

OUSU

reports to council

5th week hilary 2007

Alan Strickland

President

Alan's report will be distributed separately by email.

Ed Mayne

V-P (Finance)

Operation clean up

My main priority on Monday of 4th week was to clear out the mess in the OUSU Office – in my capacity as the sabbatical officer in charge of the office. A lot has now been cleared out although we are still trying to find out from Oxford City Council when our recycling collection is – they not only delivered our bins to the wrong address but now seem to have no idea who we are at all!

I have also purchased some new office chairs on the OUSU budget as a result of concerns about the health and safety value of the current chairs used by people typing on computers in OUSU. As a result 7 new chairs have been purchased for the Publications Room, 3 have been purchased for the Oxide Radio studio and 1 has been purchased for the general office – for primary use by the Office Assistant.

This is part of a year long plan to improve the appearance of the OUSU office, together with improvement of OUSU archiving and record keeping procedures. I hope Council understands that this is not always an easy task when there is such little storage space in the building.

OSSL Board

The OSSL Board has met twice in the last fortnight. Topics of discussion included Oxide Radio, publishing 2 new publications and reforming the memorandum of OSSL in line with the current OUSU reforms. Amy Hadden, from the University Legal Services Office, was appointed as the new Company Secretary for OSSL. Miss Hadden is Company Secretary to practically every other University subsidiary company and it is hoped that she will be able to greatly help OSSL with her legal knowledge and experience with these other companies. It is also a measure for improving continuity in the operations of OSSL and it should bring with it a degree of professionalism in the running of Board Meetings which I regretfully admit is often lacking.

Miss Hadden replaces Barbara Godfrey in this role. Ms Godfrey has been working at OUSU for 22 years and she will continue to work for OUSU as the OSSL

Accountant. As Company Secretary Ms Godfrey has kept meticulous records of our affairs. On behalf of OSSL I'd like to thank her for her service to OSSL in her role as Company Secretary.

I will report back with more info on the discussions in OSSL Board meetings when the aforementioned plans have been concluded.

Meetings with the University

I have had two important meetings with the University this week. Firstly I've met with the Deputy Director of Finance, Phil Smith, to discuss the progress of our financial reforms. Mr Smith, together with Eleanor Burnett from the Finance Division and Amy Hadden who both attended this meeting with myself and the OUSU President, was very happy with our progress and he will hopefully notify the Joint Committee of Council in charge of OUSU (JCC) of our improvements. This should pave the way for discussions about a block grant from the University at the next JCC meeting.

The second meeting was with the editors of *The Oxford Student*, the University Press Officer, the Deputy Director of the University Legal Services Office and the Junior Proctor. This was to discuss improving the journalistic procedures of the newspaper to pave the way for guidelines to be incorporated in the planned *Oxford Student* constitution, about which I have proposed a motion to Council today.

Website problems

Most of the OUSU websites, apart from the main OUSU website, are hosted on servers owned by a company called Rackspace, based in London. One of their servers failed last week and as a result many of the OUSU websites, including Oxide, temporarily went offline. I'm pleased to say that service has now been restored and maintenance continues. No important data was lost.

I hope to visit Rackspace some time soon to agree a new contract and an upgrade. This upgrade will involve moving the websites to a new server with enhanced back up facilities. I will report back to Council about this when I know more.

Amended Budget and 2007/08 Budget

With the move of all our financial records to the SAGE accounting system, accessing data for the Amended Budget has been very difficult and will continue to be so for the rest of this term because the completion of this process still isn't finished. However I hope to produce an Amended Budget for the next OUSU Council with the help of Ms Burnett from Finance Division. I apologise in advance if this proves to be impossible. I'd like to reassure Council that I take the issue of transparency in our financial dealings very seriously and that if I can't produce an Amended Budget for 7th Week Council I'll certainly produce one for 1st Week Council of Trinity.

Once the above is done work can begin on the 2007/08 Budget. This may also be late in coming as block grant discussions will undoubtedly be elongated by the University. But work will soon begin in this area in earnest.

Business Manager Appointment

The OUSU Appointments Board will meet on Monday to appoint a new Business Manager. This appointment will be ratified in OUSU Council.

Jamie Frew	V-P (Welfare and Equal Opportunities)
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Survival Guide

The Survival Guide 2007 is in the final stages of production and should be ready for distribution very soon. This delay was the result casework concerns and necessary extensive time spent as a sabbatical team appraising the current state of OUSU. It is my belief that the Survival Guide is a fundamental aspect of my job as it provides the most direct means by which I can supply each student with reliable, accessible and student relevant welfare and equal opportunities information. However, by placing such a large task in the hands of someone who will not necessarily have any experience of formatting and preparing a publication for print the task becomes unnecessarily laborious and time consuming and it is to be preferred that in the future there be some to assist in the production of publications over the summer who does know how to do these things as there would certainly be enough work for them to do. Thanks, however, must be given to the rest of the sabbatical team who offered their help and support in the completion of the handbook – I firmly believe that the guide that will be published will be a significant improvement on previous guides in terms of style, format and accessibility.

Living Out Guide 2007

The Living Out Guide 2007 has been printed and is in the process of distribution and many thanks must be given to both the VP (Finance) and the Business Manager for their help in this process.

Casework

The casework burden of the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) is intolerable – especially and the load has increased during term time. The extent and unpredictable nature of casework means that scheduling regular projects is utterly impossible and it is unworkable that incumbents should work such a role and be expected to supervise four committees and produce (or supervise the production of – a task that can often involve very close supervision) up to six publications or more a year. I am in the process of devising a constitution and record keeping protocol for the Student Advice Service, which should hopefully benefit the service in the future though this process is taking up a lot of time. However, I must voice my concerns that the nature of the casework that I am dealing with is becoming more serious and I suggest that in the near future we may need to give proper consideration on how OUSU is to cope with extreme cases.

Queer Rights Campaign

Queer Rights is going from strength to strength after a tentative start and this includes the appointment of a new co-chair. They have proposed for themselves a set of three projects for the remainder of the year; a targeted campaign against the ban on various groups donating blood; a poster campaign about LGBTQ stereotypes and setting up a mentoring scheme for local schools. Advances on these projects are currently under way and we are working with Stonewall in order to ensure that they are conducted with due professionalism.

Health and Welfare Committee

Similarly Health and Welfare is doing well and has also appointed a new co-chair (though there are currently two more co-chair positions to fill).

It appears that the campaigning arm of Health and Welfare will once again be concentrating on the subject of the now reformed Barnes Service (the self-harm, attempted suicide and transgender facilities of which have been severely curtailed). There has been much interest from the national media in recent weeks focused on the downsizing of this particular unit and others like it across the country (which have a significant impact on the lives of students). As such, it has been decided that we will take advantage of this renewed interest and attempt once more to make our voices heard.

The common room officer training arm, by contrast, has already had a sizeable success. On the Sunday at the beginning of 1st week this term a training day was held offering listening skills and first aid training to all welfare officers and the opportunity was taken to hold a forum on welfare support and provision by OUSU. The event generated a lot of extremely positive feedback and work is already being done to put many of the suggestions made by welfare officers into practice.

Jenny Hoogewerf-McComb

V-P (Women)

I've written a Student Parent Provision Survey which has been sent out to the Domestic Bursar of every college in the University. When the data from this comes back in, hopefully this will give OUSU a better idea of what is available, what isn't and what should be- at the moment we only know very vague details of accommodation and bursary provision, etc. I will be better able to inform my individuals who come to me for casework as to what their options are, and we'll be able to identify which colleges have substandard provision and lobby them to improve things. I also now have a mail mergable database of every Bursar in the University, which I'm sure will help other OUSU campaigns!

Preparations for the Women's Open Day on the 1st March are coming along nicely. We're still looking for female students to show people round, chair sessions etc- please e-mail me on women@ousu.org if you can help.

Im also organising the Women's Finals Forums for 7th/8th week this term. These aim to give female finalists guaranteed contact with a tutor of the same gender at least once in their university career (no small achievement in a University where 80% of fellows are male). I've already had some firm acceptances, and am looking forward to these very popular sessions being as well attended and productive as when I attended last year- in English, people were queuing out of the door!

The eating disorder support group Enough. had another productive session this week, with people returning from the first meeting and coming for the first time. I'm going to distribute information about the group to the annual meeting of College Doctors this week, so that they can inform student patients about its existence, and we're also going to put flyers in the University Counselling Service building.

JCC will meet on the 26th Feb, and we will be discussing the paper I have brought regarding the Safety Bus. In response to the motion passed by PGA, we will be requesting that the University fund this centrally as a service for students (and potentially staff also) due to its high cost and vital importance. I will keep council updated on the results of this.

Viva la Vulva will be going ahead on Thursday- we're hoping this will be a biannual event along the same lines and themes as the Vagina Monologues, to raise awareness and discussion of themes of empowerment and body consciousness for women. It will be at 7pm at OUSU- we'd love to see you there.

As ever, the Student Advice Service deals with casework, and some of what we handle is very serious indeed. Seeing the concerns of individual students makes me ever more concerned about the general atmosphere of the university for women, and determined to campaign strongly to get things to change.

Lots of other bits and pieces too!

Thanks to all those who have helped with my campaigns and events- you're great!

Andrea Miller (Graduates)	V-P
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There was a very successful meeting of the **Postgraduate Assembly** (PGA) on the 30th of January. 23 Graduates were in attendance not counting myself or the other members of the sabbatical team. Three motions were passed, two which were ratified at the last council, and one which still remains to be ratified. Kaushal Vidyarthi (Wolfson) was elected as the **Graduate International Officer** at this meeting. We have met once since then to discuss plans for actions he would like to take while in office.

I have received more than 20 responses to the “exhaustive” MCR Questionnaire, and am still waiting for a few stragglers before analyzing the results, which will doubtless be very interesting. One MCR (Hertford) has decided not to participate for fear of violating ‘privacy laws.’ It will be up to the MCR PresCom to decide whether or not this college can receive the general results. **MCR PresCom** will next meet on Monday, February 19, 8.15 pm at Harris Manchester College.

Last Monday, 5th February, there was a meeting of the **Proctors’ and Assessor’s Termly Meeting with College Presidents**. It was not very well attended- by my count there were four MCR Presidents and 7 or 8 JCR Presidents. It was also not very eventful. The proctors took the occasion to let students know about the impending introduction of electronic plagiarism screening software, which they stressed would be fully tested and piloted in certain courses before being more widely applied. They also promised that there would be proper advertisements to get the message about the new ‘TurnItIn’ software out to students before it was introduced. The MCR President from St. Hilda’s raised several issues, including the relocation of the Primary Care Trust Sexual Health Clinic to Blackbird Leys and the need to ensure better housing for student parents with older children.

There was a meeting of the **Educational Policy Standards Committee (EPSC)** on last Friday, 9th February. The Proctors gave their reports on examinations, flagging plagiarism and timetabling as items of concern. The divisional 5-year plans were put under review, and I was glad to see that all have given special attention to developing support and provision for graduate students in the near future. Humanities and MPLS did an especially good job with this.

Most of my time since the last council has been consumed by **Student Advice Service (SAS)** casework. The sabbatical officers who make up the SAS have decided to take a closer look at exactly what it is that we’re meant to be doing and to ensure that we have the correct procedures for support and emergencies in place. We will be working closely with the counseling service in coming weeks to lay out a clearer set of guidelines for the SAS and its role in the larger network of University student services.

Helen Bagshaw Affairs)	V-P (Access & Academic
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A quick sum-up of my last two weeks:

EPSC and the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education)

Last Friday was EPSC, and on the Thursday, another pre-meeting with Elizabeth Fallaize, the Pro-VC (Education).

University Council

Again there was a lunch and a briefing pre-Council, which this week was a debate on the Size and Shape of the University. This is going to be a big issue in the next couple of terms, and opinion is being sought on the future numbers and make-up of the University. I missed the Council meeting itself, as I went to an OULS Briefing on the RI Site and New Bodleian redevelopments held at the same time.

Target Schools

The Regional Conference planning is going well at the moment, as myself and the co-chairs are working closely with the Access Team at the University to put together a good programme for our days. We have a planning meeting this evening to go through the student presentations, which will hopefully be better than ever.

Language Centre Committee

A review of the Language Centre was the main topic on the agenda – this will be carried out over the early stages of the Easter vacation, and is looking at what the future of the Language Centre could be in terms of new initiatives and courses. The Centre does some good work at the moment, so hopefully the review will reflect this and seek to even further improve the services offered.

Casework

Casework is slightly on the increase again, but as a team the SAS have been meeting to brainstorm ideas for tackling cases, improving the service we give to our students. We've also been looking at putting some guidelines and policies in place to guide conduct as an SAS Officer, which should make the rest of our tenure and that of our successors much clearer and easier to deal with.

Online Applications and Registration

We have been kept fully up to date on all happenings within these two areas, and have been invited to sit on the Steering Groups concerned with them, so more information on this in the near future.

Gender Equality Scheme

Andrea and I have been invited to be part of the Gender Equality Steering Group – the introduction of the Gender Equality Duty means that Higher Education Institutions have to have created policy on how they deal with gender equality in admissions, and to deal with discrepancies in finals results, drop out rates and other such academic/welfare matters that can vary with gender. The first meeting of the group is over Easter, so more reported on this next term.

Imran Khan Community)	V-P	(Charities	and
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Dear Council,

It's been a highly busy and entertaining two weeks!

5th week has been dominated by Valentine's Day - not only did we set up around 200 people all around Oxford on the big RAG Blind Date, we also prepared and delivered 600 roses to lots of loved up people... Though after dethorning and wrapping them all individually in celophane, I don't think I ever want to see another rose again. Ever.

We held the Blind Date afterparty at Park End, so big thanks to Tom for helping with that!

The preparations for the Everest Trek are coming along well, with the participants getting the ball rolling for collecting money with raids in London rail stations.

We also have 19 confirmed participants for the RAG Skydive taking place at the end of term - including our very own Alan Strickland! Martin McCluskey was too much of a wimp, though.

Last week we had the RAG Food Fair, which was a huge success - we sold out in 20 minutes! Similarly at the Battle of the Bands the next night we were doing one in, one out after about an hour and a half. We raised about 1500 over those two nights alone.

Currently working on lots of exciting projects, including the RAG Paris Hitch, a mock trial competition for local schools, and the RAG Mag!

As always, let me know if you want to know anything else or get involved.