

Reports to Council

3rd Week Council MT12

David J. Townsend

President

Exploring New Commercial Revenue Opportunities

In line with our attempts to professionalise OUSU's operation and solidify its revenue base, I have instituted a new policy to ensure that commercial advertising is not allowed to clutter up OUSU's regular e-mails to students, or our communication with common room presidents (all of which conveyed such advertising free of charge). It will henceforth all be put through OUSU's commercial subsidiary, OSS Ltd which charges for advertising, send advertising on a less frequent basis and does so through a separate opt-in mailing list. I will be pursuing this further in consultation with MCR and JCR presidents to see whether OUSU can help to remove some of the commercial clutter from common room e-mails at the same time as being able to realise some profit for it.

Closing Ranks on Unfair Letting Agents

At the meetings of the MCR and JCR presidents last week, all common rooms agreed to work together with OUSU to try to push contract signing dates for private accommodation back until February (where they were a few years ago). The purpose of this is to allow a decent period of time for prospective tenants to acquaint themselves with their rights and responsibilities, choose housemates and choose properties.

The main thing for every student to understand is that there simply is no need to sign contracts early: there is no shortage of student housing in Oxford. Like that story about getting a First in Examinations if you wear a suit of armour, it's a complete myth. Hundreds more student rooms are built by the Collegiate University each year, taking hundreds of students out of the private market each year. Furthermore, there is no shortage of quality student housing as Oxford City Council has increased its regulation of student properties over the last few years so as to drive the lower quality ones to renovate their properties or leave the market. The market fundamentals of supply and demand are tipping more in our favour every year, and all we need to do is use that power. That's why all the common rooms, and OUSU, and the Colleges, and the University, and Brookes University are working together on this, and why no student should allow himself or herself to be scared or bullied into signing a contract before February. *Tell your friends this too.*

For more information, ask a question in OUSU Council or contact me at president@ousu.org

Hooroo,

DJT

Chris Gray

VP (Graduates)

Highlights

Michaelmas term has got off to a good start on a number of areas on the graduates front. Most of these are covered in more detail below but for those of you who want an executive summary they include; a huge new graduate scholarship fundraising announcement, early support from the University for increased student engagement and involvement in department decision making, and impressive interest in the Graduate Division Representative posts up for election this week.

Graduate Funding

I imagine this item will be somewhere in my report every Council this year but this announcement will undoubtedly be the biggest. The University has allocated £40m of its endowment to new graduate funding opportunities, with the intention of raising a further £60m in matched funding from donors. This is the final step in a long process that has seen the University increasingly prioritise funding for graduates, and something which we have been pushing hard for over the last year. The actual announcement was in 0th week but I unfortunately failed to include it in my last report.

Division Representatives

For OUSU the past two weeks have been incredibly busy, and myself and David Messling have had a huge portion of our time taken up covering 4 sets of Division Boards, Undergraduate Studies Committees, and Graduate Studies Committees.

We have also been busy promoting the elections for new Division Representatives and as I write this it seems that the number of people nominating will very high which is great to see. I have developed a short training programme for those that are elected and a new handbook with some key information about the role and about how Divisions operate.

Student Representation

David Messling but a paper which we have drafted, including recommendations for student co-chairs on JCCs, online information on representatives, OUSU training and support, and student representation on Department and Faculty Boards and Academic committees has so far been well received and is now undergoing wider consultation in the University.

Motions in Council

Jess and Clara are taking forward the motion passed in 1st week on the gender options on the graduate application form and their ordering. I have started discussions over the financial guarantee motion passed in the same Council but have been holding off action until I have been able to meet the students who originally brought the motion.

As always this is report records the highlights and big announcements of my work over the last 2 weeks. 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).

Katie Colliver	VP (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)
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Hi Council,

I've spent quite a lot of time recently chatting to Welfare Reps from across common rooms, which is both fun and useful for highlighting things to work on. Aside from that, here's a selection of other things going on right now:

Things that have happened...

- An interesting thing that the University's doing right now is holding a Working Group for Students With Disabilities, and I get to sit on it. It met last week and the idea is that eventually we will produce a 'common framework' between the University and the colleges guiding, amongst other things, the kind of adjustments that can be made for students. If you've noticed your college or department doing good work in this area please *let me know* because we can use it to encourage best practice elsewhere.

Right now I'm focusing on...

- Planning for Disability Awareness Week roles on, as I get publicity together and organise venues. I'm bringing the posters to Council, so take one and put it up in your common room!
- Through talking to a lot of your Welfare Reps over the past couple of weeks, I've got the impression that a Student Advice Service leaflet would be really useful as an addition to the poster campaigns in order to explain what the service does. So I'll be working on making some. Look out for them later in term.

Coming up...

- A recent report by the OIA has highlighted the potential of independent mediation schemes as a way of resolving conflicts (say, between a student and their supervisor) before they get too serious. So this Thursday I'll be going to a seminar in London and then meeting with some people in the University to see if we can get a pilot project going.
- I'm working with Chris to organise a seminar on the graduate-supervisor relationship. We're filming it this year as an example of best practice and we want to encourage departments to hold their own in the future. We'd love you to get involved so if you're up for it let Chris or me know!

Thanks for reading. If you'd like to know any more about this stuff, then you can catch me at Council or email me on welfare@ousu.org.

All the best,

Katie

David Messling

VP (Access & Academic Affairs)

Hello Council!

Michaelmas Term is speeding by! To update on the three priorities outlined in my last report:

Student Representation in Departments

The Working Group examining this met successfully for the first time last week and approved key recommendations around getting a set of involved, elected and supported departmental representatives. The draft report will now go to the Divisions for their input, before coming back to the University later this term. In related news, we've had lots of nominations coming in for Divisional Representatives, showing a clear desire for these roles!

Access Volunteering

I am bringing a proposal to the meeting of College Outreach Officers this week for an online Access hub - this would be hosted by OUSU but with the assistance of the University, who are already gathering details on volunteering opportunities in access work as part of the Moritz-Heyman Scholarship's volunteering element.

Prelims Feedback

Inquiries have been made as to current policy, and I await the results.

Other:

The **OUSU Teaching Awards** ceremony took place on Friday, and was a success! Winners were presented with awards and students who nominated and selected were in attendance, along with representatives from the University, Divisions and Colleges, including the Vice Chancellor. We're now working to ensure that this is first of many annual awards to come!

Fees, Bursaries and Scholarships

I've indicated to the University that OUSU will be working this year to find out more about the feelings of students on the financial support they receive, especially those of freshers under the £9k fee regime. This will feed in to discussions next summer over the University's undergraduate fee package for the year group commencing 2015/16, and is timely given the release of the Milbank Report on social mobility and Higher Education.

Thanks,

David

Hi Council

The last couple of weeks have been busy and productive, with campaign meetings getting off to a good start for the year, productive meetings taking place with the University and Council, and great attendance at Campaigns Training. Here's a run down of some of the things I've been working on over the last few weeks and please don't hesitate to get in touch for more information or to get involved with anything mentioned below. I can be contacted on charities@ousu.org

Community

- In the last few weeks I've addressed the City Council about student and community relations and ways in which we can work together. This has resulted in a positive reaction from the City Council, with many people getting in contact and wanting to work closer with OUSU.
- I have chaired a Neighborhood Action Group and attended a Jericho Community Association meeting; these were good opportunities to find out about local developments in the community and input from a student perspective.
- I am working with the City Council to organize a student focused area forum on 6 November at the Old Fire Station.

Volunteering Showcase

- Planning for a joint showcase event between OUSU and the Oxford Hub is going well and we have made a significant amount of progress since my last report. This will take place on 16 February and will showcase voluntary activity undertaken by students and residents to foster closer relationships between the two groups.

Campaigns Training

- The first Campaigns Training session went really well, with many new students attending to develop a toolkit for becoming politically active. The next session will be run on Wednesday of 4th week at 6pm in OUSU by the environmental campaigning group People and Planet and will be on Effective Communication.

Living Wage

- I have had fruitful discussions with the University's Procurement Team, which has resulted in a pledge to review the auditing process of the University's preferred cleaning contractors.
- I went to Slough to talk to the TUC about establishing a Living Wage Campaign and have developed contacts in order to work with trade unions and strengthen the Oxford Living Wage Campaign.

Charities

- RAG Ball: ticket sales have been going well, with over 50% of our tickets now sold.
- RAG Exec: several new members have been elected to the RAG exec and I will be involved in inducting them over the next week.
- RAG Events: these have started well with good attendance. I have taken a lead on negotiating a contract between RAG and Varsity Events to hold a regular club night at the Bridge on Thursdays.

Good Evening All,

I hope you are doing well. I have been busy and am excited about the next couple of weeks. Here is a little about what I've been up to:

A quick statistic for you...

??% of students in the University have children or caring responsibilities. Yes, that is correct, the University does not know how many students have children or caring responsibilities. Also, many colleges do not know who is or who is not a student parent due to self-disclosing.

This is problematic because students with caring responsibilities have a much harder time in accessing college facilities (dining halls usually do not allow children), welfare provision (if you do not know you have parents, how can you provide assistance), or the college social scene (few social events do not centre around alcohol).

What I'm doing about it...

I actively network students with caring responsibilities through student parent socials as seen in the social this past weekend at Exeter College.

I administer a mailing list for student parents where parent specific information can be shared as well as requests for child items or external events. If you would like to be added, email childcare@ousu.org.

I have a student parent handbook for parents that details childcare in the city, holiday play schemes, funding, and information for children with disabilities.

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

- Spoke and co-hosted the OUSU and Oxford Union Society 'Can Oxford Women Have it All?' discussion on Wednesday of 2nd week.
- Held a social and networking event for the Women's Study Department. Feminist collaboration!
- Got a graduate woman on the Gender and Athena Swan University Committee. Better representation for you!
- Worked toward closing gender gaps through convening the International Gender Studies Michaelmas seminar series - 'Gender Gaps at Oxford: 800 years of ignoring women?' Every Thursday at 2pm at LMH. Join us!!!
- Increased awareness of gender equality through organising Feminist Discussion and Dinner for Monday of 4th week at Mansfield College.

Shout out...

This week's shout out goes to Alice Irving, a DPhil in Law at Merton, for her thoughtful advice and assistance in the writing, editing, and implementation of the Sexual Consent Workshops as well as recruiting facilitators and thinking proactively about how to end to sexual violence in our University. Thank you!!!

PART TIME OFFICERS

Nick Cooper

Academic Affairs Campaign Officer

Evening Council,

Hope everyone has had a great start to term, now the fun and games of Freshers' Week are but a distant dream.

Main push at the moment on my front is compiling the information I researched last term on college complaints and appeals procedures, and putting this into a short report for the Senior Tutors to consider. Hopefully will have all this wrapped up before the next Council. Other than that, David and I have discussed how best to support the Academic Affairs Officers in all the colleges, especially those new to the role. If anybody would like to offer any suggestions, or would like any advice on academic affairs issues, do please get in contact. Otherwise, have a great 3rd week!

Nick

David Butler

Rent & Accommodation Officer

I am currently working with the President on implementing the new traffic light scheme.

I am planning Living Out advice sessions with the OUSU Student Advisor.

I am also devising proposal for a more active role in providing housing welfare advice via the Student Advice Service.

In addition to this, I am assisting the President in creating an Oxford cost-of-living index"

Bethea Hanson-Jones

Rent & Accommodation Officer

Evening Council. The E&E campaigns for this year have now been voted on, there will be a food campaign looking at fairtrade and sourcing, an energy campaign and the sustain-a-ball campaign started last year will continue. If you would like to get involved in any of these campaigns come along to our Tuesday meeting at 5.30pm in the OUSU building. The E&E rep Pamoja will be held on Friday of 4th week (place tbc), so make sure that your reps come along as its a great opportunity to find out what is happening in other colleges and discuss any issues you have. If you have a new E&E rep at your college get them to email me on eande@ousu.org so we can update the mailing list. As usual any questions then drop me an email on eande@ousu.org.

Kirran Bakhshi

Graduate International Students Officer

I've never sent out one of these so I'm not exactly sure what should be included...! Anyway, for the rest of term, I am planning or organizing a focus group of international graduate students, in order to find out what kind of preparation (information, materials, etc) they feel they need in order to be prepared when they arrive in Oxford. I will be doing this by contacting the MCR Welfare Officers, and asking them to invite the international students in their MCR to a brunch that I/OUSU will host (I will also ask for small donations so we can have tea and snacks!). I will also be asking the Welfare Officers about the kind of training they receive; if I am elected next term, I will follow up with this.

James Raynor

Common Room Support Officer

Afternoon council,

Sky TV contracts are still part of my life at OUSU and I will be talking to various people about the idea of collective action in order to get a cheaper deal. I expect to be able to report more fully on this issue by 5th week council. Other than that my focus will be to establish the new OUSU Reps list and get turnout up at meetings. Last meeting's attendance was poor so the next two weeks this will be a major focus of mine. I want to spend my last few weeks in office looking at OUSU's image problem. I think OUSU Rep meetings could be a good way to change that. You'll notice the beer motion I'm seconding, this is I think one way to make OUSU more fun and enjoyable by adding a social dimension.

Love to you all

James

Sarah Pine

Women's Officer

My work for the Women's Campaign has been very successful recently, thanks to having such a fantastic committee. Our term card has been largely finalised and beyond our weekly meetings we will be putting on the annual Gender Equality Festival in 7th week, around the theme of sexual justice. Also, our meeting next week will be skills focused for our new members.

WomCam's outcomes from last week's meeting tackled women in sport, and we will work to publicise cuppers events and a run for women's rights.