



reports to 3rd week council trinity 2006

Emma Norris
President

AUT

The situation with the AUT remains as it was – a small number of students have been affected by the marking boycott. Talks between the AUT and employers have restarted, but are so far unresolved. The Proctors assure students that every effort is being made to prevent examinations being affected.

SRI

Talks between the University and students on the calls to adopt credible SRI policy have become unconstructive, so the campaign sought to discuss the issue in a wider forum. After a petition of academic, the campaign successfully called Congregation (the highest decision-making body in the University) to consider our proposals on Tuesday of 6th week. Almost all fellows in the University have a attendance and voting rights in Congregation, so if you think your tutor might be sympathetic to SRI proposals, please get in touch. The resolution submitted is below:

The following resolution is to be submitted to Oxford University Congregation.

Resolution Text:

Congregation believes:

- i That the University should consider the social, moral and environmental impact of its investment decisions alongside concerns for the maximization of financial returns.
- ii That Oxford University should agree a credible Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) policy.
- iii That a credible SRI policy will take into account the impact of the actions of companies on all stakeholders, and will be backed up by a strategy for engagement or screening (divestment).

Congregation notes:

- i That the University Investment Committee manages over £400m of University and college funds and endowments (through the Trusts Pool).
- ii That the sole social consideration currently included in University Investment policy states that the Investment Committee should “*instruct fund managers to pursue the adoption of the core principles contained within [the Good Corporation Charter], when speaking to companies in which they are investing*”.
- iii That the Good Corporation Charter (GCC) is a voluntary Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) tool for self-assessment that gives no consideration to stakeholders other than a company’s shareholders and employees. It therefore fails to constitute a credible approach to Socially Responsible Investment (SRI).
- vii. That adopting a Socially Responsible Investment policy does not involve sacrificing financial returns. Recent studies have shown no difference between the overall performance of funds with SRI criteria as against non-SRI funds, and many SRI funds outperform the non-SRI average.

Congregation further notes:

- i There are a wide range of effective mechanisms for implementing a credible Socially Responsible Investment policy, and incorporating and balancing social, moral and environmental criteria alongside financial considerations. These include the selection of specific ethically managed funds, the screening of investments based on accepted industry standards such as the FTSE4Good Index or the use of customized ethical portfolio management software from

organizations such as the Ethical Investment Research Service (EIRiS).

- ii In the UK, SOAS, UEA and Edinburgh Universities, and the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) have implemented SRI policies without financial detriment. SRI policies have also been adopted in the United States by many Ivy League Universities including Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth College and the University of Pennsylvania.

Congregation resolves to mandate the University Council to:

- i Seek advice from independent consultants on the range of SRI options available and their financial implications.
- ii On the basis of this advice, develop a clear and credible Socially Responsive Investment policy setting out standards that specifically take into account the impact of company behavior on all stakeholders and the environment.
- iii Bring forward a resolution to establish a Joint Committee on Socially Responsible Investment, with junior and senior representatives of the University community. This committee should periodically review and assess the university's investments against its defined SRI policy and make recommendations to University Council and Investments Committee for future investment policy and decision-making.
 - iv Publish suitable details of University Investments on an annual basis and report on the action that has been taken to ensure compliance with the SRI policy developed.

Rent

The rent campaign continues, and hopefully you've all signed (and been collecting) signatures for the petition that will be presented to the House of Commons next Wednesday. A delegation of common room presidents from the most expensive colleges will be going to London to hand the petition to Andrew Smith MP, and possibly watch it being formally presented to Commons. Alongside this Martin McCluskey, the campaign's chair, and I are developing a legal case against the level of rises.

There has also been some discussion about license agreements for college accommodation. Having taken legal advice, there are certain protections students are entitled to that are sometimes ignored. These include being covered by the Protection from Eviction Act, reasonable notice before any maintenance is carried out on your room, the right to play music so long as it is not causing a nuisance and strong arguments against students being collectively liable for damage to college property. Please get in touch if you have any questions about this.

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

The past two weeks have been dominated mainly by two events...

Barnes Unit Closure

By far the most important issue for the past two weeks has been the Barnes Unit. Following last Council's mandate I have lobbied all local MPs, Councillors, JCR Presidents, MCR Presidents, Heads of House, College Doctors, College Nurses, the Committee for Student Health and Welfare, the Counselling Service and Brookes SU. The petition has (at time of writing) over 350 signatures, which is great. A lot of time has been spent writing a very extensive letter to Cherwell Vale PCT (who are handling the consultation) outlining opposition to the closure. The letter will be online soon. A lot of thanks go to a lot of people. Thank you to all those who wrote letters, signed petitions and got in touch. Thank you to the Oxford Student, Cherwell and Oxford Mail newspapers for picking up on the story so well. A big thank you to Gina Hadley for doing all the research into the proposed closure. I'll let Council know what the next stage is, although I fear that by the time the decision is made I will be long gone.

Stress Awareness Day

Last Friday was Stress Awareness Day, with Oxfordshire Mind. We had many speakers and lots of useful information for students. Although the turnout wasn't great, both OUSU and Mind got a lot of useful information and contacts and we have a template for next year. The day itself caused me no end of stress, but it's all over now, which is good. Thanks to all those people who advertised the event and all those who attended. It was great fun, but I am very, very glad to see the other side of the day!

Casework

As ever, casework continues. It has been a bit more time-consuming than usual recently, so the review of the Student Advice Service has been put on hold.

Campaigns

I've met with Disabilities Action again, and we're finishing the Access Audits work ready for 5th Week Council. The group is doing some amazing things and I will be sorry to see Leonardo and Adam leave. I've met with Ailbhe, the Anti-Racism Co-chair and we're going to get posters and events sorted out, and we plan to make a big impression during Freshers' Week. Queer Rights is still going rather slowly, but I met with Sarah Hutchinson and she has some good ideas (as well as contacts!) for the campaign, so things should happen again soon.

All the campaigns will need new Co-chairs for next term and all the equal opportunities publications need editing this summer. Let me know if you're interested.

Close Campsfield

Close Campsfield continues its good work. Soon there will be a website full of resources, which should help the campaign get its message out there as well as helping those who are involved. There are lots of ideas, both long and short-term for the campaign, so next term should be an exciting time, as some of the more ambitious projects will spring to life.

I've had some enquiries about condoms and condom machines. One college has changed to a different size of condom. Let me know if you have any questions about condoms and I'll do my best to sort them. The student press seemed rather keen on condom stories this week. I'm not sure why.

Apologies to any Welfare Officers who try to reach me on MSN- my mac keeps crashing and then MSN goes a bit funny. If you send me a message and then I sign out then it's probably because my mac crashed.

LGBSoc drinks are, as usual, great fun and I'm always happy to help.

I took one day off for an interview.

That's quite a short report this week!

Oliver Russell

V-P (Graduates)

This fortnight I have mainly been attending University committee meetings.

In the Graduate Skills Advisory Group we heard pleasing progress on the development of Skillzone, the new website that will allow graduates to enter skills they have acquired which will be

useful for applying for research grants and to assure students that they are developing skills that are auxiliary to the pure academic development.

In the Graduate Panel of EPSC (Education and Policy Standards Committee) we heard that the proposals for increasing graduate fee liability (both in terms of value and length) are to be shelved indefinitely (yay) and approved the final version of the Oxford Postgraduate Researcher Experience Questionnaire which I would encourage you to fill in when you get it as it genuinely helps us shape our provision.

In the Curators of the University Library it was reported that (as a result of the policy of this Council and my representations thereon) the libraries had been open on Easter Monday and had received a high number of users and so it was the Library Services recommendation that the libraries be open on all similar such occasions and that the opening be extended to.

In my meetings with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the full meeting of EPSC we made very encouraging progress on the subject of the student contract and in particular on the usefulness of the Memorandum of Guidance for Supervisors and Research Students which is an unusual example of Graduate provision setting an example for undergraduates to catch up to.

In addition to my casework and OUSU administrative duties I have met with the editors of the International Students Handbook to discuss their progress and had the meeting of the Post Graduate Assembly last night.

Hannah Stoddart

V-P (Charities and Community)

RAG

As some of you might have noticed, it's RAG week this week, so please do try to support some of the events. So far we've had International Beats at Po Na Na, a Poetry Slam and Speed Dating, and a Three Legged Bar Crawl and Mr and Miss Oxford is still to come. Please come to support your college at Mr and Miss Oxford from 7.30pm on Saturday night at the Union.

Please accept my apologies in advance for any strange behaviour or attempts to escape from Council, but I am participating in the Uni-wide game of Assassins that RAG has organised, and it is likely that I will be targeted during this meeting.

Community

Volunteering is thriving and I have recently established network of Community Reps in colleges who have been assigned particular areas in Oxford to research potential volunteering opportunities.

Plans for Oxford Get Involved week are also going well and relevant groups have been contacted to organise the different themed days.

Environment

Plans for Environment Day on Thursday 6th week are going well. This will coincide with Oxford Get Involved week and we hope to get students involved in local conservation projects.

We are planning an 'Environment Awareness' email to go out to every student in the University, and also encouraging Common Rooms to talk to their Governing Bodies about instituting codes of Best Practice for Energy saving.