



termly reports to council hilary 2005

Sabbaticals

John Blake

President

I understand that Linsey has already used the traditional “term’s gone by quickly” opening for her sab report, so I’ll acknowledge her right to it first, and then say, This term seems to have gone by remarkably quickly. But what a full term it has been:

This Week . . .

I’ll do a fairly succinct round-up of everything that has gone on from my point of view, and what awaits to be done next term, but first I shall say a few things about this week. I’m sure everyone in Council is aware of what has happened with regard to the OxStu and the collective resignation of the staff. I wrote and circulated a statement to all Common Room Presidents and OUSU Reps which outlined the circumstances, and ended with the conviction that the correct place to discuss changes to the running and management of the OxStu was in an open and fair forum. In keeping with that, I won’t go into any further details here; I will answer any questions that arise in Council.

The Rest of the Term . . .

The rest of my reports to Council cover the major aspects of this term: success in getting the University to extend its green electricity contract, campaigning for Azim, ongoing consultation on the Academic Strategy Green Paper, the problems new charities legislation poses for OUSU, and the Amended Budget.

Of these, still ongoing is the Academic Strategy consultation, OUSU’s submission for which is before Council today. It is now also joined by the Governance Review consultation, to which we will need to respond by 4th Week of next term. Please everyone read it and send in your ideas. Also ongoing, obviously, is Azim’s case – there will a rally the SATURDAY AT 1pm IN BROAD STREET. Please attend, and bring down as many others as you can – if it can be shown that Oxford students are right behind Azim, his case is strengthened immeasurably. I have still yet to be able to finalise a meeting with CUSU and Cambridge University to discuss the charities issue, but the relative quiet of Easter should soon provide a solution to this problem.

The Amended Budget has now been approved by the Joint Committee of Council With Student Members. They have also agreed that our elections were fair, although there was some comment on the tone of the RO’s Report; I have thus put in a consideration of this for the Elections Review Board, if Council agrees to establish it. The Budget for next term will be crafted (I hope!) slightly earlier than last year’s, which will allow people to examine it thoroughly before passing it – however, I am also going to try to expand it to include more useful information, so these aims might prove mutually exclusive.

Other than that, I have some thanks: much gratitude to Steve Harper for all of his work as RO. Also, enormous thanks to all of the members of the Executive for their help and endurance this term – without this dedicated group of people, in particular our unpaid and underappreciated part-time Exec, huge swathes of important work for Oxford students would never get done. Others who deserve praise are the business team, for the ongoing success of Zoo, and the office

staff, for their near exhaustible patience with the keen young things who run around their offices all day. Many thanks to all of them.

Nicky Ellis

V-P (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)

There's been a fair amount happening with equal opportunities this term; DA seems to be up and running again, and we held a meeting that was very well attended-the specifics are well covered by Leonardo in his report; various people have expressed an interest in standing for QR co-chair, and the exec officers with responsibility for equal opportunities have held some very productive discussions. We do still need to proceed with caution and make sure that we are not replicating the problems of the past, and that we are willing to question what we are doing and sure that it is done for good reasons.

I've spent quite a lot of time looking at the situation with Counselling service waiting times; the following reproduces the information I've sent out the common room presidents and welfare reps, but may be useful for all:

As many of you are aware, there has been a serious problem with the university counselling service (OUCS) waiting list recently. I've been talking to them about this over the past weeks, and the situation is improving. The problem came to a head because they have two members of staff on long term sick leave, and they don't have enough budget to pay for replacement staff. However, temporary funding from a trust fund has just been secured, an extra person will work 2 days per week, and Current staff are also working extra hours where they can and some of the term time staff are being paid to work into week ten to try to clear some of the back log.

This still doesn't mean service as usual, but does mean that it is still worth people contacting the service now- its still the quickest way they're likely to get counselling.

When students phone they are now being told that:

The waiting list is longer than usual at present;

that they will be sent information explaining what to expect and that it will also give them suggestions on where to find alternative support while they are waiting;

they are sent a form to fill in; the form asks if they want to be phoned to discuss the delay and how it is affecting them. It also asks them to indicate if they have exams this year.

In emergencies, students should go via their GPs- but it's worth noting that the counselling service is never an emergency service.

In terms of other options

people can go via GPs.

There's the ISIS centre- this is an NHS Counselling Service, which accepts Self referral. Waiting lists are almost certainly likely to be longer than those at OUCS. However, its worth people considering, especially if they think they might need long term help.

contact details:

The ISIS Centre

Darlington House, Little Clarendon Street.

556648

Various people in the University have been duly concerned with this, and its important that we keep it in everyone's minds- I've been raising it with any one who might possibly be interested, but its also really helpful to get letters coming in from across the student body, so that the university realises that this is of widespread concern. I've written a draft motion for colleges I response to the situation, and many are taking this forward. The service is joint funded by the university and the colleges, and so pressure needs to be brought both at governing body level and upon the central university. We're not asking for a specific funding increase at the moment, just trying to get an acknowledgement that a commitment to increase funding, and increase funding quickly, is necessary. Please do contact me if you want more information.

The Primary Care Trust (PCT) have also been taking up a lot of my time; this organisation has responsibility for the majority of local health care provision that isn't hospitals- so, GP's, mental and sexual health provision, and so on. There is currently a proposal on the table to build a new health centre, in approximately 2010. You may have seen the row in the press over student consultation, and the emergency motion that went in to last council. I was approached by a PCT representative back in October, whom I met with in November; we discussed possible methods of consulting with students; I felt that the survey they had designed was unsuitable for students (and indeed I had questions as to its value at all, but that's a longer story). I did however say that I would circulate some information via welfare reps and CRs, if he sent me something designed with students in mind; the response of those I showed the survey to confirmed my concerns about its usefulness; I then awaited the information I was promised via email- which I cannot find a record of. To be fair to them, the PCT believe this was sent out soon after the meeting. It was then the end of term, and, disillusioned with the whole process, I did not take it further nor did they contact me again.

However, I became concerned once it was reported in the local press that the PCT were claiming that they had consulted widely with students, especially as students had been specifically excluded from the original mail out of surveys via surgeries. We had also talked about the other relevant people in the university who should be consulted- for instance, the disability office, the counselling service, college nurses etc.- and I then found that none of these people had been directly consulted. I have numerous concerns about the whole process; however, myself and the graduate representative to the university committee for student health and welfare, Samir Sinha, have been talking to various PCT people recently, and are still reasonably optimistic that we can salvage the student side of the consultation process to some degree, and the PCT seem keen to do the same. We attended a meeting to consider site options- which I felt was not particularly constructive, as I still do not think they have yet properly analysed the needs of the student population, and such an analysis must precede, in my mind, the more detailed discussions of site and the relative merits and demerits of integration. I have been promised a further summary to circulate, and will make sure I follow this up if I don't hear anything this time! That should be circulated before the end of term - please do respond with any thoughts and concerns.

Condom ordering and distribution will be handled from now on via our General Office Staff, Gill and Maria. I hope this will provide better continuity from year to year and a more efficient service. It will still be the VP (welfare and equal opportunities)'s call on what is ordered, in terms, of brand, type, etc, and so still ultimately your choice, so still raise any matters of concern with me, and obviously I'll pass orders on.

Those are the main specific things that have occupied my time; case work continues as ever, as does the process of lobbying the university over provision of advice and welfare services for students.

Thanks to all the sabs and exec, Dan, Gareth, Emrys, Jamie, Leonardo, and everyone who turned up for DA, Samir, Alison, Steve (x2), Junior tribunal, all the office staff, and all the many other people who have been a help and support all this term. x

Rebecca Wilkinson

V-P (Women)

What have I spent most of my time this term on?

Women's Cabaret, which was a fantastic success, took an immense amount of time and stress. I never realised what a mission it is to run a music event with no basic technical abilities! But it all worked out in the end, and we walked away with record profits for the Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre.

I want to thank all the performers who were wonderful, and made the night the great success it was. All the girls in "In the Pink", Annwen Bates, Tessa Andrews, Katy Asimeng, Helen McCabe,

Tani Mauriello, Rachel Wechsler, Alison Kennedy and Emily Waples. I would give anything to have a quarter of the talent you all have.

Thanks also goes to Claire and Emma for constant support, and Amna for her ideas and input. To Dan and Ian for the venue and the encouragement. And to Ian and John for the help with heavy lifting and moving.

To the wonderful Ally Henderson for the piano [!] thank you thank you thank you.

To Pete for, at least pretending, to understand how microphones work. And to Louise and Chris for mental support on the night.

Eating Distress Guide: we now have all the text [apart from 2 people – you know who you are!!] Let the quarking commence. It is a guide dedicated to the needs of OXFORD STUDENTS, which is why it has been so time heavy as it can not be simply generic. We hope this will enhance its use and fingers crossed it will be out for the start of Trinity in every common room. My Casework shows there is a real need for more information about eating disorder support to be out in the colleges and I hope this can help.

OUSU is also hosting the regional National Eating Disorders Association Conference next week, and I will report back next term what comes out of that.

The Safetybus – is really lacking in drivers and co-drivers, and I can only have nightmares about how it will work next term when Brookes are no longer in session. I think it will have to be reassessed on a week by week basis for viability. I love driving the bus, and I want to emphatically thank all the drivers who have volunteered, we need none drivers too so..... women@ousu.org if you're able.

The Elections: Only really took up mental thought process time. I'd like to congratulate both candidates on the way the election was run, and wish good luck to both in the future. I hope that Ellie has a wonderful year in OUSU and I look forward to hearing her plans.

Women's Campaign, has suffered from a few speaker cancellations and snow! But we hope to kick off next term with a big visual campaign, incorporating the postponed OSAARCC speaker and the Reclaim the Night March.

It was a shame to cancel the Reclaim the Night, and thank you so much who showed an interest and gave their input into how it should run [especially Gina and Emily, who were full of inspiration about it]. The weather seemed to be against us, but we are determined to hold one next term where hopefully the elements will be on our side. If we can combine it with the OSAARCC speaker meeting, this could be a corner stone for a sexual abuse awareness campaign that wom cam has considered running.

Finals Forums have not been as diverse as I've hoped. This mostly due to the heavy schedules that most tutors have. However they are getting positive feedback, and I hope the ones in 8 week are equally well received.

The NUS pro-Choice Conference in London mid-term has set the ball rolling, and in 9th week I will be attending NUS Women's Conference in Coventry. I have never been to one of these before so I am terribly excited if not a little perplexed at what to expect!

The Women's Open Day: has rather been forced on to the backburner due to the Cabaret and RTN. However, it is all set to go forward on the 15th March in Balliol. Please, if you would be interested in volunteering, do get in touch. We offer a free lunch and a t-shirt!!

Plus loads of OUSU general stuff, casework and University meetings.

Term is always fast and furious, however this vac seems to be shaping up much the same. Two conferences, a poster campaign, a guide and a "contingency Nightbus plan" are probably going to be the key elements. All of which you can read about in next terms report.

Thank you to all the sabs, staff and the wonderful wonderful pt-exec without whom I could not do half the work I do, you all work above and beyond the call of duty and we love you for it.

This term, the world of academic affairs has been dominated by the publication of the Academic Strategy. I've worked closely with the OUSU President, JCRs, MCRs and other interested parties to canvas student opinion on the issues within the paper. I've also sat through the presentation on the Strategy several hundred times, but this has nevertheless been useful, both in aiding my understanding of the Strategy and in assessing how it is being received across the collegiate University. The OUSU response to the Strategy is being presented to Council for discussion today; it encompasses much of the feedback that we have received from common rooms and I hope that it will be the beginning of a prolonged consultation with students on this crucial issue. Aside from this, the recent publication of the Governance Review begins another round of consultation on an issue that will transform the workings of the collegiate University; this is something John and I will be working on over the vac and motions will come to Council early next term.

The National Student Survey also hit the inboxes and pigeon holes of Oxford students this term...I hope it also hit the trash folder or recycling bin just as quickly! The stance that Council took towards the survey in Michaelmas Term gave me a strong mandate to take forward and I have continued to pursue this. I've attended further meetings with HEFCE about reporting methods and how the NSS can be improved in future years. I've also answered emails from curious Oxford students on the issue, sent a joint memorandum with the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) to all finalists and wrote a piece for the Oxford Magazine. The results of the survey will begin to appear towards the end of my time in office, but I'll liaise with my successor to ensure that we keep a close eye on this in the future.

Hilary Term began with a visit to Harvard and Princeton to research study skills provision as a point of comparison with Oxford; Hilary Term will end on Friday of 8th week with a paper to EPSC on the issue. I have worked closely with JCRs and JCCs in carrying out an audit of the current provision, which forms the basis for the paper. If you'd like to see the paper, please do let me know - I'll be circulating it to all JCR officers and JCC reps once it has been discussed and the paper has already been circulated around the executive. I've thoroughly enjoyed working with the IAUL (Institute for Advancement in University Learning) on this issue and hope that a precedent has been set for future co-operation between OUSU and the IAUL.

With the examination period approaching, the casework load has continued to be steady. This is the most important part of my job and always takes priority. Recurrent issues that have arisen from casework have been discussed with the appropriate University body, in the hope that procedures can be changed to ensure students needs are paramount. Preparing for and attending University committees takes a phenomenal amount of time, if one wants to be well-informed and consult as widely as possible and this does take up a lot of my time on a daily basis.

Academic Affairs Committee has had a productive term. The Student Charter has been tabled as a motion in several JCR meetings, following a discussion at the committee. Similarly, stint reform and attitudes to classes/lectures have generated some interesting responses which have often formed the basis of my discussions with the University. Libraries are, as ever, a matter of interest - I'm going to be holding an open consultation process on what students believe the role and nature of the library system in Oxford should be, before bringing a motion to Council next term to clarify what is a very, very messy libraries policy. A JCC Forum was also held early in the term to set up points of communication between OUSU and faculty reps. Keeping a track of who is and who isn't a JCC Rep is a mammoth task (the email list is 285 and growing...) and with such irregular patterns of composition, changeover times and role within the faculties, this is only exacerbated. This needs to be tied together more closely and this is something I'll be looking at next term.

The Writing Workshop continues to function two nights per week, staffed by unpaid, trained peer-tutors (current students, some of whom have finals looming...). Demand for the workshop has increased considerably over the course of this year, with many students asking for services that the Workshop cannot provide (for example, a peer-tutor to be specifically assigned to one student). There have also been a number of requests from common rooms for revision and study skills sessions; this is something I have helped to facilitate, but again, it is difficult for OUSU to run this service as effectively as it could potentially be run without University support. Much of this forms the basis of the paper about study skills that will be going to EPSC.

Over to the other part of my job: Access. Hilary Term is always pretty crazy for Target Schools and this year has been no different. The Target Schools Handbook is something that I am really proud of - there are some really insightful articles in the book, all written by current Oxford students, that could potentially change a prospective applicants perspective on Oxford. Several schools have also requested additional copies, suggesting that someone must have a use for them! The delivery of the Target Schools Handbook was swiftly followed by the HUGE mailout to every state school and FE College in the country. This was done jointly with the Women's Open Day mailing, to save on postage and time, whilst avoiding unnecessary replication. AND - we beat the record of stuffing 2936 envelopes in just over 3 hours! Since the mailing went out, bookings for our events have begun to come in; Pembroke/ChCh (21st June) is now full and our Conferences in Northern Ireland have lots of bookings. A new mentoring scheme in Oxford Community Schools has been launched this term and there are now around 25 mentors at the school. Over 150 Oxford students have volunteered to visit schools in their home areas during the vac. I've also co-ordinated training sessions for those involved in Target Schools, both early in term with the Admissions Office and similar sessions for those involved in the Easter Visiting Scheme this week. The Alternative Prospectus is one of my major projects for the Easter vac - the section editors have been working hard to get as many contributions as possible and I hope we'll be able to get this finished by the beginning of term. Much time has also been spent dealing with random enquiries from students and the admin of Target Schools, plus I've attended all the relevant admissions meetings throughout the term.

Aside from my specific portfolio work, I've helped out with the general running of OUSU - its amazing how much time is spent in meetings and contributing to the day-to-day running of the Student Union.

As it's the end of term, its 'Thank You' time again....thanks to the rest of the sabs, Dan and Gareth for all their hard work, support and continued efforts over this term and to the OUSU office staff for ensuring that things continue to run smoothly. To the Part-time exec - your dedication and commitment to your roles goes way beyond the call of duty - your support and enthusiasm does not go unnoticed and I could not do my job without your input. To all the co-chairs and exec officers who work with me on my campaigns and committees - thanks for being wonderful, dedicated and fun to work with. Thanks to the Writing Workshop co-ordinators for giving up their time to serve the needs of students. Thanks to all those who have been involved in OUSU this term in ways that often go unnoticed - you may not hold a particular office, but still play a fundamental role in OUSU's work. Finally, thanks to all those who I've worked with and friends from outside the confines of OUSU Towers for their support and understanding over the course of the last eight weeks.

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| Ian King Community) | V-P | (Charity and |
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Hilary Term has been another crazy term. Apologies for the length of this report (it will, undoubtably be longer than I had hoped!).

On the community front, the Alternative Careers and Volunteering Fair (ACVF) was certainly the most notable task on this term's agenda. The Alternative and Voluntary Careers Fair held at the Examination Schools on February 12th was one of the principal events in this term's calendar. Last year's cooperation with the Careers Service were carried through this year, with frequent meetings taking place since September between myself and members of staff in Banbury Road. The aim of the ACVF was to allow students the opportunity to meet companies, groups and organisations involved with careers and projects which were by no means mainstream – well, there weren't any Law firms or people recruiting Management Consultant in attendance!

The collaboration with the Careers Service worked very well. Dividing tasks between us proved successful and having the ability to draw on each others resources certainly helped a great deal. During planning, a very broad and quite extensive list of employers from 'alternative' backgrounds was drawn up and our hopes were high of having a diverse range of organisations in attendance. Sadly, and despite multiple phone conversations chasing companies up and our decision not to charge charitable organisations, only about 45-50 groups replied positively. A large proportion of these groups were voluntary and gap year-esque projects, which in itself wasn't a bad thing – working in the voluntary sector is an important way to become informed and gain experience in such areas – but it was one thing which was picked up in the feedback forms. The unfortunate last minute withdrawal of a number of recruiters (they had colds – lame excuse), such as Oxfam, tipped the balance further away from careers. Although it is desirable to have as many organisations in attendance as possible, it is very hard to get the correct balance and to attract the best mix. Last year's fair was organised jointly by an employee of the Careers Service and the VP (C&C), both of whom only had one year contracts. This year's involvement with permanent members of Careers Service staff will hopefully allow contact to be maintained and ensure a greater degree of continuity throughout the years as the VP (C&C) passes information on to their successors. With this in mind, I have high hopes for the expansion of this important event over the next couple of years.

There was a great deal of interest in the fair itself, with well over 1,000 people attending – a figure that included around 100 students from Brookes, which is great. The event went remarkably smoothly, and Careers Service staff and my dedicated team of volunteers managed the continuous stream of students throughout the course of the day. The Examination Schools were incredibly hospitable and very helpful, so thanks to Keith Thomas and his staff. Thanks must go to Dick Lidwell, Anne Dutton, Angus McKendrick and Alex Caswell for making the event happen, to my intrepid assistants who dragged themselves out of bed to help out – Iain, Maria, Wen, Hollie, Ellie, Jess, David, Emma and Claire (sorry if I've missed anyone out!), and finally to Paul Kreitman (Balliol) for designing and creating the guide to the fair. It looked truly professional and was admired by all of the stall holders and many students in their feedback forms.

In February, I braved the northern climates of Blackpool for a weekend to attend Student Volunteering England's annual Student Conference. Attended by people active in volunteering and coordinating voluntary schemes in universities across the country, this conference proved to be a valuable opportunity to make contacts with like-minded people from around the country and to pinch a fair few ideas for voluntary projects which would work here through a series of seminars and a lot of tea. Something which became apparent is that Oxford does volunteering very well compared to a large number of other universities. With 23(ish) student voluntary groups covering a range of areas (disabled children, teaching English, development work, working in orphanages abroad, etc.) the initiatives in Oxford are stunningly diverse and well-developed for student-led groups according to the national norm.

This term, there have been more efforts to bring together these Oxford societies. By this, I don't mean to reduce their autonomy, but to use the (C&C) role to facilitate conversation, idea-sharing and problem-solving between these groups to make them more effective. Proposals to set up forums and emailing lists have been made and will be acted on, as have suggestions/requests to make posters about what the charities do and how students can get involved in them which can then be distributed to colleges and displayed in colleges and departments. This is something I would very much like to happen by next term. Other things going on at present: the OxfordGetInvolved site is being updated and we are trying to establish a biannual tea party for local elderly, hosted by OUSU in college locations at Christmas and in the summer, run by student volunteers. I am also keen to set up more projects which work with the local elderly, particularly those which help with hospital aftercare, to help people return to living their lives as normally as possible.

On the RAG side of things, this term' been another rollercoaster. The National Student Volunteering and RAG Conference kicked off the year on the 2nd January. Over 150 students descended onto Oxford, staying at Wadham and Pembroke and using the Said Business School as the conference venue. Pretty much everything went smoothly, with seminars going for two days and a full plan of evening events, the highlight of which was without a doubt the firewalk held on Gloucester Green. My one recommendation is this: never agree to host it again: once is enough!

The response of the University and the students at Oxford to the news of the disaster in Asia was overwhelming. The disaster motivated people from all over to take part in some form of fundraising activity to raise money for the Tsunami Appeal to help in some way. Events throughout the University have been particularly prominent this term, with things ranging from the joint club night in 1st Week in which Zoo joined with other club night providers to raise around £10,000 in funds to the Lunch for Aid plan brought to life by Queen's Colleges' JCR President, Rebecca Patton. The amount of aid was staggering, and a meeting in 0th Week with most of the JCR Presidents and Charities Officers offered an inspiring glimpse of the fundraising potential of each college.

The 17th February was the day chosen to do an event which was supposedly a joint Common Room fundraiser for the Tsunami Appeal. Having procured the Town Hall for the 12 hour Music Marathon for free, a group of JCR Presidents and Charities people set about recruiting bands to play. Much credit should go to Tristan De Souza, Mike Baker, Alan Strickland and Anoushka Kenley for bringing the musical dream alive. David Frenk of New College was a tremendous help, quite literally making everything work. Last minute searches for drum kits and minor things like PA systems tested various people's initiatives (and patience!). The event itself went okay – the performers were great and it worked well in the rooms. There was one factor missing – people. The turnout was disappointing, but those who came certainly had a good time – the atmosphere was buzzing and the bar was suitably lucrative! All in all, the event raised around £1,200 ish, which, in honesty, is better than nothing!

With so much attention drawn to fundraising for the Tsunami Appeal, raising money for RAG's nominated charities this term has been much harder than usual. In the face of tremendous media coverage, it is often hard to disengage from what is on the TV and realise that other terrible things are going on the world which aren't receiving anywhere near the amount of coverage, money or support. There is no clear solution, but it became very apparent that suddenly (and understandably), all charitable efforts became directed at one single cause which worried a large number of charities. Such instances as this however, highlight the generosity of people within our community – something which should be acknowledged, applauded and furthermore, encouraged.

RAG's nominated charities for HT were as follows:

Exeter College Vacation Project

Childline

Marie Curie Cancer Care

ZOV UK

Medecins Sans Frontieres

(Further information about these can be obtained from the www.oxfordrag.co.uk website).

A large number of events were held, with variable success. Taboo, the RAG/Zoo night at Thirst on Tuesdays, has been successful occasionally, disastrous on other occasions. MCR Speed Dating was far and away the highlight of the term at Thirst, with RAG's love machine facilitating the matching of people from around 12 colleges. The atmosphere was electric and people had a great time. It's something I'd definitely like to try once more. Bar crawls continue to be popular – a pair from St John's made the most effort with their cartoon-themed costumes. An attempt at running a charity auction at Park End was probably the term's low point, as our experiment demonstrated a certain lack of compatibility between party goers and the stationary nature of charity auctions.

The most successful events this term overall have been the Jailbreak and the Blind Date. Jailbreak contestants, having 'escaped' from Oxford Police Station, fled throughout the country, reaching Ireland, Lyon and Frankfurt. Our counterparts in Cambridge got as far as Tokyo and Hawaii (cheats) and Durham boasted San Francisco (luck). Overall, we raised well over £1,000 which is a brilliant result. Blind Date saw 4-500 people take to the streets in search of love, or at the very least, a friendly conversation-filled evening. Pairing up the forms was highly enjoyable, though I feel as though many participants were blissfully unaware (until it was too late) that their matches would get to see and study their forms!!

On Monday of 6th Week, next term's charities were nominated. These will be:

Save the Children

Jacari

Let's Play Project

Send a Cow

The Honeypot Charity

(As before, www.oxfordrag.co.uk has the details.)

Currently, we are running up to Mr and Miss Oxford, the ultimate battle of colleges, which will be held in the Oxford Union's Debating Chamber on Monday of 7th. Judged by the President of the Union, the OUSU VP (C&C) [elect] and last year's Mr Oxford, this contest should be one to be remembered! Huge thanks to Rag Exec for making this term possible – you really are all stars, to Camilla and Lucy for being brave enough to try meddling in MCR love lives, to Hollie for being a pillar of sense and reliability – an excellent President, and to Rachel for keeping me sane!

Other things, of course go on in OUSU beyond my Charities and Community portfolio. Several matters have arisen in OUSU which strongly suggest the need for stronger communication within. The explosive expansion of OUSU's commercial arm, particularly concerning Zoo, has had repercussions on other parts of OUSU, especially RAG. Problems arise with exclusive contracts with clubs which prohibit any other OUSU events taking place that night. Zoo's expansion will inevitably lead to contracts being signed for all seven nights of the week, which will, clearly create obstacles for other aspects of OUSU. These problems can hopefully be ironed out through greater communication and flexibility by both aspects of OUSU, but given that this was an unanticipated consequence of OUSU's unprecedented (but not unwelcome) commercial success, discussions of how commercial versus charitable activities in Bonn Square may take a good deal of thought.

Siobhan's departure as VP (Graduates) was one of this term's saddest turns of events for me. Siobhan worked relentlessly on promoting OUSU to graduate common rooms and had remarkable success with PGA and MCR Presidents Committees, getting participation to an all time high. She was an excellent and dedicated ambassador for OUSU and is currently being missed! Julian Brown, taking on Siobhan's representational role, seems to be doing an impressive job, and a great deal of credit must go to him for doing this at the same time as his presidential duties at St Anthony's and occasionally doing a degree! I hope that we can give him all the support he needs with this job.

Exec

Helen Bagshaw

Apologies for the length of this report...full marks and a big gold star to anyone who reads it right to the end!! It's just that as we only get this chance once a term to let you all know what we've been up to during the term, I thought I should have a proper recap of everything I've done...though I worry myself with the length of this list and exactly how much time I've spent in the offices to complete it all!! If you really don't want to read it all, just skip to the thanks section at the bottom; it's probably the most interesting bit!

Target Schools

My time as Target Schools Exec Officer started out with redoing the Handbook...it came back from the printers at the beginning of this term and looks great so thank you to everyone who contributed to it, from writing articles to the editing process. As I was previously a co-chair of the campaign, the first step this term was to appoint a new co-chair to replace me – welcome to Irene and I hope you have as much fun with everything as I've had so far!

The mailing was completed in 2nd week; copies of the handbook were sent to 2,936 schools and we managed to set new stuffing record! We also included details of our calendar of events for the rest of this year - we're off to Northern Ireland and Merseyside in 9th week, St Catz in 0th week Trinity and LMH and Pembroke in 9th week Trinity – and have received a good deal of bookings for these already so all is looking good.

The Easter Visiting Scheme is the other thing that we've been concentrating a lot of effort on over the past few weeks; the schools are now allocated, so thanks to everyone who has volunteered to undertake school visits – you really can make a great deal of difference!

Accommodation

Accommodation has thus far been the quietest of my portfolios, however I am intending to work much more on this over the next term. The first job I did was to help package up and send out all the Living Out guides to colleges – hopefully these have been of use to people when looking for accommodation this year. I have recently started looking into accommodation provisions and advice at other student unions, and am also looking into the possibility of reinstating some form of accommodation committee. Work will continue on these both over the Easter vac and next term. The other thing I'll be doing fairly soon is putting the Living Out Guide online and updating the accommodation web pages; hopefully this will be completed over the Easter vac.

Publicity

This has so far been taking up a large proportion of my time, working alongside Tom; this is mostly because we decided that maintaining www.ousu.org fell into our remit. After this decision we met the man from oncampusUK and started the long process of restructuring the design, layout and content of the website. This has been a massive undertaking and as a consequence we are only partially through checking and updating the content of the site. Work will continue on this next term and hopefully by the end of the year we'll have a lovely sparkly new website. Time will tell...

On the posters front, I have been getting to know how to work Quark and through doing so have produced posters for the OUSU Reps to put on their boards, informing students about who works in OUSU and what we do. Perhaps these have been useful to people and perhaps not, but at least the information is getting out there.

The third and final thing we've done in terms of publicity is to take control of the OUSU Live emails. Previously used as a method of advertising the council agenda and location, we thought we could do something more interesting with them. We hope you agree. Email is such a useful mode of communication and advertising vacancies via this medium has been proving successful so we will continue to use the format the OUSU Live emails have been written in for the upcoming term.

Equal Opportunities

This was something that wasn't in my original set of portfolios; however an invitation to the exec to attend meetings of the Equal Opps steering group was extended. After helping to organise the Holocaust Memorial Day, I decided that it would be nice to get more involved, particularly after the idea of combining Equal Opps and Access work. Following this I have agreed to sort out the web pages, having seemingly become the technology geek! Again, over the vacation I will be working more on this, especially the DA web pages, as I will be loading the DA Guide onto the site.

General stuff

I have spent far too much time in OUSU this term in general! Not only have I been working on my portfolios, but also I have been doing lots of other random stuff. In fact far too much to remember so this probably isn't an exhaustive list! I have made a database of JCR officers, I have put together lots of condom orders, tidied the clubs and societies resource room, I have been an "interim DRO" as Steve and I like to term it, I have attended and minuted many different types of meetings with many different people, I have helped to organise events for Holocaust Memorial Day, I have looked in to the Student Advice services at other student unions, I have redone the exec office(r) training booklet, I have sorted out some NUS/OUSU cards for people, I have pigged and flyered many many times...I'm sure there's more but I can't remember right now and I really hope that there isn't too much more or else I really will have spent too much time in the offices!

Thanks

Well I know that it's only the end of my first term on Exec so it's not like this is my or anyone on exec's last council, but I do feel as if this is the section of my report that I feel I need to spend most time over. I have many people to thank for many things this term so each will get a little section all to themselves. Aren't you lucky people! Though first I have to say that this term has been hard work but one of the most fun I've had since being in Oxford so thank you to everyone that I've met and got to know through doing OUSU work, you've all contributed to that. Linsey – where do I start?! Thank you for all the madness and the much needed dose of Ronan, and all the Target Schools fun, nights out and for always being there for me and to support me. I don't know how you get down everything you do and it constantly amazes me. Nicky – the good you do in your job may not be measurable in financial or material terms, but that doesn't mean you don't do a wonderful job. In fact, what you do for people means far more than any material thing and don't ever think otherwise. Thank you too for always being there, for your constant support and excellent advice and for all the times we've been out for coffee, food and a good chat. As you know it's always much appreciated. John – thank you for your sense of humour, for the musical entertainment and most of all for always being nice to me when I needed it most. I've felt recently like I can trust and talk to anyone in OUSU and you're no exception to that. Thank you especially for the support over the past week or two, it's something I won't forget easily. Bex – thank you for fun nights out on birthdays and women's cabarets and for the little chats and gossip, Ian – thank you for entertainment of the musical variety and always being a smiley and friendly face in OUSU, Lorna – Stop it!! Thank you for all the late nights and the gossip and the silliness and the lecture handouts and afternoons with *Arabidopsis!* Claire – thank you for always worrying about me even when I had not a thought for myself, and for always reminding me not to take on more things. I should listen to you more often!.. Tom D – thank you for the website fun and

randomness of emails and the dedication you consistently show this organisation. Matt – thank you for the drunken nights and the late night walks home, and the silly camel chats; another one who always tells me to say no – one day I'll learn I really will. Until then thank you for worrying about me enough to tell me that. Dan – thank you for support in a personal sense and a commercial sense, for always understanding why exactly it's necessary to rant about certain things and for wonderful Zoo nights out this term and the previous one. Stop working so hard! Alison – thank you for the random giggle fits and the drunken nights out and the talk about men and all the advice and help. Steve – thank you for a fun experience during the elections, though I won't do it again! Thank you most of all for the entertainment and the laughs. They've especially been appreciated over the past week or two. And the Target Schools co-chairs – thank you for the insane nights out and in, for Baileys and for gossip and for the fun and sheer hilarity. One term left guys, let's make it as good as this one!
Wow that was a long thanks!

Matt Baker

This term has seen many interesting and rewarding highlights and I hope to take my experiences forward to the next term and use them productively and creatively for students interests I represent.

Academic Affairs Common Room

This term my attendance to academic-affairs meetings has been less than desirable because of unfortunate timings of tutorials. As an attempt to bridge the link between OUSU and CR, providing resources and helpful information is vital. Posters are one medium and to that end, this term I have reworked the current academic posters for CR officers and have also produced a Writing Workshop Poster that will be produced professionally and available at the beginning of next term. Much discussion has been had this term on the Academic Strategy report and its implications for you and I. I think its important to remember that although it may not directly affect us now this will have telling consequences, for the better or worse, on our successors. The spectre of stint reform continues for the student body and in liaison with Linsey the campaign to address such issues as and when they arise as well as raising awareness of its potential deleterious effects continues, although this is reliant on communication between individuals as well as groups to OUSU. I will also continue the work upon the website which I have started, especially with respect to the study skills which are very useful and I would urge you to use and encourage others to do likewise. The website remains a constant work to improve and update. In many ways this term has laid the groundwork for many of the projects that we will strive toward and extend for the remainder of the year, this is especially pertinent for study skills.

Health and Welfare

The main focus in this portfolio has been with respect to meetings to provide CR officers with important skills. So this term I have learnt about the difficulties surrounding non-directional talking amongst other things. Attendance seems to be a problem and this may be a result of the fact that many CR officers possess the relevant training and knowledge, although I suspect that this does not account for all of this. It is our duty to make these sessions as useful as possible so if you know or know of others who have ideas please do get in touch with me (matt@ousu.org) or Nicky at welfare@ousu.org. This relates to a general point of the relationship between representatives and those they purport to represent; that this relationship is predicated upon a degree of interaction and (fair and honest) debate from all students. So do please feel free to get in touch with any ideas or suggestions.

Equal Opportunities - Queer Rights

The Equal Opportunities campaigns has proved the most difficult to organise, and this has been prior to actual work taking place upon the specific portfolios. Following the Holocaust Memorial Service we decided that it would be more effective to give particular control of campaigns to executive officers, much as has happened in the past. The Queer Rights campaign unfortunately

has lost its co-chairs for one reason or another. Thus I have been attempting to re-start the campaign and generate awareness of its existence and purpose. To that end we have advertised for co-chairs and have received responses from people interested in getting involved in one way or another. Hopefully we can now move forward to regenerating the QR portfolio.

General and OSSL

Apart from this, my general presence in OUSU has resulted in many ad hoc ventures, including the joys of stuffing envelopes for a variety of different purposes. Being a member of the OSSL board I have also had the opportunity to do various tasks, usually along the have a think, line which at times have been very interesting and by the beginning of next term there will be even more reason to come to your Zoo student union entz nights, but you will have to wait!

Thanks to all I have had the privilege of working with this term. That,s to all the Sabbaticals, Exec Officers, Business Team and Office Staff and everyone else. As I expect from people who do care an awful lot about their student union and the body of people that it represents you guys are enjoyable to work with. My only note of worry at times is the severe lack of sleep some of get. Sleep more please, you know who you are!

Tim Bennett

It has been an interesting and enjoyable first term on the exec. I have been responsible for two particular areas: the Overseas Scholarship Scheme (OSS) and the campaigning aspect of academic affairs. The OSS is a valuable, but sadly under publicised scheme. OUSU has a role in encouraging colleges to take on students and in sifting through the initial applicants. Competition is fierce, with less than 10% of applicants being offered a place. Candidates must demonstrate great need, and are sponsored jointly by the university, colleges and JCRs. This makes the scheme almost unique, and OSS scholars are not only of exceptional quality, but also very keen to pay back the generosity of their college and JCR. The academic affairs portfolio covers broader issues. This term, we have begun trying to improve the work of JCCs and the website. This is especially important in helping our campaigns on stint reform, which I believe to be one of the most important issues concerning students. In the coming term, we hope to raise the profile of this campaign.

As well our work on our allocated roles it is vital that members of the exec take collective responsibility for the work of OUSU. This requires having as much information about the operations of OUSU as possible and I have been concerned about the lack of control that the exec has over both OUSU's finances and OSSL. However I know that John is very keen on finding solutions to these problems and I am confident that we will do so in the near future.

Claire Chalmers

The first term of life on the OUSU Exec has proved to be challenging, hectic and ultimately enjoyable. It's been a real learning curve – with the lessons being learned mainly through doing, hopefully without making too many mistakes and a real joy to work with such a focussed, committed group of fellow exeeees. Below are short reports on my portfolios.

Equal Opportunities

Holocaust Memorial Day probably stands as my most significant involvement with this element of things. Many e-mail conversations and some very productive meetings saw a group of interested individuals from the university (beyond OUSU, in the main) organise a number of events to mark the day – all of which were well attended and (I hope) allowed people to remember, reflect and respond as they felt comfortable doing. As the one who ended up being the main point of contact, I've written a longer report on the organisation and content of the day as well as offering some suggestions drawn from lessons learned from this year. If anyone would like to read this, please just e-mail me (claire@ousu.org). I have also taken on executive responsibility for the currently inactive Anti-Racism Campaign alongside Tom Dale. We are now trying to see if we can

recapture interest in this campaign, beginning with a meeting which will have happened last night (Thursday 7th February). Watch this space...

Women's Campaign

This term's activity has been one focussed on events. The Women's Cabaret came to be a great success (after a technically fraught beginning!) Thanks and congratulations should go to all the performers, Rebecca Wilkinson and all others who gave their time and energy to the event. My main involvement has been with the Reclaim the Night March which has been organised through a small sub-group and will be happening next term after recent weather conditions necessitated postponement. The Women's Open Day is also upcoming in 9th week. Weekly meetings (5pm, Preswick Room, St. John's) are open all women although current regular attendees are, in the main, Women's Officers. We had a productive workshop exploring the scope and possibilities of the position of Women's Officer earlier in the term. Attendance sagged during the middle of term but now seems to be on the rise again, which is good to see and will hopefully bring new ideas to the campaign. Emma Jones has stayed on, as committed to co-chairing the campaign as ever, and she has been joined this term by Hepzhi Pemberton. Both are doing a great job.

Promoting Choice

This campaign will hopefully become active in the very near future – last terms referendum would seem to confirm the need for a forum in which we can discuss and promote the choices faced by women who fall pregnant whilst studying here. Earlier in the term I attended a day conference organised by the NUS Women's Campaign for their 'Pro-choice and proud of it!' campaign along with Rebecca Wilkinson. The day was inspiring and many of the speakers also underlined that there is a lot of work that can be done, locally, nationally and internationally on this issue, if people so choose.

Eating Disorder Support

This term, work on this has focussed on properly overhauling the Eating Disorder Support Guide produced by OUSU. A small group has been meeting when appropriate for editorial discussions. Deadlines have had to be extended to allow further submissions to be gathered which has prevented us from having it ready for this term but it will undoubtedly mean a more helpful guide in the long run. The work being done here has demonstrated to me the current lack of good support for Oxford students facing this problem.

If you have any questions regarding the above, do please ask in Council or feel free to e-mail me (claire@ousu.org).

Tom Dale

Ethics: Ethics Committee continues to be incredibly successful. We have persuaded Oxford Limited to integrate standards equivalent to the 1998 Clean Clothes standards into the contracts they use with their suppliers; thus giving significant support to workers' rights and welfare. We await the concrete results of this, in terms of their being transparent information vis-à-vis where the 'University Community' product is being sourced from (including data right down to the factory of origin), as well as an action plan on implementing the 'right to join a free and independent trade union' condition for non-'University Community' produce. We are in the process of helping Oxford Limited to 'develop a substantial volume' relationship with a fair trade producer (or producers) by facilitating an open day toward the end of March. As far as we know, these moves are unprecedented nationally.

The Ethical (or Socially Responsible) Investment campaign (check out: www.srioxford.org.uk) also continues to go from strength to strength; with 4 new college campaigns having sprouted during the term – bring the total to 12. I'm more than happy to talk to anyone about how they can make their college a responsible investor – it's not as hard as you think! Negotiations with the University continue to move in geological time, though we're getting there slowly. It will be necessary to bring a motion reaffirming our support for this to council in next term. Also, I have

been networking with other Aldwych group ethics officers about more effective campaigning and internal ethical monitoring. HOWEVER: I need a new co-chair!

NUS: As far as I know, there hasn't been an active NUS committee in OUSU before this term. We will have met 5 times by the end of HT; and I hope that it's helped those who've been able to attend to understand the NUS and prepare for Annual Conference. We are also in the process of helping NUS reps and CRs to get the information from the NUS that they need to make a sensible decision about centralised vs. autonomous affiliation. I continue to believe that, whatever way is best, every CR has sufficient good reason to join the national union: to not do so is unproductive and short-sighted. All those affiliated colleges will begin to have access to NUS officer training at the beginning of next term.

Publicity: We have inaugurated the OUSU Mail: a fortnightly bulletin to the OUSU Live e-list (which includes over 7,000 students) but which (inexplicably) has never been systematically used before. Combined with occasional ad hoc mails, these are designed to give OUSU members a drip feed of information on what we do for them, and how they can get involved. We will need to think very carefully about how (and if) we use the service in future, and talk to the FF organisers about the best ways to collect information for this. There are new posters as well, done by various people. I hope that we will be able to get the website into a new and decent format by the beginning of next term.

Fol: There is no formal role or mandate for an OUSU officer to coordinate and aid in use of the Freedom of Information Act. However, I believe that it's such a powerful tool in strengthening our relationship with the University, and CRs' relationships with their Colleges, that it's really important that someone does this, as a matter of assisting CR officers and OUSU's campaigning work. CR presidents have been given a brief guide to the act, which we've produced; and we've helped people to make Fol requests on subjects ranging from Investments (see above) to various disabilities issues. CR Presidents have received guides to the act, which I hope that they will look over. An Fol page will hopefully appear on the OUSU site as part of redesign.

Equal Opportunities: Holocaust Memorial Day: the process of organisation showed how OUSU is best when it brings together and facilitates groups of students; resourcing them, but allowing them to take the lead. Recently, there have been some very wide-ranging discussions about the role, practically and constitutionally, of the Equal Opportunities campaigns within OUSU. Most at issue has been the Anti-Racism campaign (though something of this may relate to other campaigns as well), and I will say what the current thoughts of many people are about this, because there should be discussion before a motion is put. We think that we should abolish the anti-racism campaign because it doesn't generate involvement in its current form and because it is absurd to have a body of undefined quorum and unrestricted composition which can make policy and act for OUSU. However, it clearly needs to be replaced by a structure which will ensure that such issues are never able to fall by the wayside and which acknowledges internal tensions within the objective of such a broadly defined campaign. Our suggestion: that, instead, there be in the standing orders a mandate for the exec to maintain a designated officer or officers whose roll it will be to actively reach out, consult and bring together forums for discussion (where appropriate), in order to facilitate the establishment of effective, focused campaigns on this subject (and possibly others) through Council. If you like, suggestions and thoughts to tomd@ousu.org

Internal OUSU stuff: I've been doing my best to help the officers of OUSU make better use of the various IT which we have; particularly the website and OUSU Live/Headporter service. Also, we have found a new Press Officer. Over the vac I am going to finish the guide to working in OUSU which I had started at the beginning of term.

Stephen Longden

This term has been incredibly busy and hectic. Whilst effectively giving up on academic work I've somehow managed to squeeze in the time for some fun OUSU work! Mainly, I have been concerned with helping to sort out training for OUSU's delegation to NUS conference in April. We are making a big attempt to make sure that delegates feel prepared for conference so they are not overwhelmed by the jargon and bizarre procedures that go on there. This has been interesting as NUS politics is a big interest of mine and it's been great to work with Tom Dale and Tom Packer in that. I have also been in the process of writing a report on how OUSU has been portrayed in the media this term. At the time of writing, this is slightly incomplete as I've spent the last day or so helping to provide articles for the OxStu (conflict of interest?!...) Suffice to say, I hope to have done the report by the time you read this. In general, I do not believe that the portrayal of OUSU in the media has been bad this term – certainly a lot more positive than last term. Criticisms have been broadly limited, mainly because OUSU has been functioning fairly smoothly this term (the OxStu issue beside) – certainly compared with Michaelmas. To briefly further mention the OxStu issue, I do not know any insider details about how the conflict arose. However, I am an OUSU exec officer and it is therefore my duty to help with OUSU's operations if I am asked to do so. I certainly do not consider myself to be a 'scab' and I do not consider such insinuations as those coming from journo-hacks to be particularly helpful. In general, I am looking forward to next term when I can be more single-mindedly focused on OUSU (and when the weather is nicer) yet I have enjoyed this term greatly (even meetings at 9:30am). It's certainly a lot more work than being a council delegate!

Tom Packer

NUS

Training has been reasonably satisfactory and I think has helped people. We have endeavoured to send out to the NUS reps list key information. Actual training has been more informal. We have sought to explain the "informal" side of NUS- the motions, the policy, the experience and the factionalism, more than those elements that can easily be picked up by someone. For those who couldn't make the training-particularly those who don't come to the regular meetings I do urge them to contact me at TomP@ousu.org and/or Steve Longdon at Steve@ousu.org. NUS Conference is an incredible experience in every sense and it really helps to be given some idea of what it's like beforehand.

I also include the following information which is v important for NUS reps (kindly supplied by Tom Dale) if you're not on the NUS reps list and you're going to Conference-I strongly recommend doing so.

REGISTRATION; - you have to send

off your registration form to NUS really soon in order to be able to go, get accommodation and have a

vote. SO. If you haven't already done so;

i) if you can find the form, which you would have been sent in one of those big conference mailings a

while back, then send it off pronto.

ii) if you've lost it, then really sharpish, then go to

<http://www.officeronline.co.uk/events/allevts/269809.aspx> and look at the advice under the heading down the page. basically you'll have to fax a letter stating this off to a particular number, then send the form straight back when you get it.

More generally I would say on NUS that the last year has done little to shake my scepticism of its activities. Sweeping reform has at last been achieved but instead of dealing with some of the worst problems of NUS- the large Union with a bar focus, the factionalism, the mad politization, the parallized Conferences, the over bulky stuff, the reforms seem more aimed at hurting democratic accountability and non-saabatical involvement. As for the 10£ NUS card... having said that if your

Common Room pay money to belong-it's imperative to send a representation to the Conference to defend your Common Room's interests and views.

Clubs and Societies

The most important thing here has been to start liaising with the University Clubs and Societies Office who have been extremely helpful. It strikes me that at least in the short term the most useful thing that OUSU can be doing is to keep a list of non-registered societies and publicized the Clubs and Societies Office. They are on St-Aldates street and their website links are

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/clubs/index.shtml>

and <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/clubs/clubsinfo/index.shtml>. Among other things they provide start up funding, mini bus hire, accounts advice and room hire.

Graduate Involvement

we have experienced the joy of another Quorate Postgraduate Assembly. We have also had a great deal of policy passed and ratified by Council. I am particularly pleased by the policy I proposed on making it easier for graduates to take time off their degrees to be an OUSU sabbatical- this has been raised in University forums and should now be raised at the Graduate Panel of the EPSC-I hope this can do something to get more graduate sabbatical candidates most obviously but not exclusively for VP graduates. I will reserve comment on the Graduate election until it is completed. I would say graduate involvement whilst still too low is on an upward trend.

More generally this term has been a highly noisy one. I would say I think there is a need for OUSU to look at certain areas, notably the election procedures which suffer from serious problems, OSS which I worry is not accountable enough, and the Finances which I think need to be changed to be more accountable-particularly in the absence of a VP finance. However there does appear to be signs from the highest levels of a consensus emerging on these issues that change is needed- and I look forward to significant improvement.

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| Wen Shi | Graduate |
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This is my first term as a Graduate Exec and juggling the position with full-time Dphil study at the hospital has not always been easy. However, I believe I have made good effort in fulfilling my duties and had a positive impact on the three committees with which I'm involved:

Graduate involvement:

During the Home Office consultation process on visa extension fees, I wrote a response arguing against fee increases and encouraged my friends to do so as well. I also held discussions with Siobhan McAndrew, then VP (G), and other Grad Execs on the impact of 4th year fees proposed by Oxford and OUSU's responses to it. In addition, I currently serve as the Graduate Representative to the Medical Sciences Divisional Board, providing student inputs on issues such as graduate admissions, college allocation and teaching assistantships.

After the resignation of Siobhan, Julian Brown took over as part-time acting VP (G). Since then, I have been primarily involved in ensuring we have people to fill the position, both for the remainder of this academic year and for next year. The election for next year's VP (G) was unexpectedly postponed due to challenges to the sole candidate's eligibility. During fifth week Council, I argued, along with fellow Grad Exec Tom Packer and many others, that Oliver Russell should be allowed to run. I was very encouraged that the great majority of Council sided with us and allowed Oliver to run for the position next Term. As for the VP (G) job for the remainder of this year, I am in contact with at least one potential candidate and hopeful that we will have a VP (G) elected in Council early next term.

Community:

I have been working closely with Ian King, VP (C&C), and community Co-Chairs on re-launching the committee. The major event we organized this term was Alternative Careers Fair, and I helped with calling the stallholders, setting up, directing students and cleaning up. We are also working on a meeting and social with members from various student-led volunteer groups at Oxford, which will take place tomorrow (Wednesday of 7th week). Also in the plans is a

questionnaire that we will use to survey volunteer groups and maintain an up-to-date information database at <http://www.oxfordgetinvolved.org/>

Disability:

At the beginning of this term, I got involved with a group of students interested in disability issues at Oxford. Largely because of the interest expressed by this group, Nicky Ellis, VP (W&EO) called a Disability Campaign (DA) meeting on Wednesday of 5th week to revive the campaign. About fifteen people, including several students with disabilities and college disability/welfare officers, attended the meeting. Those in attendance shared practices at different colleges and efforts by several students to approach the University Disability Officer to express student concerns. The campaign agreed on the following action items: 1) generate a template of best practices 2) obtain disability audit reports from the University and colleges 3) create a "roadmap" to better explain resources for disabled students 4) create profiles of colleges in terms of disability provisions 5) contact disabled students and generate "Disability Profiles" to be included online and in future DA guidebooks. Leonardo Martinez was elected Co-Chair of the campaign, and I will do my best to help him and the Campaign realize its worth goals.

Lorna Stevenson

I'm sorry that this is a long one and not the short, snappy soundbites expected of part-time exec reports. John is very fond of us being open and accountable and having a written memory so I've included lots of reflections on the last term. In a way it doesn't matter if nobody reads this, at least I said it.

OUSU Reps

Oh dear. We started the year with such hope: a new Guide, a goody bags, a room overflowing with lovely MCR and JCR OUSU Reps and, most importantly A PLAN. However, a whole half-way through the first meeting and the treasured plan had gone slightly out of the window. Things went progressively down-hill and I'm really sorry to say that the OUSU Reps haven't received nearly as much attention from me as they should. Many thanks to Tom and John for stepping in when plants, transcription factors and the access scheme got in the way.

Maybe it is inevitable that people will stop coming to these meetings. Many people stand for a CR position without really being that passionate about it and maybe I should have taken more notice of the fact that of the hardcore still attending at the end of last year three of us are now Exec Officers and one stood for VP Grads. However I would dearly love to make OUSU Reps relevant and interesting to the bog standard CR official and any requests you have for things we should cover are always gratefully received (or if you want us to make things more social, to decrease meeting frequency, to make more stuff for you – anything!) I know it took me at least two terms before I properly understood this organisation and I don't want to leave anyone as confused as I was. It only serves to increase disenfranchisement and if our representatives on the ground aren't enthused and informed about the work that we're doing is any wonder nobody else is. When an OUSU Rep couldn't care less, why should anybody else? Perhaps it's just me but I'm often surprised by the fact that people who have chosen to take on the job of finding out about their union and passing it on to common rooms simply don't want to know. OUSU is far more than just people blathering on in Council and if you let us we'll show you. I hope I haven't lost a whole years worth of officers and maybe another big push next term will do the job.

RAG (& OSSL)

Ahhh RAG. Guaranteed to bring a smile to my face. It's been a tough term with me and Iain playing very much piggy in the middle at times but things have worked out all right. Being both OSSL directors and RAG exec it is obvious that there is currently an issue with RAG and Zoo. OSSL does have a potential to make us lots of money and yes this is good but sometimes maybe we should be willing to sacrifice some profit in the name of being Good People. RAG is part of OUSU and so should be part of the consideration when decided what to do with OSSL. As I understand it we as OSSL directors are not allowed to think about the rest of OUSU when

making our decisions and instead must act in the best interests of the company and therefore aim for profit maximisation. This isn't right. OSSL must become part of OUSU proper and think about what it is doing from a union as well as a business perspective. There must be a way we can do this without having to make OUSU liable for OSSL's losses (perhaps but some additional aims in the memoranda or something?) and it must be done. Working extensively with RAGs from universities that have commercial and entz operations far more extensive than ours we are in a position to iron out our problems before they get any worse. As OSSL tends towards 7 nights a week we must recognise the fact that sometimes RAG would like to do something different: exclusive contracts are not a good thing for RAG. This is not to say that RAG is entirely without fault and sometimes they would do well to be grateful for the fact they have Oxford's largest entz provider and Europe's largest student publisher on their doorstep.

On another RAG musing I do wonder if our system of college reps actually discourages some of the 'RAG Randoms' as I always was from doing as much as they'd like. The same as with the OUSU reps – some college officers just don't care but the fact that they exist makes other people feel they are somehow 'not worthy' of coming along and helping out. RAG is definitely one of those things where we need to move away from it being for CR officers and make it a more social and fun thing to do.

Otherwise: Blind date was wicked as ever and sorry to all the RAG reps I shouted at. Hope everyone had fun! RAG week next term – it'll be kickass and I hope to see you all there. Thanks go to Ultimate Hardcore Rag for the laughs and the beds and to all the lovely RAG exec, especially Hollie who is so amazingly dedicated I can't believe it and also, is the BEST photocopier EVER.

OSSL

Apart from what has been said above (which is better than this and I'd read it instead!) my firm suggestion for OSSL is that it be made a proper exec portfolio and that anyone who takes it on only be allowed two others. This section should really be detailing all the things I've done with College Inequality which just hasn't happened this term. As someone who is going to be in Oxford for another two years I do also worry about the long term sustainability of such explosive growth. It is hard when you're only in a job for a year not to go for maximum impact in that year and not think about the future. Although this can be good for our efficiency in OSSL it has resulting in a (voluntarily) hugely overstretched business team and maybe we should agree that some ideas are good for the future but not right now. That said Dan a Gareth are legends and here's to late nights in OUSU.

General OUSU bits and pieces

Say your NAME AND COLLEGE in council. Sometimes you can't look up and it takes us a sec to write it down so it help if you pause for a sec to say it. Sorry that my 3rd week minutes aren't done yet but a 3-5 hour council meeting will take 6-12 hours to type up and something else just keep cropping up. Something has to be sorted out about this job, I don't know if it can stay in the part-time exec remit, it's such a horrible job.

Maybe a couple more part time exec would be nice? I might have three of the biggest but for anyone doing 3 portfolios it's a lot of work and something invariably gets neglected so if we need to do as many things as we do we need a couple more people. Otherwise, we could just do less? The alternative would be to get better at recruiting co-chairs but I think the Exec enjoy their 'hands on' role and would be reluctant to give it up.

Thanks: the big kids get them so I do too. To all the exec for putting up with me, especially to Hells (tidy-up!) for the laughs and with Tommy D for the support and the inspiration to keep going as hard as two you do. To Linsey and Dan for putting up with the crazy, to Iain and John for being so concerned by the crazy. To Emma for teaching me when to care and to Bryn and Bex showing me when you don't have to. For keeping me sane, for the little heart-to-hearts and reminding me what it's all about I am forever grateful to *Arabidopsis thaliana* and to The PMG

Campaigns and Committees

Community

The main focus of the Community Committee this term has been the Alternative Careers Fair in conjunction with the Oxford University Careers Service. This event highlighted some of the 'alternatives' to the mainstream careers which are frequently brought to the attention of Oxford Students. The Fair was held in the Exam Schools on Saturday 12th February (4th Week) and was extremely well attended. Thank-you to everyone involved in organising the event and those who helped out on the day. Our special thanks go out to the editors of the Handbook, Paul Krietman, Alex Caswell and Ian King who did an amazing job producing the very informative guide to the Fair. We are especially grateful to Ian for doing a brilliant job of organising the Fair and we hope it proved to be a useful day for all those who attended.

Disabilities Action

This term, Disability Action regrouped on 16 February and intends to re-energise its advocacy campaign and activities. Our mission remains to improve access and living conditions for students and staff with disabilities at Oxford. At the 16 February meeting, DA elected a new co-chair and discussed its future work-plan.

For the remainder of Hillary Term and the first half of Trinity Term, DA will focus on three activities:

1. **Access audits** – In 2002, the university (via the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Unit) conducted an Access Audit of university facilities to assess whether they provide adequate access and support to students and staff with disabilities. Some colleges have also conducted access audits, but their quality is variable, and not all colleges appear to have conducted such audits. DA will acquire copies of any access audits completed by the university and colleges under the Freedom of Information Act. We will then assess those documents, provide the colleges with feedback, and help ensure that there is adequate implementation of access audit recommendations in close co-operation with college and university officials. We will also encourage any colleges which may not have completed access audits to do so as soon as possible.

2. **Best practice.** DA will compile information about current college practices, policies, and procedures that are judged to constitute "best practice" in providing access and support to students with disabilities. From this compendium, we will produce best-practice standards or guidelines for all colleges and encourage them to adopt them. The standards will also enable us to conduct benchmarking and rate colleges based on their adherence to these standards.

3. **Improving DAG.** We are currently auditing the most recent issue of our publication, the Disabilities Action Guide, in an effort to improve it and expand it. Specifically, we hope to add more information to explain to students with disabilities how to use existing institutions and procedures to demand their rights under the Special Education Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). We are also working to make this information available via the internet and to disseminate the publication more widely.

These activities will provide DA with a strong foundation upon which to build more targeted and effective advocacy campaigns to improve disabled access in the university and the colleges. We encourage all members of the OUSU council interested in improving disabled access at Oxford to assist us in these efforts.

RAG

The new RAG Exec has done an amazing job organising a fantastic term's worth of events. I am extremely thankful for all of their enthusiasm and hard work this term without which RAG would not be able to function. The Exec has been supported by a brilliant team of College Reps this term and I wish to thank every single one of them for all their efforts. RAG hit the ground running this term with four major events in the first four weeks; The Ultimate College Bar Crawl, a Charity

Auction at Park End, the Doxbridge Jailbreak 2005 and The Biggest Blind Date Ever! This was the first year of the Doxbridge Jailbreak and we are very proud of our teams- who all got out of the country in the 36 hours allotted without spending a single penny. The return of Blind Date was very popular and over four hundred students from across the University went out on dates for charity. All of these events took a large amount of organising and would not have been possible without the help and support of the RAG Reps and Exec- Thank-you again. This term saw the first RAG MCR Speed Dating night at Taboo and it was an unbelievable success. Mr and Miss Oxford is returning again to the Oxford Union on Monday 7th March (8th Week) at 8.30pm and we hope to have a Mr and Miss from every college battling for the title of Mr and Miss Oxford. It promises to be a night not to be missed. Planning is well under way for a fantastic RAG Week (2nd Week of Trinity). If anyone is interested in helping out with RAG Week please contact Ian at rag@ousu.org. On a University Charity note we wish to thank Anoushka Kenley and Tristan Desouza for all their hard work in organising the massive university-wide Music Marathon in aid of the Tsunami Appeal.