



## reports to council 3rd week michaelmas term 2002

**Will Straw**

**President**

**Common Rooms:** I have visited Teddy Hall, Corpus Christi and St. Anne's where I talked about the Student Union and my role within it. I concentrated particularly on our priority this term of the campaign against the introduction of top-up fees.

By answering questions I have been able to gauge some of the current feeling in Oxford. Apathy is on the increase with motions on issues that do not affect students facing particularly high scorn. However, students are virtually united in their opposition to top-up fees. The petition has proved very popular. In addition, JCRs have been concerned about any threats to the tutorial system.

**JCR Presidents:** I have met with several JCR and MCR Presidents in order to maintain good relations between Oxford's Common Rooms and OUSU.

**Other Student Leaders:** I have met with the leader of the National Cuban Student Union. This proved an opportunity to share ideas and compare structures. I am in the process of organising a programme for the leader of the Indian Youth Congress when he visits Oxford at the end of 4th Week.

**OUSU Reps:** I attended the first OUSU Reps meeting of the year where I talked about the importance of OUSU Reps in spreading the message of what OUSU does. I took a series of questions and found the meeting very constructive.

**Press:** I was upset by the negative student press over the last week, but tremendously pleased with the support I have received from my colleagues at OUSU, the OUSU Executive and the JCR Presidents as well as from friends, acquaintances and those who I have not met before. I would like to formally reiterate my position as I believe there is some confusion. I will not take part in any debate on international issues this year. However, if Council would rather I sat in the room and said nothing, rather than outside, then I am happy to do so. I would also like to reassure Council that I will always fulfil my mandate in the appropriate manner. I am pleased that Laura Santana has gone on record saying that she welcomes the news of this clarification and I hope a line can be drawn under the whole episode. Nonetheless as I made clear in my manifesto, I do not consider OUSU Council to be the appropriate forum for motions on controversial international issues. Regardless of ultra vires law I have felt, both as a Common Room President and now as OUSU President, that these motions are a waste of time. I believe that this sentiment is held widely in Oxford and that OUSU is discredited by their appearance on the agenda. Nonetheless, I appreciate that everyone has the right to bring these motions to Council.

**CSV:** New plans for Thomas Hull House have been sent to OUSU. Although not meeting all our desires, with some tinkering they provide a useful guide for how our new offices will be when we move in at Easter.

**F&F:** As mentioned, feeling in the student community against top-up fees is high. The Finance and Funding Campaign have been working tirelessly to raise awareness and garner support. Over 2000 signatures have been collected on the petition against top-up fees. A dozen colleges encouraged their freshers to wear gold ribbons at the matriculation ceremony. There was virtually uniform take-up in these colleges. I have also drafted a motion for JCRs against fees, which St. Anne's has passed, and I hope will be taken up by other Common Rooms. I have also sent out anti-fees resources to various JCRs. Last Wednesday I attended a very well organised NUS National Lobby in Parliament with Matt Maltby (Hertford JCR President) and Laura Santana (Finance & Funding Campaign Co-Chair). The day was a huge success and I had the opportunity to ask Margaret Hodge a question on the failure of means-testing over the last five years (in line with OUSU policy). She agreed that it had not worked as planned. We had a meeting with Dr.

Evan Harris MP which was also constructive. Finally, the Aldwych Group (the Student Unions of the Russell Group Universities) produced a report which I helped draft. This received both national and local media coverage.

Environment: I have been in touch with Cllr Mary Clarkson and with Susan Marshall (Chair of the Domestic Bursars Committee) in an attempt to find out where the Council and Colleges are with their recycling programme. We have been informed by the Council that this is still four months away.

College Inequality: I remain dedicated to this project and seek a renewed mandate to produce an up-to-date report. I am hopeful that the Student Union's work in this area will improve transparency in Oxford's colleges as well as leading to a more equitable distribution of wealth within Oxford.

NUS: I attended the NUS Regional Conference in Bristol.

Entz: OUSU's night at The Bridge on Thursdays is proving popular and raising OUSU's reputation as a provider of University-wide Entz. I have booked the upstairs of the Zodiac for Friday of 8th Week and will organise a special Christmas Party.

Website: I have continued to update the website including reworking the OUSU home-page.

Election: The Joint Committee of Council with Student Members (JCC) approved our Election Regulations and new Standing Orders bringing to an end a long and arduous saga. The only change they recommended was to the construction of the Senior Tribunal. The student members were all happy with this small amendment. Full information is now available on-line at [www.ousu.org/election](http://www.ousu.org/election). The Returning Officer has been working hard with the pre-election preparations and has my full support.

VP (Charities & Community): I have discussed with the RAG sabbatical and the RAG Executive the possibility of co-option in order to make maximum use of the HEFCE Active Community Fund. A motion will be brought to Council in a fortnight to discuss this.

Police: I have been in touch with the Thames Valley Police through several mediums and have passed any information received on to JCR Presidents.

Publications: I have helped distribute both the Oxford and Careers Handbook and the OUSU Term Planner, which I hope everyone has stuck on their walls.

<b>Sean Sullivan</b>	<b>V-P (Finance)</b>
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Distribution:

Again the bulk of my time has been taken up by distributing the Careers Handbook and Term Planner.

Website:

I have continued to add and create pages for clubs and societies and offering help and assistance to those with problems.

Affiliations:

I have had discussions with Kellogg and the Department for Continuing Education about their relationship with OUSU and more concretely with the Oxford Institute of Legal Practice. I hope to clarify associate membership with the Proctors in the near future and bring the issue of these relationships to council next term.

Computers:

We have had significant problems with mailing lists and internet aliases. I am continuing to attempt to sort this out and we have had some success on the alias front. A difficulty with invoicing advertisers from our computers has been solved.

OxStu:

It's pleasing to see the high quality of the paper continue and I'm pleased that OUSU is able to supply it with more colour and pages than its rival at the moment. I have driven the van delivering the OxStu every Thursday so far this term, but hope to pay a driver from now on so that I can get on with an afternoon's worth of work.

The OUSU Shop:

A number of major developments have occurred in relation to the shop in the last two weeks. The matter has been discussed amongst the sabs and has been taken to Exec. I have called an Emergency meeting of the OSSL trustees and the matter will hopefully be discussed more fully in the OSSL general meeting before this OUSU council.

Ultra vires:

I have had to spend time seeking and thinking about legal advice on this matter.

Publications;

Due to the sheer amount of distribution that has occurred this week I have not been able to move as quickly on publications as I had hoped. The Graduate Guide should have been sent to the Printers by the time of council and the SWD Guide and Directory will hopefully go next week.

**Andrew Copson**

**V-P (Welfare)**

**Anti-racism** campaign met in 2<sup>nd</sup> week and it was decided that our focus in the next year would veer away from entz and more towards active campaigning. The members of this campaign have decided that, in order to give the campaign more direction and attraction to the average student, each term in the next year will be themed. The theme for this term will be racism and the far right *in this country specifically*. Policy was passed on the BNP, which is up for ratification this council and the terms events will be focussed around this. The campaign is looking forward to electing new co-chairs soon – probably in 4<sup>th</sup> week.

**Queer Rights** met in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> week. The first event was a “Pink Politics” discussion meeting – thanks to Antonia Bance, Louise Radnofsky, Marc Stoneham and Cllr. Mike Woodin for giving their time to join in and Phil Lavender for organising the event – he is now joined in his job by a new female co-chair elected this week, Sarah from Magdalen. Also at this second meeting, it was agreed to hold an ‘Amnesty International’ event next week, writing letters to governments and prisoners who are interred for reasons of sexuality. We also agreed to hold a mock wedding in 6<sup>th</sup> week to publicise the campaign for same-sex partnerships rights along with letters to local councillors in support of a same-sex partnership register in Oxford. One other thing we will be doing this term is attempting to standardise the positions of common room LGB Officers.

The **University Police** were replaced this week with Proctors’ Officers – basically the same people in the same job with a new name. I went on television and radio to say that OUSU was glad to see the police go but I think it is important for us to examine how far the Student Union’s concerns about accountability in the force have been met.

That was one of the things I raised with the **Vice Chancellor** when I stood in for Will last week. We also discussed Criminal Record Bureau checks on law and medicine undergraduates, which he reassured me were not going to prejudice the admissions process for these subjects.

**Health And Welfare group** held their event on Student Safety last week with a talk by the University Crime Reduction Officer, which was well received and useful for all those present. Student safety is becoming more and more of an issue with the recent increase in street crime in Oxford and OUSU will be looking at more ways in which we can advise and assist students in this area.

**Graduate Welfare** is a particular concern of mine at the moment, particularly in graduate colleges – the University Assessor, the OUSU Vice President (Graduates) and I are surveying the welfare structures of solely graduate colleges with a view to establishing best practice. This work is being undertaken at the request of common room officers and should be useful to everyone.

In the area of **Disabilities**, I attended meetings this week of the Disabilities Funds Panel and the advisory Panel on Disabilities where I pushed for more funding and a better structure for the University disabilities Section. OUSU Disabilities Action also met this week and we discussed the possibility of a speaker event this term as well as what the committee was planning for Diversity

week. The Dyslexia Network held an event last week on Dyslexia in Oxford with Alex Larg from the University Offices. I visited Oxford University Resources for the Blind and found it to be chronically underfunded and understaffed – I am thinking of bringing a motion to next council, laying out our concerns and mandating me to take action on them. I had a preliminary meeting with a postgraduate student interested in setting up a Diabetes Network – more on this throughout the term.

I met with the editor of The LIP to discuss how we could help him further with his publication, did my normal casework, contributed to the University harassment survey, represented students before the Proctors and so on, doing my normal day-to-day job.

<b>Melanie Marshall</b>	<b>V-P (Women)</b>
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In addition to general work such as dealing with phone and email enquiries, casework and meetings, the following have been particularly notable of late:

Student Parent Welcome

This took place on Saturday of 2<sup>nd</sup> week and was a great success. Loads of parents came with their children and had the opportunity to meet one another and find out what help is available for student parents. Given the relatively modest costs (in money if not in time) required to arrange this event, and the positive response received from parents, it is my intention to hold it termly. Many thanks to Georgia Toynbee, Nancy Mendoza, Lesley-Anne Perry, Peter Orlov and Matthew Richardson for their invaluable help on the day.

Nightbus

A large part of this week has been spent attempting to collate nightbus data in order to gain a complete picture of its use and develop a business plan with a view to a possible extension of the service. This is harder than it sounds, and some important missing data has had to be projected which was time consuming. However, notwithstanding my unfamiliarity with Excel and, indeed, numeracy, it is well under way, with thanks to Peter for taking on some particularly tedious donkey work. A regular private hire arrangement is providing some extra revenue this term.

Some nightbus passengers from LMH and St Annes had to be thrown off the bus, in the first case for homophobic abuse and in the second for endangering other passengers (and themselves). It shouldn't need saying that the volunteers who staff the nightbus, as well as other passengers, cannot be expected to tolerate such behaviour. They will have no compunction about throwing people off the bus and taking further action if they can be identified. Fortunately these incidents are very rare: please encourage others to help keep it that way.

Ethics

Ethics committee has met to begin researching Exxon Mobil (Esso) and its relationship with Kyoto and climate change, further to the submission of a (withdrawn) motion to 1<sup>st</sup> week council. We have established a set of objectives and welcome anyone who would like to contribute to the production of the report on this issue. We will meet at 2pm on Wednesday of 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> weeks.

Women's events

I have spent a bit of time attending assorted women's events, mostly evening or lunchtime recruitment things. They provide an opportunity to meet and talk to women students whom I might not otherwise encounter. I have also met with the producer of a forthcoming production of Ibsen's Hedda Gabler at the Playhouse and started planning some joint events for next term, which should be interesting as the director is planning to play up the feminist overtones of the text.

Harassment training

Part one of the university's highly sought-after harassment adviser's training session has taken place and the second is scheduled for next week. This has been a very useful learning experience and opportunity to share expertise with other, more experienced, advisers.

**Andy Garlick**

**V-P (Graduates)**

My tours of the MCRs have been drawing to a close with visits to Trinity and St Peters over the past two weeks, with only a few more MCRs waiting to be visited in the coming weeks. These tours have been useful to get out and meet the MCR Presidents and to advertise the role of OUSU. Although no doubt the finer details are lost in a short presentation, a flavour for what OUSU is involved in should be passed on along with the resources to seek further information e.g. the OUSU website.

In terms of University Committees I have attended the Joint Committee of Council with Students, the Standing Committee of the Tutor for Graduates Committee, the Education Policy and Standards Committee and had a productive meeting with the Head of the University Academic Policy Unit. The Standing Committee for Tutor for Graduates Committee was very useful and there is good evidence that the voice of graduates is being listened to and taken onboard in this crucial committee for graduate affairs.

I have also attended the International Students Committee and progress was made towards restructuring the committee and focusing its aims for the year ahead with the possibility of the production of an International Students Handbook becoming a priority. I attended the interesting debate on Pink Politics organised by the Queer Rights co-chairs, which provided an interesting insight into the views of the political parties represented. I also attended the highly successful Student Parent Welcome arranged by the VP (Women) and this helped to gain insight into childcare worries of graduates, mature and international students whilst the children and student parents had the opportunity to meet informally.

In terms of graduate specific work I have revised the Student-Supervisor Relationship survey following the constructive comments in Postgraduate Assembly in first week. This has now been circulated to MCR Presidents and OUSU representatives for further comments and will be discussed in 4<sup>th</sup> week with Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) with the aim to launch in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> week. The long-awaited Graduate Guide 2003 is now complete and is awaiting printing and subsequent distribution to the colleges.

I have continued to work on some ongoing casework, and to assist in the general running of the OUSU office, attended OUSU executive meetings, and helped with deliveries of the Oxford and Cambridge Careers Handbook and the OUSU term planner.

Now that term has started the job has become more structured and I am more settled in the position having finally got to grips with most aspects of the job and I look forward to the term ahead.

**Sonia Sodha**

**V-P (AcAff)**

#### Academic Affairs

It's been a busy couple of weeks for academic affairs. One of my priorities has been looking into the issue of stint reform (see motion I've brought to Council this week). I've had a couple of meetings with the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) on the issue, and I've spoken to some of the heads of undergraduate studies in faculties too – eg Dr Lesley Brown at Philosophy. Basically, it is very much a faculty/division driven process, with colleges being asked to agree to the principle. I believe that the best place for any moves to be opposed (if students in that faculty so wish) is in the undergraduate JCCs – as it's people from that faculty who can complain about teaching provision for that subject with the most credibility, and I fully intend to support JCCs in holding faculties to account. Faculties are using improvements in teaching quality as well as resource based arguments to justify changes in teaching. It is in the university's interests to

maintain and increase teaching standards, but this is by no means a certainty. It is absolutely crucial that there are appropriate quality assurance mechanisms in place to ensure that changes to teaching are not accompanied by a decline in teaching standards, and again, I will support JCCs in ensuring that these are in place and that students in their faculties are properly consulted once changes are implemented. I hope that after today's Council I'll have the mandate to lobby the university to introduce better university-wide quality assurance mechanisms.

The OUSU Writing Workshop has been running, and we are starting to get people to use it now, which is really positive. It's on the agenda of the next Senior Tutors' Committee – and some senior tutors have agreed to recommend it to their students.

Academic Affairs Committee met for the first time this term – it was a really well attended and useful meeting, in which we discussed a number of issues I've covered in this report. I will also be collating for JCR Academic Affairs Officers a summary of different feedback mechanisms in each college, so if AcAff officers don't mind getting that info to me that would be great.

I attended the first meeting of Education Policy and Standards Committee of term. Most of the committee was taken up with debating the new framework within which the committee as the university's academic policy forum should work in the next year – there's going to be a new Undergraduate Panel which I've secured representation for us on.

A university-wide undergraduate Student Charter on Academic Rights is something which I would like to make progress on this year. I have distributed model motions to JCRs in favour of this – if it hasn't been brought to your JCR, and you would like to take a motion on this to it, please get in touch. I'll be bringing a motion to Council next week as well.

I've also met with Richard Hughes at the Academic Policy Support Section, and am helping him to coordinate a couple of focus groups for the university, one on student feedback and the other on general student experience.

#### Access/Admissions

Target Schools had its Freshers' Lunch in Hertford on Thursday of 2<sup>nd</sup> week which was well attended, and will hopefully help to provide us with a good volunteer base for next year! There will also be the TS Social event on Wednesday of 4<sup>th</sup> week – if you're interested, please come along (Freud's at 7pm for pizza, the Goose at 9pm for drinks).

I've also spent some time thinking about the TS Handbook and revamping it a bit with the co chairs and exec officer – we've decided this year to scrap the Teacher's Guide, and incorporate some of this information into a bigger, better handbook.

I've had meetings with the Admissions Office – plans are now underway for OUSU to organise undergraduates meeting arriving interviewees at the train station this December. I've also had discussions with them about where to hold the TS regional events next Easter.

Next Council I will be putting in a motion to create a new OUSU Admissions Working Party, as I think we really need some up to date policy on admissions bearing in mind the changes which have occurred in the last two years, and the changes which are currently being mooted within the university.

#### General stuff

I've done some proofreading of careers handbooks and termplanners, and helped with shop deliveries etc.