

OUSU

reports to council

5th week michaelmas 2007

Martin McCluskey

President

Hi Everyone!

Welcome to 5th Week Council. I hope you're all looking forward to husts and the elections next week.

Election 2007

...Has taken up a large part of my time over the past couple of weeks. We've produced publicity for Common Rooms to advertise the husts in colleges and more publicity will be rolling out at the start of next week. On election day, look out for the funky "I've voted" stickers and make sure you wear yours with pride!

Away from the publicity, I've had many meetings with the Returning Officer to make arrangements for next Thursday and to make sure the elections run as smoothly as possible.

JRAM

I had a briefing from Sally Vine in PRAC about the updated recommendations for the JRAM. On the whole, the new recommendations reduce losses for colleges and see a new teaching split introduced that generally favours the colleges more than the original plan. I'm arranging a briefing on the revised recommendations for JCR and MCR Presidents.

Vice Chancellor

I had a pre-University Council meeting with the Vice Chancellor to discuss issues that were to be raised in the meeting. I expressed our unhappiness at the fact that more and more business seemed to be being tabled in the reserved agenda and that we seemed to be learning more from his informal reports on the University Website than from actually being at the meeting. He pointed out that the Confidential / Strictly Confidential Policy was currently under review and we may see changes in forthcoming meetings.

I also discussed with him the PPH situation and I'm in the process of arranging a meeting between PPH Presidents and the new group working on the Implementation of the PPH Review.

University Council

Along with James and Ingrid, I attended University Council on Monday of 5th Week

JCR Prescom

Along with James, I attended JCR Prescom on Friday of 4th Week.

Trashing

Along with James, Claire and the JCR Presidents of Keble, Univ and Worcester, I attended a meeting at University College to discuss potential solutions to the problems caused by trashing at the end of exams. It was really constructive, and I should have more to tell Council at our 7th Week meeting.

Groupware

I attended a meeting at OUCS to discuss the requirements for the University's new Groupware system. Groupware is the name given to an integrated email / calendaring / online apps system. The University hopes to implement something within the next couple of years and OUSU will be consulting students as this group progresses in its work.

Self Rustication

We have started a small internal working group to discuss the problems around rustication on the grounds of mental health and unexpected illness. We hope to work on this issue further over the next few weeks.

Anti-Racism / BME

We had a fairly successful meeting of the Anti-Racism / BME Group in an attempt to kick-start this autonomous campaign. We're going to try and integrate this group more closely with the diversities / ethnic minorities reps in colleges in order to provide them with a greater level of support.

Weekly Emails

We've started sending University-wide weekly emails, which we've been getting really good feedback on. This is the realisation of an OUSU dream and finally means we can communicate directly with our members.

Louise Randall

V-P (Welfare and Equal Opportunities)

Meetings

- Welfare Committee

This 2 week period saw the first official meeting of JCR and MCR welfare reps, in a very well attended meeting, which proved to be a really useful forum for discussion on the issues common rooms face. Particularly of note were discussions about the way Peer Support training is used and funded between colleges, and the issue of the inequality of welfare budgets between colleges.

A really useful discussion on condom brands was had, and following a number of complaints about the NHS brand, Safex, condoms that OUSU currently supply, support for OUSU beginning to stock Durex as an option was overwhelming. Some colleges were happy to stick with Durex, as they had had no complaints about Safex and feared Durex might be too expensive for their budget. Thus, we are planning on continuing to stock Safex for those colleges who wish to buy Safex, whilst also offering Durex to those colleges who would prefer. Please do ask me anything more about this!

- Anti-Racism Committee

We're currently working hard to kick-start its Black and Minority Ethnic / Anti-Racism campaign. The BME/Anti-Racism campaign is an attempt for OUSU to improve BME representation in the University and feed into the debates that are currently ongoing. We want this campaign to be able to help us in answering questions around BME access to the University, campaign on the needs of BME students within the University and take a leading role in the anti-racist movement in Oxford.

- Consultative Committee for Health and Safety

I have the minutes of this meeting for anyone who is interested! Please do contact me if there are any issues that you wish to bring up at subsequent meetings.

Issues

It has become increasingly obvious that there are issue of rustication for welfare reasons, and self rustication, which need to be examined. Martin (President), James (Access and Academic Affairs) and myself have formed a working group to look at the issue and what can be done to improve the current situation.

Night safety continues to be a concern. We are currently working to promote the Walk Safe scheme, which has been set up by students at Teddy Hall, in order to provide students with a way to return home safely after dark. A student can ring the number, and a pair of volunteers will cycle to meet them, and will then accompany them home from their department, college, library or elsewhere. It is open Tuesday-Friday, 9pm-1am, and the number is 07769371882. Please volunteer for, and use, this great service!

There is a growing concern in the university that there are many students with disabilities who could be benefiting from the practical and financial support available, but who are not disclosing their disability. I have been working together with the Disability Office to write a 'Simple guide to disclosure' which will be available soon.

Student Advice Service

We have continued to have a steady stream of casework through the Student Advice Service. The volume that we are receiving further highlights the need not only for a Student Advisor but also further validates the need for the current review into the functioning of the Student Advice Service. For a detailed explanation of how the Student Advice Service functions on a day to day basis to better aid your understanding of the review, please feel to contact me!

The SAS is currently undergoing a period of consultancy run by the counselling service. This is proving to be a valuable opportunity to think about the procedures that are in place, the role of the SAS is within the university, and how the members of the SAS are being equipped to deal with the challenging nature of their work. We're really appreciating this opportunity for some 'blue sky thinking' and believe that it will directly benefit the students who use the service. We'll be reporting back as the process develops!

Hannah Roe

V-P (Women)

Meetings attended –

Women in Science Conference – hosted by OxWiP and FEST, this conference raised clear issues surrounding women scientists in academia in Oxford, especially surrounding research grants and maternity leave which I am working with FEST to bring policy to OUSU council about and which I am raising to the University's Gender Equality Scheme.

Enough!

Women's Campaign

Events –

Upcoming-

In the Pink – Friday of 5th Week – I've worked to support VP C&C, RAG and WomCam on hosting this event.

Held since the last Council

Women in Student Politics – resulted in very interesting discussion – the attendees decided that it would be very useful to hold future events and produce a report, so I am currently organising for that.

Public Speaking Workshop- very well attended and very positive feedback, more to follow, watch this space

Welfare

Eating Disorders – the publicity for Enough! which I'm responsible for organising is clearly helping to raise awareness of the this issue in Oxford- last week the Cherwell contacted me about a study referred to on the Enough! website and ran a front cover article on the issue. I've had several positive e-mails about the group. I'm currently working on getting the University and Colleges to organise a training day on eating disorders for their staff in a welfare referral capacity – this has been an ongoing project since the summer.

Student Health and Welfare Committee Report- I'm currently working on this, to explain to the University the women's welfare issues in particular which need addressing.

Self Defence Classes – The instructor is now well again and these classes will be running for the rest of this term and the term after. Please contact me for more information.

Campaigning and Representation

Reclaim the Night March – I've worked with the Police to organise the route for this march.

The indicative poll on the review of the Student Advice Service has proved to be incredibly time consuming, because some of the proposals brought involve removing the VP Women position. This means that my main work is suffering as I have to spend a lot of time explaining why the position is so valuable in terms of women's welfare within OUSU, lobbying the university for better provision for women's welfare and addressing effectively and consistently the number of issues which particularly affect women in Oxford and damage the value of Oxford as an educational establishment for promoting women's education. It is very disappointing that these proposals were brought with no consultation with either myself or women's campaign.

Ingrid Frater

V-P (Graduates)

Casework has been mounting up over the last few weeks, and has taken up a good deal of time. However, casework is certainly feeding well into committee representation – e.g. on graduate admissions.

MCR Presidents' Committee – I organised and chaired this in third week, we were hosted by New College. Turnout was very good and we had some productive discussions on such issues as college fees, student safety and alcohol licenses. The sabs all came, to ensure that we are working closely with graduate common rooms.

International Students with Disabilities – I'm planning to write a paper on this, to take to Graduate Committee of Conference of Colleges in Hilary.

SAS Review is now well underway and the discussions continue...

New Bodleian – I was on the tour with other sabs and CR Presidents, which was incredibly interesting and informative – Osney Mead motion today.

Nightline training – I'm currently Nightline training as part of my SAS training and development.

Proctors and Assessor meeting – I was present at this meeting with CR Presidents. Will be trying to encourage more topics of discussion from graduate common rooms for next term.

Student website – www.ox.ac.uk/students is almost ready to go.

Teaching and Learning Space – I'm currently collecting data from a survey up on ousu.org and by sending it round to JCCs. This data will be used to make a presentation to a University group working on teaching and learning space, of which I am a member.

University meetings – Council, Graduate Committee of Conference of Colleges, Committee for the Language Centre. Will update orally.

International Students' Campaign – constitution and committee will be ratified today. Will update orally on meeting with Dr Heather Bell.

Mature Students' Campaign – am determined to get this going asap!

Common Room outreach/ZOO nights – I've been gathering dates for MCR meetings, and meeting MCR committee members individually, to try to ensure that I'm in touch with as many people as possible, listening to what they would like to be seen done and to speak to students about what OUSU is and how we can support students. I've also been going to ZOO nights to meet more students.

Book selling – I'm going to be trying to set up a scheme on our website for book selling between students.

MCR Presidents' Questionnaire – Last year Andrea sent round a huge questionnaire to all MCR Presidents. Over the summer Greg Lim (from Merton) worked on compiling all the data, and it's now on our website for use by current students and applicants.

James Lamming

V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

Term is already half way over and I don't know where the time is going. If there is a word to describe the past two weeks, it is 'preparation'. There will be lots of things happening over the next two weeks: finishing interview website, Osney Mead campaigning, admission policy discussions, OUSU Education Committee and interview videos, that are just about ready to go, but don't all quite merit being reported on. Here below are the edited highlights from the rest of my fortnight. Any questions, then please get in touch and don't forget to read my blog.

Access

Training – I helped with the training of volunteers for University and Target School schemes, running a training session myself.

Interview Website – I am still collecting profiles for this website, and have mounted a concerted push this week to get 50 students experiences on there. I hope to advertise this via colleges mailings to applicants.

Target Schools – I met with Emma Coulston and Mike Nicholson to discuss a networking and information event for all students in Oxford finishing their PGCE or going into TeachFirst next year. It is hoped that the event will provide these students with information about helping their future students applying to Oxford and inspire these new teachers to act as ambassadors for the University.

Academic Affairs

University Meetings – These last two weeks, I had University Council, Committee for the Languages Centre, and Student Gateway steering group.

National Student Survey – Met with Sally Powell and Richard Hughes in Academic Policy Division about NSS. Our current policy is fairly neutral towards it, where we highlight all its faults but then say that it does have a use so we won't campaign against it. Communicated as much to them, and expressed strong reservations about passing on personal details like mobile phone numbers with which they agreed.

Miscellaneous – Caught up with casework paperwork and met John Eekelaar, Senior Tutor at Pembroke and Chair of Conference of Colleges Senior Tutors' Committee for lunch to discuss the year ahead.

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SAS Review – With Ingrid, I submitted a proposal for a reformed Student Advice Service, and discussions about this have taken up a large amount of time over the past fortnight.