



## reports to 3rd week council michaelmas 2003

**Helena Puig-Larrauri**

**President**

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Never thought I'd say this, but I worried last council because no-one asked the sabs any questions about our reports. Hold us to account, go on, you know you want to.

### **Change of portfolios**

Digo and I have decided to swap portfolios, for a trial period. Digo is now in charge of entz, and I am in charge of battels and clubs & societies. The idea behind this swap is that the VP Finance is much better placed to do entz (which is effectively a service). In turn, I am much better placed to do battels (a campaign which often links to F&F) and clubs & societies (they often contact me initially anyway). We are going to try this out for a few months, and if we think it is worth changing for the long term, we will bring a motion to council.

### **Battels**

The consultants employed by the estate bursars' committee to look into the cost of providing student accommodation have now produced a report which OUSU will have a copy of. I have arranged for a meeting with a few bursars to discuss this report. However, the negotiation point is likely to be the pricing decision (how much of the cost is passed on to students) not this report. I will be producing a briefing sheet for CR committees on this report nonetheless. I also discussed the possibility of a coordinated rent negotiation strategy with the JCR presidents, and we agreed that it would be useful if I produce a negotiation pack over the Christmas holidays. I'm continuing to lobby for representation on both Estate Bursars' Committee and Conference of Colleges.

### **Clubs and Societies**

I haven't done that much on this yet... Stuart Colville (exec in charge of Clubs and Socs) and I have a few plans. We want to create a database of all clubs and socs on the OUSU website, with contacts, in the style of the old Directory. We will also be inviting reps from all clubs and socs to attend a meeting to raise issues on which OUSU could help, and we will be inviting them to join the OUSU live service.

I have been working closely with the Sports Fed, and have attended their Sports Council. The Sports Fed and OUSU have not liaised enough in the past, and Libby Payne (Sports Fed president) and I would like to remedy that this year.

### **Legal advice**

I spent some time getting legal advice and advice from the university on the effects on college entz and college bars of the Private Security Act (April 2004), the Public Entertainment License and the Liquor Licensing law (2005). These new regulations will begin to affect college soon, and the common rooms need to get going now to ensure that colleges are aware of this and don't use it as an excuse to clamp down on student run social events.

Also on legal things, I've been trying to sort out the contracts for OUSU staff and sabs. The current contracts seem to have been drafted in a fairly adhoc manner, and there is no complaint procedure for staff (the student complaints procedure also needs a review, but that's a different matter).

### **Meetings meetings**

I've met with

- the Proctors (and all CR presidents): very inconclusive advice on rent strikes, and nothing that we didn't know already on rent increases. Still, it was useful to hear what their approach is to student issues.

- Judith Finch (new diversity officer for the university): Rosie will tell you more about this, but hopefully this appointment is a step in the right direction for the university's equal opps strategy.

- representatives from the equivalent of the JCR in the European School of Management: they want to do things with OUSU, but cannot affiliate (not members of Oxford University). I am investigating their position.

I also went to University Council, which is always a pleasure and never a chore.

### **Election**

This has been taking up quite a bit of time. I am pleased to see that there are candidates standing for all of the positions. The election is running smoothly, largely due to the hard work of Connor and Angela.

### **F&F**

The alternative white paper is coming along a bit slower than I hope because the model we were going to use to calculate increase in progressive taxation is not working. Omar did some excellent calculations on expenditure, and the CUSU lot are also producing some good stuff. The paper should come to council in 7<sup>th</sup> week.

We are planning a day of direct action on November 26<sup>th</sup>, the day of the Queen's speech, of which more later. I've also been to a couple of meetings to talk about HE funding and have arranged to meet Evan Harris MP at the NUS lobby in London on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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**Rodrigo Davies**

**V-P (Finance)**

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Over the past fortnight I have had a number of rather mundane tasks to undertake, including the distribution of the Oxford Handbook (epic) and helping prepare the JMB for the election and chasing around attempting to mould the rudiments of OUSU's IT facilities to the needs of candidates nominating extraordinarily late last Thursday. I should probably give a quick well done to Rob Vance, now Student Union President-elect of Wadham, for obvious reasons. Unfortunately the above scuppered the prospect of the first entirely free weekend since taking office. Nevertheless I'd like to extend a huge thank you to Ian Caddy, Stuart Colville and Louise McMullan for their help with distribution, which was invaluable.

Unfortunately the above scrapped the prospect of the first entirely free weekend since taking office. Nevertheless I'd like to extend a huge thank you to Ian Caddy, Stuart Colville and Louise McMullan for their help with distribution, which was invaluable.

On the publications front, I continue to be impressed with the unending growth in quality and content that The Oxford Student is undergoing, and especially its unwillingness to stoop to the level of prejudicing the upcoming elections or running frivolous and inaccurate stories as is often the way with the student press. A process to which I hope to commit a good chunk of time near the end of term is the complete rewriting of OUSU's publications complaints procedure. One of the major merits of our position as the largest student publisher in Europe is that we can set the standards for accountability and accessibility for our readership and not hide behind institutions or private companies – neither of which are acceptable for a Student Union.

The JMB insert and Fifth Week Blues special that were both released in yesterday's paper were pleasing and I've received good feedback on their clarity and content. Sadly it did become a slightly farcical situation once complaints had flooded in and this greatly hampered my ability to send off the documents to the printers. I would strongly recommend – and I think this sentiment would be echoed by the Returning Officer – that the "window" between the close of nominations/publication of manifestoes and the printing of the JMB be widened to smooth the process of printing vis a vis complaints and alterations.

I would like to offer my apologies to Council for the unavailability of the OUSU website for around half a day on Monday, which our service providers have told me was due to an attack on one of the world's largest internet servers which led to a large tranche of the world wide web being unable to be properly accessed.

The last two weeks have also been marked by an experimental shift in my portfolios, so that the President has now assumed responsibility for Clubs and Societies and Battels, and I have taken the co-ordinating role in Entz, working with the Business Manager who will continue to marshall the commercial end of Zoo. In my own role, I have met with a large number of college entz reps over the last week or so, and hope to continue to do so. It has been an extremely useful process that has allowed me not only to promote awareness of Zoo events but also to garner valuable information about the way different colleges run their entz and to offer Zoo's support on such issues as promotion, marketing, commercial negotiations and contacts. I do hope that OUSU can continue to build fruitful relationships with colleges in this manner.

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**Rosie Buckland**                      **V-P (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)**

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The most exciting thing that has happened to me this week has been receiving an email from the registrar telling me that he is willing to cover the cost of blinds for Louise's, Catherine's and Dan's offices, meaning that the other caseworking sabs in the Student Advice Service can now take casework in private. This is the culmination of an ongoing struggle with the university and I'm very, very happy that they've now agreed to pay. The second most exciting thing that has happened to me this week has been the conference held in the town hall on race, ethnicity and nationality organised by the ethnic diversity campaign (thanks also to Dan and Louise for all their help). It took a fair amount of planning, but I think everyone's hard work paid off, as everyone who attended the conference seemed to get something from it. There were also plenty of new faces and it's always good to see people who don't usually come to ousu events getting involved. The workshops were taken by the Access Scheme, one of the convenors of the NUS's anti-racism campaign and Judith Finch, the University Equal Opportunities Officer and councillor Fiyaz Mughal spoke about race issues at a community level. Although the number of staff who attended was disappointingly low, the involvement and co-operation of the university's Equal Opps officer sends a positive message about the university's commitment to equal opps issues, and this seems to be being reflected by the keen interest taken in the conference by much of the press. The conference will hopefully form the beginning of continued dialogue between students and the university on equal opps issues and I will be pushing hard to ensure that the points raised will now be taken on board and acted upon.

I've also met with representatives from Thames Valley Police, following on from discussions with the new community and race relations officer and am hoping to hold regular 'drop in' surgeries in the OUSU offices, probably starting next term. The police are keen on the idea and I'll be working with them to encourage the reporting of crime, especially hate-crime, amongst students by making the police seem more accessible and encouraging students to come in and meet them/ask questions etc. I also held a very productive meeting with Judith Finch, together with the other Student Advice Service sabbaticals, on the Equal Opps Unit review; the university will now be replacing many of the now dissolved Advisory Panels with consultative bodies (based on ousu's equal opps campaigns, plus childcare) open to all staff and students, as there was concern that student representatives elected in ousu council and pga often felt to intimidated to contribute to debate at the previous meetings. It hasn't yet been decided which policy-making committees these consultative panels will report to, but I be lobbying hard to ensure that I have representation on them. The Student Advice Service has also met again and conducted an internal review of sorts, with each member submitting a report on the future of the Service, which we then discussed. I will be writing this up as a report and making a number of recommendations which will then go to the Future and Finances committee and council to hopefully implement a number of changes. I have also, with Louise's and Digo's help, made an SAS wallchart to go in 5<sup>th</sup> week's Oxstu-in the absence of the termplanner, I'm glad that students will now be able to access the contact details of various welfare providers at a glance and hope it will be something continued in future years. Other stuff I've been doing has included representing ousu on the web housing bank steering committee, ongoing casework, compiling statistics on the use of the SAS to present to the university next week on the types of cases we've been seeing and the types of students using the Service, planning with the Careers Service and Josefa this year's Future Outlook, which will be incorporating a Diversity Fair and will be the conclusion of Diversity Week, writing my bid for money to pay for this year's Diversity Week and holding all the usual campaign and committee meetings (for which I'm still lacking in co-chairs a little-ask me for more details), including a sexual health session in health and welfare committee (thanks to James advertising the session).

Meeting re. Housing bank tomorrow

Casework

Future outlook and been writing diversity week bid

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Casework  
Future outlook and been writing diversity week bid  
Stats-am putting together to take to university  
5<sup>th</sup> week blues wallchart  
committees and campaigns-stuff done and that still need co-chairs

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**Dan Paskins**                      **V-P (Graduates)**

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The highlight of the last couple of weeks for me was that by close of nominations there were no fewer than five candidates for the two posts of graduate executive officer. This is especially pleasing because it is the first time ever that there has been a contested election for this post.

One of the nice things about the job of VP (Graduates) is the sheer variety of the sorts of things that it requires.

Whereas other sabs concentrate on welfare or representation, I get to do a lot of both, and as a result get to see a wider range of the good that OUSU does than any other sab. In the last couple of weeks I have attended University Council (enlivened as ever by the wit and wisdom of the Vice-Chancellor), Education Policy and Standards Committee and the Graduate Committee of the Conference of Colleges. I have also been involved in the plans to revamp and improve the Student Advice Service, and had a fair bit of casework to do, particularly with helping to fill out visa extension applications.

There have also been a couple of successes in the last couple of weeks in terms of getting bad decisions overturned.

Wolfson College are not, as they intended to, going to charge all students £105 for the privilege of eating in hall, and the Department of Geography are not going to quadruple the fees which second and third year Human Geography D. Phil. students have to pay for equipment. There is a very clear message here for both administrators and students. For administrators, it is always best to consult students properly before taking decisions which affect them, and for students the message is that you don't have to accept any terrible decision which comes along and that it is possible to get it overturned.

Finally, on Friday there will be a Mature Students wine and cheese evening in Kellogg College, which is going to be fantastic. Please pass on the message about this event to anyone whom you think might be interested in going along, and if you'd like to help out with the creche then please let me know.

As ever, this report mentions only a few of the things that I have been doing in the last fortnight, I keep a daily diary on the OUSU website should you want a more detailed account of what I have been doing as VP (Graduates).

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

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In the past two weeks I've been working on a couple of ongoing projects. In target schools we've been trying to decide where to go for our regional conferences – Northern Ireland is a definite and is a really exciting prospect for me personally. We are yet to finally decide on where our English conference will be – it will be between Exeter, Cumbria and Hull. The target schools handbook is coming along nicely, the first few articles are coming in and they are very well written. We're aiming for a far more colourful handbook this year so if anyone has pictures they would like to donate, please send them in. Target schools is also working on a contribution to FandF's Alternative White Paper – I'm yet to write this up fully but I expect it will be done by early next week. We now also have a stand arranged at next year's NUT conference (at Easter) and I've set up a maillist for admissions/access reps in JCRs – I'll be meeting with all of them next week to discuss arrangements for the interview season.

Progress on the student charter and library opening hours is slow – I'm yet to receive a reply from the Head of Reader Services at the Bod and the Proctors' Office are also taking a while to get back to me on their progress with the Student Contract, I will update Council when I hear more on these. I've also met with Libby Payne from the Sports Fed to discuss the possibility of making Wednesday afternoons free for BUSA sport and hopefully things should be moving along with this shortly.

The Student Advice Service has also taken up quite a bit of time since my last report. All of the SAS sabs and the Student Advisor met together on Tuesday morning to discuss the direction of the service. This was an excellent, if epic, meeting and at the beginning of next term it is likely that there will be a couple of motions coming to Council about the service.

I've also helped out with general bits and pieces – it's quite a busy time in OUSU at the moment what with these hideous election things going on. I've helped deliver the Oxford Handbook to colleges and carried about a million Careers Handbooks around, all good fun. The rest of my time has been taken up with the usual meetings (EPSC, Target schools, acaff committee), doing general admin and casework.

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

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**RAG**

I have arranged to get myself arrested. Don,t know what crime I'll commit yet but I'll be taken to St. Aldates Police Station on 26th Nov in a convicts uniform and locked up in a cell until I can raise £500. All the money raised will go to Deafblind UK.

Marcus Walker will be doing it with me so try to help me raise more and please sponsor me! Wear it Pink day raised about £1200 for Breast Cancer Awareness,. On Thursday of 4th we had a charity auction in New College which raised £800. RAG charity nominations are taking place on Mon 6th, along with RAG exec elections (there are 8 positions available). A lot of time has been taken

Thursday of 4th we had a charity auction in New College which raised £800. RAG charity nominations are taking place on Mon 6th, along with RAG exec elections (there are 8 positions available). A lot of time has been taken up organising the Sex and the City Fashion show which is on Wed of 7th at 8pm in the Union debating chamber. Tickets are £6 and will be on sale early next week – email [rag@ousu.org](mailto:rag@ousu.org) for yours! One of the various ideas I am working on with reps at the moment is producing college pants. This Saturday RAG will be out on the streets of Oxford collecting for Shelter, plenty of people have signed up, and anyone is welcome to join us as we prepare for the Tour of the North. RAG meetings are every Monday at 5p.m or see [www.oxfordrag.co.uk](http://www.oxfordrag.co.uk)

### Community

Since last council I have met with other Hefce funded groups, sports, museums and drama outreach and discussed how we could work better together. A volunteering party is planned on Nov 16th 7.30 in the Lower Oscar Wilde Room as part of a series of networking events to try to connect the charity/volunteering student sector more. On Wednesday of 4th week I organised a dinner for several international groups to discuss setting up a volunteering scheme in Bangladesh. Nick from the Careers Service, Rosie and I are starting with preparations for Future Outlook and are currently trying to recruit a committee. If you would like to find out more about Future Outlook or what you can do to help, drop an email to [nicholas.anstead@cas.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nicholas.anstead@cas.ox.ac.uk). On Fairtrade, I have prepared a fact finding questionnaire to be filled in by one rep per college on the current fairtrade status of the University, we will then follow this with a much more extensive questionnaire . The committee are also building a Fairtrade website database.

Community meetings are every Wednesday at 5p.m.