



## reports to 3rd week council hilary 2005

**John Blake**

**President**

Three major tasks have concerned me over the past two weeks: the Amended Budget, OUSU's position under new charities legislation, and the University's Academic Strategy. There is not a great deal to report at this stage about any of them, as they are currently works in progress, but I will happily answer any questions about them that arise out of this briefing:

**The Amended Budget:** This will be presented to Council in 5th Week. I am attempting to write it in such a way as to reflect our current practice, not just in the amount of money we have spent, but also in the manner in which we use our money. This somewhat cryptic sentence will become clearer when I present it. The Executive has also had a discussion about ensuring greater accountability for OUSU's money by that body. I think it is essential that if the Executive is to have any meaningful role in the day-to-day management of OUSU, this must include a coherent idea of what we spend our money on, and the reasonable right to ensure it is being spent in the best manner, and we will be looking into the most efficient and effective way to do this.

**New Charities Legislation:** I have spoken to the JCR Presidents and to the OUSU Reps about the difficulties posed for OUSU by the changes in charities law that the government is currently implementing. They will make our current autonomous situation within the University unviable. Solutions have been proposed by the Proctors' Office and by the University Legal Services department which the Executive is investigating. I will be arranging a visit to Cambridge and CUSU to discuss their system, which hopefully should provide a workable solution.

**The Academic Strategy:** The motion coming to Council today discussing OUSU's initial response to the University's Green Paper on Academic Strategy. Despite the press reports about British undergraduates being replaced by international students (which is a short-sighted reading of the document), the real issues are to do with the shape of the University as an academic body and will have impacts on learning for students. The Vice President (Access and Academic Affairs) and I attended a discussion on this yesterday and will go to a further one on Monday. It represents a real chance for students to have an impact on one of the most significant documents the University has produced since the North Report.

Beyond that, Zoo's newest night, Zoo Na Na, has been an enormous success: many thanks and congratulations to Gareth Lloyd and Chris Allan for their work on Oxford's best indie night. Those of you engaging in Zoo's dirty weekend of Filthy

Fridays and Saucy Saturdays will note that the Studio (now the Studio Lounge) has been refurbished – more beds, fewer shoes stuck to the floor. All good.

**\*\*\*ELECTIONS\*\*\***

Nominations for Vice President (Graduates) – for the remainder of this year and for next year – and for Vice President (Women) have been reopened until MIDDAY TUESDAY OF 4TH WEEK.

**Nicky Ellis  
(Opportunities)**

**V-P (Welfare & Equal**

**Holocaust Memorial Day**

This went really well; I'm sure that Claire will speak about it in more detail, as she was the driving force behind it, but just a few things. The service and the vigil were both well attended and very moving; the service had a reflective and quiet atmosphere, and managed to be non-religious but still spiritual, and really did feel like a space for quiet reflectio rather than a statement. I was deeply impressed with all the people that got involved, and hope that we can plan other events along these lines; it reassured me that there was the will to do things within the student body The service was also a good mix of students and local residents, proof I think that we did manage to create an atmosphere in which all felt welcome. Thank you everyone.

Yesterday, those of us on the executive involved in equal opportunities work had an extremely productive meeting in which we discussed the future of the equal opportunities groups; many ideas came out of this, and I am in the process of typing up the minutes. This will all knick off over the later half of term, and I'll keep you all informed. Ideas and thoughts welcome as always.

I have been talking with out general manager about a more efficient system for the provision of condoms- more on this soon.

As some of you may be aware, there are currently some problems with the university counselling service as far as the length of the waiting list goes. I will be talking to the head of the service next week, to see how serious the situation is and what can be done about it. In the mean time, if anyone has any concerns, or is being asked about the situation, they are welcome to contact me and I will advise them as best I can on alternative or interim sources support if they feel that they cannot wait for the university service.

**Rebecca Wilkinson  
(Women)**

**V-P**

On Wednesday myself and Claire Chalmers went to an NUS conference on “Pro-Choice and proud” in Portcullis House. I was on a panel of 6 speakers and gave a speech on last terms referendum.

The day was very informative and inspiring. There were representatives from various national organisations speaking about their plans and the opportunity to meet other women’s officers from universities around the country.

I have been planning the RECLAIM THE NIGHT MARCH, along with Claire and Gina, which we hope to hold on Monday of 7<sup>th</sup> week. We attend to walk through Oxford and then gather in a central location to have speeches and a vigil. Jo Salmon [NUS Women’s Officer] and Antonia Bance [former-OUSU VP(Woman)] have both agreed to give talks at the event. We hope to make this a really large event and urge everyone to contribute ideas on how to make it relevant to students.

Finals forums are coming along. The first one is Arch and Anth, next week.

Time Table:

ARCH & ANTH: Lucia Nixon, 2-4pm, Magdalen

[please email to confirm you want to attend; [lucia.nixon@magd.ox.ac.uk](mailto:lucia.nixon@magd.ox.ac.uk)]

ENGLISH: Emma Smith, 12.30-2pm, OUSU

PHILOSOPHY: Lesley Brown, WK 8, TBA

CLASSICS: Teresa Morgan, 2pm+, Oriel

MATHS: Katherine Morris, 2-4pm. Mansfield Council Room.

HISTORY: Senia Paseta, Date TBA (early next term)

The only real issue with these is publicity. Any bright ideas, please let me know.

The Eating Disorder Guide is in its final stages, just awaiting one last article. It will then be quarked and sent off to be produced. The Counselling Service have agreed to read over the final document to make sure it is all helpful and accurate.

I have spent a lot of time speaking to various eating disorder groups and we hope that the guide will be comprehensive and a useful common room tool.

Last Friday we had a very successful Safetybus training day, in which basic first aid and crowd control was discussed. Along with a quiz on road safety and a trip bowling. Sadly I lost both!

I attended MCR Presidents lunch and PGA, which was very interesting and enjoyable. I think it is very important that graduates do not only view the SU as the VP(Graduates). The entire organisation is there to serve them and it is important they don’t feel restricted to only using the Graduate positions to air their concerns. There is nothing about the other positions which prevents a graduate from running for them or becoming involved in the campaigns and events in their remit. I hope that positive steps, such as a broad range of sabbatical officers attending PGA and holding Council in graduate colleges, will encourage this.

Preparations for the Women's Open Day have been going ahead. Thank you to everyone who came in and stuffed envelopes with Linsey and me last Wednesday. The mailing went out successfully and hopefully we will have lots of interest. Anyone who would like to help on the day – Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> Week, 15<sup>th</sup> march- please email me: [emma@ousu.org](mailto:emma@ousu.org).

I am aware that it clashes with NUS Women's Conference and I apologise for this. We are currently trying to coordinate who is going to the Conference, so if you are from an NUS affiliated college and are interested in going please do get the forms off your JCR President and think about coming.

I have also been involved in the proctors and executive discussions on the legal status of the Student Union.

<b>Linsey Cole</b> <b>Affairs)</b>	<b>V-P (Access &amp; Academic</b>
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Firstly, apologies for my absence from Council today - I have an interview for my PGCE course in Cambridge that could not be re-arranged. Please do email me with any questions that you may have...

To say the past couple of weeks have been a whirlwind is a HUGE underestimation; I think the rest of the Exec and OUSU staff would agree with me in saying the last two weeks have been among our busiest whilst we have been in office. A lot of this has definitely been caused by the reaction of the national and student media to the Green Paper on the University's Academic Strategy. In my wisdom (ahem!) HEFCE scheduled a National Student Survey consultation (more on that later...) for the day the press picked up on the Green Paper, so the OUSU President had to deal with the bulk of the enquiries. John dealt with them admirably and I really appreciate his support on this issue. Please, if you're interested, read the paper from beginning to end - available on [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/vc/acstrat/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/vc/acstrat/) - and get back to me with any comments or questions. I'd really like OUSU to have a major say in how the Green Paper changes over the coming weeks, so please pass the motion that John will be proposing to today's Council in my absence.

Back to the National Student Survey - I attended a consultation event in London on reporting methods, which in itself was a very worthwhile event. The opposition that OUSU has to the survey has certainly put us in a very strong position to influence the way it changes in future years. I've been working closely with Cambridge and Warwick Student Unions on this and this has provided an invaluable cross-institution perspective on things. I'm also writing an article for the Oxford Magazine, which is my next job once this report is finished...I've said it before and I'll say it again: DON'T FILL THE NSS IN!

In terms of my other projects for the term, I've been putting lots of work into the study and learning support audit. The Director of the Institute for the

Advancement of University Learning (IAUL) attended Ac-Aff Committee on Thursday and I've begun to disseminate information to common room and faculty representatives. I will be taking a report to the 8<sup>th</sup> week meeting of EPSC, which I hope to bring to Council in 7<sup>th</sup> week. Thanks to Matt Baker and Amy Bilton for testing out the water with this.

We held a JCC Forum on Thursday of 2<sup>nd</sup> week which was well-attended and useful points of future contact were put in place. Thanks to Tim Bennett for all his hard work on collecting JCC reps details and putting things together over the past two weeks.

The OUSU Writing Workshop has a better attendance than ever before; when I get chance, I hope to produce some pretty posters to advertise this great service. The times have changed slightly to Monday and Thursday 8pm-10pm in the OUSU Offices - anyone can drop in and ask for advice at any stage of the essay writing process, so please advertise this service to students!

The other motion that I've brought to today's council concerns libraries and the variance in provision across the collegiate university. This was originally one of my manifesto pledges and the idea of increasing access to college libraries has been floated about for a while; passing the motion will mandate me to raise it as an issue for discussion with the University and investigate the feasibility of opening up Oxford's resources to its students. Although we're nowhere near the logistics stage yet, I expect that is one thing some of you may be concerned about - allowing students from other colleges into your own library doesn't mean you'll have less availability to those books; what it does mean is that every single book within the University will be open to you, instead of half of them being kept behind a locked door. The logistics can be worked on at a college-level; this motion is a means of raising the issue of shared resources on a cross-college level which OUSU is in an ideal position to do. Again, any feedback or questions on the issue of library provision is very welcome!

One thing I have achieved in the past two weeks is that 2,936 letters have been sent to all the 'Target Schools' in the country - I've done 4 TS mailings now AND I'll never have to do another one again! Thanks to all those who came along to help, no matter how long you could stay for, enough - we'd have been there a lot longer than we were without your help and we did set a new record for speed-stuffing! We started to take bookings from the 1<sup>st</sup> February and hopefully, we'll begin to fill our spaces over the coming weeks.

The Alternative Prospectus is coming along nicely under the guidance of Dan, Chris and Lorna - I am confident we'll end up with a wonderful publication and expect that there are many long nights ahead! Its not too late to get involved - if you fancy writing an article, taking photos or have publishing skills, email me on

[access@ousu.org](mailto:access@ousu.org) or the editors on [lorna@ousu.org](mailto:lorna@ousu.org) - this is the MOST important publication OUSU produces...make it the BEST one as well!

I've also been working on gaining more information about the impact of the new charities legislation for OUSU, by contacting other Student Unions to see how they are dealing with the impact of the changes. This is a decisive moment in the history of OUSU and the decision that Council will have to take should not be taken lightly.

I couldn't write this report without thanking the part-time executive officers for the amount of enthusiasm they put into the Student Union - you all amaze me with your dedication and willingness to go beyond the call of duty. Please bear with us when we're often too harassed and having bad days - in case I don't get the chance to say it, I really appreciate the support that you're all giving me at the moment and couldn't have got through the past two weeks without it.

Enjoy Council!

<b>Ian King</b> <b>Community</b>	<b>V-P</b>	<b>(Charities</b>	<b>and</b>
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As usual, I've been kept busy. The current task is the Alternative Careers Fair which is planned for the 12<sup>th</sup> February (Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> Week) in the Examination Schools. This is a joint venture between OUSU and the Careers Service which aims to present students with opportunities in careers which do not usually get as much exposure as others such as Law, Management Consultancy or Banking. A number of NGOs will be represented, along with charities and voluntary and ethical groups. The event will run from 11.30am until 3.30pm. This has taken up a tremendous amount of time and I am incredibly grateful to Paul Kreitman of Balliol for stepping in at the last minute to make the brochure which will accompany the fair a substantially more polished look. If you are able to help out at the fair, stewarding, welcoming people, etc., I would be very happy to hear from you. Please email [community@ousu.org](mailto:community@ousu.org) for more information.

OUSU's mentoring scheme has been blossoming under the leadership of Linsey and her dedicated cohort of co-chairs. I've been dealing with the CRB (police check) side of things, which is good as I get to see a sample of the types of people who get involved in community work in Oxford. My season of doing Jacari CRBs seems now to have come to an end, but next week I shall be lending KEEN with their Mencap-based police checks, and later this term, ODA (Oxford Development Abroad) shall be coming to OUSU too. This is certainly a positive indication that OUSU is increasingly being looked upon as a useful resource and centre by Oxford's voluntary groups and is something which I fully intend to build upon over the coming months.

My new board of co-chairs, the excellent Natasha, Jen, Hollie, Maria – along with Wen and Jo – are currently working on generating and capitalising on closer ties within OUSU and between the University's 20 or so voluntary groups. We are using Brookes' STAX organisation as a basic model to which to aspire. STAX is a long-standing volunteering bureau at Brookes which works in conjunction with the Job Centre. Whilst there are glaring differences between Oxford and Brookes, most importantly that students at Oxford aren't officially meant to hold jobs whilst studying, the model at Brookes has a number of important features which are to be emulated. STAX has a database of over 200 local voluntary organisation and has personal contact with each and every one of them on a regular basis. Volunteers are interviewed and recommended to particular voluntary projects, informed by a room full of brochures and general information about the schemes which are operational in the Oxford area. Volunteers are kept in regular contact through feedback forms and, through its success, STAX has developed a very strong brand which is attractive to Brookes' equally transient student population. Volunteers are also rewarded regularly with social events and incentives, such as t-shirts, etc.

The aim for the VP (C&C) in the long term is to build up a similar network of contacts and volunteer relations. Whilst STAX is run by two full-time members of staff and assisted by a sabb, OUSU's volunteering schemes are only maintained by a sabb and a small group of other volunteers. As the position of VP (C&C) is relatively new, only in its second full year now, contacts are still being made and the organisation is still growing. This year, more opportunities are being encouraged than last, and I have no doubt that next year's range will improve further. In the short term, it is important to try and build up a public recognition of the number of people involved with voluntary work around the University. One such method of doing so is to hold a Party for volunteers in Oxford – this is being planned for Weds 2<sup>nd</sup> March, and should hopefully bring about a sense of community in itself. Furthermore, the current 'Community Committee' needs to be re-branded to make it appear more interesting (perhaps relevant is a better word) and accessible than just being a committee. Most of the work that this 'Committee' does, and is funded to do by the University, is to refer people to groups or organisations which want or need volunteers. In order for it to be recognised more for its bureau type of functions, it needs a makeover – here, again, STAX is a helpful point of reference (although it's a crap acronym – 'Students Taking Action for Community Change). So far, the idea winning top prize is VIO (sounds a bit like a Sony rip-off though), standing for (inventively) Volunteer In Oxford, but if you can think of something better, all suggestions are welcome. This would be run by the Community Committee and operate through the [www.oxfordgetinvolved.org](http://www.oxfordgetinvolved.org) site as usual. To say something doesn't appear 'interesting' or 'attractive' enough sounds shallow, but the success of organisations such as ODA, Jacari, KEEN, ExVac and OXAB has been remarkably boosted by a little bit of a face lift. The ultimate aim is to make 'Community Committee' an attractive umbrella organisation for volunteering in Oxford which can accommodate a diversity of interests and be a valuable source of support for the University's own societies. Anyway, this is turning into waffle now –

the gist is that the VP (C&C)'s community aspect is evolving. If you want to help, just let me know.

RAG-wise, all is well. Blind Date forms (for the 9<sup>th</sup> Feb) are selling like hot cakes and have attracted a great deal of attention. For only £4, a date next Wednesday could help you to meet the person of your dreams! This morning was Jailbreak day – at 8.20am today, the RAG exec and I were joined at the local constabulary by the intrepid teams hoping to get as far away from Oxford as possible in the next 36 hours. Equipped with cameras, rape alarms, insurance documents and a rather snazzy neighbourhood watch pocket diary (a must I gather), clad in their stylish t-shirts, and after a number of photo shoots in police cells, lifts, cages, we set them free and off they went. Hopefully they'll come back.

Preparations for the Tsunami Appeal Music Marathon are well underway. Many bands have been in touch with the Team and offered their services. However, we are in desperate need of help with the technical side of things – including getting hold of the right types of lighting and sound stuff. Please help if you can. For your diaries, the Music Marathon will be running from 11am until 11pm on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February in the Town Hall. The bar will (hopefully) open at 5pm and entry will be £3 and you'll be free to come and go as many times as you wish for the rest of the day.