

# OUSU

## reports to council

1st week trinity 2007

**Alan Strickland**

**President**

### **Fees discussions**

- We said last term that we would hold discussions in colleges to explore Oxford students' views on higher education funding.
- The fees discussion briefing packs are nearly finished. Many thanks to Andrew Lomas, the Access & Admissions Officer for his hard work on this.
- Please let me know if you would like to have a discussion in your common room.

### **Increased University Funding for OUSU**

- The Vice-President (Finance) and I have been working closely with the OUSU Accountant and others to draw up a paper to secure funding for a permanent member of staff to oversee financial, legal and personnel issues.
- Please see the paper attached to the agenda which shows the proposed job description.

### **Common Rooms**

- At the weekend I spoke at Magdalen's OUSU affiliation debate. A referendum was held on Tuesday and it is with regret that I report to Council Magdalen's disaffiliation, after a vote of 73-60.

### **NUS Conference**

- NUS Conference was held in 11th week and was attended by 13 delegates from Oxford.
- Neither of our motions got debated! The guillotine on the Society and Citizenship Zone debate fell seconds before I was due to make the proposing speech on the climate change motion put forward by Council.
- I will be submitting a full report on Conference to the next Council.

### **SRI**

- I attended a meeting of the University's SRI Working Party this week.
- We are near to completing a draft SRI statement for the University.
- The committee, chaired by the Provost of Oriel, and on which the President of OUSU has a seat, has been very productive and I look forward to the adoption of a credible ethical investment statement which will lead the way for similar actions by the Colleges.

### **Vice-President (Women)**

- This has obviously been a very controversial issue. I have chaired a number of meetings, including the executive and the sabbatical team to explore the options open to the Student Union and to ensure that this remains a calm and rational debate.

### **Proctors**

- At the end of term we thanked the outgoing Proctors and Assessor for all of their hard work for students. To say thank you I presented them with confetti, silly string and a novelty hat.
- We will be meeting the new Proctors and Assessor shortly.

### **Appointments**

- I have attended several meetings of Appointments Board.

**Ed Mayne**

**V-P (Finance)**

I have been at OUSU for most of the Easter vacation working on the following projects, although I did take a week of holiday in -1 Week.

### **NUS CONFERENCE**

I was part of the Oxford University delegation that went to NUS Conference. Two important financial decisions were taken that will affect the finances of OUSU. Firstly, from now on NUS will use a new affiliation fee formula which should mean that all affiliated Student Unions will pay slightly less in future. Secondly, Conference voted to keep the NUS Extra Card scheme, capped at £10 per year.

### **NUS AFFILIATION FEES**

NUS Affiliation fee invoices will hopefully be sent out next week. I'm sorry this has been such a nightmare. I was going to discuss this issue in this Council but in light of the rather long agenda I will bring a motion about how we fund NUS affiliation in future to 3<sup>rd</sup> Week Council.

### **SURVIVAL GUIDE 2007**

The Survival Guide 2007 was finally finished midway through the vacation. The OUSU Executive decided to do 2 print runs. So a copy will be delivered to every undergraduate and graduate fresher who arrived this year and we also printed enough for next year's undergrad and grad freshers. It is worth emphasizing that this may affect our overall predicted surplus for this financial year as I did not foresee this in the Amended Budget. However it is not a significant problem because no provision will need to be made for this in the budget for the next financial year. We are still waiting for confirmation as to whether we will receive a contribution towards the printing costs of this guide from the Walter Gordon fund. Other than this, the Survival Guide will be subsidized in its entirety by OSSL profits. The Guide should be in the process of distribution as you read this report – the Vice-President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) is in charge of this.

### **WOMEN'S HANDBOOK**

OSSL also produced the last ever Women's Handbook, sponsored by Deutsche Bank. This is also currently in the process of distribution, which is being organized by the Vice-President (Women).

### **OXFORD FORUM**

OSSL is proud to announce that it has acquired *The Oxford Forum* publication. This will be distributed this week with *The Oxford Student*. This arrangement basically came about after the editors of the Forum were unable to gather funds to print the edition currently being distributed. OSSL agreed to distribute it and absorb the loss made on the first edition, in the hope that it will cover its costs through advertising revenue in the future. In light of the fact that the Forum being distributed this week is the first to appear for a year, another will be produced for the end of this term. Once that is done we will work on the basis of one edition per term. I hope to construct a constitution for this publication similar to that currently being constructed for *The Oxford Student*.

### **OXFORD STUDENT CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY**

The Oxford Student constitutional working party met for the first time in 9<sup>th</sup> Week Hilary Term. The meeting was chaired by me and was attended by the following. Rob Cookson (Editor, Michaelmas 2006), Jenny Rigterink (co-Editor, Hilary 2007), Andy Heath (Deputy Editor, Michaelmas 2006), Cat Armitage (Editor), Simon Akam (Editor, Trinity 2006), Matt Holehouse (News Editor), Tom Wrathmell (Business Manager), Jenny Hogewerf-McComb (Vice-President (Women)), Jonny Medland (Deputy News Editor and OUSU Rep, Queen's JCR), Jamie Frew (Vice-President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities)), Ed Hancox (co-Editor, Hilary 2007). Andrea Miller, David Ellis (OUSU Rep, Wadham SU) and Rich Hardiman (Vice-President (Finance)-elect and Deputy Editor, Hilary 2006) sent their apologies. The group reached consensus on several key issues. The working party is currently working on a draft which I hope to present to the next OUSU Council for ratification before having it being included in the referendum.

### **OXIDE RADIO CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY**

The Oxide Radio constitutional working party also met for the first time in 9<sup>th</sup> Week Hilary Term. The meeting was chaired by Tom Wrathmell and attended by: me, Imran Khan (Vice-President (Charities and Community)), Paul Arrich (Station Manager) and Lewis Iwu (President, New

College JCR). The group reached consensus on several key issues. The working party is currently working on a draft which I hope to present to the OUSU Council in 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of 5<sup>th</sup> Week for ratification. As the OUSU Constitution currently has no reference to Oxide Radio in it, this constitution may simply need to be ratified by Council twice without the need for a referendum.

### **STUDENT UNION MARKETING CONFERENCE**

The Business Manager and I attended the Student Union marketing conference in 0<sup>th</sup> Week at Warwick University Student Union. This was a very useful experience for both of us. We established several new contacts who may well be able to save OUSU money in the future for our service provision. And we were also able to explore potential new sources of revenue. We also learnt a great deal about Student Union marketing across the country – information that will be very helpful to our successors.

*And finally...*

### **CREATION OF OUSU COUNCIL HOMEPAGE**

In light of the fact that so many people have complained about the difficulty of accessing OUSU Council agendas, I have created a new homepage for OUSU Council ([www.ousu.org/ousucouncil](http://www.ousu.org/ousucouncil)). The very first line, below the title, is a link to the latest Council agenda. I will upload previous agendas, reports and minutes shortly.

<b>Jamie Frew Opportunities)</b>	<b>V-P</b>	<b>(Welfare</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>Equal</b>
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### **Survival Guide**

It's done!!!

Yes, you heard right – it's done... After endless delays, difficulties, revisions and modifications it's done and I think it looks wonderful. I think that this guide represents a significant improvement on previous versions of the Survival Guide and that it will definitely have been worth the wait.

14,000 copies are now within OUSU. 7,000 of these will be distributed in the next few weeks and the remainder will be given to next year's Freshers. Although not a perfect system, by doing these things this way we have managed to save a substantial sum of money and freed up enough time to permit the VP(WEO)-elect to concentrate on other projects over the summer. Further budgetary savings were made by publishing the guide in monochromatically throughout (unlike previous years), but we have still managed to produce a guide that looks good and contains more important information than ever before.

Thank-you to everyone who helped so much with this effect – I owe a lot of thanks to many people.

### **Casework and the SAS**

Given that this is a somewhat controversial subject this week I will attempt to be as honest and non-partisan as possible.

This past vacation has been extremely enlightening in terms of the casework I have undertaken. For a period of three days I was the only caseworker in the office and during those three days I did nothing other than casework because the stream of visiting clients was constant. As we start Trinity Term and the main exam season casework levels continue to be high, but appear to have maintained a reasonable level.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> March a new system of recording casework was introduced across the SAS (accompanied by a 22 page manual and record sheets that I developed specifically for the purpose). The system is largely based on premises advocated by the Association of University and College Counselors and should provide greater assurances of data protection. In addition to this the new system introduces specific measures for the ready generation of statistics which can then be presented to both OUSU Council and relevant university bodies as evidence of the variety and seriousness of a full spectrum of student welfare concerns. As with all new developments there is still room for improvement and I am anticipating a second version of the system to be introduced

before the end of this term. Further procedural reforms should also be following this term to improve our remaining working practices.

Preliminary meetings with the counseling service have been held with a view to arranging on-going structured group supervision for the members of the SAS (a informal individual version of which we have enjoyed for many years). I believe I speak for the four of us when I say that we are grateful for their generosity.

### **Queer Rights Campaign**

It continues to be the case that Queer Rights is going from strength to strength and is still recruiting new members. Following the motion last term to increase the autonomy of the Equal Opportunity campaigns Queer Rights Campaign has been preparing in anticipation of the final readings of the reforms passing. A draft constitution has been written, revised and accepted according to current procedures (and will go on to form the basis of the constitutions of two of the other Equal Opportunity campaigns). Following this nominal elections have been held to the posts detailed in this constitution and acting-officers have begun work on their remits. This constitution and relevant officers will be presented to OUSU Council for ratification at the appropriate juncture.

### **Health and Welfare Committee**

Health and Welfare Committee have been suffering significant set backs over the past few weeks. Extensive delays to research have been incurred because relevant authorities have not been available to for interview in the case of the Barnes Unit campaign. Similarly another Training Day in the same vein as the one that had been filled to capacity in Michaelmas Term was planned for this term. Sadly, however, not a single common room officer has asked to attend (in spite of longer notice being given) and so the event was cancelled.

It is hoped that a series of relaxation events including massage, aromatherapy, mediation and other similar events targeted at student with exams this term (and anyone else who wants to attend). It's intended that the events will be run with little to no fee being charged per event. Thanks must go to the Business Manager who is helping us a lot in working out how this service could be provided at minimal cost to students.

### **Oxford Student Mental Health Network Anniversary Event**

I was invited to give a speech on the student experience of mental health focusing on what support and treatment mechanisms I found helpful and those I did not as well as my experiences in providing and assisting in the support of others. The group (which is a joint campaigning group established between Oxford and Brookes) has been for campaigning for many years and, having reached their fifth anniversary, were conducting a consultation exercise into what policies they should be campaigning for in the coming years. It was extremely gratifying that many of the reforms that I and many of my predecessors have been pushing for within the university appear to have given very serious consideration and will hopefully be adopted. A fuller account of the discussions will soon be announced on their website, but one notable element is the issue of the role of tutors as providers of initial welfare support, their suitability for this role and the issue of potential for training to overcome this shortfall in service provision.

### **Condoms**

In response to requests from Common Rooms I have started to look into finding a new supplier of condoms for OUSU and there is potential that we will be able to supply a high street name brand in addition to our current manufacturers (it should be noted that *all* condoms supplied by OUSU bear the kitemark which assures they have passed quality standards). This introduction has been requested by many common room officers, but may result in OUSU's condom prices increasing (due to additional delivery charges). A full report shall be delivered upon completion of investigations.

OUSU has secured a supply of condoms that it will be distributing for free to all common rooms (regardless of affiliation). Including a limited supply of dotted and flavoured varieties – common room officers will be being informed about how they can claim their free condoms in the near

future, but please inform them in advance if you want to have the dotted/flavoured varieties – they are going to be strictly first come, first served.

### **Preparation for Handover**

Whilst for some 8<sup>th</sup> week mind seem like a long way away there is a lot to prepare in that time. I have been holding regular meetings with my successor to discuss not only how my position works within OUSU, but also what she would like to do with the post. I believe that she has had a lot of good ideas that common rooms and common room officers will be very appreciative of and I am working hard to ensure that the infrastructure is established before the time she takes over so that she need not waste time in trying to learn how OUSU operates whilst trying to reform it at the same time as so often seems to happen with sabbatical handovers.

Initiatives include new web-based support and communication networks for common room officers, revisions to casework training systems, bulk publicity buying schemes to reduce costs for common rooms, stabilizing and securing additional funding from university departments with whom we work most closely (as opposed to seeking central university funding) and hopefully extending OUSU's welfare supplies sales to include a wider range of personal safety equipment.

**Jenny Hoogewerf-McComb**

**V-P (Women)**

Hello Council,

In a massive hurry, so please forgive me if I miss things out, but since last time I have been:

- attended both NUS and NUS Women's Conferences. Wrote <sup>3</sup>guide to Women's Conference<sup>2</sup> for whoever attends from OUSU next year, to make sure we take full advantage of the opportunities of linking up with events and campaigns on a national scale which that affords! Saw most of Oxford's policy passed, which is A Good Thing. Looking forward to national action on Sports Inequality from NUS next year- hope Oxford can be a driving force in that!
- completely revised Women's Officers handbook, looking at other publications from other SUs to make sure ours is as effective and useful as possible
- got Women's Handbook completely finalised, off to the printers and printed, planned distribution schedule and am awaiting data to allow this to go ahead
- organised Women's/Women's Welfare/Female Equal Opps Officers Training Day for second week, which should be fantastic- training in listening skills, distribution of OUSU and external publications and leaflets, networking, tips on events, and discussion of the issues
- processing results of college-wide Student Parent Provision survey, and working on action points to lobby colleges for as a result
- examined Eating Disorder handbook with Enough!; will be making edits to the publication due to very positive suggestions from meeting
- attended Citigroup training day with JCR presidents- gave me some of the leadership training skills which I have been feeling were missing from my own experience all year; took copious notes to hand over to my successor and her fellow sabs, and am working on organising a similar event for the handover period at the end of June
- spoken to Childcare office about linking student and staff parents together more closely, working on a cashfree childcare system to replace the TRIO scheme the University has pulled out of,
- rewriting the OUSU student parent guide to include the many new, exciting initiatives going on for parents in the Oxford region
- putting together very busy termcard for Trinity, including Faith & Feminism talk, Clothesline Domestic Violence project with Amnesty, talk on careers & Employment law by Sue Ashtiany from Nabarro, Women's History trip to London, and Positive Body Image event with Lush, Oxford Parent picnic, and the rescheduled Women's Open Day

- writing my handover report for Hannah, which looks like it is going to be enormous- and there's still a term to go :(
- student advice service work- adjusting to new casework recording system, and working towards successful solutions for individual students

**Andrea Miller**

**V-P (Graduates)**

Although most undergraduates leave Oxford for the Easter Vacation, the University continues its business and so does OUSU!

### **I. University Committees and Meetings:**

#### **Meeting about Graduate Prospectus (March 13, April 17)**

The Graduate Office is looking into improving the format and content of the Graduate Studies Prospectus, and have asked me to contribute. While not many changes will be made this coming year, the text has been revised to be more 'user-friendly' (i.e. less confusing and distant) and the college-specific texts have been rearranged (with graduate colleges presented first, ahead of mixed colleges, and with information about college life and academic opportunities placed ahead of information about accommodation and dining). Hopefully OUSU will continue to be involved with further changes intended for future issues of the Graduate Studies Prospectus.

Note: working with the official Prospectus team has made me realise just how much we need to bring back the practice of producing an Alternative Graduate Prospectus to give prospective students more insight into how things really are...

#### **Online Admissions Steering and Management Committee (March 27, April 24)**

Applications for graduate study at Oxford are slowly but surely making the transition from paper to cyberspace. Led by Academic Registrar, Michael Sibly, this group is charged with ensuring the process goes smoothly and is informed by the input of those involved. The Law Faculty has been conducting a successful pilot online application process this year. The first meeting of the OASMC reviewed the content of the online application form and signed off on a final draft. Since then, discussion has mostly surrounded the practicalities of how the process will be conducted for each gathered field, who is responsible for printing files if necessary, who will scan things that arrive in paper format (or whether they should, in fact, scan them at all), whether the data should be imported directly into the university data system (OSS) or left on the application database (Embark), and other technicalities.

#### **Meeting with Sarah Thomas (April 11)**

I had a lovely meeting with the newly appointed Bodley's Librarian, Sarah Thomas, to chat about her vision for the future of OULS (Oxford University Library Services). I was particularly glad to hear about her willingness to introduce longer opening hours and better borrowing practices. While these improvements won't come immediately, they are on the docket for future years as the library tries to sort out its deficit and get its house back in order. She mentioned that she would like to create an informal student advisory board that she could meet with on a regular basis (over pizza) to discuss how the libraries are running from the student perspective and what can be done to make improvements.

#### **Meeting with Stella Griffiths (April 12)**

I had a very useful meeting with the new head of the Graduate Studies Office, Stella Griffiths. The theme was to focus on exactly what the Graduate Office does (a mystery to all) and how OUSU can be more involved so as to bring student perspective and feedback into play and improve services.

#### **University Council (April 23)**

The weekly pre-council presentation was given this week by the Humanities and Medical Sciences Divisions, regarding their plans for the future. Medical Sciences is looking to expand their graduate programs and Humanities is looking to ensure more and varied teaching experience for its graduate students.

The actual Council meeting itself was not that interesting. The Gender Equality Scheme was approved and updates from various committees were presented, including health and safety, which gave a scintillating overview of the latest explosion to occur in the Chemistry Research Laboratory...

## II. OUSU Meetings and Projects

While there were no formal OUSU committee meetings during the vacation, I did arrange for a few to take place in the coming weeks. **PostGraduate Assembly** will be May 8<sup>th</sup>, at 6pm at the University Club, and **MCR PresCom** will be held the evening of May 10<sup>th</sup>, at St. Cross.

I spent a good deal of time over Easter planning for my Hand Over so that Ingrid will be fully prepared when she takes over in the next few months and can hit the ground running.

I also spent time pursuing the project I have begun on departmental JCC's, who has them, and how they work. I have almost got all of the contacts I need to begin the official inquiries (Divisional Heads are not so good about getting back to people...)

I have been in discussions with Michael Webb at the Bodleian about working to create a more professional OUSU Archive. I spent a lot of time over the vacation sifting through old records and disposing of extra copies of things, and trying to figure out exactly what we've got so that cataloguing can begin at some point...

I have also been helping Ed in an effort to look at the way OUSU charges affiliation fees and make it fairer. I've been in touch with college financial bursars, accountants, treasurers (and whatever other names colleges have for these people) to ask about how much of a block grant common rooms receive so that we can consider that when looking at how affiliation fees are charged.

## III. Casework

Casework did not slow down much over the vacation. I had three new intakes and continued working with regulars.

<b>Helen Bagshaw</b>
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<b>V-P (Access &amp; Academic Affairs)</b>
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Apologies for the somewhat brief nature of my report to Council this week; things have been a little hectic so I haven't had chance to put down many things in detail.

To cover the vacation, Target Schools went on it's annual tour with Regional Conferences in Belfast, Derry, Omagh and Dundee. Attendance was down on previous years but this is the first year that anyone from the University itself has visited Northern Ireland, and so in some ways we are starting to win our campaigns to get underrepresented areas noticed. I am working on a report on Target Schools for both my handover and Admissions Executive later this term, so once this is done I will make it available on the OUSU website for anyone who is interested.

I have been attending meetings within the University as ever – since the last Council this has included one University Council meeting, one Curators meeting, one Gender Equality Scheme meeting, one Online Registration Steering Group meeting and two workshops, one meeting on Exams and Assessment, one EPSC Undergraduate Panel meeting, one Admissions Executive meeting, one meeting on changes to Units of Assessment within exams and one workshop on it and one or two casework meetings. Lots of the issues coming up within these meetings are things that I have been working on all year so I have mentioned before, but others such as the Gender Equality Scheme and some of the changes to Exams and Assessment are much newer; certainly for the latter I am about to organise a meeting for Divisional Board Reps and Academic Affairs Officers with the Co-ordinator of the project so that information about changes can be disseminated.

The Gender Equality Scheme is yet to be published on the website so I will talk about this much more in my next report, but the meeting was a good opportunity to talk through issues such as the Gender Gap in finals and Women's admissions. It's like that some things OUSU has been

requesting for years, such as Equal Opps training for all current and new staff, alongside interview training, will finally be put into place. More on this later.

I have been working with a number of institutions on laying out the future and aims of the Aldwych Group (Students' Unions of the Russell Group, the twenty most research-intensive HEIs) so that Oxford can benefit from it's part in this network of Students' Unions. Proposals we are putting forward such as active policy making and campaigning should benefit Oxford students no end, as the things you want could be campaigned and lobbied for on a national rather than local scale. Though the NUS technically does this already, being involved in the Aldwych Group means we can campaign against or for things that are only relevant to the Russell Group institutions. Hopefully I will have much more to report in my last Council report, after having had our next Aldwych meeting.

Amongst other things, I have been working on my handover file so that James will be able to start off on a good foot in terms of knowledge about the University and it's structures. This has involved planning the content and starting to organise meetings for the handover period. There has never been a proper file for my job, so I intend to create something that can be updated over the next couple of years; a written record will be incredibly important to future VP (Access and Academic Affairs) postholders, as without it it takes so long to work out who people are, how things work and where you should take your ideas.

**Imran Khan**

**V-P (Charities and Community)**

## **RAG**

Things have been going really well with RAG so far this term – we organised a joint Wadham & Brasenose 3-legged Bar Crawl just this Wednesday gone and it worked really well. Everyone really enjoyed it both as an opportunity to get a bit drunk and also to meet new people. If you fancy getting involved when we do more of these with other colleges later in term, let me know!

Brasenose are also taking part in RAG Speed Dating next week, along with Balliol, St Hilda's and St Hugh's, but there'll be at least two more coming up this term for other colleges to get in on the act.

The RAG Mag was completed and published over the Easter vac, for which RAG actually got paid – a nice bonus. Look out in your college for these cropping up.

The main thing the committee is working on this term is RAG Week (which is taking place in 3<sup>rd</sup>). It should be absolutely mad, with loads of events. RAG Assassins, a Sports Day (think egg & spoon races, obstacle courses, etc), Mr & Miss Oxford, Wine Tasting, and loads more.

The RAG Everest Expedition is also progressing nicely in terms of fundraising and training, and it's still on schedule to head off to Nepal this summer.

## **Community**

We've got lots of interesting projects coming up this term. I'm helping get people involved with the Cowley Carnival, the Oxford Mela, mentoring local kids, organising coaching for local children's football teams. Something in the pipeline for later in term is an inter-school competition for local kids to take part in some debating or mock trial competitions, coached by Oxford students.

I've also been in touch with Citigroup about organising a careers-focused community and volunteering training day, which is looking quite positive. Hopefully we can set up a lasting relationship with them so that they can assist with the Alternative Careers Fair when it rolls round again, too.

Again, if any of that interests you, drop me a line – [community@ousu.org](mailto:community@ousu.org).

## **Environment + Ethics**

It's been a really positive term for OUSU already. Along with Niel, I met the (long overdue) new chair of the University's Environment Panel, who was really impressed with everything E&E committee has been doing so far this year, and said he'd be very happy to lend his support to our projects.

We're hopefully going to be running an inter-collegiate energy efficiency competition for students later in term, for which there will be cash/amenity prizes, and that's one of the things we're looking for the University's support on. Get in touch if you think your bursar would find this interesting as a way of cutting their energy bills!

I was also recently gifted a copy of An Inconvenient Truth by one of the University's sustainability officers, so we're sending this round colleges so that common rooms can hopefully do free screenings of the film. Tell your Environment rep to get in touch with Environment and Ethics committee regarding this if you want it to happen in your college.

## **Other stuff**

KEEN (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now) are still having some residual issues after their eviction from University premises, so I've been talking to their coordinator regarding how OUSU can help. Amongst other things, we're doing some RAG fundraising events for them, and rerouting their pigeon post to us so they can actually collect it. Similarly, OCEP are hoping to use OUSU as a permanent registered base. I really hope that this sets the scene for the future in terms of OUSU

become a focal point for more and more student societies, and I'll be talking to my successor about how we can keep that moving forward.