

## Reports to Council

1<sup>st</sup> Week Council Trinity Term 2013

David J. Townsend

President

I've been away over much of the Easter Vacation on OUSU business, first in Myanmar for the student delegation, then in Sheffield for the NUS Conference. Some brief details are below: for more information, e-mail me at [president@ousu.org](mailto:president@ousu.org) or ask a question in OUSU Council.

### Oxford Student Delegation to Myanmar

This occurred between 25 March and 7 April. Some details of it appeared in *The Oxford Student* in 0th Week: [oxfordstudent.com/2013/04/18/ousu-group-travel-to-myanmar/](http://oxfordstudent.com/2013/04/18/ousu-group-travel-to-myanmar/). The other delegates and I are preparing a report to be circulated in 1st or 2nd Week (containing follow-up actions) and a presentation evening open to students, academics and other interested people around the middle of Trinity Term. More details will follow as they become available.

### National Union of Students Conference

This occurred between 8 April and 10 April in Sheffield. Many of the details of how OUSU delegates voted and spoke can be found in the report contained in Appendix 1 of the agenda for this meeting of OUSU Council.

### OUSU Funding 2013-2014

During Hilary Term, OUSU Council passed a motion to mandate me to write to the Vice-Chancellor setting out the urgent need for extra funding for OUSU from the University, and the destructive consequences of underfunding over the last few years. I also wrote another letter on behalf of the Trustee Board. The Vice-Presidents and I lobbied the academic and administrative staff throughout the term, including flying Congregation and the University administrative offices, talking to individual decision makers, speaking at Congregation (and giving the Vice-Chancellor a Valentine's Day heart), making the case in the student press and speaking at University committees about the need for a remedial funding increase. We were joined in these efforts by MCR and JCR Presidents, other common room officers, OUSU's Part-Time Executive Officers and individual students who worked in their common rooms, in the student press and at the University level to make the case for this urgent funding increase.

As a result of this joint effort, in 2013-2014 **OUSU's block grant will be increased by £100 000**. (This is in addition to the small, sub-inflationary percentage increase that was originally being contemplated. The ear-marking of certain sums of money for specific projects will also end as from next year, leaving OUSU free to decide how best to deliver its services to its members.) Representing **an over 25% increase on the present year's budget**, this is believed to be the biggest single increase that OUSU has ever achieved - and we did it thanks to all of you who joined with us in this effort. Over the course of this term, your elected representatives on the Budget Sub-Committee will be helping to put together next year's budget and allocate this increase where it is needed most (communications comes to mind!), and that budget will be submitted to OUSU Council later this term for your approval.

Thankyou to everyone in OUSU Council who helped make this happen! It's your Student Union, and I'm happy to have worked with you all to make sure that it starts getting the money it needs to do what you expect it to do. There's more work to be done on this front in the future, but I must confess I'm feeling pretty damn good right at the moment.

Hooroo,  
DJT

### Highlights

Since my last report I have been lobbying the University over what will replace the Financial Guarantee, I have signed up our local MP Andrew Smith as a 'Postgraduate Champion' in support of more postgraduate funding, I have begun drafting OUSU's PGT 'audit', I have begun planning handover, and I have been meeting the latest influx of MCR Presidents who have taken over during the Easter vacation. I have also held a rent breakfast and negotiation training session.

### Financial Guarantee

As the court case has now been settled this can be discussed openly. While Damien Shannon must be given the bulk of the credit for the shift in University policy lobbying by many MCR Presidents over Hillary also played a significant role in creating the necessary internal momentum.

The University has set up a Working Group that we are represented on and I have been meeting the Chair of the Committee and the Director of Graduate Admissions to ensure that the options on the table are palatable to students. I will report back to MCR Presidents and to Council when the preferred option is put out for consultation. It is now extremely unlikely that the Financial Guarantee will continue in the way that it does now but the battle is not completely over.

### NUS Lobby on PGT Loans

I have discussed the issue of loans for Masters students with our local MP Andrew Smith and he is now signed up as a 'Postgraduate Champion' who will represent the needs of postgraduate students and postgraduate education in Westminster. I have been trying to arrange a meeting with Nicola Blackwood MP but have struggled to receive a response so far. We are also having discussions with University Officers to encourage the University to come out in support of a loan system. Finally, a motion on PGT loans that Oxford proposed was passed at NUS conference, mandating action by the NUS for a viable, government backed, loan system.

### PGT 'Audit'

I am using my final term to produce a report with the Postgraduate Academic Affairs Officer, Nick Cooper, for the University on the experiences of masters students at Oxford, drawing on a report produced by OUSU 2 years ago. We are reviewing progress in the following areas: student engagement, quantity of teaching, communication of course structure to applicants, careers service provision, and feedback.

### Graduate Rent

We have now confirmed the uplift figure for next year, which will be 3.1% rather than 3.2% following a recalculation of inflation.

As always this is report records the news and highlights from my work. If anyone has any questions about any of this or my other work then please do ask them in Council or email me ([graduates@ousu.org](mailto:graduates@ousu.org)). Equally if anyone has an issue they would like me to work on drop me a line.

Hi Council,

Sorry I couldn't get this to you in advance - I was out of the office working on Folk Weekend: Oxford (did you see the Morris Dancers?) Here is what I have been doing and planning over Easter, in brief:

### What I've been up to...

- Working with CRAE, we have got the University to agree to the idea of holding a Race Equality Summit. This will involve stakeholders in BME students' access to, and experience at, Oxford.
- With the help of a range of clubs and societies, I have organised Wellbeing Week for next week. Posters will soon be arriving in your common rooms detailing the activities on offer to get you thinking about your physical and mental health.

- Perhaps not the most exciting news for you guys, but I am pleased to announce that I have completed the Student Advice Service's policies and procedures. I will be bringing them to the next Council for your approval.
- Planned an updated Equality and Diversity Training, with input from OUSU's part-time officers and liberation campaigns. Training taking place on Tuesday is open to common room officers and anyone interested in equality. Equal Opportunities Officers are particularly

**Coming up...**

- Wellbeing Week is next week! There are events both in individual common rooms and open to everyone in the University. Learn to manage exam anxiety, stretch out with beginner's yoga, examine body image with Student Run Self-Help, or chill out in front of a film.
- 'Plain English' Campaign: subject to Council's approval of this evening's motion, I want to start putting pressure on colleges to make their student-facing procedures clear and accessible.

As ever, drop me a line on [welfare@ousu.org](mailto:welfare@ousu.org) or catch me after Council if you want some more info on this, or if there is anything else I can help you with.

All the best for the term,

Katie

**David Messling**

**VP (Access & Academic Affairs)**

Hello Council,

Belated Happy Easter and welcome to Trinity term! Lots is going on in world of access and academic affairs, and to spare you a long read I produce the edited highlights below. For more info please, as ever, feel free to get in touch at [access@ousu.org](mailto:access@ousu.org)

Thanks,

David

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**Student Finance**

This term sees several developments on the student finance front. The University is currently surveying freshers on their opinions of Oxford's financial support package, and to complement this I've produced briefings for JCRs to get their students talking about the future of undergrad finance. Alongside this, we're hopefully near to successful outcomes on providing extended term support and getting next year's Year Abroad fees lowered - watch this space! I've also begun a survey of College hardship funds, with a view to creating guidance for JCRs on campaigning on better hardship funds in their colleges.

**Teaching Awards**

Thank you to all who nominated for the Teaching Awards! We received 239 nominations for this year's awards, and are currently in the process of selecting the shortlisted candidates, before revealing the final winners in Eighth Week's awards ceremony at Rhodes House.

**Target Schools**

...is currently taking a chance to a reassessment following the conclusion of this year's shadowing scheme. Over the vacation we've been working on a new website, and a new plan for the campaign, aiming to provide shadowing throughout the year, and beginning to recruit student volunteers towards the end of Trinity.

## Complaints and Appeals

Nick Cooper, OUSU's (Gradute) Academic Affairs Campaigns Officer has been putting together a detailed analysis of what's good, what's bad and what's ugly about information of college complaints and appeals. Along with Katie Colliver, we'll be taking forward the results to the University, as well as providing information for MCRs and JCRs to campaign on in their colleges.

Sarah Santhosham

VP (Charities & Community)

Hi Council,

Welcome back and I hope you've all had a great vac! The Easter vac has been a productive time for consolidating the work done over Hilary and planning for Trinity term. Here is a summary of activities and, as ever, please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or want to get involved. My e-mail address is [charities@ousu.org](mailto:charities@ousu.org)

### Environment and Ethics

- This term I am launching a **new magazine** to make environmental and ethical affairs interesting and relevant to students. I have been acting as Editor-in-Chief, coming up with ideas, commissioning articles, co-ordinating an editorial team and working with our Business Officer to finance the magazine through sponsorship.
- Last week, I went on a trip to Milton Keynes to visit a Material Recycling Facility (MRF). It was an enjoyable and educational trip and you can read all about it in the new E&E magazine later this term.
- I have contributed to the University's new Sustainability Strategy and Environment Panel.

### Charity

- Over the Easter break, I sorted out and wrote a report on the RAG accounts. Over the last year RAG has raised just **over £91,000** and has supported 14 charities. This is a tremendous achievement and much credit goes to the last committee. Let me know if you would like a copy of the report.
- I have done a lot of structural work with the RAG committee over the break to allow for greater efficiencies and increased fundraising. This will hopefully pay off over the next year.
- I've been overseeing the RAG Ball committee and drafting their contracts.
- I have also been developing our links with local charities.

### Living Wage

- Hopefully you will have seen coverage of the University's decision to pay all directly employed staff at least the Living Wage. Next week I will be contributing to the University's new working group to lobby for an extension to contracted staff.

### Community

- I am working with the City Council and Oxford Brookes to develop and implement an end of year recycling scheme to manage excess waste, in collaboration with the British Heart Foundation.
- The Community Wardens will be working with Common Rooms to prepare students who will be living out next year.
- I've been working with Oxford's Safer Communities Partnership Group, in particular on their Community Safety Plan.

### Other

- I have developed a programme to support OUSU's campaigns, and in particular the campaign chairs, and have been working on a publicity campaign for them.

Hello All,

Where has the time gone? Trinity Term is here and there is so much left to do. But, I have been busy especially with the upcoming launch of It Happens Here. If you are keen on getting involved, email [ithappenshere@ousu.org](mailto:ithappenshere@ousu.org).

I'm also looking forward to the screening of *Girl Rising*, a documentary about the impact of a girl's education on her life, her community, and her world. Come and join us on Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> week in the Saskatchewan Room, Exeter at 6pm!

Suzanne

### Some quick facts for you...

- Sexual Consent: an agreement by choice, a person must have had the freedom and capacity to make that choice.
- 61% of Oxford student participants in Sexual Consent Discussion said they know someone badly affected by issues of sexual consent.
- That is a lot of people!

### What I'm doing about it...

- Talking to colleges and common rooms about getting sexual consent discussions embedded in the college's Freshers' Week and running throughout the year.
- Over the break, I spoke with three colleges and finalised plans with another!!

### What else I'm doing from 9 to 5(ish)...

- Ran Sexual Consent discussions at the Oxford Cherwell Valley College with It Happens Here members and volunteers from the Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre (OSARCC).
- Represented OUSU and the consent discussions at the Brook Awards Ceremony in which we were nominated for the UK Adult Sexual Project of the Year. We didn't win, but it was great getting the word out on what OUSU does!
- Facilitated a number of Athena SWAN focus groups for the Medical Science Division in preparation of the April submissions.

### Shout Out...

- This week's shout out goes to Dan Guinness for his tireless work with the Good Lads Groups.

## PART TIME OFFICERS

**Henry Chong**

**Mature Students Officer**

Dear All,

Welcome back! It's the last term of the year: hopefully it'll be one filled with sunshine and mature students events.

Please do contact me at [maturestudents@ousu.org](mailto:maturestudents@ousu.org) if you would like to join the mature students campaign committee, and help guide community issues.

Keep a look out for our upcoming Facebook page!

Yours Sincerely,  
Henry Chong

**Nick Cooper**

**Graduate Academic Affairs Officer**

Evening Council,

First, sorry I can't be at Council tonight - turns out I can't tell 0th week from 1st week when booking holidays... Hope everyone had a great Easter break and is looking forward to Trinity sunshine. I have been working with Chris on writing up a review of taught Masters courses and information given to students in advance about contact hours and assessment methods. This will go to the university in due course, and hopefully help to shape both what students are told, and the education they receive. I'll update in later Council reports but for now, have a great 1<sup>st</sup> Week.

Nick

**Jonathan Metzger**

**Common Room Support Officer**

Continuing to work slowly on the proposal for Oxford colleges to sponsor academies to replace failing comprehensive schools. Have also had discussions with JCR Presidents about a strategy to open up the process by which VNI inflation is calculated and how we can argue that this should not form the basis for college rent negotiations.

**Will Neaverson**

**Disabled Students Officer**

Over Easter, I've been putting the finishing touches on the Disability Guide. It's looking great, and I'd like to thank all the students who have contributed their experiences in order to make it engaging and relevant to future students.

This term, Dwight Kelly, the rest of the Disabled Students campaign, and I will start to plan the Disability Awareness Week, 2013. If anyone attended the 2012 week and has feedback, I'd love to hear your suggestions.