

Reports to Council

5th Week Council Trinity Term 2013

David J. Townsend

President

Here are some of the major things I've been up to in the past 2 weeks. For more information, e-mail me at president@ousu.org or ask a question in OUSU Council.

New OUSU Website

As discussed in previous meetings, the launch of OUSU's website has been delayed by the lack of suitable staff time and expertise. Last term, you worked hard with me, the Vice-Presidents and the part-time OUSU Executive Officers to win an extra £100 000 for OUSU for next year, identifying that part of this should be spent on a Communications Officer (as a permanent employee) who should be responsible for managing the website, along with doing other communication work to allow students to better know what OUSU actually is and does. You'll see that the proposed draft OUSU Budget 2013-2014 under consideration today includes provision for such an employee.

In the meantime, we have organised for our out-of-house designer to set up a temporary OUSU website which is more user friendly than the existing one and will provide the necessary information about the identity of elected officers, examination advice, OUSU budgets, OUSU Council documents and so forth. This will be a bridge to the full new website which will be launched over the summer (after the Communications Manager has been recruited). This seems to be the best way to deliver a usable website at this stage in the year. I have been assured that it should be ready in time for this meeting of OUSU Council - if not, it should be ready very soon thereafter.

Letters to the Vice-Chancellors of Oxford and London

On your mandate at the last meeting, on 9 May I wrote to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford regarding the partnership between the Earth Sciences Department and Royal Dutch Shell, setting out OUSU's opposition to it and its wish that it be reconsidered. I have not yet received a reply.

On your mandate at the last meeting, on 9 May I also wrote to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London regarding the impending removal of services, funding and building from the University of London Union, setting out OUSU's condemnation of this decision on grounds of democratic process. I received a reply on 14 May which I have distributed to all voting members of OUSU Council.

Proposed Guidelines on OUSU Council Binding NUS Delegates

On your mandate at the last meeting, I have written a set of proposed guidelines for the circumstances in which OUSU Council can bind Delegates to the Conference of the National Union of Students, and the mechanism by which OUSU Council binds the Delegates. These guidelines are submitted for your approval at this meeting.

Hooroo,

DJT

Chris Gray

VP (Graduates)

Highlights

Over the last 2 weeks I have reviewed the economics department, followed up the UKBA visa issues raised in council and written to the VC and UKBA on the issue, finished my report on the PGT student experience with our Graduate Academic Affairs Officer Nick Cooper, held a Graduate Strategy Meeting with MCR Presidents, OUSU Officers, and Division Reps to decide our priorities for the next 12 months (priorities to follow in 7th week report), produced a formal response to the University's review of the Financial Guarantee and consulted with MCR and JCR Presidents, our International Students Campaign, and our Division Representatives, and, finally, have begun work with the University to hire an external firm to produce a cost of living index for students.

UKBA

Following concerns raised by students and the motion brought to 3rd week Council I have met with the visa team to confirm that the University is not introducing any new systems to fulfill UKBA's new monitoring requirements. A small number of individual cases have been flagged up to me where students didn't think this was the case and these have been resolved with the help of the visa team, either by changing the department's plans or by demonstrating that there were in fact no changes being introduced. I have written to both the UKBA and VC on this issue.

PGT Report

This is finally done - or at least a first draft is. The main issues we are raising with the University for further work are: contact hours, communication about the content and structure of the course with applicants, methods of assessment, and student engagement. It should be noted that the University has made good progress on feedback on work and careers service provision for PGT students since our original report 2 years ago.

Financial Guarantee

As mentioned in previous reports we are supporting the University's proposal that evidence will only now be required for first year fees and that all other costs will be met by a 'self-declaration'. Unfortunately the short consultation period did not include a Council but I have had our response approved by circulation by JCR and MCR presidents, the International Students' Campaign, and our Division Reps.

Student Living Cost Index

Following discussions between DJT and the University earlier this year the University is now going to put out a tender for a set of independently produced student cost of living figures. Much of the new impetus is due to the outcome of the Damien Shannon case. I have been working with the team putting out the tender to ensure that the figures that will eventually be produced will be an accurate reflection of student costs. Once these are produced they will be a major help in rent negotiations and access package discussions.

As always this is report records the news and highlights from my work. If anyone has any questions about any of this or my other work then please do ask them in Council or email me (graduates@ousu.org). Equally if anyone has an issue they would like me to work on drop me a line.

Katie Colliver

VP (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)

Hi Council,

What I've been up to...

- Delivering training! The new version of Equality and Diversity training went well and I got positive feedback alongside some helpful pointers to think about when developing it further. I was joined by members of OUSU's part-time Exec and liberation campaigns, and my hope is that these folks might help expand the work in the future and be able to take training straight to your common rooms, rather than you having to come to us in OUSU.

- Held the Student Advice Service Review day. You will remember my various pleas for your input (thanks to those of you who filled in the survey) - we have now brought the various pieces of the consultation together. The final recommendations are still being developed but they are likely to include a movement towards a professional coordination of the Service and bringing key record-keeping into the electronic age with case management software.
- Agreed plan for Peer Mentoring scheme for Disabled Students. Volunteer Peer Mentors will be trained by the head of the Peer Support scheme in 7th week and incoming students will be contacted over the summer to give them an opportunity to request a mentor. They will be matched up from the beginning of the new academic year.
- Writing the annual Student Advice Service report, explaining what we have been up to over the year, giving a break down of the types of cases we get and exploring the challenges that lie ahead, both for tackling problems within the university and colleges and in terms of the work the Service does and how we can grow.

As ever, drop me a line on welfare@ousu.org or catch me after Council if you want some more info on this, or if there is anything else I can help you with.

All the best,

Katie

David Messling	VP (Access & Academic Affairs)
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Dear Council,

Fifth Week comes, and with it my penultimate Council Report. Since last we met, these have been the highlights:

Student Finance has been a focus of attention, both for Extended Terms and for the general future of undergrad finance. Council gets the chance to discuss the latter today, which will inform my continuing discussions with the University.

On a separate note, OUSU has been successful in getting the University to address the anomaly with 2013/14 Year Abroad fees, saving students next year approximately £150,000 in fees!

Teaching Awards is speeding to its conclusion, with the shortlist announce (see the website) and preparation for the ceremony underway. The awards will conclude at Rhodes House in 8th Week - with Common Rooms Presidents invited, along with any student who nominated a shortlisted tutor, lecturer or supervisors!

Academic Feedback Sessions summit took place last Friday (3rd Week) - thanks to all who came along! I'll be writing up the results to provide to JCRs, but the afternoon was a useful time to share experiences of AFS, and to discuss the issues encountered by colleges seeking to introduce Feedback Sessions.

Examinations timetabling. Good news on this one is that the University has been considering a proposal to get timetables out earlier, to ensure exams aren't bunched on one or two day and to avoid 6 hours or more of exams in a day, all of which have been pushed by OUSU. Bad news (partially), is that it was decided that more consideration is required so will come back again in Michaelmas - however, having succeed in getting this on the agenda.

Target Schools has a new website! Take a look at targetschools.wordpress.org for more! It also plays host to the promised **Oxford Access Hub**, which aims to provide an overview of Access activity across Oxford.

Division Rep Elections are go! Following Council's go ahead we are steaming ahead with the election of Student Division Reps 2013/14 - nominations are open, and elections will be taking place in 6th Week! Don't forget to vote.

Alternative Prospectus is taking shape gradually for 2014. If you're a talented designer or editor with an interest in widening access to Oxford look out for the adverts for the editor position, or just drop me an email (access@ousu.org).

Finally, on Friday morning Chris Gray and I rescued a man who had fallen over in his wheelchair. Full details available on request.

Thanks,

David

P.S. If you are at all interested in running in the 2013 elections, and working for a better and more open University, feel free to get in touch and I'm happy to meet to discuss the role in more detail.

Sarah Santhosham	VP (Charities & Community)
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Hi Council,

The last two weeks have been busy and productive as I've been drawing some of my projects to a close and continuing to work with my campaigns on their events and activities. Here's a run down, but as ever, get in touch if you've got any questions or want to get involved - charities@ousu.org

Environment & Ethics

- Over this term I've been putting together and editing a new magazine on environmental and ethical affairs. By the time Council takes place, this will hopefully have gone to print! The magazine will be delivered to common rooms in 6th week - if you're interested in getting involved in the next issue, let me know.
- I'm working with the University to bid for some money from HEFCE for a green project between OUSU and the University.

Charity

- I have been leading the RAG exec and we have come up with a strategy for the year ahead, which has included planning all of next year's events. We've planned for a larger and broader range of events, so I hope you'll get involved to beat this year's fundraising.
- I'm working on securing corporate sponsorship for RAG for the next year, and have successfully got through to the final round with two firms.
- A quick plug - get your ticket for RAG's Summer Twist this Friday!

Community

- By the time Council takes place I will have brought together local stakeholders for the Oxford Student-Community Partnership Group, a productive forum, which gets stakeholders from different organisations discussing solutions for local issues.

Other

- I sat on a selection panel for the Vice Chancellor's Civic Awards this year. There was a great range of nominees and an excellent set of recommended winners! The winners will be announced soon!

Work with OUSU's campaigns is going well - last week I led a meeting on branding and publicity and next week we'll be looking at charring meetings. It is hoped that these meetings will improve the performance of OUSU's campaigns and groups.

Suzanne Holsomback	VP (Women)
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Hello All,

Fifth week is upon us and my time as VP (Women) is drawing to a close! Crazy isn't it. They time has flown, but I am still working hard and doing a ton. If are interested in any bits or think you might like to be VPW someday, give me a shout!

Freshers are coming...

As the end of Trinity approaches, common room officers are looking toward Freshers' Week. If you are keen on having a sexual consent discussion during your Freshers' Week or integrated into a welfare talk later in the term, let me know! I am training facilitators and helping common rooms organise sexual consent discussions for their Freshers now!!

Facilitator Training

Wednesday, 6th Week (29 May) from 5-7pm in St. John's.

Email women@ousu.org for more information and to reserve your place.

What I've been up to...

- Launched It Happens Here Campaign.
- Spoke about women's equality at St. Anne's Equality Forum.
- Co-hosted a Women's Garden Party with OxFEST and WomCam that was a super success!
- Advocated with the EDU for a clarification of the maternity leave policy for students.
- Co-sponsored the talk given by Bianca Jagger at the Union.
- Held a Student Parent Social in Wadham's Gardens.
- Ran a sexual consent facilitator training, getting people ready for Freshers' Week 2013.
- Screened *Girl Rising* for the second time due to popular demand!
- Spoke to Harassment Advisors about sexual violence, how to support survivors, and signposting.

Shout Out...

This week's shout out goes to the women of OxFEST and in particular Lucy Hutchinson. You all worked so hard to have a lovely garden party. Thank you. Lucy, you have led OxFEST brilliantly. It has been an honour to work with you this year!

PART TIME OFFICERS

Nick Cooper	Graduate Academic Affairs Officer
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Evening Council,

Time seems to have rolled round rather quickly since 3rd week Council, so hope everyone's doing well. Must admit it's been a bit of a quiet couple of weeks (well, OUSU-wise - not in general!), but Chris and I have submitted our paper on taught postgraduate courses and are now awaiting feedback from the University. I also mentioned in my 3rd week report that I was attending an event on the "digital future of Oxford". This was really productive and people from across the university came together to discuss how the University can use technology better. Do let me know if you have any suggestions or questions on this.

All the best for 5th Week,

Nick

William Neaverson	Students with Disabilities Officer
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Hi Council!

We've had a great couple of weeks in the Disabled Students' Campaign. First was the massive success of OxDERN (Oxford Disability Equality Research Network) run by the campaign chair, Dwight Kelly. This saw academics from across the UK come together in Wadham College to discuss topics such as the portrayal of Oscar Pistorius' trial in the media and the National Autism Strategy. The event generated such

interest a larger venue had to be booked - over 50 people attended. Both Dwight and I are excited about passing this on to our successors to make this an annual event.

In other news, the Disabled Students' Guide has its first draft copy, which will have been discussed in a subgroup of OUSU's Executive Committee and with the Disabled Students' Campaign by this Council. We hope with input from students across the University this will be the most engaging and useful guide we've ever produced.

If you're interested in getting involved in the Campaign, we'll be holding a meeting in 6th week at Wadham, and in 8th at Christ Church, and you can email me at disability@ousu.org if there's anything you'd like to ask.