



reports to 3rd week council hilary 2006

Emma Norris

President

Student Contracts

As many of you will have read in press, or heard from common room officers, colleges are in the process of introducing contracts for their students. There have been a number of problems relating to this, the first being the lack of student consultation. The contract was drafted as agreed in meetings that student representatives do not have access to.

In terms of the contract itself, the thrust of opposition is not quite what the papers have suggested. The contract has no minimum level of provision for teaching or accommodation, and no commitment to discussing any serious changes to teaching or courses with students. This contract potentially leaves students at risk - should a college suddenly be unable to provide accommodation for first year students, there is little or no room for recourse as the contract allows for this. Likewise with teaching - whilst it is standard for teaching to vary subject to subject, this document makes no commitment to discussing changes or limitations to teaching with students first.

There is also the issue of fees and charges - the copies of the college contracts I have seen have you sign up to fees and charges "varying from year to year" with no qualification. This leaves students contractually vulnerable to huge rent rises, kitchen levies, and so on.

What can we do? One of the most attractive options, taken forward by a few colleges already, is incorporating a student charter into the contract. A charter would set out the rights and standards students could expect from their college. This would be a very positive step for students, effectively applying a legal framework to our rights that would protect us during rent and accommodation negotiations and so on.

I am meeting with the common room presidents next week to work out a joint response, that can be used in governing bodies or academic panels discussing the contract.

NUS Central Affiliation

Finally we have a concrete offer. Central affiliation at £11,199. Colleges will be able to decide whether or not to affiliate, but those affiliating would have to do so through OUSU.

An open meeting with the NUS Treasurer will be held at the end of next week, date and time to be confirmed once I have heard back from Common Room presidents and NUS reps.

It's also worth noting that there seem to be some problems over current NUS affiliation fees. Some common rooms have not paid yet, and are facing suspension. This might prevent attendance at annual conference in March. If any common room is uncertain about whether they have paid, how to pay or have any related concerns, please get in touch and I will talk to the NUS for you, or put you in touch with the relevant NUS officer.

Socially Responsible Investment

The paper on socially responsible investment is being finished at the moment, and will hopefully be presented to 5th week University Council. The paper details the ineffectiveness of the University's current attempts to engage with SRI, and suggestions on how to improve on this. SRI campaign are organising a demo outside 5th week Council (similar to the Green electricity demo last year), and a huge petition drive that aims to collect 5000 signatures in time for Council. University Council accepting this paper would be a significant boost to SRI in Oxford and would provide a basis for further college negotiations.

Chris Allan

V-P (Finance)

I've spent most of the last two weeks working on OUSU's financial situation, working closely with the financial consultant who will be spending the next few weeks helping us to reform our financial systems. The main result of this so far has been to demonstrate that OUSU's short term cash flow is likely to be very healthy, and it is extremely unlikely that we will hit any liquidity problems any time soon.

I've also been working with our accountant to finalise the 2004/5 accounts, which will be released once they have been audited later this term. From the preliminary figures I've seen there are unlikely to be any big surprises here.

All of OSSL's projects are performing as expected, so there's not much to report there. As usual, I'm more than happy to answer any questions you have about our business activities in council or via email.

Aidan Randle-Conde	V-P	(Welfare	and	Equal
Opportunities)				

Condom machines

All the condom machines have now been distributed. Some Common Rooms have placed additional orders since then (at a slightly higher cost than the bulk order) which is great. Intelligent Vending apologised for the delayed delivery and gave us a new coffee machine free of charge. OUSU has had much nice coffee.

Welfare Resources Team

We now have a Welfare Resources Team, consisting of myself, Ellie and some of the Office Staff. We deal with sexual health orders, pregnancy tests and attack alarms. I've also streamlined the system and we have a good stock of condom machine condoms. Order forms have been sent out to every single Common Room. It should be easy to follow. If not then get in touch.

Safety at Night

Ellie and I have produced the Safety at Night pamphlet and sent it out to Welfare Officers and Women's Officers. Big thanks to Ellie for all the hard work on this. It's great and it's the sort of thing that OUSU should be doing.

Accommodation Office

The Housing Advice Surgery saw over 100 students, which is great. I'm currently talking with the Accommodation Office about making this a regular thing, or at least an annual thing. More information will follow and I expect a lot more will happen next term.

LGBSoc

Just a quick note really to say that LGBSoc are being great at the moment and I'm helping them as best I can with their drinks events, library and listening skills.

I'll say more in Council, but everything is going well for now!

Ellie Cumbo	V-P (Women)
--------------------	--------------------

V-Day Oxford 2006 is in three weeks!

Our benefit performance of Eve Ensler's The Vagina Monologues is at the Moser Theatre, Wadham, on Thursday-Saturday of 6th Week. Tickets are £7.50, or £6.50 concessions, and all profits go to the Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre. Email women@ousu.org to reserve tickets, or buy on the door.

This event is brought to you by Women's Campaign, generously sponsored by RAG. We are still looking for front-of-house people and sound/light operatives – a great way to see the show for free....

Safety Pamphlet

The VP (Welfare) and I have this week sent all Welfare and Women's Officers an electronic copy of the Safety Pamphlet that was requested by members of Women's Campaign last term. It contains information on the Safety Bus, a warning about drink spiking and a blank section where college-specific safety contacts can be filled in. If you don't see this in your college, ask your Welfare or Women's Officer about it.

Women's Finals Forums

These will be held at the end of term alongside the Exam Skills Sessions for everyone. I am still seeking good female tutors for Classics, Engineering and Biology – please help!

Women's Open Day

This has been confirmed for Monday 27th February (7th Week), and I had already had some interest even before the Target Schools mailing went out. This year the Open Day is to be held in Corpus Christi and Merton colleges, following a request from the Corpus JCR.

Finals Gap

I will be taking our survey results to Senior Tutors' Committee on Tuesday of 4th Week. We are also looking into how the University can help us to expand the research among Oxford students.

Student Parents

Joint Consultative Committee will take my concerns to Conference of Colleges, and I believe that it will be possible for a system whereby a central list of student parents is compiled from college information in time for the coming academic year. I will keep you updated on this.

Women's Handbook

At last, this will go out over the weekend. The three-week delay on this has been entirely my fault, but I am pleased that the University's women will at last be able to access the information it provides. In future years, the Freshers' Guide and Welfare Handbook will carry this, so that men will be made more aware of issues such as the Finals Gap too. In the meantime, I hope people will benefit from this publication, which my predecessor worked hard to put together.

Casework

Remains consistent and frustrating. It is clear that most students are not aware of the University guidelines on harassment, and do not know how to approach it when it happens. I am going to discuss this further in Women's Campaign, and with Aidan, and develop a new plan of action. That's all for this fortnight,

Oliver Russell

V-P (Graduates)

In the last two weeks I have attended meetings of the:

1. Graduate Skills Panel - lots of graduates being skillful
2. OSSL Board - everything progressing as planned
3. Curators of the University Libraries where I argued strongly in favour of opening on Easter Monday; we shall await the Acting Director's discretion on the subject
4. EPSC Graduate Panel where we discussed embedding graduate studies at the core of the collegiate university by a massive increase in funding: 70% increase in the number of Clarendon Scholarships awarded this year.

5. Joint Committee of Council with Student Members which will no doubt be reported by my colleagues who were presenting papers there
6. Executive Committee where we assigned portfolios to our new Grad Exec member, Maja
7. Educational Policy and Standards Committee - student number policy and preparing the student responses to the Quality Assurance Assessment
8. Information and Communications Technology Strategy Steering Group - Enhanced Computing Environment Workshop. Exactly as exciting as it sounds.

Our visa seminar was/is Thursday evening so no doubt my oral report will mention the outcome of that.

I have also dealt with the usual level of casework inquiries and begun assisting the Returning Officer for the polls this term.

Charlynn Pullen

V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

These are the things I have, as ever, mostly been working on:

NSS

An email went out on Monday from me on behalf of the Student Union. This was part of the mandate in the motion passed last term, that we should give people more information about the survey and tell them how to opt-out. Although the email got a balanced response, with a few students objecting to the way the email was constructed, with having to click on a link to see an explanation. For this, I can only apologise, I am reliably told by the University's Student Administration Department who sent out the email that it is only possibly to send an email out to so many students (all final year undergraduates) if it is very short and so longer emails require a link. I am happy to answer any questions students have with regards to the NSS either in Council or by emailing access@ousu.org.

Further to this email, I will be sending out posters to admissions reps hopefully tomorrow (Friday) and so there should be posters up next week telling students how to opt-out.

Finals Gap

Although this is mainly Ellie's thing, we've been working together to get it heard by more facets of the University, and we're currently working on a survey of students, but more on that when we've got something concrete to show you all!

NUS

Emma and I met with the NUS Secretary and one of the accounting staff and they gave us a figure for NUS central affiliation, although I'm sure Emma will be able to tell you more about what's going on there.

Target Schools

We sent booking forms, teachers' leaflets and Alternative Prospectuses to every state school in the country this fortnight! After a 13-hour envelope stuffing session we finally got the 2800 done and sent off this week. A big thanks to Amy, Rob, Jess, David, Nus, Ollie, Iain and particularly Helen and Alice who I'm sure have better things to do now they're proper finalists.

We also have our Open Days in Trinity finalised for Monday of 9th week at St Anne's and Wednesday of 9th week at Queens' which is great. We will soon be advertising our school visiting scheme and anyone who would like to get involved and go back and visit their old school to talk about Oxford should get in touch with me on access@ousu.org.

Libraries

Ollie and myself fulfilled our mandate to ask the University to open the libraries on Monday of 0th week in Trinity Term, and they extended from looking at the possibility of opening the central bod and the rad cam to looking at the RSL as well. We'll pass any more information we get onto the students as soon as we get it.

Data Protection and Exam Scripts

The OxStu have been asking me questions about this issue during the week, so I'm going to email the JCC rep contacts I have, and see if we can bring a Council motion about it so that we can do more to help students on issues they care about.