



## reports to council 5th week Hilary term 2003

**Will Straw**

**President**

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The last two weeks have been perhaps the calmest since I started last June with pretty much no unpleasantness from any quarter whatsoever. Long may it continue.

The Finance and Funding Campaign will be organising a March for Free Education on March 8th. We are inviting leading political figures to come and address the demonstration afterwards. The march commences at 2pm in Jowett Walk. A resolution for Congregation has now been drafted and is being distributed to tutors in order to reach the necessary 50 signatories. The 'Take the shirt off my back, Tony' campaign is picking up speed with several shirts now sitting in my office. A £10 gift voucher will go to the college rep who provides the most shirts. Thanks to the many people who helped flyer Oxford students with information on the Campaign this week. Plans are underfoot for the NUS mass lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 5th March (7th Week). Anyone interested in coming to London and lobbying their MP should get in touch. Finally we are encouraging colleges to put F&F resources near their ballot boxes on election day next Thursday (6th Week). If any colleges need more resources please get in touch.

The Executive drafted the Chancellor Statement which we hope will be signed by one or more of the candidates. Other stuff included visits to Magdalen, Greyfriars and Univ JCRs. I had a meeting with Edward Wigzell who will become University Environment Officer in April. I've attended all the normal fun-filled committees including OUSU Reps, F&F (recorded bizarrely for the BBC World Service Romania), University Council, Prescom and the Proctors' and Assessor's Meeting. Finally media work has included the World Service, Telegraph, Radio 1 and THES.

**Sean Sullivan**

**V-P (Finance)**

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In the past two weeks I have met with and spoken to both Magdalen and Univ JCR committees. I have met with the editors of the Alternative Prospectus to arrange their work schedule and have been in contact with the university as to how we can best move our server and computers over to Thomas Hull House when we move over the Easter vacation. I have done some trustees related work regarding OSSL, done some updating of our web site and published two *Oxford Students*.

However my major commitment since last council has been to produce the amended budget. I decided to go into all the figures quite thoroughly so it was a time-consuming process. The task is now complete and I look forward to presenting the amended budget to this council.

**Andrew Copson**

**V-P (Welfare)**

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As I write this on Wednesday morning, Diversity week is proceeding well – we've easily outstripped attendance figures in comparison with last year and I think OUSU members have been enjoying it.

Because it is Diversity Week and I have to find some food for Paul Boateng in about five minutes, this report is brief.

Condoms – have arrived for those common rooms who ordered them and are ready for collection.

University Equal Opportunities Office – the review, which we originally expected to report over Christmas has still not reported and I have met some really rather rude and obstructive opposition when I tried to find out what was going on. Furthermore, this term's meeting of the Committee for Diversity and Equal Opportunities has been cancelled as has the Advisory Panel on Disabilities with no explanation given. The Vice President (Women) and I will be looking into the situation but it is difficult to know how to proceed constructively.

College Inequality – at a very successful meeting, it was agreed which figures would be used for the final report and representatives from a number of common rooms were given the chance to learn about what the committee has been doing. We still aim to report in first week of Trinity and if anyone would like to assist in this, please contact me.

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OUSU Equal Opportunity Campaigns – the University may be cancelling its meetings but the OUSU ones are continuing happily. International Students has been researching hard and campaigning on international fees, as well as organising the International Cultural Event for Diversity Week; Queer Rights held a very successful lunch for common room LGB reps and all those interested in ‘gay Oxford’ and will be hosting a talk by Peter Tatchell on homophobia and rap lyrics at 7pm in the Northgate Hall on Monday. I have sent a letter on behalf of Disabilities Action to every state school in the country with the Target Schools mailing to advertise the new OUSU Disabilities Guide and DA itself held a great lunch with KEEN and a joint session with Target Schools to consider access to Oxford. Anti-racism campaign has formed a long term plan for the year ahead and its events this week were also very successful.

Alcohol – I spoke last week at the University Committee for Student Health and Welfare’s seminar on students and alcohol misuse. Generally I found the whole thing informative and constructive but I am concerned that the University will be making new recommendations for Colleges to increase bar prices. I have successfully argued that this should be re-discussed and it will be in two weeks – I’ll keep you posted.

Doctors – Met with the College Doctors’ Association and had a productive time discussing suicide and a new disclosure protocol for those with mental health difficulties.

Diabetes – The first meeting of OUSU’s Diabetes Network went well – they are going to be doing great things, I’m sure, and I’m pleased that OUSU has managed to form such a useful support network.

**Melanie Marshall**

**V-P (Women)**

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The load of nightbus, welfare and general sab administration continue as usual, augmented by the series of college visits in which the sabbatical team is currently engaged. I have found these useful as an opportunity to convey in more detail than is possible in council the range of services the sabs and student advice service provide, and hope that the colleges have found the contact beneficial. A productive meeting with the new JCR women’s officers at Hertford served a similar function, and I hope others will take the same opportunity for direct feedback with their student union. My main other areas of work over the last couple of weeks have been:

Diversity week

This has generated a great deal of administrative and donkey work for all concerned details such as room booking, practical arrangements, planning meetings and getting hold of participants, as well as publicity, mailings etc have taken up the better part of my working time in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> week. I hope that by the time you read this our manifold efforts will have been crowned with success. The speaker meeting on women-only space last night was most stimulating.

Women’s Cabaret

The major Women’s Campaign contribution to Diversity week, and a significant undertaking at any time: the difficulty in managing the arrangements for this has been noticeably greater than in previous years and correspondingly more time consuming. I will recommend to my successor that work on this should commence rather sooner than I had adjudged necessary. However, thanks to the hard work of Georgia, Louise and Ros the evening looks very promising indeed. It will be held on Friday at 7.30 in Teddy Hall and I hope you will all join us in this celebration of female talent from across the university.

Finals Forums

Despite the evident popularity of the forums and my continued (if increasingly beleaguered) efforts to organise more, I am having difficulty finding tutors for many subjects. I shall continue looking and hold them into the first week of next term if necessary. With the exception of ancient history, those which have been held so far have been a great success. Anyone with any feedback on these should email me and I will incorporate their suggestions into the game plan. I have also been preparing a “How to Hold a Finals Forum” sheet with an idea of their purpose and general format, so that this can be distributed to the tutors giving the seminars in future years. This will be important if, as looks likely, we are unable to rely on the same individuals year on year.

NUS

The deadline for women’s’ conference has now closed, though not without incident (thanks to the inefficiency of the Events Office). The organisation for attending conference is now under way: anyone with preferences for how to travel should contact me as soon as possible. I am organising a training in 7<sup>th</sup> week for those women who are attending, and suggestions from former attendees of ground worth covering would be much welcomed.

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**Andy Garlick**

**V-P (Graduates)**

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Much of the past two weeks has been spent on the distribution of the mature students questionnaire (still on-going!) to some 200 undergraduates and 2150 graduates aged 25 yrs or over at matriculation. To date I have been particularly pleased with the response rate, and initial glances suggest that there is much work that OUSU and the Mature Students' Committee can do in the coming months. The mature students' diversity week cheese and wine event has had many responses and I hope to be able to report orally on the event in council.

Postgraduate Assembly will be held on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb, 6<sup>th</sup> week at 8pm in a new, more central location - lecture room 2, Christ Church. I hope that this meeting will be quorate so that important left over work from last term can finally be ratified.

In terms of committees I have attended the Advisory Panel for Childcare, The University Club (Halifax House) Management Committee, the Tutors for Graduates committee of Conference of Colleges, Rules Committee, the Committee for Management of the Language Centre and University Council. I was unable to attend EPSC in 4<sup>th</sup> week, due to my flat flooding the night before, but I had already discussed the agenda with the Pro VC (Academic) the day before.

The question of continuation fees resurfaced in the past two weeks, I have gathered an almost unanimous opposition to the fees from most MCRs with one or two exceptions. I have raised the matter with the Pro VC (Academic) and the Tutors for Graduates Committee. The situation still seems unclear. About half of Oxford colleges already have some form of fee, but with great disparity in the charge ranging from £50/year to £160/term. There seems to be a feeling in the University that all colleges should charge, but there also seems to be many sticking points and so an overall cross-college policy seems unlikely in the immediate future. I shall keep you updated as necessary.

I have continued to support the work of the Oxford Pride Committee. The generous donations of common rooms have been gratefully received by the Committee. The Committee remains dedicated to ensuring the all groups of the Oxford community are included in the event, in particular the student communities of Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University.

Attending diversity week events has been a pleasant release from the normal office day and I hope many of you have also enjoyed the weeks programme put together by the tireless efforts of the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) and the Equal Opportunities Campaigns.

The remainder of my time has been spent on the usual, day to day enquiries, some casework, and on the invite of the University, to assessing two applications for the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme.

**Sonia Sodha**

**V-P (AcAff)**

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### **Academic Affairs**

Academic Affairs Committee met in this week on Tuesday (unfortunately I couldn't attend because it clashed with a meeting of the EPSC Undergraduate Panel). The meetings have been excellently attended this term, which I've been very pleased with.

I've now sent the JCR Academic Affairs Survey for those JCRs not taking part in the IAUL survey to the Institute for the Advancement of University Learning for their feedback. I've just heard back from them, so this will be going out to JCRs in a Campaign Resource Pack next week – along with posters etc. Hopefully this should provide some useful information for those JCRs who aren't taking part in the IAUL Student Experience Questionnaire.

Things have been progressing well with JCCs too. We have organised a JCC Forum for **Tuesday of 6<sup>th</sup> week, 1pm in Wadham Seminar Room**, and publicity for this has gone out to JCRs and over the JCC e-mail list. Please encourage any JCC reps in your JCR to come along. Hopefully the forum will be a good brainstorming session for how to better involve the JCCs in OUSU's academic campaigns, as well as a source of information for JCCs as to how OUSU can support the work they do. I have also been getting names from JCC Chairs about the names of reps on their committees, and I am hoping to disseminate this info to JCR AcAff officers soon.

Attendance at the Writing Workshop is still fairly low, which implies publicity problems – please please plug this excellent service in your JCRs. The workshop coordinator, Stephanie Frank, is holding sessions in different JCR around the university (in addition to the normal nightly workshops in Exeter) to spread the word. If your JCR hasn't had a session yet, ask your JCR AcAff Officer to contact Stephanie to ask for one ([writingworkshop@oux.ac.uk](mailto:writingworkshop@oux.ac.uk))

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### **Access**

Target Schools has been very busy the last couple of weeks. We got our mailing out, and have been taking bookings from lots of schools for our events. Nearly every college has been pidge with letters to every undergraduate asking them to take part in the Easter Visiting Scheme, and we are starting to get a good return on replies to that too. If you haven't received a letter in your pidge, you can download the letter and form from [www.targetschools.com](http://www.targetschools.com) (click on the 'current students' tab). Please spread the word – also this year for the first time those who successfully visit schools and give us feedback will receive a small remuneration in book tokens (£5 for one school, £8 for two and £10 for three or more). Much of our time has also been taken up with continuing organisation of our events.

More generally in terms of access, I have attended the meeting of the university Admissions Working Party. I have also met with some CR admissions officers. The OUSU Admissions Working Party's second meeting was held in fourth week. We had an excellent discussion about quotas and standardised testing in the admissions process. There are two meetings left, Wednesday of 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> week at 1pm in New College Lecture Room 6. Amongst the things we will be discussing are interview best practice and centralisation of the admissions system – if you're interested please do come along.

We have started recruitment for next year's mentoring scheme, and I've had lots of interest from people for that – I am organising an event for all those interested with the university in 7<sup>th</sup> week.

Generally, I have attended College Inequality meetings and have attended 'sabs meeting JCR Committee' sessions with a couple of JCR committees.