

OUSU

reports to council

1st week trinity term 2011

David Barclay

President

Council,

It has been a fairly hectic Easter time in OUSU with the big move, but here's what I've been up to since the last Council of Hilary.

Fees, waivers and bursaries

- Saw the campaign through to the end, lobbying virtually every member of University Council before the final decision on fees and student support in 9th week. In the end we won an increased spend of £6.9mil on the Oxford Opportunity Bursary and a 'frozen fees' model of fee waivers which keeps the poorest students' fees at their current level in their first year. We are going to be the most generous University in the country in our offer to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Access

- Took part in the Access Roadshow, attending events in Edinburgh and Newcastle.
- Continued working on the Access Working Group, which will report back this term.

Organisation

- Helped out in the great migration from Bonn Square to Worcester Street. Along with Alex and Tom formed a 3-man removal/wrecking team the likes of which have never been seen in OUSU history.
- Started work on the Strategic Plan.

Common Room Support

- Continued to meet one on one with new CR Presidents
- Worked with Eleanor to produce the Rent Guidance Pack for Common Rooms and begin the Rent Campaign.

Representation

- Won representation on all the main committees of Conference of Colleges, completing work which has been going on in OUSU for at least 4 years.
- Represented Oxford students at the NUS Conference in Gateshead, in particular building a strong relationship with the new NUS President Liam Burns.

Katharine Terrell

VP (Women)

Harassment:

- Represented OUSU, with Yuan, at a 'stakeholders' meeting' for the new Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Oxfordshire for anyone who has been sexually assaulted who may not want to go to the police. Spoke with different agencies about the specific needs of students in Oxford and learnt more about the service and how it can help students in Oxford.
- Met with Keith Zimmerman, Director of Student Administration and Services, about a better university policy. Am working closely with the university and other agencies to write a paper explaining the need for a new policy and drafting it.

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- Started discussions with Oxford City Council, Oxford Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis Centre on how to reach students, especially in the spring, when cases go up, and in freshers' week.
- With Tom, organized training for common room officers on how to support students who have experienced sexual harassment, taking place on Weds and Thurs of this week. (Demand meant we are doing it twice.)

Student parents:

- well-attended and appreciated by parents last term.
- Consultation about the kinds of activities student parents want for Tea and Toys, the meet-up of students with children in Oxford.
- Event happening in 2nd week (part of Well-Being Week).
- Negotiating with the University nurseries, including the new nursery to be opened soon, about finding a permanent home for Tea and Toys.

Finals forums

- Many took place in 5-8th week Hilary term
- Have received paper feedback from many of them, will collate this into a report.

WomCam

- International women's day celebrations!
- Held 'WomCam woman of the year' event on Friday 8th week – well-attended, great fun and made lots of contact with women and men from across the university.
- Have been planning this term's events, including anti-cuts, Love Your Body garden party, guest speakers etc.

Women in Politics Open Day

- took place on Saturday 8th week at St John's College
- attended by 100 sixth-form students interested in studying politics at Oxford
- great feedback from all.
- Huge thanks to Helen Hall at SJC!

Misc:

- attended NUS women's conference with Yuan, Tania and Nicola. Made a lot of good contacts, spoke in debates, shared ideas and learned lots. Also met with the other women's sabbatical officers from across the country.
- Been organising meetings with new women's officers.
- Stewarded an event for Oxford Intl Women's Festival.
- Took part in an OxHub 'power debate'.
- Attended Oxford Uni race equality conference.

Non-portfolio

- organised common room presidents and exec members to go to London for the launch of the OCCH
- Represented Oxford at an Oxbridge student conference in London, speaking to young people considering Oxford.
- Represented OUSU at a Higher Education and Careers Convention in London organised by the Tamil Youth Organisation.

Springboard

- Took place Tuesday-Thursday 0th week, attended by around 40 students. The whole programme went really well, with students saying it helped them understand their personal values better and plan for their future.
- I organised the catering, rooms, printed the workbooks, organised the bookings, etc.

- Next step to collate feedback and find financial and organisational support from the university for it to continue next year.

Meetings:

- Gender Panel
- Sarah Carson (with responsibility for gender equality in Oxford Uni) to give student perspective on the kinds of issues the Uni could be looking at.
- Filmmaker commissioned to make film about women in Oxford .
- Athena SWAN

Casework

- A few smaller cases, mostly information requests.

Beth Evans	VP (Graduates)
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- **OUSU Executive Committee**

Discussion on the new changes to visas for International Students: what we've already done, what was originally proposed and what's actually gone through. Finally, what is OUSU going to do about it? We identified the main issues as dependants not being able to accompany students studying for courses of less than a year, the use of 'low risk' (and implicitly 'high risk') to define students by nationality, and potentially the minimum salary needed to take up the new Tier 2 visa route. We discussed how OUSU can best get information out to students (e.g. through working with Careers Service), reassure those feeling unwelcome and also what we can do to (and whether or not we should) influence the University's position on courses less than 12 months.

- **University Council**

Brought up what we'd heard from International Students in focus groups last term – students feeling increasingly unwelcome due to government changes and attitude of UKBA in general, asked Council to consider ways the University could counter this and reassure international students of their value to the University.

- **International Undergraduate Working Group**

Continuing work on how to prepare overseas applicants for undergraduate courses, how to encourage them to apply and generally let them know what they're in for if they do.

Building Move

We've now moved from Thomas Hull House to our new building at 2, Worcester Street. It's been a bit of a mission – a huge amount of effort to sort out all the various weird stuff that you might expect to accumulate in an SU building, but definitely a great place for the new Sabbs to start their jobs. Hopefully you can make it to our open day this Friday!

Taught Postgraduate submission to Teaching Review

For those who don't know, OUSU is working on a submission to the University's Review of Teaching. Last year's work focused on undergraduates, and this year we're covering taught postgraduates (PGT students). This is incredibly important as it's a way for us to let the University know how its own students feel about the way they are taught. Focus groups have finally begun, beginning with PGCE students last week. If you'd like to hold a focus group or if you'd like to be involved and want any more info, please email gradteachingreview@ousu.org. Massive thanks to fab Graduate Academic Affairs Officer for hard work and baking.

Casework

NUS Conference

Hello Council!

I hope you all had a great Easter and have been enjoying the weather. I expect I'll be repeating a lot of what the other officers have said regarding what we've been up to; a substantial part of our Easter was taken up with the building move. For those of you that haven't seen it yet we have an open house on Friday from 1pm, come and look around!

Once you take out the time we spent moving, the various bank holidays, and my lovely break in sleepy Nova Scotia, there wasn't much of the vacation left. However here is what I've been up to. Feel free to drop me an email with any questions you may have:

- Katharine and I have been planning a workshop on Sexual Harassment and Abuse. This is a new training session, so hopefully it will go well. The first one will be just before Council so I'm sorry if we're a little late! If you would like to come there is another at 2pm tomorrow (Thursday 5th); come and speak to one of us if you're interested.
- While on the topic of harassment my paper on harassment provision has gone to Conference on Colleges this term. I'll update you on its progress when I hear more.
- Well Being Week is next week; I hope you have all joined the Facebook group. If not, why not?! The week is full of events to promote students taking care of their mental well-being while in Oxford. From workshops on Mindfulness and sleeping, through to feel-good movies and Zumba, there is something for everyone. For more information or posters come and find Laura Hancox or me.
- I've spent most of the past week or two catching up on casework, due to our inability to see students during the move. If any student in your common room needs information or advice, particularly if it is exam related, they can email advice@ousu.org or one of the officers (Alex, Katharine, Beth and me) directly.
- The Race Equality Conference was a success (well, most of it!). Congratulations to Leyla at the EDU and the rest of the Race Equality Working Group for getting it together. A special mention should go to OUSU's CRAE, who received more positive feedback for their workshop on 100 Voices than any other part of the conference.
- Alex and I have assisted a couple of college officers who are looking to change their academic discipline procedures. One of the biggest flaws with the College system is the inequality it brings, and one area where we see that the most is with academic procedures. If you would like to improve the way your college deals with students who aren't meeting their academic requirements please drop Alex or me an email.
- I've done more research into getting Case management software for the Student Advice Service.
- The Trustee board met for a second time to discuss things such as governance and the budget.
- I met with the local council to talk about the security and safety procedures for May Day. I believe that no one jumped off the bridge this year, which is a win. I hope everyone who went had a good time.
- The Sab team, along with several officers from around Oxford, went to London to take part in a consultation event for our new careers resource from RealWorld Push. This was a great chance to shape this new project, and I hope it will be a valuable tool for Oxbridge students.

With a combination of bank holidays, moving offices and annual leave, it's been a fairly odd Easter vacation. Below are a few things I've been up to other than packing boxes and lifting sofas.

- It seems like an age ago now, but 9th week last term was D-Day on student support and fee levels. After extensive discussions in Council, in which a number of figures spoke out in support of OUSU proposals, the University finalised the fee level at £9k and created a package of financial support for the poorest students which looks to be among the most generous in the country at present (see

http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate_courses/student_funding/index.html for details. OUSU and student campaigners across the University can be particularly proud of the support package that's been agreed. Along with common room presidents and divisional representatives, we stepped in when the possibility of cutting bursary provision was floated by one or two voices in the collegiate university, with the result that bursary provision is being maintained at the current level. The idea of 'freezing fees' at current levels for the poorest students was an OUSU initiative that was pushed towards the end of the last year, and it is fantastic that a version of this scheme has been implemented. Thanks to all those who gave up time lobbying on this issue.

- There has been a steady flow of casework through the Student Advice Service over the vacation, both in requests for information, particularly around exams, and in students seeking help in formal processes.
- I attended the second meeting of the visiting students working group that is setting out to look at the experience of visiting students in the University and how they are integrated into Oxford more generally. We will hopefully be running some focus groups during the term to add some anecdotal evidence to the group's discussions.
- Harriet Green (OUSU Part-Time Access and Admissions Officer) came up with a brilliant idea for a University/OUSU access showcase. We have spent a lot of time seeking buy-in from people in the University and are now starting work to see if we can make it a reality. Lots more on this in the near future.
- Reports on Target Schools and OUSU's access priorities for the future are well under way and will be coming to Council this term.

Daniel Lowe

VP (Charities & Community)

So, bank holidays over its back to the grind. Not that bank holidays are included in sabs' contracts. The Easter vac was largely taken up by the move and I assure you that the view of the coach station from my new window is lovely. Still a few creases to iron out re drawers that fit and meeting rooms bookings but we're pretty much functional.

RAG

A new RAG committee is in office and has been hard at work to rustle up a term of awesome charitable events. Coming up on Saturday is a raid for Kids – a charity that works with disabled children. If you feel like shaking a bucket for an hour or two on Cornmarket email raids@ousu.org to volunteer. We'll also be seeing ice cream at wadstock and are organising a FIREWALK!!

Do you want to raise lots of money for charity? Improve your CV? Boss people around? Get a career in events management? THEN APPLY TO BE RAG BALL PRESIDENT or on the RAG ball committee. Email rag.president@ousu.org by Sunday evening to get more information and book an interview.

At the close of the financial year RAG had raised £119,300 for our four charities Shelter, Emerge Global, Pathway Workshop and Helen and Douglas House. This is the first time we'd ever raised more than £70k

E&E

E and E were very lucky to win an award of £600 from DEFRA over the vac. We'll be putting it to good use over the next few years (its twice our annual budget) and in the mean time we're attempting to break a world record of creating the largest tower of tin cans for World Environment Day to show people how much waste an average family produces over time. On top of this I'm organising an indoor ethical market place (the ethical bazaar) and we're joining all the environmental and ethical campaigners in Oxfordshire together in the vaults and garden for 'campaigners connected.'

In second week we're hosting the Oxford Hub Series Event in the Saskatchewan Room, Exeter College entitled 'Incinerators: a burning issue' (see what we did there?)

Community

The safety bus was out in force over May Day and I'm pleased to report that no one jumped off the bridge making the first time in six years when the bridge was open a huge success. I myself was on shift for over twelve hours and it was great to see so many people enjoying themselves safely.

I attended each of the four NAGs East, North, Centre and Jericho/Abingdon Road/West. The big issues at the moment are students drinking on their way to crewdates at a particular curry house in Jericho popular for such occasions. Please remember guys that you can't have open containers of alcohol in the street in Oxford. You could get fined (bossy voice over).

PART TIME OFFICERS

Jacob Diggle Officer	Clubs & Societies Support
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It's been a very busy holiday and a large number of projects are now underway which will hopefully have a very positive impact on the Oxford extracurricular experience. Here is just a quick run down:

* **Oxford's first ever University-wide 'Clubs Council' - Friday 4th Week (7:00 - 8:30pm Corpus Christi Auditorium).**

This will be a fantastic opportunity for the Presidents, Treasurers and Secretaries of all Oxford clubs and societies to get together, exchange ideas, raise issues, expand networks, and increase their skills. The sheer scale and diversity of Oxford's extracurricular groups creates a rich but also quite chaotic environment where identifying support and identifying best practice can be very difficult. With the rapid change over of a society's committees (often every term) a daunting challenge is posed to each new set of organizers and with sad predictability, things inevitably fall through the gaps. And when things do go wrong, for whatever reason, it is often quite difficult to know where to turn to for help. This Clubs Council aims to act as a regular forum for raising issues, providing workshops, and learning from each other. A general forum will be followed by expert-led workshops on key skills such as chairing meetings, taking minutes, registering with the Proctors, and book-keeping. I can also exclusively reveal that a very special speaker will be opening the forum with what is set to be an inspiring and exciting address.

* **Fortnightly newsletter to all of Oxford's clubs and societies.**

After much hard-work and negotiation, a mailing list of all clubs and societies, whether registered with the Proctors or not, has been compiled and can now be used to share ideas and increase co-ordination of Oxford's vibrant extracurricular scene. A bulletin will be regularly sent out and will include information about relevant events, campaign information etc. If you have a notice to be included in this newsletter, please email it to societies@ousu.org by 12pm on Monday of every odd numbered week.

* **Producing a set of simple 'how-to guides' on key areas of society administration.**

I am still overwhelmed and incredibly excited by the sheer number of students looking to set up new societies on an almost daily basis - adding to the over 600 existing groups. There are a number of routes open to these budding founders and whilst Oxford's lack of formal registration process increases flexibility and organic development, it does make setting up a society a rather intimidating prospect. By creating simple guides on how to set-up a society and some of its basic requirements, I hope to make the prospect more enjoyable and convenient.

* **Improving OUSU's support for international and visiting students, through joint projects with national societies.**

Through the central University, OUSU, Colleges, Common Rooms, student societies and third-party groups, a

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large amount of support and advice is available for Oxford students. However, this is not always the easiest to access and is particularly poorly penetrated into the international/ visiting student community. Oxford has so much to offer - both extracurricular and academic - but many students with tighter time limits on their stay make little use of these opportunities. Through increasing co-operation with national societies it will be possible to organize joint events, foster a more coherent community, increase awareness of support services and extracurricular activities and generally ensure that OUSU is supporting ALL students. This will also provide many opportunities for more effective campaigning on issues of mutual concern - e.g. changes to international visas.

* **Creating an easily searchable website with details of all of Oxford's fantastic societies.**

Oxford has over 600 clubs and societies but their contact details are often difficult to access and out-of-date. Beyond the initial experience of Freshers' Fair, it is rare for information about the extracurricular activities available within the University to be widely circulated. Having a dedicated area, regularly maintained, with information about a societies' activities and how to get involved may seem like a simple step but one that would dramatically increase participation and enjoyment.

* **Increasing the involvement of clubs and societies in Access.**

The abiding perception of Oxford amongst many school students is one of relentless academic focus. However, our extracurricular activities play an integral part in the student experience and their role needs to be more accurately conveyed to potential students - especially those from schools with little history of previous applications. I will be working with OUSU's Access and Admissions Officer to see how we can better integrate clubs and societies into access work. This will be a process that will also include the Sports Federation, the University, Common Room Reps and representatives from societies themselves. Not only does greater integration improve Oxford's image in the minds of potential applicants, but it also serves as a fruitful scouting ground for new talent.

This is just a taster of the work I have been doing over throughout Hilary and will continue to develop during this term and beyond. Clubs and Societies Support Officer may have been a new role this year but it has proved immensely challenging but rewarding over the last few months. I have loved meeting so many passionate and talented individuals who work so hard to provide great opportunities and plenty of fun. I can't wait to see what the next term holds! Watch this space for regular progress updates and news of other projects.

In the meantime, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns please don't hesitate to get in touch: societies@ousu.org

Sarah Santhosham

Community Outreach & Charities Officer

I hope you've all had a great vac! Over the vac I've been busy preparing for some exciting events this term for my respective campaigns. Here are some of the events that I've organised for this term and others which I'll be working on:

Community Organising Workshops: I've put together a series of workshops on community organising and these are going to take place on Wednesday of 2nd, 4th and 6th week in Corpus Christi College at 5.30pm. They are being run by professional organisers from Citizens UK, the Contextual Theology Centre and Oxford and will give an introduction to the theory and applications of community organising. All welcome! Contact me if you'd like more information about this.

Living Wage: I organised a group to go to the 10th Anniversary of the Living Wage Campaign Assembly held by Citizens UK in Westminster on Monday. Regular campaign meetings have resumed and take place on Tuesdays at 5pm in the new OUSU building. This term we will be continuing with our college strategies as well as exploring the potential for a community action. I'm also in the process of writing a briefing document on the Living Wage Campaign in Oxford – e-mail me if you want a copy. For more information about anything Living Wage related, send an e-mail to livingwage@ousu.org

Community Space: I'm in the process of putting all the data I've received from various colleges together and will be devoting more time to this project this term. I've also had a meeting with OxHub to see how we can work together on this and am in the process of talking to the Council about their own similar plans.

RAG: I'm currently planning 'Choose a Challenge' collaboratively with OxHub and this will be held at the beginning of Michaelmas Term in the new OxHub building; to this end I've been having meetings with OxHub and potential fund-raising student adventure companies. I'm also working with Daniel to organise 'Summer Twist' which will be held on Friday of 7th week.

If you'd like more information about any of this or would like to get involved, feel free to send me an e-mail at communityandcharity@ousu.org

Sarah

Alastair Marsh

Environments & Ethics Officer

Dear students,

I hope you have all had a good Easter holiday. Over the vac, I've been arranging the Campaigners Connected event that I hope will stimulate fresh interaction, collaboration and support between students and non-students in Oxford who are working on environmental and ethical causes. In addition, as mentioned in my last report, planning for a world record attempt for the tallest tin tower has been underway, as well as helping colleagues arranging "Incinerators: a burning issue?" on the impact of incinerator technology which'll be a OxHub Series event on Wednesday of 2nd Week.

Although having stated it as an intention for this term, I don't realistically expect to be able to arrange group meetings with all the college reps; however, I will think of other ways in which to get in touch with those I haven't met yet.

Wishing you a happy start of term,
Alastair (eande@ousu.org)

Jonny Medland

Grad Academic Affairs Officer

Hey Council,

Sorry I'm going to be late today. I'm running a focus group for students on 1 year Taught Masters Programs in the Classics Faculty at 5pm which will likely run to just after 6. Here's what I've been up to since last time we met.

Most of my Exec-related stuff has been related to the University's Review of Teaching which I did quite a lot of work on last Trinity with Hannah Cusworth and a bunch of JCR representatives. Long story short the University is reviewing its Teaching Model for the first time in recent history, we think it's important that student views are taken into account. With Beth Evans I've met a bunch of University people (Academic Registrar, PVC Education, Director of Student Administration & Services, Chair of Conference's Graduate Committee, Head of Education Policy Support, others) to devise questions for focus groups for students on PGT programs. I've also met with the MCR President of Linacre and met/Skyped about 25 postgrad JCC reps to ask them to run focus groups for students on their courses. I reckon we'll probably run about 20 focus groups in the first 3 weeks of this term which will be quite cool and then put together a report based on that, survey data and data I've got from the university on student attainment on postgraduate taught programs. This will then be submitted to the University and circulated to you all by the end of week 4.

This is really exciting, is probably the largest consultation OUSU has done of postgraduates in recent times and builds on all the work that Sarah Hutchinson did last year on the experience of DPhil students. Hopefully next year's sabb team will be able to do some work with PGR students on their experiences; contrary to popular belief you can engage graduates on something like this although it is more difficult than doing the same with undergrads and the project is a lot of fun. I'm working on the PGT Teaching Review with Beth Evans and the

work is being shared between us.

Other plans for the term include bringing policy to OUSU Council in either weeks 3 or 5 on prioritising graduate student support as part of Oxford's Development Campaign (in line with what Jim O'Connell ran on in last term's VP Grads election) and bringing something on theses being printed double-sided instead of single-sided. It sounds petty right up until you realise Oxford's small but unfortunate role in deforestation.

Anyway, that's what I've been up to. If you've got any questions then feel free to ask me either at Council when I arrive or by emailing gradacaff@ousu.org.

Jonny

**Eleanor Brown
Officer**

Rent and Accommodation

Hello all,

This term many common rooms will be conducting Rent Negotiations. The new, improved OUSU Rent Negotiation Pack is available as a guide to anyone interested. I can also provide statistics on college rents which you might find helpful in your negotiations. OUSU's Rent Response Team are also available to anyone who needs help or support in negotiating with their college - don't hesitate to get in touch! I'm also always available to deal with any individual problems to do with housing, landlords, college accommodation etc at rentandacom@ousu.org.

Eleanor