

Ruth Hunt

President

The last two weeks have been dominated, understandably, by Diversity Week. The week was a great success, due mainly to the hard work that James put into the project. I don't think that the sabbatical officers thought that the week would be as busy as Freshers Week but by Saturday night, it felt very much like first week michaelmas. It was really nice to see people at events that I had never met before, who didn't have a clue who I was and were just having a good time. This is what OUSU should be doing - events that appeal to different sections of the Oxford community and it is something we did well. Diversity Week was also the first real opportunity that the current executive has had to recognise exactly what their role is. The function and paid responsibilities of the sabbaticals is to do the worrying and the thinking. It means that as well as our standard responsibilities of advice to common rooms, event management, sorting out trouble we also spend a lot of time texting each other at half two in the morning about how we are going to get to the cash and carry, pick up a barbeque, clear up current event, and get to the next one on time. And sleep. This is where the work comes in, and we enjoy it and everything (well, almost) comes off. But it is so refreshing and nice when the part and full time executive also take a part in that responsibility. The exec members who excelled this week have already been identified in James' report and so I am not going to wax lyrical now. Of course, it is great when members of the exec turn up to events but a distinction should be made between those who nip in for an hour and then leave and those who worry whether groundsmen would prefer scotch or rum. And whether two hundred beef burgers will be enough. That's where the work comes in, and it is that level of responsibility that makes an event a success.

The exec, however, will have another opportunity to demonstrate their ability and judgement – those qualities that got them elected in the first place. It was with deep regret that I accepted the resignation of Catherine Sangster this week and despite the wisdom that has been imparted by the second year undergraduate journalists on the matter, this is an indication of how hard the Vice President (Graduates) must work. Catherine is right and brave to make the difficult decision that representation of graduates is too important to be done half heartedly. It would have been easy to continue to hold office but prioritise her academic work. This would have probably gone unnoticed by the press, but graduates would, of course, have suffered. All sabbaticals in OUSU represent graduates but it is essential to have someone here who understands the extraordinary pressures that graduates are under in Oxford. It would have been a demonstration of a lack of understanding of the experiences of graduates if I refused to accept Catherine's resignation. The vacancy arises on Saturday 8th week, and as the constitution stipulates – a stipulation approved by the proctors – the executive will be given the responsibility of co-opting someone for the Easter vacation. There will then be an election in council. There are graduates around who have already submitted and have the time to take on this role and will be grateful for the salary. The position will be filled by someone who understands graduates and I am sure council will elect someone to fulfil this role.

On a separate note, though one that the student press again confuse, there is a by-election for Vice President (graduates) 2002-20003. It is true that no-one decided to run in Michaelmas. This is because though undergraduates can predict that they will have finished their academic work by June, graduates can rarely make a similar prediction. This indicates that an election later in the year is going to be much more effective. This does not demonstrate that graduates are not interested, concerned, keen to be involved with OUSU and graduate representation. It is because we recognise this distinction that graduates are part of OUSU that we will run another election and we will organise it with the same commitment and attention as the michaelmas elections. This is not a complex concept. However, if any graduates would like hustings please email ro@ousu.org as soon as possible.

On another note entirely, I think it is necessary to explain my comments in the Oxford Student regarding NUS. I cannot deny that I am very angry with NUS at the moment. In October 2000, the government announced that they would be undertaking a review of higher education funding that would possibly include the abolition of tuition fees and the restoration of the grant. This review was promised by December. It is now February and nothing has been announced. Students are convinced that tuition fees have been scrapped. The new proposals are worse. This is without policy and therefore my opinion, but the abolition of student loans to be replaced with commercial loans – immediate repayment – cannot be a good thing, even if all the press pick up is the abolition of tuition fees and the restoration of the grant. Graduate tax will be paid for twenty five years, accruing a greater pay back than three years of tuition

fees. Perhaps it is unfair of me to suggest that NUS have done nothing to campaign on this. However, if organisations do not know that they are, this is an equal failing. If I were president of a national union of students, I would ensure that this issue does not leave the media spotlight. I would be expressing disgust that the government have failed to announce anything. I would be using my meetings with the cabinet to really push this home. This, as far as I can see, is not happening. The second matter is more relevant to the Russell Group universities. The RAE funding has been cut across the board. Universities are making a loss on each undergraduate and as the budget gets tighter, the more privatisation is mentioned with seriousness. As far as I can see, NUS are neglecting this topic completely. Of course, NUS do many things that we do not see, and whether we are affiliated or not, they still represent us. And we are in a better position to effect that representation if we are in not out. Disaffiliation does make NUS sit up and take notice of what is happening here and may lead to the current leadership being accountable to its constituents. However, I cannot condone disaffiliation as a means of communicating our problems and I am sorry if my quotes implied this.
That's it for now. Thanks. Ruth

Eleanor Fletcher

V-P (Finance)

The Amended Budget Preparing this to bring to Council has taken up a considerable amount of my time. I am very disappointed that OUSU will run at a deficit this year. I hope this will be a one-off (as I made clear in my notes on the Amended Budget, OUSU's current financial misfortunes are largely due to the unlucky coincidence of one-off payments with a sharp downturn in advertising sales) and it does not herald an era in which OUSU returns to running on a regular deficit as it did several years ago. Deficits eat into the reserves which have been carefully invested and exist to facilitate long-term expansion; it would be a terrible shame if we lost them.

The OUSU Shop The extended loan to OSSL (the limited company, a subsidiary of OUSU, that owns the shop) of £5,000 is a key factor in contributing towards this year's deficit. I have warned since early Michaelmas that no more money can be given to the Shop by OUSU. Student numbers visiting the shop have been in steady decline over the past ten years and now have reached crisis point. It seems that OUSU is providing a service that nobody wants these days. Such a service cannot be expected to continue in its current form. The Shop trustees will meet at the end of term to consider the future of the OUSU Shop.

The Draft Accounts KPMG, our auditors, have only been able to present us with draft versions of the OUSU and OSSL Accounts for 2000/2001. The delay in completing the OSSL Accounts is due to uncertainty over the future of the Shop as such a decision would affect the assets of that company. In turn this means that the OUSU Accounts cannot be completed because how the OSSL Accounts turn out may affect them slightly as well. This year, for the first time, KPMG have asked me to produce a trustees report on the 2000/2001 Accounts for OUSU as well as OSSL. This I bring to this Council, I hope you think it a fair evaluation of those figures and the financial developments of that year. Once the Accounts for both OSSL and OUSU are completed by KPMG, I will of course bring them back to Council for approval.

Resignation Obviously Catherine's resignation has become a major factor in my job more recently. It is with deep regret that we lose a valued member of our team. As a responsible member of the executive I will ensure that we strive to find a solution that is best for graduates and OUSU. I firmly believe that it is as necessary as ever that OUSU has a full-time graduate officer.

Diversity Week This passed off very well. I was particularly pleased that both the Entz events were a great success. With the BBQ/Bonfire on Saturday we seem to have created some landmarks: it was deeply refreshing to see non-hack students come to an OUSU event, hopefully we will move away from organising hackfests to providing good events that all our members wish to attend.

Business Manager The appointment procedure for next year's Business Manager has begun. The job has been advertised in the *OxStu* and will be appearing in *The Bridge* on Monday. I have already had 3 enquiries, if anyone is interested then please email me on finance@ousu.org and I will send out an information pack. The deadline for applications is Friday 6th Wk (22nd Feb) and interviews will happen in 7th Wk.

Student Radio My investigations into this are ongoing; unfortunately, I am still unable to bring any concrete plans to Council. Obviously the current state of OUSU's finances has a serious impact on any intention to support a new initiative. Costings are coming in and I shall be speaking to the Oxford Student Radio Trust about exact funding arrangements (I have already made it clear to one of their

number that we can offer little more than a room and a bit of backbone through being associated with an established and recognised institution).

James Rowlands

V-P (Welfare)

The last two weeks have (not unsurprisingly) been taken up largely with **Diversity Week**. I (despite my appearance to the contrary on occasions) really enjoyed the week, and think that those people who came to events did likewise. This was an opportunity to demonstrate that students are a diverse group – not all of an age, an ethnicity, a particular background or outlook – and to demonstrate that we really are part of our local community. Everyone can identify with the themes of the week, and while many of the events were fun, others were informative and challenging and I hope they encouraged people to consider a number of issues. Most of all I hope that Diversity Week really did help people realise our responsibility, both as individuals and as a student union, to work for equality of opportunity and to challenge discrimination and prejudice where we find it. Ultimately apathy is no excuse – religion, sexuality, nationality, race, disability status and gender are still all-to often grounds for prejudice and we simply cannot afford to be complacent – in the long run I trust Diversity Week provide a forum for the discussion of, and action on, these issues. Special praise for the events put on by Queer Rights, which featured some excellent talks (on queer theory and on sexuality and religion) and thank you Rachel for her life-saving effort on the ‘Pride Not Prejudice’ bop despite the technical problems we encountered. Likewise the Cabaret and the anti-racism groups event ‘how British are you?’ which was great – alas the others seemed to suffer from that perpetual bane of any event: lack of people. Disabilities Action also had a useful meeting, which raised a number of issues, and which will hopefully put the committee firmly back on track in terms of attendance. Finally I must mention soirees and the wonderful bonfire and fireworks.

I will be writing a lot for my successor in my handover report on Diversity Week. While I do think the week was a success, this was not a one off project and it will require work in future years. No doubt establishing the week firmly in the University calendar will help counter some of the problems we faced, including a low turn out to the March. Likewise the Diversity Fair, while being unfairly hampered by the no-show of some of those groups invited, was both interesting, drew people of the streets and has the potential to become far better. Thanks to Anne Begg MP, who in many ways summed up the week far better than I ever could, and to Maria from Stonewall. Ultimately looking back there are always things which could have been done better, this is the nature of any event, and I will make every effort to ensure that next years VP Welfare and his fellow sabs can produce a bigger and better Diversity Week.

Thank you to all those who helped, and especially to those who helped above and beyond the call of duty, please forgive me if I miss you out: thank you to the sabs who I can (as always) depend on, Colin, Maria, Rachel Logan, Vinca, Rosie, Patrick, James C, Nailah, Amira, Angela, Nicky (despite mods), Penelope, Julia, Chris, Laura, Liz C, Adam Booth, Duncan, the venture scouts, Eleanor Thompson and Ali. Finally thank you to the ensemble of speakers during the week and to Pamela Roberts from the City Council.

Beyond that I have been returning to a (largely) normal schedule of work. Reliable issues and requests on my time, like casework, liaison with common room officers and university staff continue unabated and I hope prove useful to all those concerned. If anyone has any queries, about my report or on other issues, please get in touch.

My bid to the NHS Health Promotions for funding to run a **sexual health campaign** was successful, and this means that I (and my successor) will be able to run a high profile advertising campaign over the next few terms. Additionally OUSU is now the central distributor for condoms to Oxford Colleges, previously a role which Health Promotions filled. Although this is not officially in place till April, any college needing condoms should contact me. The main aim of the change in distribution is to ensure an equality of provision to colleges, and I hope that by OUSU acting as a main point of purchase we can, along with common rooms, secure more condoms at a lower cost.

Accommodation Committee now has a co-chair, and is beginning to make progress on the living in guide (to assist students living in) and a housing list to alleviate the traditional pains of house hunting. **Queer rights** likewise almost up to its old contingent of co-chairs, will shortly have a new website and will soon be holding an LGBT Officers social.

The University is now adopting the **Race Relations Amendment Act**, and a lot of time is being spent on consultation on that (in this case with myself and Antonia). In the long run I am determined to see the Equal Opportunities Statement strengthened (especially around sexual orientation as it remains too easy for colleges to ignore very real homophobic incidents, given their tendency to (mis) use the code in order to clear things always as quickly as possible) and I think this is likely to happen. I have also been worrying a lot about the **Data Protection Act** and **SENDA**, the later of which is a focus of a paper submitted to Joint Committee with Council, about the inaccessibility of OUSU. **Mental Health** continues to give the University issues to consider and I have been involved in the drafting of a much-needed mental health policy for the University and I am continuing to work with the Oxford Student Mental Health Network and HOCAS. I am also preparing a **draft code of confidentiality and practice** for common rooms welfare providers.

The Student Advice Service is continuing to be improved and shored up: partly by the constitutional motion I have submitted to Council, and through a number of projects such as the Student Advisor visiting scheme, the soon to be completed training packs and, by next term, the newly devolved training structures. In the short term I am concerned by the departure of Catherine. While she will be leaving a detailed guide to graduate issues (on issues like status and funding) I am reluctant to see any co-opted (or even next terms by-elected replacement VP) assume a casework role in such a sort space of time. While it is possible that a successor for the remainder of her term may have substantial experience, I find it unlikely that they can or could become a fully integrated member of the service. With the upcoming election of a VP Graduates for 2002-3, this is a short-term problem, although it does highlight the absolute necessity of assured graduate representation in OUSU. Nonetheless the Student Advice Service will continue to meet the needs of graduates, and I am thankful to Annily, John and Antonia for their efforts. Once again it has become clear quite how important that the post of Student Advisor is for OUSU, providing both continuity and some very specific expertise, without which our welfare services to students would certainly be greatly reduced.

Antonia Bance

V-P (Women)

What can I say? These last two weeks have been Diversity Week, Diversity Week and more Diversity Week. What a fabulous week, and one that shows that no matter what the cynics on the left and on the right claim, OUSU is a student union with a fundamental commitment to campaigning for equal opportunity and liberation for disadvantaged groups. Over fifteen events, hundreds of students involved, bridges built with the local community, and the only criticism the OxStu can make is that there were a disappointing number on a march. I was so proud to be part of this student union last week. I've said before and I will say again – we live in a world where religion, sexuality, nationality, race, disability status and gender are still grounds for persecution, we cannot afford to be complacent about equal opportunities issues. I hope next year's event will be even bigger and better.

The Women's Cabaret was amazing – thanks to all the people involved in making it happen, especially Pippa and Francoise, and all the performers. All the proceeds went to the Oxford Asian Women's Helpline, a local charity which does a really essential job, and deserves our support. The JdP at St Hilda's was a great venue, the atmosphere was really chilled and relaxed, and we were treated to a wonderful display of diverse talented women.

I've done more work on Finals Forums, which will mostly happen in 7th and 8th Weeks, and have been promoting the private hire of the Nightbus, as well as the regular service – if any clubs and societies want to hire the bus, it costs just £40 per 24hours plus petrol, email me on women@ousu.org. Admin for the service takes up as much of my time as ever. Remember – 07754 516172, Thurs, Fri, Sat nights 11-2am, £1 from and to anywhere within the ring road, open to male and female students.

Ethics Committee has now presented the petition calling for ethical investment of the university's pension funds, and is looking forward to the conference for bursars, CR/SU officers and activists about ethical fund management in 7th week. We need another co-chair, so please email me if you want to get involved.

I'm doing lots of work on safety in Oxford, as you'll see from my motion, and enjoying the Elections Review. All OUSU members are encouraged to attend – the next meeting will be 3-6pm next Thursday

in Jesus, to finish weeding and anglicising the existing regulations, but what I really want is for YOU to email me YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT THE ELECTION particularly if you are a stakeholder, like CR PRESIDENTS, former CROs, CANDIDATES last Michaelmas term, or former ELECTORAL OFFICIALS. The email address is women@ousu.org. It would also be great if lots of people could come to the meeting of the review next Friday at 3.30pm in Jesus, where we will be discussing feedback from the last election, and the opinions of stakeholders, as well as comparing our elections with Cambridge and other unions.

Other than that, I've been doing general OUSU stuff, casework, (lots of it – must be the fourth/fifth week blues!), university committees and representing OUSU to the City Council.

I still love my job – last year if people had told me that I would involve being a publicist, typesetter, signwriter, barbecue technician, spin doctor, removals operative, support worker, secretary, balloon blower-upper, interior designer, events promoter, cleaner, bouncer, negotiator and so much more, I would never have believed them. OUSU should thank its lucky stars it has as dedicated a team of sabs, staff, execs, co-chairs and other willing volunteers – the work involved in Diversity Week was immense, and most of the worry was carried by James, who deserves a round of applause, if such a thing were allowed in Council.

Catherine Sangster	V-P (Graduates)
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Like the rest of the sabs, Diversity Week dominated 4th week for me. I was particularly occupied with this on the Tuesday, which was International Students' Committee's day (ISC is part of my portfolio). The Committee held a successful discussion in the early afternoon about whether Oxford was truly an international university, which was well-attended and has left the ISC with many ideas and projects to follow up. Later, the ISC's soiree at the East Oxford Community Centre, complete with salsa dancers and an impressive spread of international food and costumes, also went well. I spent more time helping out on Friday (at the QR bop) and Saturday (at the march, fair etc.) Congratulations to James and to everyone for organising such a good week.

Since the last Council, I've attended further meetings of Graduate Committee and EPSC, and also had private meetings with members of those committees. My initiative on written agreements for graduates who teach is proceeding well, and I will report on this and other developments more fully to Postgraduate Assembly on Monday of 6th week (which report will also come to 7th week Council). I've also attended University Council and a meeting of the Childcare Panel, and as usual have been dealing with a significant amount of casework.

Postgraduate Assembly, which will be held on Monday of 6th week at 8pm in St Anthony's College, will include hustings for the forthcoming byelection to elect a VP (Graduates) to join the 2002-2003 sabbatical team. All graduate students are welcome to attend and ask questions of the candidates. Other items on the agenda include motions concerning telephone provision and nursery provision. As usual, the agenda is available on-line at <http://www.ousu.org/current/news/campaigns/graduates/meetings.html>.

As Council may know, I have resigned as VP (Graduates), and will be leaving office after the end of this term. I am sorry to be leaving such dedicated colleagues, and such a challenging and varied job. My resignation is for academic reasons. The representation and support of graduate students is a demanding full-time job, and requires the total commitment of the sabbatical officer. This is a commitment that, owing to unforeseen complications with my research, I am no longer able to make. I feel that I have achieved a great deal during my time as VP (Graduates): in improving relations with MCRs, in my role as part of the sabbatical team and the Student Advice Service, and in furthering important graduate initiatives. I want to thank Ruth, John and the other sabs, Annily, Maria and Exec for their support at this difficult time, and to offer my successor my support and best wishes.

John Craig	V-P (AcAff)
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I spent a lot of time during 4th Week helping with Diversity Week. I have also spent some time this week returning tables and walkie talkies and barbecues to their rightful homes. All hard work, but well worthwhile.

The work of Target schools is starting to come to a head. Most importantly, time is running out for volunteering for the Visiting Scheme (online at www.targetschools.com). Posters and flyers should be visible in your college - if not and you would like some, please let me know ASAP.

There is a Target Schools Open Day at Lady Margaret Hall on Monday of 9th Week, and you can volunteer to help out there on the web site. There are also regional conferences in Belfast (18th March) and Sheffield (14th March). To volunteer to help in Sheffield please email christopher.white@some.ox.ac.uk, and to help out at Belfast, please email jonathan.faley@mansfield.ox.ac.uk .

There is also the Target Schools Visiting Scheme Launch Party at Thirst on Wednesday of 6th Week. The party starts at 8pm, with a free drink for the first 50 to arrive - all are welcome. Please do let your colleges know about what promises to be a great event, and the perfect after-march party for those going to the NUS demo in London (please Do!).

The last two weeks have seen Academic Affairs take something of a back seat, which is something that I will rectify during the next two. A couple of JCCs are all ready to begin creating 'trailblazing' JCC web sites in collaboration with OUSU. These will be very easy for them to manage and update, and will hopefully improve the efficiency with which JCCs function. In the light of this development, and in the context of a need for some of that famous prudence, Academic Affairs committee has decided that it would be better for the forthcoming Academic Affairs Handbook to be a web site rather than a paper publication. We hope that this will complement the JCC and study skill section of the web site (there are still some copies of the 2001 edition - if you would like one, please do let me know).

Academic Affairs Committee is also looking at the issue of mods/prelims failure and the way in which the undergraduates concerned are appointed. It is likely that this will result in a motion to the next Council, but if you would like to have any input on that, please do let me know.

Please do ask me if you have any questions about my portfolios.