



reports to 5th week council michaelmas 2004

John Blake

President

National Student Survey

A quick note on this – policy was passed at last week's Council to have no confidence in this survey. I forcefully carried this view to University Council on Monday, and I hope I left no one in the room in any doubt that we were against it. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) expressed his opposition to the Survey as well, and the University ultimately resolved to provide minimalist assistance to HEFCE in carrying out the survey. OUSU will be advising all students to opt out of the survey at the earliest opportunity, so as to avoid being harassed for six weeks before their Finals.

The Vice President (Finance)

As many of you will be aware, the Vice President (Finance) resigned last Thursday. Her resignation letter did not specify her reasons for resignation. I hope Council will appreciate that, as with the conclusion of any employment, certain restrictions of best practice and law apply in terms of what can and should be said by all parties. I have spoken with the University Personnel Office regarding the matter, and, in light of their advice, if there are questions, I will respond as fully as I can.

The resignation has obviously had consequences for the projects OUSU is undertaking and the workload of those in the office. Tribute must be paid to Dan Finley, the Business Manager, and his assistant Gareth, and also, again, to members of the part time Executive who consistently amaze me with their readiness to put in huge efforts for OUSU. In terms of OUSU's ongoing projects, responsibility for publications and authorising expenditure now falls to me, and in that regard we are presently despatching the OUSU and OUSU-NUS Cards across the University; the Oxford and Cambridge Careers Handbook has now been sent to print, and will be returning next week, and the Oxford Handbook is, as I write this, being prepared for print, to go off to the press before Council begins. Thanks to all those who have devoted time to both Handbooks, in particular Kim Hardman, who has done all this work whilst also taking on the demanding role of Press Officer, at which she is excellent and an enormous help to me.

Christ Church JCR

On Sunday, the Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) and I attended a very full Christ Church JCR meeting to discuss affiliation. After what I feel was a useful and healthy debate, the JCR voted to affiliate termly to OUSU and mandated its representatives to bring certain motions of reform to OUSU Council. I am delighted that a JCR has engaged with OUSU in this way, and mandated its representatives to bring to Council ideas for reform, and I think it is an example other JCRs might like to follow if they have particular concerns with OUSU. However, I did say to the meeting at the time that I felt that termly affiliation would be unfeasible for OUSU, as most of our projects are planned on the basis of an annual period to implement them, and indeed the length of time needed to achieve reform in OUSU is at least two terms. After discussion in the Executive on Thursday, the request for termly affiliation has been rejected, but I have already notified the Christ Church JCR President that I am ready and willing to engage in a debate with her and the JCR Secretary (who proposed the motion) about their reforms, and I will be writing a formal letter laying out the Executive's reasons for turning down termly affiliation and to initiate that debate. I hope it will prove productive for everyone.

OUSU Elections

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Since last Council, an additional referendum has been added to that on student finance to take place with the annual elections. I was presented with a petition last Thursday to ask the following question in a referendum: "OUSU should adopt the proposed amendment [below] into its Constitution YES or NO". The proposed amendment is: "Add Article L: OUSU shall not have any policy on the termination of pregnancy at any stage. OUSU shall not discriminate for or against any group or individual on the basis of their views or actions concerning abortion, so long as said views and actions are permissible under the law. OUSU shall provide to those members requiring it sufficient information about all relevant, legally operating services dealing with unplanned pregnancy." The petition was validated by the Deputy Returning Officers by the end of Thursday, and since there were still 14 days before the annual elections, the referendum must be held. Notice of poll duly sent to colleges through JCR and MCR Presidents and OUSU Reps. The whole situation does, however, present some problems:

The question. As those of you who attended 3rd Week Council will know, Council can amend the question in a referendum by a two-thirds majority. However, by my reading on the Constitution, in the case where a constitutional amendment is put to referendum, the text of amendment cannot be altered (since that text was the basis upon which the 500 signatures had been gathered to call the referendum in the first place), so the question has to be, in some form, "Do you accept this or not?". Thus, I set the question suggested by the petitioners and contained above, which seemed as good a form of the limited number of options available as any. The next issue was then what Council could do if they disagreed with the question, since no regular Council was scheduled until this one, which is less than seven days before the elections. I noted in the statement of notice of poll that an Extraordinary Council could be called if it was felt necessary, since mechanisms exist for it – although, interestingly, not many mechanisms, since it is the only meeting OUSU can call with no time delay at all. What all this suggests to me, along with the long and sorry debate two weeks ago, is that the procedure for the calling of referenda in OUSU is deeply flawed – in other Student Unions, referenda over-rule all other policy, as do ours, but clear procedures exist to work out what is and what is not covered by that, and one policy making forum (such as Council) does not interfere in the workings of another (such as a referendum) as happens here. This has been added to the long list of necessary reforms for OUSU which I will be spending the next two terms offering to Council.

The Returning Officer. The Education Act 1994 requires us to hold fair and democratic elections, and for me as Returning Officer, a question on abortion policy presented problems. My own personal views, on various aspects of this question, are extremely strong, and I was therefore concerned that my continuing as RO was not a feasibility. In such cases, the Constitution lays out that a Deputy Returning Officer shall take on the role. Nothing is said about what happens if the DROs do not feel able to take on the role as a result of other commitments (as happened here). It seems to me neither wise nor fair to demand that someone take on the job, and thus OUSU was left in an irregular position: I could not continue as RO without compromising my own beliefs, but the procedure laid down had not produced an RO either. The DROs dealt with this question admirably, drawing up lists of qualified candidates in Oxford, and asking them if they wished to perform the job. One, Angus Heberton, eventually agreed to take on the role, and I asked the Executive to confirm him. In a bid to save the time of a formal meeting, the confirmation was done via email, with Angus receiving the ten affirmative votes necessary to be appointed. As I noted, this is irregular, but I think provides a sensible and effective way out of yet another Constitutional cul-de-sac. This has also been added to my list of reforms. I would like to thank for their help through these difficulties Dominic Curran, Kimberley Gillingham and Tania Das, the DROs, who have been excellent and an enormous source of support.

Lastly, it has been noted that there are very few candidates for part time Executive Officer this year. These vacancies will be filled through a by-election in 7th Week Council, so if you are interested, please contact me on president@ousu.org. I have been asked numerous times whether having so few candidates means that OUSU is in decline, and taken together with the resignation of a sabbatical officer and the delay in several of our projects, some seem to have formed the view that OUSU is in turmoil. I don't believe that is true – I believe OUSU's habits of openness and attempts at accountability render our mishaps clear to a large number of people, but that ultimately these circumstances are no more nor less trying than many organisations undergo, and come out fine from. I believe OUSU

believe OUSU's habits of openness and attempts at accountability render our mishaps clear to a large number of people, but that ultimately these circumstances are no more nor less trying than many organisations undergo, and come out fine from. I believe OUSU would be in far graver danger were it to lose those habits of openness and accountability (although OUSU should always take seriously those times when it has a responsibility to be discreet). But I also think that, whilst the immediate circumstances in which we find ourselves perhaps look worse than they are, we are not without problems. As the union for all Oxford students, OUSU faces many challenges, over this next year, and over further years to come – for nearly ten years, the fees questions has been hanging over students, for five years a battle has been fought against the government's fees proposals, and we now stand on the other side, in a brave new world of higher education. In that new world, many new problems present themselves, and many old ones appear under new guises, and OUSU must be ready and able to respond to those problems, to be able to (and to be seen to be able to) represent its members over all the issues which affect Oxford students, from rent and hardship, to welfare provision and academic support, to accommodation and into issues which I cannot even think of, but which some student in some college is worried about and does not know who can help. OUSU's members need to see it not as a distant, obtuse organisation working for undefined ends in a mystifying way, but as their union, something of which they are a part – indeed, something which without is, quite literally, nothing. All very well to say, but to be achieved, that aim needs to be held not just by members of the OUSU Executive, or habitual Council attendees, but also by Common Room officers and individual students themselves. Certainly, it is true that those who have worked within the OUSU structures must consider what they do, and what they appear to do, in order to ensure that they are working for (and are seen to be working for) student's aims, but students, either individually through Council, or through their Common Rooms, need to make clear what those aims are, what it is they want: I believe absolutely in the need for a central student representative body, and I know of few who (no matter what they thought before they got involved in OUSU) have come away from working in OUSU without sharing that belief. But what the central body does and how it does it will only ever be decided by those who show up – if that means many students are disinterested, then what matters is to change, or at least add to, those who are showing up. Common Rooms, just as Christ Church JCR has done, must start telling OUSU what it is they want done better, and be willing to enter a dialogue about it. Demands one way and denials the other will not improve our union, but a genuine discussion about what is needed may well do. OUSU is not in turmoil, and it could almost certainly continue just as it is, but I think that would miss an enormous opportunity to begin a project of reform which could benefit all Oxford students.

Nicky Ellis

V-P (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)

Casework continues as ever, sometimes rewarding, sometimes frustrating. It is certainly clear that there is more out there than we can currently take on board, and that the better we advertide, the more we will get. In this vein we need to think seriously about the future of the service, and how we will deal with this ever increasing volume. I have writtem a paper on this as planned for the University committee on student health and welfrare, addressing in particular the provision of legal and specialist advice, and who ought to be the first (and last) port of call for this.

The distribution of publications progresses. Many common room orders for welfare publications have now been processed; the rest of those requested will go out very soon.

Some colleges I still haven't heard from, so if you think you've slipped through the net, please get in touch; I'll begin advertising them much more widely in the next couple of weeks. I've also begun work on the lnew 'living out guide' which will be ready for distribution at the beginning of Hilary in line with house hunting season.

When John and myself were talking to Christchurch during their re-affiliation discussion, one of the things they wanted to see was a breakdown of how we spend our time- this is certainly something I'm happy to do if people would find it helpful. A quick run down here and now- the vast majority of my contacted hours, and more besides, is spent on a combination of welfare and casework tasks, the planning of training sessions, and other welfare related matters, alongside the general VP tasks- running this place on a day to day

and now- the vast majority of my contacted hours, and more besides, is spent on a combination of welfare and casework tasks, the planning of training sessions, and other welfare related matters, alongside the general VP tasks- running this place on a day to day basis. In reality, that means carrying an awful lot of boxes around (which makes for impressive bruises). Because of the low profile of the equal opportunity campaigns at present, very little time is spent on that sort of active campaigning, and what there is is outside office hours. Though I hope that by the end of the year we will a little more life.

There is the intermediate sort of campaigning, the meeting with the university and working to improve things that way; that too takes time. Then there is all the rest of the things that need doing, that don't really fit in a working day- going round and talking to colleges, editing the website, and more and more, helping out with entz. I can certainly look into setting this out more formally if people want, and likewise, if anyone is unclear what my job involves and wants to come and talk to me about it, or email me about it, they're more than welcome.

The other the thing that happened these past couple of weeks was the resignation of the VP (Finance). All I would say on this for now is that I suspect it looks rather frightening from the outside, in simple terms of what is going to happen now, and whether things will fall apart. I don't think they will, and we're pretty much operating business as usual (as much as one can be in elections fortnight). I'm very grateful for the additional help the part time exec have offered and given, as well as the business manager, and Gareth, as ever.

Going back a little further in time- last council- I am relieved to think that as you are rereading this, I will no longer be sitting in the chair remembering why I gave up on drama early on. Two things about that council- one, the referendum debate- I'm really sorry that was so long and difficult,; I should perhaps have chaired more decisively. Many thanks to however put the touching description on Oxford gossip in which I allegedly sat on the floor urging everyone to 'vote to end it all'. Council is long, and tiring, and sometimes tiring, but I sincerely believe that referenda motion discussions are few and far between. The other point about that council was that I'm given to believe that some people felt there was a little too much dissent against unity. It is possible, and often important, to iron over differences before they make it public. It is also important to be accountable. I fear that people think that OUSU is the exec, the building, the bits they don't say. OUSU is primarily you lot, and council binds us all. Sometimes that means that divisions will show, and people will have to decide one way or the other- that's the only real way to get round the old criticisms of the OUSU clique. We will do our best to reform from the inside, but we also need people bring ideas for reform from without. If you've never written a motion before and don't know how it's done, the sabs will be happy to explain the format- please do ask. Beyond that, thanks to everyone in due measure and beyond- you know what is owed and it is certainly true that I wouldn't be able to do this job without the support I get from those I work with. Thankyou also to anyone else who has taken an interest, emailed me, or in some other way got involved.

Rebecca Wilkinson

V-P (Women)

NIGHTBUS/SAFETYBUS

Continuing with ups and downs.

No crashes so far in the last two weeks which is a bonus.

ED

A positively attended start up meeting, a tragically unattended second meeting.

Mass poster campaign to ensue for 7th week meeting and for next term.

A good idea but needs continual attention and revision.

Thank you for all the positive feedback I've had, and those who have offered their expertise.

Looking into writing a new eating disorders guide in time for Hilary – please get in touch if you're interested.

SAS

I underwent harassment training last week, so I am now better briefed on the University rules and attitudes regarding harassment.

SELF-DEFENCE

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We had a class on Wednesday last week and Tuesday this week.

I attended both, and thought they were excellent. I would encourage all females wanting self-defence rather than classical martial arts training to come along to the class in 7th week or to our classes next term.

COLLEGES

I have been visiting colleges and also had a lot of email interaction with various women's officers.

However, due to the eclectic nature of women's officers and the lack of women's officer committee my ability to communicate with colleges remains at the bequest of individuals. Whether it is to discuss the Nightbus/Safetybus scheme, the new ED initiative, the role of female specific representation or simply my views on Stanley Kubrick, I am always willing to visit a college if asked.

OSSL

I have done more driving [yay] to ensure we get the ousu cards out as soon as possible.

I attended the ZOO dinner which I thought was a great success, and have practiced my bouncer interpretations on several occasions.

I truly believe that we can move away from entz in Oxford, performing the function of providing a playground for the rich and move towards a club nights structure which provides cheap and safe entz for all.

ELECTIONS

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT NO-ONE STANDING FOR VICE-PRESIDENT (WOMEN) MEANS WE SHOULD NOT HAVE A VICE-PRESIDENT (WOMEN)

If no one stood for President we wouldn't advocate abolishing the position.

There is no obvious or substantive correlation between the two and it is possibly the weakest argument I have ever heard for abolishing the position (and I've heard some weak arguments) espoused by those who employ tabloidese style rhetoric.

The position of VP (Women) is [in my opinion] the most varied, eclectic and I feel enjoyable job OUSU has to offer, this is true for the incumbent AND for the students who benefit from it.

THE FORETNIIGHT

Obviously the executive has gone through turmoil over the last two weeks. However, I do not wish to comment on it in my report.

I do however believe that OUSU can get through this period in the short term and in the long term. It highlights many internal problems with the structures that I have long felt needed revising. Maybe this is the opportunity.

We are not the first student union to have a sabbatical officer resign and, no doubt, we will not be the last.

Fave person of the week undoubtedly goes to Lorna S for lovely emails about the Nightbus, least fave person goes to Daniel for early morning phone calls [!], highlight of the week was of course Chesney, surreal experience of the week would be being interviewed by a Bournemouth Student Radio on whether I thought stripping to cover debts was a good idea for female students (I didn't).

Siobhan McAndrew

V-P (Graduates)

In general, a hectic couple of weeks.

I organised a meeting in Somerville MCR to discuss Fourth Year Fee proposals with a group of MCR Presidents and OUSU Reps, passing on information and consulting on responses. Some colleges (such as Green and Nuffield) passed motions against fourth year university fees whereas other presidents (such as Lincoln, Wadham and University) delivered responses to their governing bodies. Their proactive approach was really encouraging. There really was a sense of team effort on this.

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encouraging. There really was a sense of team effort on this.

I discussed fees and other graduate issues such as college advisers and graduate teaching with the chair and vice chair of Graduate Committee (Conference of Colleges) on Monday this week, prior to the committee meeting (of Tutors for Graduates) the following day, where I spoke against the fees proposals, together with Andrew Beaumont, MCR President of Lincoln.

Thankfully fourth year fees were not passed; it was decided that the committee would not support the measure until they were completely satisfied that revenue predictions were credible and that a bursary scheme would be workable. I can't see how this will be done in the next term or so; furthermore the scheme would not be introduced until 2008, which means at least that existing students will not be surprised by an extra £10,000 of fees. But the long term effect is that D.Phils will not be affordable by self-funded students which is why we should continue to oppose fourth year fees.

It's now time to do a similar round of communication and report-writing on visa extension fees – there is a month before the deadline for responses to the Home Office's consultation document, so I must work quickly.

I have attended EPSC and met the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for a pre-briefing session with Linsey – these are really valuable meetings and he has made a point of praising Linsey's work repeatedly at EPSC and University Council. Bill MacMillan has also invited me to join the group working out how Graduate Teaching Assistantships will work, which is going to be great fun. I attended University Council with John where he spoke effectively against the National Student Survey. I visited Nuffield last week to promote our services – Chesney and the Nightbus went down very well. I went to the Trades Union Council meeting with Charlyne Pullen, and met the Proctors and JCR and MCR Presidents with John. Lots of interesting stuff was thrown up – especially on graduate accommodation – to be pursued further.

The Graduate Guides are almost all out now – and massive thanks to Jamie Audsley, Gill Viner and Maria Burgess for making up the packages, and to Maria for driving me around town dropping them off. I've been to Chiselhampton twice this week to collect OUSU cards and drop them off at colleges (which is not exciting graduate policy reform work but needs doing) and the van drivers, Kimberley and Pete, took my bad directions with great humour.

The highlight of the week was perhaps disposing of the urine-drenched decaying cardboard which had languished outside the offices for some weeks. The execs who did the rubbish disposal yesterday were heroes – there was almost two tons of rubbish. It took all day and wore us out physically. It's all glamour in this job. My personal lasting contribution to OUSU is probably in the form of four black plastic self-assemble shelf units which I chose with Dan Simpson yesterday.

I have to go and distribute the remaining Oxford Students and Graduate Guides right now with lovely Ross Horne from LMH, so will speak more later.

ISIDORE Report:

Student administration desperately needs modernising – and ISIDORE is about reforming student records to stop duplication of effort and inconsistencies across departments, colleges, and services such as the Careers Service.

A database has been designed (the OSS) and new procedures created. In many ways this is good. The planned modernising over the next few years will mean, for example, that students can get transcripts for exam grades which helps with job and postgrad applications. At the moment you have to hassle a college secretary to do a letter confirming mods, prelims and finals results.

However: These changes will create enormous upheaval and it's not clear that Wellington Square, let alone every department and library, has the space, staff or resources to manage. This year the Graduate Admissions Process is changing radically. Rather than allocating students as they apply, with their application folder being sent to up to 8 colleges, there will be a meagre five deadlines where all applications will be decided

manage. This year the Graduate Admissions Process is changing radically. Rather than allocating students as they apply, with their application folder being sent to up to 8 colleges, there will be a meagre five deadlines where all applications will be decided against each other. This is good in terms of judging academic merit fairly but will mean that Wellington Square must store up thousands of applications until deadlines occur, and then transport hundreds of boxes of applications about Oxford - although they have no van.

Severe bottlenecks will result – if you are applying for postgrad study, get your application in early and check that it is being processed. The first deadline is the 22 November and the second (applying particularly to ESRC and AHRB deadlines) is in January.

Regarding the student database (Oracle Student System): the internal security is still questionable – one college can enter another college's admission decision and patches have to be devised. A college IT officer told me privately that his college will run their old admissions database alongside the new one anyway. Furthermore it isn't possible to use a program to transfer entries from one to another. A comparatively old version of the Java Authentication Service will have to be used which means running two versions of JAAS. The system hasn't been designed with colleges in mind not least because the University does not know college systems. And OSS cannot be run on Macs. It doesn't appear to have been tested thoroughly and the expectation outside Wellington Square is that it will just not function or provide intelligible data – which throws people back on their old systems.

Most seriously from our point of view – it is proposed to have the Counselling Service incorporated into the database. The justification is that the Counselling Service needs to check entitlement to services. Even if the database were perfectly secure this is undesirable. Given possible internal security problems this may be severely dangerous with regard to confidentiality. Our concerns will be raised at the next ISIDORE consultative meeting.

Linsey Cole V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

Firstly, apologies for my absence from today's Council. I am attending a meeting of the Russell Group Student Unions (known as the Aldwych Group) in Glasgow. A representative of HEFCE is also coming to talk about the NSS - after consultation with the Executive it was decided my attendance would take the very strong policy we have on this issue forward. I'm more than willing to answer any questions by email, so if you want to ask me anything, email me on access@ousu.org

Academic Affairs

Lots going on at the moment in terms of ac-aff. I wrote to HEFCE and the NUS expressing OUSU's views on the National Student Survey (NSS) - I've had no personal reply from either as yet, although the presence of a HEFCE representative at the meeting in Glasgow on Friday is the result of letters from myself and my counterparts at other Student Unions. The University has decided a policy of 'minimal co-operation' is best, but as decided at last Council, we will not be publicising the survey in any way. Will keep you updated as and when I get more details..

I've attended Senior Tutors Committee, where the main issue of discussion was English stint reform. I'm pleased to report that the proposals to halve the number of tutes were rejected and sent back to the faculty for more consultation - the JCC will now have chance to have their views considered and there will be an opportunity to ensure that any changes, should they occur, enhance rather than detract from the undergraduate experience. I also went to EPSC and the Language Centre Committee, plus lots of other meetings with relevant officers in between...its been a manic couple of weeks!

I now have contact details for most JCC Reps which is proving really valuable when issues crop up - I organised a meeting for Divisional Board Reps and am working to keep the lines of communication open between representatives on all levels within the University.

Along with the rest of the Executive, I'll be preparing OUSU's submission for the Governance Review (a review of structures within the University that (co-incidentally) marks five years since the North Report and the start of the new Vice Chancellor's term of office).

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Libraries - I've met with Mike Heaney who is in charge of user surveys, to discuss opening hours and other issues - again, keep on sending the Open to Change postcards back and I have the next meeting in 7th week so will report back on progress. Libraries gave us power to progress academically and we must ensure that user needs are paramount when any changes in provision are being discussed. There should (if the proposer and seconder have submitted it in time..) be an Emergency Motion at this Council about the relocation of the library in Queen Elizabeth House and the Refugee Studies Centre - please vote this through and give me an explicit mandate to help the students concerned on this issue (if it hasn't made it in time for this Council, it'll definitely appear in 7th week).

Study Skills - I'm going to meet with the head of the IAUL (Institute of University Learning) to discuss what can be done to improve provision and will report back on this. The OUSU Writing Workshop is now up and running - Sunday and Thursday 8pm-10pm in the OUSU offices. This is a chance for those who need help with their essay writing skills to come along and get advice from trained peer tutors on a drop-in basis - posters will be sent out advertising this next week, but in the meantime, PLEASE publicise to your members.

Access

Target Schools is ticking along nicely thanks to the work of the co-chairs and exec - most of the Handbook Articles have been rewritten and I hope to publish it by the end of 10th week, ready for distribution early in Hilary term. Lots of new faces are coming along to meetings which is great to see - come along on Wednesdays at 5pm in OUSU. We're settling the dates and venues for this year's events at the moment and working on establishing links with Oxford schools. I've also been asked to sit on the new Admissions Working Party within the University - this is a great opportunity to have a say in how admissions work across the University and is particularly important in light of proposals of Post Qualification Application and more widespread admissions testing.

I've also been doing lots of other bits and pieces...the motion about the 'Ox-Stu two' (as they have become known) has been left deliberately vague so a response can be made that all involved parties are happy with and a full discussion of the issues and possible means of support can occur in Council. It is important that whatever action OUSU decides to take has the support of the two individuals and does not prejudice any future appeals. I also created what was named in an alcoholic haze the I CAN HELP email list - this is a list for those who are willing to help with delivering, pidgeing, sticking....well, basically anything and everything that OUSU does...we've had lots of response already, but if you want to be added to the list, email me on access@ousu.org I've been helping to co-ordinate the distribution of the OUSU Card - the stuffing company appear to have a fetishism for Zoo publicity and NUS Cards, but they are being distributed over this week and early next. and I've also been helping with general Elections Committee stuff, plus I had the pleasure of seeing Ronan Keating and Chesney Hawkes (well done to Dan and everyone else involved for organising a great night - Chesney, you love us!) within a few hours of each other...but I won't go there now...

The past two weeks have been difficult for the Executive. However, I have full confidence of what can be achieved over the next couple of terms - please be patient as we readjust and reassess what needs to be done - we're all working to move things forward on all fronts and I am confident that things will come together.

Again, apologies for my absence...I'm probably stuck on one of Mr Branson's excuses for a train listening to yet another apology for being late....email me your questions and enjoy Council.

Ian King **V-P (Charity and Community)**

The last two weeks have been interesting. Laura's resignation from the position as VP (Finance) has been a source of great sadness to me as I immensely enjoyed working with her and found her to be a good friend. It is my genuine opinion that OUSU has lost a valuable asset; this is a tremendous shame.

(finance) has been a source of great sadness to me as I immensely enjoyed working with her and found her to be a good friend. It is my genuine opinion that OUSU has lost a valuable asset; this is a tremendous shame.

On the RAG front, a lot of stuff's happening... The Fashion Show ('Back to Glamour... break the rules') will be held at The Bridge on Sunday of 7th Week (21st November). This will consist of an evening of fashion, including a funky two-tier catwalk on which some of Oxford's most glamorous boutiques will display their wares alongside dresses designed by up and coming student designers. Tickets will be £12 in advance and £14 on the door.

These include: Free bubbly and chocolate, Luxury Molton Brown Goody Bags, Molton Brown complementary makeover, 10% off at Fever, and the chance to be a model for the night. Booths are also being sold for £100. These booths house five of the best seats in the House and come with a bottle of bubbly and waiter (waitress) service. The evening will run from 8pm-1am. In terms of what I've been doing for this, last minute changes of venue and negotiations with various colleges and bars has taken up a rather large chunk of the fortnight in the run up to this rather large and hugely exciting evening. Please do come if you can. Other RAG things include: a charity auction to be held at New College on Saturday and next week's a capella night, Taboo, at Thirst in which the Oxford Belles and In The Pink, Oxford's newest, female a capella group, will be entertaining the audience. Last week's performances by Out Of The Blue and the Oxford Alternotives were tremendous and raised in excess of £630 for charity. Film nights are continuing as usual – Trainspotting was this week's offering. Spare bits of my weeks have been filled with doing Jacari CRB (police checks) – a noticable stream of people have been filing up to my office which now resembles a waiting room – and running Oxford's main Poppy Appeal collecting (and selling) effort. Saturday's collection raised in the region of £640 alone. If you would like to get involved and sell poppies, please let me know – I'll be running the collection every day until Saturday of 5th Week at 4pm.

The charity auction which has been scheduled for Saturday of 5th has now been moved to Saturday of 6th, venue tbc. This is due to the unforeseen nightmare which is the fashion show's organisation! Preparations for 9th Week's Tour of the South with Cambridge are well under way; if anyone wishes to join Oxford RAG in raising money for MacMillan Cancer Relief, please email rag@ousu.org; this will run from Sunday of 9th Week until Saturday of 9th, ending in Oxford.

With respect to the community side of my job, volunteers for the hospital, for the homework club, for the Children in Touch Mentoring scheme and for Olga Primary School have all been increasing and involvement in Oxford's growing by the day. To see these schemes which (apart from the hospital scheme) had minimal involvement from students taking off in such a way is thoroughly gratifying. This part of the job will never be done as there are so many volunteering opportunities which can be offered to Oxford students and developed – this is what makes the job especially exciting! If your college has yet to receive www.oxfordgetinvolved.org flyers, please let me know on community@ousu.org and I'll arrange for some to be sent to you.