

Reports to Council

5th week council tt12

Martha Mackenzie

President

Evening Council,

It is beautiful and sunny and Summer Vills is on so thank you very much for being here at this bumper edition of OUSU Council. I hope you've enjoyed the past couple of weeks, I'll do my best to make tonight a highlight...

NUS National Conference Motion Number 307

As I mentioned briefly last week an 'anti-Oxbridge' motion was headed to NUS NEC for debate after it was not discussed at National Conference. Gerard, the President of CUSU, and I spent a long time lobbying the NEC over the removal of the offending parts and in the end they were successfully defeated on Monday.

Many members of the NEC were incredibly responsive and very happy to help once we were able to reach them.

Lead For Equality

In the absence of Yuan I am working with some of the members of this campaign to ensure that it remains active until Suzanne (incoming Vice-President (Women)) takes over. We held a breakfast yesterday to discuss our options moving forward and will now be holding a 'Lead for Equality Formal' in Seventh Week. More information about the event will be announced shortly but if you have any questions in the meantime or wish to get involved with the campaign please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Clubs and Societies

Adrian and I have finally revisited the issue of OUSU taking more responsibility for clubs and societies (and removing some of the inefficient and bureaucratic controls of the Proctors' Office). We had a fairly productive meeting with the Proctors and are consulting with the Sports Federation over how to take this forward as soon as possible.

Rent

The past couple of weeks have continued to be pretty rent heavy. I have been reading through a number of proposals and answering lots of information requests. Jim and I also held a Rent Surgery on Friday of Fourth Week. I have been incredibly impressed by how hard everyone is working in order to ensure the best deal for their students and there have been some great success stories.

Election Regulations

Jim and I have been working with one of our External Trustees, Richard Jackson, to draft the OUSU Election Regulations. These regulations have now been circulated to all of you and are being presented today for wider feedback. A final draft will be presented to Council in Seventh Week for passage at Ordinary Council and then Termly Council. While this time period is undesirably tight we feel it is

necessary to get these regulations confirmed before the next set of elections in Michalemas, the current standing orders are not fit for purpose and urgently need replaced if we are to ensure proper accessibility to the electoral process. These Election Regulations are intended to be a lot simpler than what currently exists in the Standing Orders but few substantive changes have been made.

Teaching Awards

The Teaching Awards Selection Panel met this last week and ever since we have been shortlisting the three hundred and thirty nominees. This has proved to be incredibly difficult as the quality of the nominations has been so incredibly high, however I am feeling very positive as we will have a huge number of examples to take forward as excellent practice. The Panel will be selecting the winners tomorrow and we'll be announcing them in sixth week.

Website (hurray!)

Work has continued on the imminent OUSU website. We will be signing a contract in the next couple of weeks and are currently recruiting for a web designer (see your emails!). Seb and I are now helping to put together some of the content in order to ensure that the site is up and running before Freshers' Week.

Other:

I have also attended the Joint Advisory Group on Student Fees, the OUCS Groupware Panel, one JCR Presidents' Committee, one OUSU Rep's Committee, one OUSU Executive Meeting, attended University Council, and met with sixteen students individually. Also, Chelsea won the Champions League.

As ever do not hesitate to get in touch with me or any of the other officers!

Martha x

Jim O'Connell

VP (Graduates)

Hi Council,

It's been a fairly busy couple of weeks - even though it's Trinity, things aren't slowing down (whether I like it or not!).

Frustratingly, the University appears set to be going ahead with above-inflation fee increases for all graduate fees for the 2013-2014 academic year. This is just annoying for a whole host of reasons. What is most aggravating is that this comes after a year of good focus on graduate funding, and, I had thought, recognition that for our graduate body academic concerns must trump financial. Additionally, it appears that some individual courses will have their fees increased even further, with very questionable additional benefits to the quality of the teaching on those courses. I would advise everyone to in particular avoid the Master's in Comparative Social Policy, which is both truly awful and truly expensive.

In keeping with much of OUSU's work this Trinity, I will be bringing a motion to next Council and then writing an angry letter to Divisional Heads and the PVC for Planning and Resources. The Medical Sciences Division deserves an honourable mention here - they have not increased their fees by as much, and for many of their courses are actually proposing a fee decrease in order to attract the best students. This is very responsible.

Yesterday I took the PGR Provision Report to Conference of Colleges' Graduate Committee, who gave it a positive if possibly a little misguided reception. We're working with the Colleges' Graduate Issues Working Group, which was set up largely in response to our gripes about the College Fee and aims to articulate the 'Graduate College Offer' in a better way. So, we'll follow up the issues coming out of the PGR Report with that group.

We had University Council on Monday, which was held at the Old Road Campus up in Headington. We got a very interesting bus tour of the Medical Sciences Division beforehand - bringing in £450m a year, Medical Sciences accounts for nearly half the University's income. Council was reasonably uneventful, but contained more good (albeit confidential) news on graduate funding.

Further on the issue of graduate funding, today I am raising the issue of hardship money and money for completing/4th year DPhils with the Proctors. The Proctors and Assessor control access to much of this money (as well as colleges), but access is currently termly and fairly inflexible. I'll let you know how it goes.

I've spent a lot of time both visiting and supporting Common Rooms over the last two weeks. In particular I went up to visit Wycliffe, and was very impressed by the sense of community there and how the Hall provides for student parents. Much of the work I've been doing for Common Rooms is around rent negotiations, providing data, information and perspectives on negotiating alongside David and Martha. I even got a quote for installing wifi in one College's buildings, which was fun. I think it's safe to say that this year OUSU has provided more rent support, both bespoke and general, to Common Rooms than in each of the last four years (at least). So, let's hope for some good results.

Last week Hannah and I sat on the Review Panel for the Department of Chemistry, along with a number of very distinguished scientists. This was the first pilot for including student representatives on departmental review panels, and passed off very successfully. I think we brought a valuable perspective to the Review, and it also enabled us to gain a close insight into how research is conducted in the sciences.

The week before last I also went to NUS International and Postgraduate Conference to represent us. It was very useful, with the NUS aiming to focus on visas and postgraduate funding over the next year, which is more or less what we want them to do. I voted for Georgia Thresh for NUS PGT NEC Rep, although she narrowly lost out. We joined with Nottingham and Swansea to pass a motion encouraging NUS to focus more on PGT funding.

Also, I have been spending a lot of time on the OUSU Election Regulations, so an election themed quote to close:

'Vote early, vote often.'

Richard J Daley

Sebastian Baird

VP (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)

Hi Council,

The sunshine is here! I hope you're all well, that you've endured the rain and cloud, and exam stress. Here's hoping that the rest of Trinity Term is (relatively) footloose and fancy free. We've been busy here at OUSU towers, finishing off projects and tidying things up for the next lot to come in. Here's a run-down of what I've been up to.

Graduate Supervision Project:

- Unfortunately, our partner in this project had to cancel the session planned for 4th week, meaning that this project has been set back somewhat. We are still fully committed to putting this in place for next year, and hopefully we should be able to run the pilot session later in term.

Mind Your Head

- Our major project post-MYH Week is a documentary film project, led by campaign member Josh Chauvin in conjunction with the Lincoln College Film Production Society. We're planning this at the moment, but should be going ahead with filming in the next couple of weeks.
- Tatiana and I delivered a seminar about the campaign for Merton JCR/MCR peer supporters, with a view to developing our activity in Merton next term.

- We have also just found out that the MYH Campaign has been chosen by Queen's College JCR to be one of their dedicated charities, which means that they will kindly be donating £2000 for us to be campaigning with next year!
- We are also planning for next term - early Michaelmas is a crucial time for student mental health, and we are aware that we need to have as big an impact as possible during that period. If you have any ideas as to how we can best do this, I'd be happy to hear them.

Mental health policy

- I'm working with the Head of Student Support & Welfare and Senior Tutors Committee on a project to allow students to more easily disclose mental (and other) health problems to academics that might be teaching them. This would allow students to avoid having to broach the subject every time they are taught by a different individual, and to ensure that the necessary adjustments are made in the teaching they receive.

Student Advice Service

- I've been writing the Student Advice Service's Annual Report over the last couple weeks. The report consists of a compilation of statistics measuring various aspects of the Service's activities over the last year, as well as a number of observations about what the Service has dealt with in the Colleges and University and how the Service has worked internally.
- I've also been working on the ongoing policy renovation project - by the end of the term, we're hoping to have new confidentiality and equal opportunities policies, as well as a new complaints procedure.
- I've also continued to carry out my role as a member of the Service - dealing with casework and information requests.

SWD Guide

- I have been writing and sourcing content for a new iteration of the Students With Disabilities Guide, with the aid of the Careers Service and the Disability Advisory Service. It will be written and made available for the incoming intake of first year students with disabilities.

Living Out Guide

- I've been working with David Butler, our Rent & Accommodation Officer, and Jenn, our Student Advisor, on a new iteration of the Living Out Guide, which will also be ready for students to use next term.

Welfare Resources Project

- Elisabeth, the Health & Welfare Officer, is leading on a project to expand the availability of issue-focused resources for welfare officers and peer supporters. I've been helping out with this, too.

Muslim Prayer Space

- This looks to be finally getting somewhere - the Working Group has decided on a location for the prayer space to be situated, and it is now a case of taking a proposal to various university committees and getting them to vote in favour of it.

Hannah Cusworth

VP (Access & Academic Affairs)

Hi Council,

Since we last saw each other, I've mostly been madly busy, which has been a bit of a shock since it's now 5th week of Trinity. Quite a bit of my time has been spent in committee meetings which have been long but in many ways fruitful, I've got lots of things to pass on to David Messling, who I hope is smashing his way through finals as we speak.

Access

Clubs and Societies- we've got the colleges coming on side now and the societies have developed their workshops. We're running slightly behind on the timetable, but then the colleges haven't got school visits until 7th week at the earliest, so all is looking good.

BME Access scheme- I've been working with Chidi our BME officer a lot in the past few weeks helping her get this scheme off the ground. She's put the presentation together and we've got a meeting next week with the volunteers who are interested in going back to their local schools to lead the presentations.

Target Schools- have picked their Shadowing Scheme team and help the first committee meeting, which is brilliant, and I'm working with Undergraduate Admissions to gather a list of schools that ties into the University's OFFA targets that they can use for the Scheme.

Committees- AdCom, JFSAG- in Admissions Committee almost all of the business was on the timetabling of interviews. I don't think that candidates will lose out too much although they may find out slightly later (perhaps even after Christmas) whether they've got in. That's not ideal but it's obviously better than the colleges rushing and making mistakes. In the Joint Fees and Student Support Advisory Group, which took place in 5th Week, Martha and I pushed back on the rise of postgraduate fees and argued that a better, more transparent and consultative model needs to be in place for next year. We also spoke about the need to commission research into the impact of £9,000 tuition fees and a considered approach to student support during next year's review of our fee waiver and bursary package.

Vice Chancellor and Heads of House Meeting- Next Monday I am presenting along with the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education and the Head of Undergraduate Admissions about social mobility. My focus will be on student involvement in access work, what Oxford should be going and the need for us to capitalise on the opportunities we are fortunate to have here in Oxford and lead the way on the issue of access. That will involve identifying priorities, thinking of solutions that will impact the problem and then being bold and coming together to solve the problem, instead of faffing around and watering down. I'll let you know how it goes

Open Days- I've been involved in the planning of the University Open Days and held a JCR Access Officers meeting on how to make Open Days as accessible as possible.

Academic Affairs

Chemistry- Jim and I took part in the Review of Chemistry. This was a big deal as students don't normally sit on these review panels. It provided us with some fascinating insights into how departments work and we made some valuable contributions. I'm doing to Review of Music in 6th week and we will be

Teaching Awards- with nominations closed we're now going about choosing the winners. Martha and I have been leading on organising the selection panel meetings (with a lot of help from Karen on the mail merge and sandwiches) and we now have a shortlist for each Division. On tomorrow we'll be picking the winners and announcing them early next week! I've been working to book a good venue and liaising with diary secretaries to make sure University officers can make it. Over the next few weeks I'll also be working with Martha to write the report to the NUS and make a big fuss about the winners and those who nominated them.

Academic Feedback Sessions- I ran a training session with Nick Cooper on 'Using Your Feedback' I think it could be a useful session to re-run next year but it will have to be run earlier in the year (we originally planned to run in last term but then I got a monster cold)

Departmental Representation- This has been a big priority over the past few weeks. I submitted a request for OUSU to hold a session at the UAS (University Administration Services) conference, which is a big deal in the world of University administrators, on the issue of departmental representation. I've also been working with the University and now the Divisions to collect information from every department about the structure of their student representation, with the view to making it work better for students. That's not to say that some departments don't work brilliantly well at the moment, just that in many ways, it could be more coordinated and supported.

Student involvement in allocating the new £9,000 fee- this has now passed through the University's governing body (University Council) and is going to Conference, so one hurdle down, one to go. The group will also consult with a group of students early next term so I'll be letting David know and then he'll be calling on you I'm sure.

Casework and Student Advice Service- Yesterday I spent the best part of an afternoon, and evening, filling all my information requests that I've received all year and making sure my case recording was up to date so that Seb could produce the figures for the Advice Service report. I've also been spending quite a bit of time on a long running case as well as a few other smaller ones here and there. If you or anyone in your common room is having problems with any aspect of university life, tell them to get in touch either with me on access@ousu.org or the student advisor on advice@ousu.org.

Apologies for any typos, I write this in a bit of a rush! Hope everyone is enjoying the sunshine, Eights and the fact that the Eurovision song contest is on this weekend.

Daniel Stone

VP (Charities & Community)

Dear Council,

I have to admit that I'm feeling a little queasy after eating too much Ben and Jerry's too quickly, but nevertheless I have conjured up a report of the last two weeks for your enjoyment! As always if you have any further queries please send an email to charities@ousu.org

Community

The Student Community Wardens have continued to build relationships in their respective communities. Over the next few weeks they'll be working with local residents to plan community events to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

- The Oxford Student Community Partnership met just before last Council. We have developed a comprehensive Action Plan for aiding the student experience of moving in/out of private rented accommodation.
- I attended a series of Neighbourhood Action Groups and community meetings:
 - In the meeting of alcohol and ASB issues, the police agreed to develop a video to show the effects of excessive drinking.
 - A homelessness sub-group met to discuss a new poster campaign to encourage Oxford residents to give to local homeless charities rather than funding addictions.
 - Concerns around safety were re-iterated with an emphasis on using d-locks and looking out for 'bag dipping' in local bars and on nights out.

Charity

Thanks to all those who went to the RAG Comedy debate in the Oxford Union, which raised £433 for charity! And last weekend around a dozen students went to Bath where we raised over £700 for the British Heart Foundation.

- This Sunday is the RAG Dodgeball Tournament from 1-4pm in the University Club, Mansfield Road. Email rag@ousu.org if you'd like more information.
- Oxford RAG will also be at Summer 8s all week, so please drop by our stall to say hello!

Environment and Ethics

On Monday, Ben and Jerry's teamed up with the OUSU Environment and Ethics Committee for the Fifth Week Fair Trade Freeze, where we gave out free Ben and Jerry's ice-cream to hundreds of students while raising awareness of fair trade issues.

- The end of year recycling scheme leaflet has been produced and will shortly be delivered to all houses in East Oxford.
- The Environmental Sustainability Policy workshop will take place next week and I'm hopeful that we will see colleges working more closely with reps and students on sustainability issues.
- The Sustainability Steering Group and Socially Responsible Investment Review Committee both met in the last fortnight. The SRIRC has vacancies on the committee from the MPLS/Medical Sciences Divisions - if you know any tutors who you think may have an interest in this area please let me know.

Living Wage

Since last Council, a College Campaigns Meeting was held to offer more direct support and advice to college campaigns. We've arranged for the Head of the Living Wage Foundation to come to Oxford in early June to meet with College bursars to discuss the Living Wage one-to-one.

PART TIME OFFICERS

Emily Cousens

Access & Admissions Officer

Hi Council,

This has been a busy but productive term so far.

Hannah and I have got 3 societies and 3 colleges on board to trial a new initiative for visiting students on insight days. The societies (the union, amnesty and RAG) have been working on workshops to deliver to the visiting students in order to give them an insight into the world of oxford beyond just the city itself and the degrees we offer. The pilots are taking place over the next few weeks.

Secondly the access handbook has now been made and is soon ready for distribution. We hope that this will enable a better understanding of how access officers across JCR's can make the most of their position.

Last week Hannah and I held a discussion of college access reps and had a very interesting discussion about how open days work across colleges.

Enjoy the sun!
Emily

Oliver Gleeson

Community Outreach and Charities Officer

Hi Council,

RAG has been busy organising events and I have been helping to promote charity throughout the university. I have also been fulfilling the 'community outreach' element of my job title by attending meetings in the Town Hall to combat begging and organising community 'Welcome to Students' events. In detail, RAG will be organising a stall at Summer Eights, selling drinks and snacks throughout the week as well as a BBQ on Saturday. This is your chance to raise money for charity whilst also getting good value for money!

There is also a RAG Dodgeball Tournament this Sunday at the University Club. This event has been successful for the last few years and has been very popular so get in touch ASAP if you'd like any more information.

Keep going to 'BAR FTSE' on Wednesdays (TONIGHT) at No.9! It is free entry and you'll be raising money for RAG by buying their really cheap drinks!

On the community outreach side, I attended a begging initiative meeting with Dan (VP Charities and Community) last week that was immensely useful in furthering my understanding of the begging problems in Oxford city centre as well as the council's targeted approach and campaign to solve this. More details will follow, probably in Michaelmas.

Dan, David (Rent and Accommodation Officer) and I are meeting to look at how we can engage student and community groups more, specifically with those who live out in Oxford rather than in college accommodation. It is very important to ensure that Oxford students are responsible citizens but it is also important that community groups represent students' views if they live in their area.

Lastly, my email address is communityandcharity@ousu.org and I urge anyone who wants to get involved to get in touch.

Have a great 5th week!

Oliver

Beth Hanson-Jones

Environment & Ethics Officer

Following the E&E Pamoja I have been working on ways to get E&E reps more connected. I have received helpful feedback from several Reps and will be setting up a more effective system through which E&E Reps can gather information on other colleges. This week our Fairtrade campaign also ran a very successful event with Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, if anyone wants any further information on Fairtrade then don't hesitate to get in contact with me at eande@ousu.org. As usual, any questions then e-mail me on the above address.

Nick Cooper

Academic Affairs Campaign Officer

Evening Council,

Hope everyone's well and surviving 5th week blues (the weather isn't exactly helping that, but it's supposed to be getting better!) Here's a quick review of what I've been up to over the last fortnight...

On the Academic Affairs front, we held the second session on using your feedback from Academic Feedback Sessions last week. If anybody wants any advice on any part of the Academic Feedback Sessions process in their college, do feel free to email and I will happily answer any questions!

Other than this, I'm collating all the information I've found on college complaints and appeals procedures, and will report on my findings in my next Council report. Finally, I've been involved in some more general OUSU work - attending OUSU Reps Committee last week, and I will be attending the University's Clubs Committee tomorrow.

As ever, do email if you have any questions, queries or suggestions: academicaffairs@ousu.org. Other than that, have a great 5th and 6th week!

Nick

David Butler

Rent and Accommodation Officer

Evening council,

As Rent and Accommodation Officer, my primary focus has been on supporting Common Room presidents in their rent negotiations. Alongside individual meetings, I hosted a rent surgery (with the President and the VP Grads) so that presidents and their teams could seek advice on strategy.

In addition to this, I have been preparing content for the new Living Out Guide and the housing section of the International Freshers Guide.

I also represented the student community, alongside the VP Charities & Communities, at the City Centre NAG.

Jess Pumphrey

LGBTQ Officer

I've finished the subfusic report and will be meeting with the assessor to move the issue forwards on Thursday.