



reports to 3rd week council michaelmas 2003

Helena Puig-Larrauri

President

If I had to pick the randomest thing I've done since last council, it would probably be talking about top up fees to a Swiss TV company in Italian. Just weird. Other than that, here are some things I've been doing.

Finance and Funding

The national demonstration against fees in London was very successful. F&F took 150 people down to London, and another 50 or so met us down there. It was the largest turnout from Oxford for a few years, and everyone seemed to have a good time. The demo was an excellent way to demonstrate the strength of feeling amongst students – the NUS says 31,000 turned out. Demonstrating is not enough, though. F&F now has a plan for what to do for the rest of the term. The alternative white paper is our next objective. Omar and I met with Andrew Dilnot (principal of St Hugh's and ex-director of the IFS) to discuss this. I have been in touch with CUSU about this and we have divided up the job. It should be ready for release in the next two weeks, and is taking up quite a bit of my time at the moment. Other plans for F&F include: encouraging more people to email their MP, a speaker meeting to discuss alternatives for HE funding, and organising people to go down to the lobby of parliament organised by the NUS. Yet again, my thanks go out to Omar, Torsten and Alice who work tirelessly on the campaign.

Joint Committee of Council with Student Members

I went to a meeting of JCC which was very productive. They passed our election regulations, which is nice. We also discussed the issue of services to common rooms withholding their subscription fees. The student union has an obligation under the Education Act of 1994 to provide certain core services to all individual students, whether or not their common room is affiliated to OUSU. This is a blanket rule for all student unions around the country, and hence does not take into account the particularly financing structures of OUSU. The difficulty lies in the fact that at every other university, the student union receives money for every student regardless of whether they are affiliated. In Oxford, we only receive money for those students who are affiliated. Hence, the student union is forced to fund the services it has to provide services for student from disaffiliated common rooms from the subscriptions brought in by affiliated common rooms. This is patently unfair, and I have asked JCC to rule on what we should do about it. I will keep you updated on developments in this area.

Support to CRs

This has taken up quite a lot of time. I won't go through the details of it. One thing that does keep recurring is the rent issues being faced by most common rooms. I had a meeting with Alex Hardie, the bursar of Oriel, to discuss what the Estate Bursars Committee is going to do about rent. It seems to me that, despite their fervent denial, the committee will be putting forward recommendations for all colleges to follow. If the colleges are coming together because there is strength in numbers, then dare I say I think common rooms should be doing the same. I am also trying to negotiate representation on EBC in some form.

Press

The resolution of the Visitation Board investigating the actions of Professor Wilkie came to a decision on Monday. OUSU put out a statement responding to this resolution, which was covered by the Guardian. Answering enquiries about this has taken up quite a bit of time.

Rodrigo Davies

V-P (Finance)

The last two weeks have been very demanding but thankfully the Student Union now is showing real signs of settling down and pushing on forward with more long-term changes.

Aside from grappling on with the behemoth that is OUSU Live, I have been distributing the Oxford Handbook – a process that will hopefully be complete by the weekend – to freshers who have not yet picked up their copy, overseeing the OUSU Card, attacking OUSU's IT network, expanding the website and working on subscriptions. The Oxford Student continues to go from strength to strength under the stewardship of Coatsworth and Flood, and is slowly establishing itself as the superior paper in terms of quality and appearance. Thanks to the hard work of Business Manager Edd Southerden it is also bringing in more advertising revenue than has been achieved in the last two years.

Entz is now also looking healthy financially, though sadly still robs me of several evenings a week forcing me to miss out on key television programmes. Sundays at Thirst and Wednesdays at DTM are a pleasing and steady flow of revenue, and the whole project will hopefully settle down soon to allow more thought to be given to strategy and tying Entz more fully into OUSU's existing structures for Services and Business.

The two areas to which I hope to devote a lot of energy in the next fortnight are Clubs and Societies and Liaison with Colleges, and as such I'll give them a slightly fuller explanation now.

I. Clubs and Societies

Having updated the website to include information on OUSU's services for Clubs and Societies as well as full information about registering with the Proctors, I now intend to attack the task of replacing the Oxford Directory with an online resource. Sadly the current online system under which ousu.org operates does not lend itself to complex databases, but I am investigating the possibility of designing a microsite to handle the task. Several more societies have also signed up to use the OUSU Live email system since last council, which in itself seems to be working as a means of reaching an unprecedented number of students. Another plank of my objectives for Clubs and Societies, getting together a list of rooms available for hire, has hit quite a lot of obstruction from colleges so unfortunately is

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2. Liaison with Colleges

This week I started up JCR Treasurers' List, an email list for JCR Treasurers (soon to be expanded to include MCRs and GCRs) to exchange information about battels, managing CR budgets and expenditure as well as providing Common room officers an outlet to ask me riveting questions about IT and publications that might otherwise have gone astray. The critical question that I have put to the list to get the ball rolling is that of the capitation sum that Common Rooms receive from their SCR. I will also be collecting this information more formally by letter, however I think it strikes at the core of many Common Rooms' dissatisfaction with OUSU and potentially opens the door to a more wide-ranging review of subscriptions that I think is essential.

Rosie Buckland V-P (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)

The past two weeks have been pretty hectic, as ever. I finished the Living Out Guide content at the beginning of the week, so once it has a front cover and all the ads are in, that'll be going to print and will be distributed by the accommodation office to all students about to live out. This year it will probably be pigged to them and will also be going online on the housing bank website once that's up and running. As I mentioned before, I'm involved a steering committee with Brookes su, Brookes accommodation office, our accommodation office, the city council, Thames Valley police and environmental health; the benefits of having the local community on side is that the database will hopefully act as a form of quality control as well. I've dealt with plenty of casework, as usual and have also held a Student Advice Service meeting, as it seems increasingly clear that the Service needs to redefine itself; when the post of Student Adviser was created and the Service itself began in '99, both OUSU's structures and those of the university were pretty different. All the members of the Service are therefore going to write something about their views of the Service's strengths and weaknesses and although a full review of the Service will be conducted in Trinity, by the end of this term, I hope the overall direction of the Service and each individual member's role within it will become clearer by the end of this term. I am also in the process of ensuring that the Service keeps more detailed records for the vacation and subsequent three terms, to allow tends to be better monitored and ensure transparency of the service. I have also been to an 'Anti-Begging meeting', out of which I hope something positive will come, as I'd like to be able to have the OUSU logo on some of OXPAT's publicity, though currently this simply isn't possible. I've compiled much of the content of a Disability Briefing, which I hope to get out to common room committees, to encourage them to be more aware of disability issues and to that end, I met with the Disability Office again to consult about the briefing's content. My campaigns and committees have been meeting regularly and though attendance is still often poor, there is plenty of enthusiasm from those who do attend. In health and welfare, I took some equal opps type training, which I intend to repeat with admissions officers prior to the interview period, ethnic diversity held a session with the community race relations officer, (with whom I am meeting regularly, alongside some others, to discuss student safety issues) and is still planning the conference on ethnicity, race and nationality, which is being held in the town hall on 11th November, 6.30-9.30. Please do come along, as it promises to be an exciting event, not least the three workshop sessions on access and admissions, equal opps at Oxford and the student movement. Queer Rights held a letter writing session and Disabilities Action is planning an awareness raising campaign. I still need co-chairs for equal opps, (x2) accommodation, (x1) health and welfare, (x1) qr, (x1) da (x2) and ethnic diversity, (x2) so please, please spread the word! My maillists are now up and running and will hopefully be used to communicate information between all the various welfare type officers, as well as enabling me to communicate with them better. I will also be setting one up for junior deans, whose contact with each other is fairly minimal and whose training varies. I have also set up regular meetings with Judith Finch, the university equal opps officer and will be keeping council informed as soon as any decisions are made about the structures of the various equal opps committees.

Catherine Wallis V-P (Women)

Nightbus: I spent a long time arguing with the phone company, but to no avail as our phone number had irretrievably been reclaimed by them, although I have since made a written complaint to which I have as yet received no response, maybe it'll work...in the meantime I purchased a new phone, the number is now: 07800655825. Our worries were not over however, since this week the bus received an injury to its body and thus required me to twice travel to a garage (the first time it had closed earlier than they told me) in the middle of nowhere in an effort to get in repaired – I'll keep you posted on this. [I also spent half an hour trying to move a gate in St. Hugh's and in the process injured my leg, but that's another matter...]

LIFE: As per motion further down the agenda. I've been answering a considerable number of enquiries on OUSU's pro-choice policy and the history behind the LIFE ban. These have taken up the majority of my time since the motion was released. I've looked into research being done by Education for Choice, since it was brought to my attention that they were currently investigating the directiveness of anti-abortion groups, including LIFE.

Women's Campaign; For the Wom Cam's Campaign on rape and sexual assault I've talked to the Clerk to the Proctors to try to gain some kind of accurate figures on how many cases of sexual assault, particularly by an acquaintance, occur at Oxford. Dr. Gasser is going back through the case books for us.

Ethics Committee: I've contacted No Sweat to try to find out whether there's a list of acceptable factories which the University should use for its merchandising. They're looking into this for me. We'd love more people to get involved with our campaign to spread ethical investment in the University, so do contact me if you'd like to know more.

Women's Officers: I'm going to talk to Somerville JCR tonight on a motion for a men's room and I've been talking to the NUS Women's Unit about their networking event (which unfortunately I can't attend since it's during Council, but I will be getting feedback from them, which I'll pass on to other women's officers).

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Student Parents: I'd like to hold the Student Parent Welcome in 4th or 5th week and I'm currently looking for a venue. I've also been advising several people on the new regulations about the childcare fund and what sort of things it can be used to buy. I've also been looking into the provision of after-school care for student parents (non-existent on the University's part) and trying to work out if there's any way it can be improved (without success so far).

Dan Paskins **V-P (Graduates)**

Just a quick report - I keep a daily diary on the OUSU website of what I do in my job, go to www.ousu.org/graduates/dansdiary if you want my full day-by-day report. I'd like particularly to thank the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) and the VP (Access and Academic Affairs) for their very helpful and constructive comments regarding this. The difficulty in writing this report just now is that I don't know whether I shall still be VP (Graduates) by the time of Council, as that depends on the decision of Postgraduate Assembly. It will be much easier to let council know about my priorities for the rest of the year if and when I am sure that I shall be employed until the end of August next year. I shall update council on this in a verbal report.

Just to pick out three highlights of the last couple of weeks:

The national demonstration for free education was fantastic, and many, many thanks to all those who came along. I've been going to these national demos since 1999 and that was the best ever. I was delighted to see OUSU get coverage in the national press for our response to the decision of the University's Visistatorial Board regarding Professor Wilkie - the fact that the University regards training in equal opportunities as a punishment for staff who do bad things is an eloquent testament to how much still needs to be done to make Oxford a university free from discrimination.

On a rather different note, the Graduate Panel of the Conference of Colleges was extremely productive, and confirms my view that Oxford decision-making is at its best when the university, colleges and students are all equal partners in the decision making. We're going to be working with the colleges to provide more support and training for junior deans in colleges across the university, an example of exactly the sort of thing that a university wide student union should be doing, and one which will provide real benefits to students who serve as junior deans as well as to everyone who gets advice and support from their junior dean.

Louise McMullan **V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)**

How quickly two weeks fly by. A number of issues have been ongoing. History at Harris Manchester is one such concern. The President, VP Welfare/Equal Ops and I were invited to HMC last Wednesday by the SCR to learn a bit more about the situation. The visit was very fruitful and brought home to me the duty that OUSU has to ensure there are provisions to support lifelong learning in this university. I hope everyone in council will endorse the motion brought by the JCR President of HMC and lend their support to the college.

Target Schools now has a massive and colourful banner which was displayed proudly at the National Demo on Sunday - thanks to all those who helped to make it. In the coming weeks the TS handbook for 2004 will be compiled, so if anyone is interested in contributing, please come along to OUSU on Thursdays at 5pm.

I've met with a number of college admissions officers, all of whom have been excellent and have lots of ideas. In the next few weeks I will be creating a mailing list for them and organising meetings for them. At these meetings JCR admissions officers will receive equal ops training from the VP Welfare and Equal ops - which will be particularly useful for those of you helping out during the interview season. Please encourage all those who help during this time to come along to these sessions. I will send details of the training sessions out to JCR presidents shortly.

Additional training sessions for all access volunteers will be available through the admissions office. These sessions will cover child protection and other legislative requirements and will be taking place in 5th 6th and 7th week - venues and times to be confirmed.

I would also be grateful for help from JCR admissions/access officers in responding to the Schwartz review of access to higher education. A number of JCRs have received the document - I will post a copy on the admissions officers list and ask for comments.

Very briefly - other things I have been working on in the past two weeks:

I've met with some of the Writing Workshop tutors and produced more publicity for the workshop. Feedback has been great. If your college would like to learn more about the workshop or get a visit from them, contact either me or the co-ordinator, Gareth Lloyd from Univ.

OUSU has produced a response to the Professor Wilkie verdict and this is available from the website. Comments from the VP Grads and I appeared in a number of places in the media. Reaction to these comments has for the most part been supportive.

I hope to be moving forward with a number of projects soon, including making progress on the Student Charter and library opening hours.

Josefa Henry-Bochan **V-P (Charities and Communities)**

Since the last council RAG has made about £7,000 for good causes. This has been largely through the beerfest, our raffle, the Medsoc pub crawl, college pub quizzes, and the bungee jump. I have been helping reps to plan events for Wear it Pink Day and there will be events in at least 8 colleges. I have also been getting donated prizes for our charity auction in New College on Thursday 6th November at 7.30 - there will be great things to be auctioned and free drinks served - please come! The plans for the Fashion Show are also well underway - models have been selected, publicity is being produced, sound and lighting has been sorted and we have 100's of items of clothing. The date is Wed 26th Nov, which has been changed so as not to clash with Queer Bop. I will let you know when tickets go on sale!

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RAG has been meeting at 5pm in OUSU every Monday and there has been a good attendance at all the meetings. The RAG exec elections will happen on Mon of 6th week and we are preparing a poster campaign to try and get as many people involved as possible. We have also been able to plan 4 events for next term.

Community/Volunteering

Community/Volunteering committee has been meeting every Wednesday in the OUSU offices. Attendance has been ok and I've had quite an enthusiastic response from those that came. I have created duty roles in the committee so that we now have a Community Liaison Officer and a Publicity Officer and we are still looking for more Co-Chairs, a Student Liaison Officer, Newsletter Editor and a Website Manager. We now have 5 volunteers who are ready to work in local hospitals. I went with them to the Radcliffe Infirmary and John Radcliffe Infirmary. Helena and I met with the Warden of Rhodes House to talk about the Mandela Rhodes Trust and I am arranging a meeting of students who have worked on international and development projects in Africa. I am working on several networking events for students involved in charity/volunteering and community work. We are planning a party to be held in a couple of weeks. I have also organised a free dinner and presentation at Aziz Restaurant, Cowley on Nov 5th for students interested in working on an education project with Bangladeshi children.

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