Gareth – for being truly exceptional.

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