



reports to 1st week council trinity 2005

John Blake

President

President's Report, 1st Week, Trinity Term, 2005

NUS Conference

My time during the vacation was spent, in the early weeks, preparing for and attending NUS Conference. I won't say too much about that here as I am in the process of producing a comprehensive report on the events of Conference for 3rd Week Council, which I will be discussing with the NUS Reps on Monday of 2nd Week. Any OUSU Reps or Common Room Presidents of non-affiliated colleges interested in the NUS, how it works and what Oxford students could make of it, are welcome to attend that meeting, on Monday at 7pm in the OUSU offices.

The Budget

Having returned from NUS Conference, I have thrown myself into attempting to put together the Budget for next year. Rather than simply replicating previous years, budgets plus some additional money as we seem to have done in the past, this year we are attempting to break down the costs and incomes of OUSU and OSSSL projects more accurately, so as to provide next year's Exec with a better guide to what they should be spending their money on. I am also going to produce for next year's VP (Finance) a cash flow forecast, which will allow OUSU to track where its money is at any one time. It is difficult to overstress how important this is for OUSU: the large incomes we receive from advertising, and in some cases from Zoo's various projects, do not simply arrive in the OSSSL's bank account by magic ^ they drip in slowly as we get our debtors to pay up. On the other hand, the costs of our projects are large and come out of our bank accounts in big lumps, mainly across the summer. This year this presented OUSU with a severe cash flow problem, which is unlikely to go away: the expansion of our commercial projects and their increasing income has, paradoxically, placed us in more risk of bankruptcy now than when we had no money. It is now possible we will be footing a huge bill across the summer which we will not be able to pay, as our anticipated profits are still outstanding. Other Student Unions receive, at the beginning of each year, at least a part of their block grant to fund them through dry periods of income ^ as we do not, OUSU at present cannot afford not to make a surplus. Our reserves, which we have used to fund our way through our cash flow problems this year, cannot continue to be used for this purpose ^ for a start, large portions of the money we hold in our reserve bank account do not actually belong to us; we are awaiting bills from the University for our move to Bonn Square. This problem is behind the motion I have put to Council this week regarding sabbatical remuneration.

I will prepare the budget over this weekend, and it will be constructed by Executive during 2nd Week, ready for 3rd Week Council. Given our present construction of our commercial activities, the OSSSL Board will pass the budgets for OSSSL's commercial projects for next year; the Executive and then Council will be able to play around with the „financial envelope% given to OUSU by OSSSL's profits to spend as they see fit on campaigns, salaries, and so forth.

I am also preparing rough estimates of full economic costings for OUSU and OSSSL projects, which will include not only the unique costs of our individual projects, but take account of the cost of sabbatical and other staff labour, and overheads. These will be completed after the budget, and once they are finished will form the basis for our charges to non-affiliated Common Rooms. This will certainly increase the current costs of items such as Freshers, Fair and publications. I

anticipate that it will also highlight how much OUSU depends upon its full-time officers and staff to work well over their contract hours for no additional pay in order to make any money at all.

OSSL,

the Oxford Student, and Oxford Student Radio OSSL has obviously proved an enormous success this year, producing profits which only a short time ago we could not have imagined. However, as I have said many times, during my hustings two years ago and in my preface to the Amended Budget, it is imperative that OSSL's work does not come into conflict with OUSU's work. There have been many discussions over this year about the powers of OUSU over OSSL, about the ability to mandate directors, and about how we prioritise our service and representative work.

The Board has met to consider these issues, and I have sought legal advice about them, and the Board is announcing a consultation on the whole commercial work of OSSL and its relationship with OUSU. **The OSSL general consultation will take place before 5th Week Council at 1pm in the Wadham Old Refectory.** It will range across any issue that anyone wishes to raise, and the aim will be to produce a Statement of Principles to bring to 7th Week Council, which will outline what Oxford students want from the commercial arm of the Student Union, how they want it to be run, and who they want to run it. Such a motion would mandate the incoming President and Vice President (Finance) to create our commercial operations in such a way as to ensure that the Statement of Principles can be achieved, or lay out why they cannot.

There will also be two other, specific consultations on two major OSSL projects: Oxford Student Radio and the Oxford Student. The plan to integrate the various incarnations of an Oxford student-run radio station have been long-standing, and have finally come to fruition, with OSSL taking under its banner the Oxford Student Radio. How this radio is to work and how Oxford students would like their money spent on it is something we need to discuss. **The Oxford Student Radio consultation will take place at 6.30pm Wednesday of 3rd Week, in the OUSU offices.**

Finally, after the events of last term, there is to be a consultation about the Oxford Student. To my knowledge, at no time in the development of the Oxford Student, from free-sheet through tabloid to broadsheet has there been a discussion of what the OxStu is, how it works, and what it means to be funded by a Student Union, and thus by other students, money. These are essential questions, ones which are not answered simply by referral to „editorial independence%. **The Oxford Student newspaper consultation will take place at 6.30pm Thursday of 4th Week, in the OUSU offices.**

Every Oxford student is welcome to attend any or all of these consultations; if you are unable to attend, but have things you would like to say, please feel free to email your comments to me on president@ousu.org.

Charities Legislation

I am continuing on my search for an answer to the problems thrown up by the introduction of new charities legislation. The Bill has now been delayed until the new Parliament, as a result of the delay in announcing the election brought about by the death of Pope John Paul II, which should (assuming Labour are re-elected) come into force in 2007. This gives us a little more time to implement the changes, but I think we should still have a firm idea of what OUSU intends to do by the end of this term.

I have now visited Cambridge to examine how CUSU are currently running whilst being directly responsible to the Charities Commission. At the present time, this seems to make little difference

to how they work, and they manage themselves much as we do here. However, I am certain this will change for both them and us under the new legislation, so it seems clear that if we do choose to create ourselves as an independent charity, we will be doing something for which they currently exists no real guidance. When I have completed the budget, I will be devoting more time to this, and to getting some answers out of the Charities Commission.

Vice President (Graduates) Election

As I write this, I am seated at a ballot box in St. Anthony's, scrutineering the election for the VP (Grads) 2005/06. I will be able to announce the result in Council. There will be a Postgraduate Assembly this evening as well to discuss graduate issues, which will hopefully suggests some ways forward for OUSU in representing graduates, which I will be able to report to Council. Note for PGA: the PGA this evening was extremely useful, and has suggested a good way forward for graduate involvement in OUSU. There will be reasonably informal PGA lunches at 1pm before 3rd Week and 7th Week Council, all graduates welcome, especially MCR Presidents and OUSU Reps.

Rents

It is rent negotiation term again in Oxford. PresCom will be meeting this evening, and I will speak to Presidents there about what they need in the way of support from OUSU. I have already sent out this year's Rent Pack ^ many thanks to Bryn Adams for his work on this. I have copies of the Estate Bursars, Committee's Full Economic Costing Report and OUSU's response to it, which I will send out to any Common Rooms facing these arguments from their SCR.

NUS-affiliated Common Rooms had the opportunity to come to a training event from Ruth Moor, our NUS Regional Officer. Unfortunately, because of the last-minute arrangement of the meeting, only a few people were able to go, but I think all of us found it extremely useful. I will be passing notes from that meeting onto the Presidents tonight. On a side note, in future years, I think it would be wise to arrange training events like this on various aspects of negotiation with colleges for all NUS-affiliated colleges at the beginning of each term; that way, as many Common Room officers as need training should be able to receive it.

The nature of this year's negotiations in the various colleges will, I should imagine, determine OUSU's response. If, as seems distinctly possible, they become difficult and the rents demanded are ridiculously high, it is my conviction that an effective campaign against such charges will only work if it is broader than the colleges immediately concerned: the colleges are working to a University mean, sharing figures and costings; if we are to effectively represent our students in the weeks ahead, we must do likewise.

Rebecca Wilkinson

V-P (Women)

What have I been doing?

Well most of the Vac has been taken up with NUS Conferences.

We kicked off in 9th Week with NUS Women's Conference, which sadly clashed with my Women's Open Day so I had to miss the second day.

The conference itself was..... entertaining..... hustings and motions which don't have any opportunity to ask questions truly perplexed me. I felt what was discussed on the floor was not especially relevant or insightful, however, if anyone would like a detailed account CUSU has promised me I can steal their almost verbatim account of the proceedings. What was more useful was meeting all the other full time 'Women' Sabbatical Officers. We had a lot of chance to discuss corresponding projects and exchange ideas and best practice. For this alone the conference was

not a waste, although I would [and have] highly recommend the NUS set up greater contacts between these officers.

The Women's Open Day, which fell mid conference, was equally a success. I couldn't have done it without Emma and Claire and I would like to thank them so much for all their help. The day went off smoothly – and I had fun pretending to be a Wadham student after everyone refused to go and see Teddy Hall!

I also went as an observer to NUS National Conference. This was not an experience I will cherish. All the drawbacks of Women's Conference – e.g. No opportunity for questions, or real debate – then add a ridiculous election process.... I could go on but won't. Next years Oxford contingent must either decide to spend a lot of time learning/understanding the idiosyncrasies of Conference or it must seriously consider the worth of being there.

The only advantage I can see to NUS Conference is that it makes you appreciate OUSU Council! Never again will I be so glad to hear the words “no clapping in council” and “short, factual questions”!!!

Aside from these “trips”:

I have put together the all-new OUSU Eating Disorder Guide, and am now waiting for people to finish proofing it [I really can't spell] and then to figure out where we're going to get the money from to produce it! Hmmm

I really hope JCR Officers will take the time to read through this guide and to advertise it to their constituent members; it has been designed to be Oxford Student specific, with sections on College Welfare Officers, local GP's, and Academic Advice.

SWEDA has also agreed to set up a private – Oxford only – support board on their sight, which I hope people will find useful.

I have also been working on a new “Drink Safety” Campaign [for want of a better name], along with Dan and Ian. I hope people will look at the new sections of the website and offer any input. I have been in negotiation with the police and Nightsafe, and we hope to gain the support of local clubs. It is about consumption awareness and also about drink spiking.

The Reclaim March will be held on Monday of 3rd week [police confirmation pending] and just before that we are having a talk from OSAARCC which I hope people will find useful.

In the last few days I have dealt with numerous press enquiries about oxford-escorts. And had a new computer installed, which took up a surprising amount of time.

Ask questions.

Linsey Cole

V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

The Easter holidays have been a welcome break from the trials of term-time; this is the first-chance I've had since the summer to properly catch-up with things and make plans for the future. I've really enjoyed working in OUSU Towers this past few weeks and its definitely led me to approach this term with a sense of enthusiasm and a desire to finish off what I've started.

One of the highlights of the Easter vacation (if not the year!) for all VP AccAcAffs has to be the 'Target Schools Tour' and 2005 was no exception. This year, we ventured into new territory in Northern Ireland, basing all our events in schools, which I'd definitely recommend for the future. Our three events in Derry, Belfast and Omagh were well-attended and hugely-successful. I did feel a sense of nostalgia on returning to the same school as I'd visited as an exec-officer in 2003 and also a sense of pride in how things have moved on since then. Comments from students and teachers make all the hard work and effort that goes into Target Schools well worth the energy that many students put into it on a part-time basis. We really should not underestimate the impact of these events; meeting and hearing from a “real Oxford tutor” or a “genuine Oxford

student” gives prospective students an insight into Oxford life that is second to none. Thanks must go to Dan Butt and Chris Ballinger for subjecting willing “victims” to mock interviews and to Paul Teulon from OCAO for his help in Belfast. I think a lot of people expect Target Schools to be the main part of my access portfolio, but I, despite a very strong attachment to it, took a back seat in the run-up to the Easter events, due to commitments in other areas of my job. Credit for the smooth-running of Northern Ireland must go to Maighread McCloskey – a super-efficient guide to the wonders of the NI transport system, despite my best attempts to get us lost in Belfast! Thanks also to Eric Howard for dealing with the joys of Liverpool and Royal Mail. To them both and the rest of the Target Schools Team – Alice, Irene, Kumaran and Helen – for the bus journeys, Heat Magazine, the “mothers meetings”, Wetherspoons desserts and good humour during what is never an easy week.

Other stuff on the Target Schools front – we held an Open Day last Wednesday in St. Catherine’s College which again went well. Moving this Open Day to the end of the Easter vac, instead of holding it in 9th week as has happened in previous years, increased attendance and good feedback was received from those who attended. We also organised visits to around 500 schools and colleges during the Easter vacation as part of the Visiting Scheme – thanks to all those who went on visits as part of this scheme. Bex and Women’s Campaign held a Women’s Open Day during 9th week – from what I’ve seen and heard since, the day was a really successful and reveals another arm to OUSU’s access work. I’ve also had a good purge of the Target Schools website (www.targetschools.com) in recent weeks and will be fully-updating this over the coming term. And...both our open days at the end of Trinity are already over-subscribed!!

I’ve also been working closely with admissions officers, the Access Scheme and the Oxford Colleges Admissions Office to co-ordinate our work. Many colleges are revising their Alternative Prospectus and if you do need help with this, please get in touch! I’m also organising a meeting for all CR Admissions Reps and Officers to discuss best practice at open days and during the interview period – Wednesday of 2nd Week, 4pm in the OUSU Offices. The Alternative Prospectus is plodding along...still chasing up articles, so please if you said you’d write an article, send it to me asap.

I met with the rest of the sabbatical officers and the new Proctors and Assessor in 10th week and we had a very constructive meeting in creating greater communication between OUSU and the Proctors Office. Nicky and I have been working on an Exam Information sheet covering appeals procedures and what to do when problems arise with illness and exam procedures since that meeting and hopefully it will be distributed to all those taking exams during this term. Academic Affairs committee will be meeting on Thursdays of odd weeks at 5pm in OUSU – lots to work on this term, including exam failure procedures across colleges, following up study skills work and the proposed libraries changes. There will also be a exam skills and revision session on MONDAY OF 3RD WEEK at 4.30pm in Corpus New Music Room – it will be relevant to all students, no matter what year they are in, so please do encourage people to come along. There are also further sessions planned for 4th and 5th week, so keep an eye out for these too.

I have also been trying to gain an insight into what is actually happening in the world of Oxford’s libraries. Many of you have probably read the stories in the national and local media about the supposed future of the Rad Cam – be it a theme park, helter skelter or the demise of a much-loved library, its something OUSU and students need to care about. John and I have met with the Acting Deputy Director of Library Services, with a view to ensuring full student input throughout the whole process over the coming months and years. This is something I’ll be following up over the next few weeks – for those of you who are interested in what is happening to your libraries, have a look at <http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/management/erp.html> and read through the Establishment Review – any comments/thoughts gratefully received.

Other than that, the joys of term have begun with earnest – I've been to Undergraduate Panel, where my study skills paper was discussed and proposals within it passed onto another committee for further consideration. I've also attended Admissions Exec and an Admissions Working Party, plus meetings with university and college officials. The Green Paper on Academic Strategy is now progressing into a white paper – thanks to everyone for their contributions to OUSU's submission – and the Governance Review consultation is also continuing.

A busy term ahead...

Dates for your diaries:

- **OUSU Writing Workshop – Monday and Thursday 8pm-10pm OUSU Offices**
- **Meeting for Admissions Reps/Officers – Wednesday of 2nd week 4pm OUSU**
- **'Coping with Revision and Exams', Corpus Christi College (New Music Room) – Monday of 3rd week 4.30pm**
- Target Schools – every Wednesday 5pm OUSU
- Academic Affairs – Thursdays (odd weeks) 5pm OUSU

Emma Jones

exec

Just a quick update on what I'm doing on behalf of OUSU (as promised in 7th week Council at the end of Hilary). Thanks so much to everyone who is working with me on these projects. It was an intense, (mainly) enjoyable and educational first term as executive officer. I am currently working hard to see the following projects through to fulfilment. All feedback very welcome to emma@ousu.org – thanks.

'KEEP AZIM IN OXFORD' CAMPAIGN:

The campaign has continued to fight for Azim's right to remain in Britain with his brother to complete his degree free from the fear of persecution. The brothers have shown tremendous courage and overcome huge adversity to make new lives for themselves in the UK – we are not prepared to stand by and watch as these lives are destroyed by a system of arbitrary tyranny..

Our big event last term was the MASS RALLY on SATURDAY 5th MARCH in solidarity with Azim and Wali. I was very pleased that so many you were willing to stand and be counted and that so many JCRs sent representatives with their college banners etc. – it demonstrated to the politicians that support for Azim is strong in Oxford.

Thanks to the amazing Tim Davies, we now have a CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

(www.KeepAzimInOxford.org.uk). Thanks to all who have signed the online petition calling for the Minister for Immigration to intervene now and end the brothers' cruel suspense. You can also join the campaign through the website.

The campaign continues, with the active help of Azim's local MP ...

ONE WORLD WEEK:

This year I am responsible for organising OUSU's 'One World Week' (7th week).

I am looking forward to working with existing student global justice campaigns to help publicise their important work to a wider audience. I'm also keen to put on some unique events to mark this year's 'Make Poverty History' Campaign and to focus on the ethical issues that involve us all within the University. I believe that 'students as students' should be interested in the wider world – it's about education and the responsibilities of our generation ...

Look out for the next 'Student Union News' for details of how you can get involved.

Ideas are not yet finalised, so if you get in touch now then you can help form this exciting project at its outset.

WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN: "WHAT WOMEN WANT "CAMPAIGN

As Co-chair of WomCam, I am fortunate to be part of a great team. This term we'll be running a campaign highlighting the issues that affect us as women at Oxford and in the wider world.

The issues we're focusing on include SAFETY, EDUCATION, WELFARE & INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CONCERNS...

What do women want? Politicians are vaguely aware of the power of female voters – but it's up to us to make our views known.

Look out for the 'Women's Student Union News' email launching the campaign.

Now is the time to tell the University what matters to women in Oxford – to join the discussion send us an email or come to Women's Campaign on Mondays at 5pm in the Prestwych Room.

A big event this term for women and men to support is the all-important RECLAIM THE NIGHT MARCH on the evening of 9th MAY. We are marching for the right to walk our streets unafraid and unattacked. Keep your diaries clear ...

CAMPAIGN CO-ORDINATION:

The current executive is determined to ensure that OUSU fulfils its aims and ideals practically and effectively. I want to use my portfolio for Campaign Co-ordination to help in this work:

- Maintaining high standards and common values throughout our work
- Cross-fertilisation between OUSU campaigns
- Co-ordinating our time properly
- Liasing with other student campaign groups
- Providing proper support for JCR & JCC officers & Campaign Co-chairs
- Boosting college representation on OUSU campaigns
- Ensuring we respond effectively to the issues of the moment
- Helping our members harness the support of OUSU when they need it

I want to look at what other Universities do and hear from people with ideas, work with my colleagues on Exec to implement day-to-day solutions and hopefully produce some kind of document with recommendations for Council by the end of my time on the Executive.