



reports to 5th week council hilary 2004

Helena Puig-Larrauri

President

AUT

The AUT is going on strike next week. We passed a motion in council a few weeks ago giving our support to their right to strike if they chose to do so. I've been liaising with the local AUT branch to find out what exactly they are doing, and what effect this is likely to have on students. I've also contacted the University about to find out what the likely implications of the strike are in terms of disrupting students' education. Louise and I are trying to find out whether the University will reschedule any lectures that are cancelled as a result of the strike. I've also helped the AUT send out information to students about why they are going on strike. The AUT may have a demonstration next week at which they would like student support, and if that is the case then OUSU will help publicise it.

NUS

I've been mostly trying to sort out the Oxford delegation to NUS conference. Tedious, but quite necessary. Also trying to find out how to organise husts for the NUS officers in Oxford.

Staff

I won't go on about this much because we are about to discuss a lengthy motion on OUSU's staff structures. Basically, our staff structures had never really been looked at, and now we have it's been like opening Pandora's box. It's really important that we thrash it all out and adopt a structure and reject others. I had a meeting with Diane Donal from the University Personnel office who has been incredibly helpful. I've also discussed the issue at length with a number of interested parties. This is a difficult issue, and one which I hope Council will treat with the sensitivity it deserves. My thanks go particularly to Andrew Copson, Dan Finley, Dan Paskins, Rodrigo Davies and Maria Burgess for having the integrity to deal with this issue, admitting mistakes, making suggestions and generally making me drink too much coffee...

Joint Committee of Council for Student Members

This is the committee of the University which looks at the way the student union works. I've spent a lot of time in the past week preparing papers for this committee together with Rodrigo and Dan. OUSU is at a crucial point in terms of its future financial planning. The amended budget shows a positive picture for this year, but the general trend is more complicated. Over the past five years, the student union's sabbatical team has grown, while its non-elected staff has shrunk. In the next few years much of the grant money OUSU receives is likely to dry up. At the same time, our commercial activity is ever expanding, and the proportion of funds from common room subscriptions falling sharply. When JCC asked me to present a review of the number of sabbatical posts and in particular of the VP (Graduates), I decided that there was no point in presenting such a review without setting it in the context of our future financial planning. What I have prepared then looks at the way the funding of OUSU has changed and what problems the student union faces if it does not receive more sustainable funding. The main point of the argument is that if the University believes that the student union provides a core of services that all students should be entitled to, then it should contribute towards the cost of these services. I will report back to council after the meeting.

Exam Celebrations

Rosie and I went to another meeting about post-exam celebrations and how they are going to be regulated. It looks like the University and OUSU will be producing a joint 'code of conduct' for students at the celebrations. It will probably ban spraying champagne/sparkly wine, but will allow glitter type things. We are still waiting to hear from the University on road closures, and then we'll report more fully to council.

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Clubs and Societies

The co-chair of Clubs and Societies committee and I have been looking at what needs to be done for OUSU to begin providing adequate services in this area. The main project at the moment is to build a database on the web of clubs and Societies, and then to open up the OUSU live system to as many as possible. We're also looking at the possibility of having a resource centre for Clubs and Socs in OUSU.

College Inequality

A questionnaire on hardship provision in colleges has just gone out to JCRs and MCRs. I hope that this questionnaire will form the basis of a proposal to the University on how to standardise hardship provision across colleges and make it more accessible.

Finally, a big thank you to Rosie, Dan, Catherine and all the equal opps campaigns exec and co-chairs for the work they have put into organising Diversity Week.

Rodrigo Davies

V-P (Finance)

I have spent the majority of the last two weeks working on the Amended Budget, which I am happy to present to Council and which largely explains the brevity of this report. At the time of writing it the Alternative Prospectus was lacking funding, however I am delighted to report that the University has now decided to fund it for this year only. Conversations had with University officials regarding papers that Helena and I are taking to JCC have been very productive on the funding front, and I hope that we will be able to make the case for the University helping to fund the activities that it relies on the Student Union to provide.

Also this week the Referendum was moving ahead nicely on the technical front, which owes a great deal to Chris Allan's tireless efforts with Linux and lots of things I don't understand. (I'm just design pretty things, honestly). Once a meeting with OUCS to iron out some of the details has gone through I hope to be conducting in depth tests of the system to ensure that everything is in place for what promises to be an excellent piece of participatory democracy.

I am pleased with the progress that is being made on the Entz front with respect to next term and next year, and there should be some exciting developments to allow us to build on the success of this year's experiment.

Affiliations are also an area for optimism following the last two weeks' activity – Mansfield's return and also the prospect of bringing colleges that have never been affiliated to OUSU before into the fold. It does make me laugh that I continuously get emailed by student journalists asking the question "what do you think about recent talk of disaffiliation in (insert college purely at random here)?" It's getting a little bit old now. I'm encouraged also, by Mansfield's reform stance since I think this is the best way for colleges to push forward with the things they believe the Student Union should be doing. I only hope now that their Common Room will bring forward a motion or two to that end, especially now that we are in such an atmosphere of review and reform.

I've also been keen to push out the last OUSU cards for this year, which I hope will be completed by next week. Unfortunately due to this being the first year for yet another project the logistics have not been quite as smooth as I would have liked, though I think the foundations for a smoother roll-out next year will be in place by the summer.

Finally, jobs for summer publications, the Freshers Fair and summer publications will hopefully all be being filled in the next few weeks, which should allow all the projects plenty of time to settle in and an unprecedented amount of time spent working during Easter and Trinity so that those we employ aren't as ransom to staying in Oxford and paying vacation residence to colleges. I think the proposed changes to the Standing Orders regarding appointments will only help to make the whole process smoother and more accountable.

Rosie Buckland

V-P (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)

I have mostly been planning, organising, poster-making and publicising Diversity Week, which, by the time you read this, will have seen plenty of events having taken place, though there are some still to go, notably the Disability Awareness training session (Balliol 12-2 Friday) and Al Davison's show (Balliol 8pm onwards), as well as Saturday's Future Outlook

which, by the time you read this, will have seen plenty of events having taken place, though there are some still to go, notably the Disability Awareness training session (Balliol 12-2 Friday) and Al Davison's show (Balliol 8pm onwards), as well as Saturday's Future Outlook (11-3.30 exam schools) the International Student's evening (Tuesday, town hall, 7pm) and the Reclaim the Night March (Thursday, 8pm clarendon steps). Attendance has been mixed, but on the whole not great, though this hasn't impaired the quality of the events, which have all been fantastic. Once things have calmed down a little, I do want to give some serious thought to the focus of the week and the role of the equal opps campaigns, so feedback on the week itself and what people want from it would be grand-just drop me an email. I am just a little confused by such a clear desire, as expressed at council last term, for an anti-racism campaign when its efforts to campaign against racism are continually thwarted by a lack of involvement in the campaign itself...Please do let me know what you want the campaigns to be doing for you!

I've been along to chat to the OUSU Reps about OUSU welfare and talked to them about the Student Advice Service. Just to remind everyone-it's a free, confidential and non-directive listening, advice and advocacy service. We have the advantage of being out-of-college and can fulfil a really important representational and advocacy role, which your cr welfare officers may not be appropriate for. Do let people know we're here! We also do fantastic things like talks on living out, revision skills etc-let me know if there any any specific sessions that you'd like us to be holding. On that, some fantastic new guidelines have been published by the university on dealing with students with mental health difficulties and the role of the SAS is now going to be put into that, so that all tutors will know a)that we're here and b)what we can do. I also spoke to the college doctors at a meeting of the College Doctor's association about the SAS to let them know about it as well. We discussed at length the Gp contract issue and I spoke about the motion that council passed last term-I'll be contacting welfare officers on that soon to talk about what else it might be possible to do. I attended a meeting with Helena on exam celebrations again and we seem to be making quite a bit of progress on that-we took the motion that passed last week to them and also raised issues of concern that had come up in council, so that's moving forwards. I also had a meeting on health and safety at the university and talked in particular about Occupational Health Services. The committee on student health and welfare is next week, so do make sure you're getting in touch with me if you have issues you'd like raised with the university.

Health and Welfare met this week as well and we discussed general issues of concern in colleges-I'm going to prepare some glossy factsheets for colleges on issues such as safety, security and drink-spiking, so look out for them next term. I've been the condom queen as ever again and have distributed huge amounts of condoms to welfare officers as usual! I've also now got in the sexual health packs and will be bagging them up and sending them out to crs next week-in them are a small supply on non-latex condoms, dental dams, lube and extra strong condoms. I promise that batches of Survival Guides will be going into colleges soon as well-most were distributed at fresher's fair, but there are still about 2,000 left to go into colleges. More Rough Guides to Welfare and Equal Opps have been sent out as well to lgbt reps etc and I've had some really positive feedback on the guide, which has been lovely. People are using it as a real resource, which is great.

Catherine Wallis

V-P (Women)

Largely, I have been doing various things to do with Diversity Week – including a whole day spent producing a programme due to computer and printer failures and last minute changes to the acts. The Women's Cabaret went really well, I thought, due in a huge part to the hard work put in by Ros and Charlyne, Women's Campaign co-chair and exec. There were a lot of great acts, as usual, and we promoted volunteering for Oxfordshire Women's Aid for women and children suffering from domestic violence and for an OUSU RAG scheme to work in local hospitals. We managed to raise £36 in donations to Oxfordshire Women's Aid and the Eating Disorders Association and I intend to bring the donating tins along to the **RECLAIM THE NIGHT MARCH** next Thursday to see if we can get a bit more. Unfortunately, the audience at the Cabaret was rather small compared to previous years, but I believe this was mainly because the posters went out very late and may not have been seen at all by many potential attendees and not due to a lack of interest

bit more. Unfortunately, the audience at the Cabaret was rather small compared to previous years, but I believe this was mainly because the posters went out very late and may not have been seen at all by many potential attendees and not due to a lack of interest in the event. I apologise for the delay in sending out posters, this was because we had terrible difficulty finding a suitable venue to hold the Cabaret (there are fewer rooms with a piano and disabled access and able to hold 50 people and available for out-of-college events than you might think) despite looking since the vacation and I would urge next year's organisers to find somewhere at least a term in advance! I have also been in contact with people from various groups to ask them for material for the Alternative Careers Fair on Saturday – I spent some time, too, looking for a speaker on women's issues for the Fair (primarily the gender pay-gap in most careers), but without success. As for the Reclaim the Night March, plans are going well. Posters have gone out and I will be doing a big email push to get people along (it's a march so you really need a lot of people for it not to look pathetic). I have received no reply to my letter to the Chief Constable asking permission for the march to take place, but the police originally assured us that there should not be a problem with it so I hope we'll be fine. I will need a few stewards, so if you would like to volunteer for this role then do let me know. Please come to the march to shout for women's safety at night – bring pots and pans to bash, banners to wave, whistles to blow, slogans to chant and most of all yourselves! All welcome.

I received a letter from Fruit of the Loom in Donegal (who apparently read the Oxford Student, strangely) protesting that they do not use sweatshops and that their workers in Morocco went on strike because the bosses tried to set up a union for them which they didn't want and not because the union leaders were victimised. After consultation with Ethics Committee, we decided that although this sounded a bit incredible, it would be remiss of us not to investigate it further and so we are putting the campaign against them on hold for the immediate future while we contact the UMT union, who were the other interested party. I have written to the UMT in Morocco and hope to receive a response shortly. So, anyway, Ethics Committee aren't going to put the sweatshop thing to JCC this term, as the deadline would be too tight, but we will continue to look into it, and if our investigations uncover further evidence against Fruit of the Loom, press forward with it next term. We're still collecting the petitions but everything else will wait for the moment. For now we will probably return to our campaign for ethical investment in the University and colleges.

I've designed posters for the Women's Open Day and written covering letters and application forms. I will soon be sending the posters off to be printed and then sending a package to all the schools in the country, with which help would be very much appreciated.

I continue to organise Finals Fora, and am currently in contact with departmental administrators to ask them to send out an email to relevant students to advertise them. I am also finalising posters which will go out on Monday to academic affairs officers and people at Women's Campaign. I've been talking to a few people on the phone who had enquiries about the Women's Open Day (having seen it advertised by the University) and the suitability of Oxford for them, or (in all but one case), their daughter.

A really cool new group has been set up, Oxford Women in Politics, OxWiP – it's open to anyone in Oxford interested in the issues of gender and politics and has a lot of exciting events planned. I'm looking into collecting some data for them on women in Oxford. If you'd like to join the group, please email carolyn.haggis@bnc.ox.ac.uk.

Lastly, I've been sorting out a few mini-crises with the Nightbus – disputes over hiring, drunken and abusive passengers etc. I think the current round of problems have been smoothed over for now but we'll see how it goes. This doesn't take very long to write but such arguments take an awfully long time to sort out!

Dan Paskins

V-P (Graduates)

One of the nice things about the job of VP (Graduates) is the wide variety of things that I end up being involved in doing. Below is a summary, please do ask me any questions on any of this.

Representation to the University:

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In the past couple of weeks I attended University Council, Educational Policy and Standards Committee and Tutor for Graduates Committee. I found it rather heartening to find a recommended code of practice on the role of the college advisor which is exactly in line with the recommendations made by OUSU's written submission to the QAA back in October. This is one of those issues which isn't that interesting until the time when the future of your degree depends on having a good college advisor, and the good practice guidelines which are being adopted by colleges should help to ensure that every student has a good college advisor and that it is not just luck of the draw. And it wouldn't have happened without OUSU, so hurray for that. I'm also looking into the issue of how students from countries which are becoming members of the European Union in May are affected by gaining EU membership, again, not that interesting except that there are all sorts of extra benefits that EU students have, massively lower fees being a good example, and the guidance from the Home Office is currently less than clear. I'll be writing to all students affected by the change when we get a response from the Home Office about exactly how the changes are going to work.

Mature Students Diversity Week event:

There were about forty people who came along to this event, and I think that the combination of careers advice and free alcohol was one which was appreciated. Many thanks to Dan Simpson, Emma, Chris, Josefa, Louise and Rosie for helping out at the event, and to the careers advisors - John Kirwan from the Careers Service, and Kirsty, Anna and John for their expert advice on the voluntary sector, the law and local government respectively. I've said before, but the point is worth repeating that this is the sort of event that OUSU can play a very useful role in organising, and is something that I wish that the people who believe that OUSU is irrelevant and doesn't do things for students could see.

While we're on the subject of mature students, I would like very strongly to support the amendment in the budget to increase the amount of money for the mature students campaign, as it will ensure that we can put on one or two large events next term, hopefully one joint with Ruskin and the other adult education colleges.

International Students:

I've been preparing for the Diversity Week event which will be next Tuesday in the Town Hall, which is a social evening with representatives from many different national societies and volunteering groups who do work all around the world. It will be great, do come along.

I've also been working on the issue of visa fees, and will be running a consultation exercise, following which I shall write a paper about the issue of visas for international students as a basis for lobbying the government for a change in policy.

Graduate Involvement:

I attended MCR Prescom, at which the issue of the College Fee and hardship provision was raised. While it is, of course, up to each college to decide what fee to charge and how much hardship provision to make available, I think that there is an interesting issue that if colleges wish to recoup the full economic cost of providing rooms and teaching, graduate students should be entitled to receive in terms of provision as much as they or their funding council pay to the colleges in fees. Together with the two new co-chairs of the Graduate Funding Committee, the issue of what colleges should provide, what the role of the college should be for graduate students and what we would like to see in terms of hardship provision. This will be the main issue for discussion at Postgraduate Assembly next Monday, which will be in Magdalen at 7pm.

Really exciting constitutional reform:

By far the most thrilling part of the last two weeks has been wading through the OUSU constitution, standing orders and election regulations to write motions and amendments for Council. The two major items that I have been working on are the changes to make the VP (Graduates) election run and an amendment to the staffing motion to get OUSU to comply with employment law and give our staff job security. While the business of working out how to turn the principles into OUSU constitutional-ese was a little tedious, I think that both of these changes are extremely important and necessary ones.

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Finally, the news about Dr. Mike Woodin's illness is desperately saddening. Mike has been a good friend to OUSU and an excellent advocate for students for all the time that I have been a student here in Oxford, and I'm sure I speak for everyone who knows or has worked with him when I say that my thoughts and best wishes are with him and his family.

Louise McMullan

V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

Target schools has taken up most of my time recently and most of this has centred around the mailing we are doing to all the country's state schools, telling them of this year's events.

We've received the Target schools handbook (all 10,000) copies, and very nice it is too.

Forms have also gone out to every student in the university asking them to take part in the Easter schools visiting scheme. Many thanks to all those who helped with both of these projects. At the time of writing we haven't yet finished the mailing, but this should be done by Friday morning. Target schools should return to its normal form next Thursday and I hope to use this opportunity to get feedback on OUSU admissions policy. In the coming weeks the campaign will be a source of input for motions I hope to bring to council to tighten up our policy on race and admissions, centralisation of admissions and standardised testing. If you're interested in taking part, either get in touch with us or even better, come along (or send your CR reps along) to Target schools - every Thursday at 5pm in OUSU. The Alternative Prospectus...has been saved. I wrote to the Registrar a couple of weeks ago about the state of the AP's finances two weeks ago and received a response last week from no less than the Vice Chancellor himself. He has allocated £3350 from the University Chest in a one off payment to OUSU to cover some of the shortfall on the AP. This is really excellent news - especially for the VP Finance -and it means that it is now possible to include the AP in the target schools mailing, providing it free of charge to all state schools as well as to those individuals who send us postage. A couple of things are going on with academic affairs at the moment... Mods and prelims failure: After 3rd week's acaff committee meeting (with the Junior Proctor) I wrote a letter to him asking for three things; 1. That all students have the right to resit after their first failure of their first public examination. 2. That there should be a university wide standard set for those undertaking resits. 3. Senior Tutors should provide academic welfare information and contacts in their correspondence with those students who have failed. It's good to see that some colleges already demonstrate very good practice on many of these issues, but there are anomalies that I would like to see addressed. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the meeting of Senior Tutors' Committee which discussed the letter last week, but I have been in touch with the chair of the committee to request a response. Many thanks to those who allowed me to use details of their cases in the letter - I think this certainly will make a big impact. The co-chairs of acaff committee have been great. They've come up with a superb campaign on library opening hours - "Open to Change". The thrust of this campaign is to get library opening hours on a Saturday changed permanently from 9-1 to 1-5. In the coming weeks we'll be printing thousands upon thousands of postcards so expect to receive these either in your pigeon hole or from your CR officers. Please take the time (all of ten seconds) to fill it in and pop it into the pigeon post. It's not just the co-chairs who have been busy - thanks to Ian, the Exec for Acaff, the website is improving. He's put in lots of time this week so do have a look at the new stuff on there. We should have new information for Acaff officers and JCC reps as well as new academic welfare information included in the Survival Guide. Acaff committee this week (on Wednesday) took the form of an open revision skills session for all students with the Student Adviser. This was enormously successful and I will gloat about the attendance at it (around 80) to the other sabs for another two weeks or until one of them hits me. It was so packed that the co-chairs, exec and I couldn't get into the meetings room. I find it particularly gratifying that this session was in the same week that the big cheeses in the University told me that asking faculties to take on better study skills training was in effect just transferring training that tutors give in tutorials. OUSU, in its submission to the QAA was therefore effectively asking for a reduction in the number of tutorials in asking for these sessions to be faculty led. What a load of cobblers. I'm sure the 80 students who turned up to this session would beg to differ. Following on from this success, acaff committee is hoping to hold another general revision skills session in the next few weeks as well as a number of subject

would beg to differ. Following on from this success, acaff committee is hoping to hold another general revision skills session in the next few weeks as well as a number of subject specific study skills sessions (on things like thesis writing, extended essay writing, researching, field working etc etc.) to consolidate much of the work already done by peer tutors in the Writing workshops (Sun - Thurs 8-10pm in OUSU by the way!).

Josefa Henry-Bochan V-P (Charities and Communities)

The past two weeks have been both fun and successful. I banked, with much help from Barbara in the accounts office, lots of money from our Blind Date (£1500), Bar Crawl (£600), College Pants (£2,800) as well as events from colleges ranging from Mr and Miss Univ to the Pembroke Pub quiz. All accounts are now in much better shape and more transparent than when I took over and from now on we will present every college with a certificate detailing exactly how much they raised. We have had a great attendance from reps who have also then gone on to do lots of things in college –however, Wadham and Exeter are trouble spots – we haven't had any representation all year. On the positive side more graduate colleges are getting involved with the addition of Green this week. I am editing the RAG MAG and putting together a RAG week committee, so far we have 16 central events planned for 2nd-3rd week next term. Our raids have also been very successful having made £500-£1000 every Saturday so far this term.

Also, I've been working for the Alternative Careers and Volunteering Fair on Sat 21st (11am-3.30pm). We've produced a guide to go alongside the fair, we are having 5000 copies printed and it is also available on www.ousu.org.