

# OUSU

## reports to council

3rd week trinity 2007

**Alan Strickland**

**President**

### Rent

- Juliette and I have been recruiting students for the new Independent Rents Watchdog which will act an expert advisory group on rent. The group will provide analysis, professional scrutiny to OUSU and Common Rooms, bringing a new input to rent negotiations.
- We are particularly looking for economics/maths masters and DPhil students; please encourage anyone you think might be interested to contact [juliette.fisher@lmh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:juliette.fisher@lmh.ox.ac.uk)

### Handover

- I chaired a meeting to plan the handover from the current team of sabbaticals to our successors. We are determined that this years handover will be well structured and really well organised.

### Securing University funding

- We attended a meeting of the Joint Committee where I presented a paper requesting funding for a 'Head of General Office' - a permanent member of staff to deal with finance, strategy, personnel, legal and other core organisational issues.
- The Committee agreed to support the proposal and asked us to bring a paper to the next meeting outlining our request for wider block grant funding to accompany the proposal to University Council.
- This is an incredibly positive step and is the closest we have ever been to securing stable funding.
- I met with Tim Softley, a member of the committee to discuss the proposal.

### Post-graduate Assembly

- I attended a really interesting meeting of PGA and heard lots of very useful feedback on the University's graduate programmes during workshops run by the University's Director of International Strategy and Head of Student Funding & Access.

### MCR Presidents' Committee

- I attended MCR Presidents' Committee at St. Cross and gave a presentation on OUSU reform progress, as well as highlighting some of the wider work that officers have undertaken this year.

### Proctors and Assessor

- I chaired a meeting of the sabbatical team and the new Proctors and Assessor. Issues discussed included graduation ceremonies, clubs and societies support, Freshers' Fair and the forthcoming referendum.

### JCR Presidents Dinner

- I was somehow lured to a recruitment dinner with the JCR Presidents. No idea how that happened.

### Sponsorship

- With the Business Manager I met representatives of Lehman to discuss how they can support OUSU's work, particularly in networking common room representatives.

**Ed Mayne****V-P (Finance)****APPOINTMENTS**

My work over the past fortnight has mainly consisted of running the appointments process for OUSU's summer vacation staff. We have so far appointed a Freshers' Fair Organiser and a Deputy Freshers' Fair Organiser, whose names we are presenting to OUSU Council today for ratification.

We are in the process of appointing Assistant Business Managers and staff to work on our summer publications run.

**OUSU ACCOUNTS**

I apologise for the fact that I have requested that the presentation of the OUSU Accounts for the 2005-06 financial year be withdrawn from this week's Council agenda. Due to the new methods OUSU is now using to construct its accounts, specifically using the SAGE accounting system and a new accountant at the University, there have been delays in their completion. I was hoping that these issues would have been resolved in time for 3<sup>rd</sup> Week Council but this has not been the case. I will endeavour to present them to 5<sup>th</sup> Week Council for ratification. I have brought the non audited accounts to this week's Council.

**NUS AFFILIATION**

Invoices were finally sent out to NUS Affiliated Common Rooms this week, charging £1.03 per student.

**OXFORD STUDENT CONSTITUTION**

The Working Party convened to construct a constitution for *The Oxford Student* met for the second time last week and we have reached consensus on the format and wording of the document. I hope to present this document to 5<sup>th</sup> Week Council for ratification and for subsequent inclusion in the OUSU Standing Orders. It was decided in the working party that it would be better to present this document to OUSU Council rather than put it to referendum.

**WEB**

I am in the process of migrating all the data on OUSU's web hosting server to a new server with more memory. Theoxfordforum.com and theoxfordforum.co.uk have already been set up. Hopefully this will allow Oxide Radio and oxfordstudent.com to operate much more quickly.

**Jamie Frew  
Opportunities)****V-P (Welfare and Equal****Considerations on the Past Two Weeks**

These weeks have been highly unusual and came as something of a shock. It would be grossly unrealistic of us to expect you to believe that the the atmosphere in the OUSU offices had not been tense both before and after the last council. A debate of that nature was simply always going to have had some effect. However, over the past two weeks I have been very surprised as whatever emotions might have been experienced have largely dissipated or been overcome by professional conduct. I do not believe in any way that for a sabbatical team to be openly divided in opinion is a sign of weakness – any group of strong-willed people who care about the matter in hand will be divided in some way. Rather this division shows a willingness to ensure that debates are had properly, in public to ensure that everyone has their say and that all issues are given due consideration. However, the fact remains that difference of opinion need not and must never be a bar to efficient and productive work and to this end I would like to offer genuine thanks to an executive team who have successfully proven this to be possible in two weeks the prospect of which I has not relished.

## **Casework and the SAS**

Casework, in its many guises, has taken up a significant part of the past two weeks. As such, it's quite irritating that I cannot say very much about this as a consequence of our confidentiality policy. However, I do feel free to say that this week has seen a number of firsts for the SAS. We have been advocated on cases of the highest levels our service has ever encountered and I am immensely proud of the work that we have done. I take this as some testament to the work our current sabbatical support team can achieve.

## **LGBTQ COUNCIL / Queer Rights Campaign**

It continues to be the case that Queer Rights is going from strength to strength and is still recruiting new members. Following the motion last term to increase the autonomy of the Equal Opportunity campaigns Queer Rights Campaign has been preparing in anticipation of the final readings of the reforms passing. A draft constitution has been written, revised and accepted according to current procedures (and will go on to form the basis of the constitutions of two of the other Equal Opportunity campaigns).

The Council / Campaign has begun to operate under its new provisional structures already and these have already heightened its levels of efficiency and productivity. I have to say that even I am extremely impressed with the degree to which these new structures have improved the operations of the Council / Committee. Currently they are working on administrative matters to ensure that they are fully prepared to re-launch themselves to the new Freshers and the university at large in the new year.

## **Restore**

Restore is a voluntary support and rehabilitation centre for people experiencing mental health difficulties based in Cowley. I have been meeting with them and visiting their centre to establish how we might be able to be of mutual benefit to each other. Possibilities that have arisen from these meetings include stress and anxiety workshops and support for returning students. I believe that this has the potential to be a very valuable partnership.

## **Media Appearances**

I don't want to make too much of this as it's fairly normal for a sabb to be approached by one of the student newspapers for a quote during a week, but over the past two weeks I've a lot more time than usual responding to similar requests other than the OxStu and Cherwell and so though that I'd better record it.

Interview for BBC Radio Oxford: May Day Celebrations

Interview for SJCTV with Imran: Dissaffiliation Debate

Article written for Oxford Student Mental Health Network Newsletter: Student Experience of Mental health

## **Condoms**

OUSU has secured a supply of condoms that it will be distributing for free to all common rooms (regardless of affiliation). Including a limited supply of dotted and flavoured varieties – common room officers will be being informed about how they can claim their free condoms in the near future, but please inform them in advance if you want to have the dotted/flavoured varieties – they are going to be strictly first come, first served.

## **Preparation for Handover**

Whilst for some 8<sup>th</sup> week might seem like a long way away there is a lot to prepare in that time. I have been holding regular meetings with my successor to discuss not only how my position works within OUSU, but also what she would like to do with the post. I believe that she has had a lot of good ideas that common rooms and common room officers will be very appreciative of and I am

working hard to ensure that the infrastructure is established before the time she takes over so that she need not waste time in trying to learn how OUSU operates whilst trying to reform it at the same time as so often seems to happen with sabbatical handovers.

Initiatives include new web-based support and communication networks for common room officers, revisions to casework training systems, bulk publicity buying schemes to reduce costs for common rooms, stabilizing and securing additional funding from university departments with whom we work most closely (as opposed to seeking central university funding) and hopefully extending OUSU's welfare supplies sales to include a wider range of personal safety equipment.

Sadly, this term will be much more busy than any of us imagined it would be and the workload for the remainder of the the year will be much greater than any of us could have anticipated. The consequence of this is that I will be forced to spend most of the what little spare time I will have preparing for handover. My position has, it would seem, to have been left by predecessors with many loose ends for many years in succession and it's about time that someone attempted to simplify the structures surrounding it.

**Jenny Hoogewerf-McComb**

**V-P (Women)**

Hey Council,

Exceptionally busy this week, but will attempt to summarise:

- held women,s officer training day with listening skills training, discussion & sharing of ideas and experiences
- sent/sending out packs of information to those women,s, women,s welfare and equal opps officers who couldn,t make it
- 2 x more women,s finals forums- really well attended, looking forward to feedback so Hannah can make them even better!
- Chasing down student data from Proctors for Survival Guide & Women,s Handbook distro
- Sitting on appointments board for summer pubs staff
- OSSL board with new professional company secretary
- Chairing standing committee discussing staffing structure for summer & other employment issues
- Meeting with new Proctors & Assessor
- Sue Ashtiany from Nabarro talk at Balliol
- Organising rest of events for Women,s Campaign termcard
- New online women,s termcard, coordinating all events for or featuring women in the University in one place for first time
- Working with University,s new Learning Development Advisor to organise new venture; Freshers Forums in Humanities & Science to address the gender gap in achievement from the first few weeks of uni
- SAS casework
- Writing up joint proposal for OxWiP and political societies:Women in Student Politics day for Michaelmas 07, to address the disparity in JCR & MCR presidents, etc- showing women how to get involved and network
- Getting 07-09 Student Parent Handbook ready for printing
- General OUSU stuff like target schools mailing, moving boxes
- Special Enough! Session planned to address Finals & eating distress
- Trying to keep working on handover whenever I have a spare minute!

Thanks to my wonderful co-chairs Kit & Lucy, my co-co-chair and Enough! Organiser Sian, all the exec who work so hard, esp Liv & Emma for their support in the last few weeks, & all the people who have written or spoken to support my position- it means so much.

Jenny xxx

**Andrea Miller**

**V-P (Graduates)**

## **I. University Committees and Meetings:**

### **Curators of the University Libraries (April 30)**

Much discussion of the capital fundraising campaign and other financial details. Libraries have more sensible opening hours on weekends.

### **Educational Policy Standards Committee (May 4)**

Discussion of 'Size and Shape' of the Collegiate University needs to take place desperately. The committee was not yet ready to approve the consultation paper prepared by the secretariat for wider release.

## **II. OUSU Meetings and Projects**

### **PostGraduate Assembly (May 8)**

Reasonably good turnout- 22 people attended. 2 motions passed Nem Com, one on OUSU not counting Non-Fee-Paying Graduates in Common Room numbers for affiliation fee calculations and the other revising the job description of the Vice President (Graduates). Paul Clark, head of Student Funding and Access and Heather Bell, the International Strategy Coordinator, gave an excellent and informative presentation on new developments in university funding for graduate students and held focus groups to gather some preliminary information on student views and needs.

### **MCR PresCom (May 10)**

Again, reasonably good turn out, excellent dinner and gorgeous hospitality at St. Cross. Lively discussion held regarding OUSU reform and upcoming referendum. Interesting conversation transpired regarding enforcement of impending smoking ban in college and university accommodation, which I am actively looking into.

## **III. Casework**

Same old...

**Helen Bagshaw**

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

### *Curators of University Libraries*

This was the second meeting with the new Bodley's Librarian present, and she was presenting a number of papers on the financial recovery plan on the library and its future development campaigns. Although a lot of this is strictly confidential at the moment, it is encouraging to see how well Sarah Thomas has grasped the differing funding streams in the UK (in comparison to the US institutions she came from) and worked out how to recover losses made in recent years. Hopefully her plans will be successful.

### *Meeting with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) and EPSC*

As usual in even weeks, we had our meeting with Prof. Elizabeth Fallaize and then EPSC. A lot of the reports coming to the committee at the moment concern the Gender Gap, as related to an admissions study that is currently ongoing within the University (based on a group of students who were part of the 2003 Matriculation intake). Following the work of mine and Jenny's predecessors last year, a number of questions relating to the Gender Gap were added to the Oxford Student Course Experience Questionnaire, and these are currently being analysed by the Director of the Learning Institute. Although the results have not been published, it looks as though

there are some patterns emerging in the data that show women perceiving a lack of clarity surrounding what is expected of them in their degrees. If anything like this is flagged up, it will give us something concrete to campaign on within the University to try and improve the Gender Gap.

The other big issue being discussed at the committee was the future size and shape of the University. In the Corporate Plan produced by University Council, a cap of 18,000 students has been suggested, but there now need to be discussions about the mechanisms by which departments, divisions and colleges plan for student numbers to ensure that this number is maintained. Currently this is not that much of an active issue within the University, but there will certainly be debates in the very near future so Andrea and I, and probably more our successors, will be consulting with students about how they feel the University should be made up (proportions of Undergraduates and Graduates, proportions of Home/EU and Overseas students etc).

#### *Handover*

We had a planning meeting last week to decide on how handover should be structured and what information needed to be passed on to our successors as a group. We were all determined that we would organise a useful two weeks, so starting on planning this early means we can make sure that everything is written down and sessions are planned. Every incoming Sabbatical should also have a comprehensive handover file prepared for them by the end of this term, which we hope will be an excellent resource for them in their term of office.

#### *Casework*

Casework is ongoing as ever. The Student Advice Service has gone from strength to strength this year in terms of its professionalism, and we are now all using the new policies and procedures that Jamie worked hard to write and put into action. Working with the Counselling Service will hopefully lead to further professionalisation of the Service, which should mean a better service for all of the students that need our help. We have been dealing with some large SAS cases at the moment, and this experience will be useful to pass on to the new members of the SAS.

#### *JCC Meeting*

Last Thursday the majority of the Sabbaticals attended a meeting of the Joint Committee of Council with Student Members and talked about the referenda, the proposed Head of the General Office and proposals for centralised funding from the University.

#### *Meeting with the Head of Student Administration*

Last week I had a meeting with Sue Bennett, the Head of Student Administration to talk about developments in online services for students, such as registration, applications and examination entry. A lot of progress has been made this year in getting some of these services online, and in improving the paper-based procedures in the mean-time. Exam timetables have been sent out much earlier this year, and there are attempts to reduce the number of exam entry dates so that Examiners can be appointed and timetables sent out even earlier. Our discussion centred on the time delays between sitting final exams and getting results, and between results and graduation. In the next year or two, the first delay should certainly start to decrease with some of the changes being implemented.

#### *Proctors and Assessors Meeting*

On Wednesday, we had our first official meeting with the new Proctors and Assessor, alongside Brian Gasser, the Clerk to the Proctors. The new officers are James Forder, Balliol (Senior Proctor), Marcus Banks, Wolfson (Junior Proctor) and Paul Coones, Hertford (Assessor). They came to visit us in the OUSU Offices, and as well as running through introductions to both our and their jobs, we discussed a number of issues such as Clubs and Societies and improving our

services to them. These meetings are also an excellent chance to get advice about casework and to lobby the Proctors and Assessor, which we take great advantage of!

#### *Graduation*

One of the issues raised with me by students this year is Degree Ceremonies and the way they are conducted at Oxford in comparison to other institutions. There seems to be a wide variety of opinions on the current provision and how it could be changed or improved, determined largely by what college a student is from and the way in which that college organises its degree days. There is to be a review of Degree Ceremonies this year, which the Proctors Office has assured us will have student representation. Therefore, following discussions with the Assessor and the Head of Student Administration, I will be doing some research into the status quo and what students feel should be provided.

#### *Online Registration Guide Workshop*

On Thursday I attended another Online Registration Workshop, to review what the help document for the website should say and what help text should be directly entered onto the portal. Online registration seems to be progressing on schedule and will be rolled out this year from the 1<sup>st</sup> September. This is one area in which student representation has been truly welcomed, and I have ended up knowing rather more than I ever thought I would want to about the processes involved in large student databases and the work that is involved in creating online portals!

#### *Referenda*

I am not going to say very much on this other than that my Junior Tribunal is currently lacking a number of members so please stand in this Council if you would rather get involved in the arbitration side of referenda than the campaign side. It will be important for us to have enough members to reach quorum, otherwise no complaints can ever be heard or decisions made be the Returning Officer queried to a higher authority!

<b>Imran Khan</b>	<b>V-P (Charities and Community)</b>
-------------------	--------------------------------------

Dear Council,  
Very, very brief report! Apologies.

#### **RAG:**

The RAG exec's been extremely busy organising events like the Poetry Slam, Mr + Miss Oxford and Scavenger Hunt, with RAG Assassins, an a capella night and sports day still to come.

#### **Community:**

Still recruiting people to help with Cowley Carnival and Oxford Mela, as well as organising the Citigroup/Aston Rowant volunteering/conservation day.

#### **Environment:**

Liaising with Environment Panel members about cycle safety plans for next year's Freshers' Week.

#### **Other:**

Starting work on handover!