



termly reports to council michaelmas 2005

Emma Norris

President

This is not going to be the kind of 7 million word report that deals with OUSU past/present/future, I'll save that for the summer.. Here is a relatively brief summary of the major topics of the term:

From Freshers' week to the end of term elections, this term has been a busy and sometimes difficult. The busyness I am happy about – we've seen excellent progress on Socially Responsible Investment, the Finals Gap, College Inequality and central affiliation the NUS; we've produced *many* informative and worthwhile publications; RAG's new night *Electric* has proved far more successful than Taboo last year; Freshers' Fair was the most successful ever; my office is tidy, which I'm sure those of you who ever visited John will agree is probably the biggest achievement of all. The problems I am less happy about, and will talk about how I think they can be avoided later in this report.

Campaigns

As I have discussed in previous reports, both Socially Responsible Investment and College Inequality are going well. As always, things are taking longer than expected, but nonetheless we've had a crowded speaker event and demo for SRI, and are taking a paper to University Council imminently. College Inequality is a longer-term campaign; the paper key to achieving change is in the making – as I have said, it will focus on minimum standards rather than just redistribution.

The NUS central affiliation 'campaign' deserves a paragraph of its own – I am very hopeful that Oxford's relationship with the NUS is going to change for the better this year. The quite high-profile (and no doubt unsettling for the NUS) disaffiliation of Balliol JCR in 6th week foregrounds the problems of the current relationship between collegiate Oxford and a national student union designed to work with central student bodies. Whilst I think devising a system that works for Oxford is going to be complicated, I'm confident that the NUS is as keen to have this resolved as we are. Please read my attached report on progress with the NUS so far for an introduction to the long-standing problems we have encountered, and the potential solutions that we can choose from next term.

Elections

The technical problems encountered during election-period will be covered by those sabbaticals and officers who were permanent members of elections committee. I had hoped that we could avoid the usual problems of factionalism and bitchiness that alienate students from the statutory elections. In terms of the candidate elections, I think this was generally achieved (much like last year) and want to thank all candidates for this. Also like last year though, the high-profile referendum did not work to a similar standard. In the weeks running up to polling day, accusations were thrown about in the student press and common rooms that I am positive did absolutely no good to either campaign. Legitimate calls for referenda shouldn't be undermined by the actions of a few. Hopefully when we see the referendum next term there will be more understanding about what it means, and more restraint shown by vocal campaigners. Elections always have their fun side though, and this year was no different, highlights include having to break into various ballot boxes with drills and crow bars to count the votes, getting locked in Exeter late on Thursday night whilst searching for their ballot box and almost getting beheaded by a ballot box in the VP Graduates car. How metaphorical.

Common Rooms

As is normal for Michaelmas, there have been quite a few affiliation debates; I am very happy to report that every common at which I or another sabbatical have spoken has almost unanimously reaffiliated to the student union. The debate in Jesus JCR is one that particularly sticks out for me – it was a proper discussion about the role of the student union that I think was informative and reassuring for both Jesus and OUSU.

The lines of communication between common rooms and OUSU have been alright but could definitely be much better. OUSU must accept responsibility for this; we have decided various ways to be far more proactive (I think the VP Graduates termed it 'aggressive love'..) in our relationship with common rooms. Instead of seeking to understand the mood of a college through an OUSU rep/ President meeting, we need to have OUSU officers in colleges for meetings, events and so on. Expect to see us a lot more next term.

The Oxford Student

You all know the Oxford Student was not distributed at one point this term. The paper is editorially independent of the student union, but come a crisis, the student union does tend to get dragged in. This is an inherent and perhaps sufferable consequence of owning a (rightly) independent paper. However, getting a balance between 'big' stories and responsible journalism should be a priority for the student press.

University Governance

The structure of the university has been topical this term with the publication of the *Governance Discussion Paper*; a reconsidered version of previous structural suggestions. To keep it brief, the paper continues to divide University Council into two separate bodies dealing with institutional and academic governance – creating a Council and an Academic Council. The student union, in line with policy, continues to oppose a Council with a majority of external members. The student union has proper membership of Academic Council (meaning we get votes) which is a move forward from our current attendance rights to University Council, but no rights at all to Council. We oppose this also. It is unclear whether these proposals will have a clearer path than the last, but Congregation in 8th week should provide an indication of how the staff of the University and colleges feel.

Central Grant to OUSU

The University have finally begun to meet on this; unfortunately the key discussion is not until 8th week, so I will have to report on that next term. As I have said before, I think we will have definite progress on this and Joint Committee of Council (chaired by Dame Fiona) are supportive on this.

Thank you to all sabs, part-time exec, campaigners, staff and the business team for a very lively first term. Merry Christmas! Emma xx

Chris Allan

V-P (Finance)

Publications

The Oxford Student has been successfully published most weeks this term, with only one minor(ish) problem. Thanks to the whole OxStu team for making this part of my job so easy.

The Women's Handbook has now arrived back from the printers, and thanks to Rob securing sponsorship the entire project can be run without incurring any cost to OUSU.

The Alternative Prospectus is (still) nearly finished, as it has been since about May. This should be finished over the vac, and ready for access events next term.

Radio

Oxide has had a very successful term, including a four week spell on FM. Well done to everyone involved, your skills became appreciated much more after Rob and I decided to walk into the studio and do a show ourselves – it's harder than it looks. And sorry to anyone who was listening.

Zoo

Zoo has continued to run successfully, and is looking like it made nearly as much profit this term as in the whole of last year. There's not much more to say about it really, except make sure to come to Wednesday's Christmas party at Park End, which will be amazing.

OUSU Cards

In the last week we managed to finally get hold of the data from the University, so can start producing the cards, which will be distributed at the beginning of next term. Emma and I are looking into ways to get the data earlier in future, although it seems that nobody in the University has it until about 4th week, which will make it problematic to ever produce cards in the first half of Michaelmas.

Budget

I'm in the process of a major overhaul of OUSU's accounting systems, replacing and integrating the four finance databases we currently use with a single custom-written system. This will give us the advantage of actually being able to see our financial position without auditors spending a month going over our accounts, which will be useful.

Over Christmas I'll spend time going over our exact financial position, and report back to 1st week Council (there will probably also be a few budget amendments to keep the budget up-to-date with the latest OSSSL profit forecasts).

Aidan Randle-Conde

Vice-President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities)

Is it the end of 7th week already? The weeks have gone so quickly! Rather than waffle on and on and on I'll try to keep it short. Well, perhaps a bit longer than it needs to be.

Condoms

Condoms are, as ever, part of OUSU's staple services. I've done my best to make sure that we're all up to date with condom payments, and most of the Common Rooms have been great about this. Most of the Common Rooms have taken their free allocation, so if you think you haven't collected them then come and see me! I'd like people's feedback about the condom system as well. Can it be improved? Is it wonderful? Do you want more colourful forms? Thanks to the Office Staff for all their help- they've done a great job!

With the introduction of condom machines (see below) there will be a new condom supplier. Much will stay the same (including price) except they will all come in threes.

A few Welfare Officers have mentioned condoms splitting or tearing. If this is the case then can you please let me know. OUSU changes the supplier to find the safest condoms we can at a reasonable price so please give feedback.

A lovely lady from Passante visited and showed me many cool sexual health resources with flavoured lube and space-age condoms. If Welfare Officers would like some central supply organising then that's no problem. I think the non-latex space-age condoms may actually be cheaper than our current supply (stronger too.)

Condom machines

I have finally managed to get to the end of the condom machine saga. Thanks to all the Welfare Officers for being excellent about this. The cheques are checked and should be sent off by now. The only thing left to do is decide what denomination of coins to use for each machine and arrange where you want college to put it. The machines will arrive and I'll press-gang someone into driving me around all day before next term starts.

Sam from Intelligent Vending is a very nice chap. He mentioned sharing the Oxford success story with other Universities, so I'll be working with him to get some sort of press-release style information for other Universities. Anyone who wants to help is more than welcome to do so. Credit goes to Sophie McDonnel. She did the initial legwork.

Pregnancy tests and attack alarms

This is more of a VP (Women) thing, but I'd just like to say that we have attack alarms, so please consider buying them, especially with recent increases in incidents of attacks in Oxford. Also, for the first time in quite a while (perhaps forever?) we're going to look into supplying cheap, reliable pregnancy tests. Both of these things make me very happy.

Elections

Elections took place this term, as everyone reading this will know. I'm glad to say that that election campaigns were generally very clean and well run, with no ballot boxes going down. Election reg reformation isn't really my thing so I'm glad to say that there are already people willing to go through and change the very rules that bind us in elections to something else equally bindy, but different. I sat on Elections Committee, who promptly told me to get off when I became too heavy (well, I wanted to get involved in the referendum) and a day or so before the election I joined again. There was much counting. I do enjoy a good election.

I'm less pleased about how the referendum (or lack thereof) worked out. Most people who spoke to me about it know that I was a fervent "NO" campaigner and had mentally prepared myself for a good campaign. I think that the referendum does need to happen, but only when it works within the rules laid out. Obviously there was

heated debate and there were also many different interpretations of the rules, but I think that this stopped being helpful in places. There was talk of knifing, there were Oxford Gossip posts and what started out as valid questioning of what the rules meant turned into something more divisive. Two tribunals later and the referendum was kicked out a few days before the election, leaving some rather confusing looking ballot papers. The referendum started out as a valid call for democracy but it very slowly fell apart. It will be back, don't worry, but next time everyone, including the voters, will know what it all means.

Thanks to Daryl for taking on the burden of democracy. It's not easy, especially when there's a referendum taking place. Enjoy your freedom.

Student Advice Service

The Student Advice Service is still going strong, which is good. There have been no major problems so far, although there do seem to be times when casework can legitimately involve all four of us and we find ourselves all trying to be too helpful! I want to look at the Student Advice Service a bit more closely over the vacation. I want some more support for the Student Advice Service Officers (especially Vice-Presidents (WEO) and (Women)) and I want more than just the policy as a guide for the officers. I also want a printer/scanner for the service, and most people seem to think that this is a good idea. Thanks obviously go out to Ellie, Ollie and Charlyne for all the hard work they've put in. It can seem thankless at times, but it really does matter.

Rough Guide to Welfare

The Rough Guide has been completely rewritten this year, and I want every single welfareish Officer to have one, including Women's Officers, Equal Opps Officers, LGBT Officers, SWD Officers, EM Officers and Presidents. I might also write a similar but much shorter guide for tutors, as they need to know some of these things too. I want constructive criticism of the guide because as it's an in-house publication I can change the content at will. Next on the list: Rough Guide to Equal Opportunities.

Posters, posters, posters

I like colourful posters. They've gone out to lots of Welfare Officers in lots of places. They'll go to absolutely everyone that they should do by the end of term, but please be a little patient as photocopying and stuffing envelopes takes time and I don't want to give the poor pigeon post chap a hernia by burdening him with all the paper in one go.

PCT Consultation

Big big thanks to all the CR Presidents who got back to me about the Common Room consultation, even if it was just to say "We're not that bothered either way"- it all helps! The central consultation, to which anyone can attend will be in the Seminar Room in Oriel on Monday at 3:00pm. Please come along if you're interested in that sort of thing. It's free!

Queer Action Week

Perhaps the biggest project for me this term (condom machines aside) is Queer Action Week. It started out a demo and turned into a whole week of events, with other LGBT events sprinkled here and there. Thanks so much to all the people who have helped with this- to Ellie for inviting the female members of the LGBT community to reclaim the night. Thanks to Hannah for inviting all the interested parties in her bar crawl. Thanks to Chris for sorting out Bar G. Thanks to Rob Vance for the advert in the paper.

People, please do come along to the End of Term party on Saturday of 8th and have fun. It's a great way to wind up the term!

Health and Welfare

I've done quite a few meetings for Health and Welfare this term, though they seemed to dry up when elections approached. I'm very sorry about this. When we did have meetings they were good and I really enjoyed meeting the new Welfare Officers. I promise that next term will be better.

Equal Opportunities Campaigns

Since they've all got their own reports I'll be brief. I'm glad to say that having inherited two defunct campaigns and one very active one I've managed to get both Queer Rights and Anti-Racism back on track. I haven't been able to give either of them as much as time or support as I'd have liked to, but I hope that Queer Action Week will breathe new life into Queer Rights and that Anti-Racism's plans to create an Ethnic Minorities Open Day are successful. I suppose we'll see next term. In the meantime I'm just glad to have enthusiastic Co-Chairs.

Thanks to Leo, Jamie and Adam, who are doing phenomenal work at the moment. Thanks also to Craig for prodding me until I arranged Queer Action Week. Thanks to Ailbhe and Jenny for having fresh ideas for Anti-Racism. I was really beginning to struggle with Anti-Racism.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Having been a part of Holocaust Memorial Day in the past I really want to make sure that this year it's a big success. I've been to quite a few meetings with people from all over the community, and still haven't given all the time I'd have liked to. Claire has been amazingly supportive and patient in the whole matter. Thanks so much. Harriet and Yoni have also been really great!

Office space

The offices were quite disorganised earlier this term. After much cajoling from myself and a few others, the wonderful OUSU crew made the place more beautiful. I've invested a lot of time in it myself, so please respect the space when you visit/use the building. Tidy workspace is quite important, but more importantly there are serious access and health and safety issues with a disorganised office. The building needs to be kept tidy enough so that wheelchair users can use the building (we have had quite a few students using the disabilities access facilities.) We also need clear walkways for safety reasons. I don't want anyone with a twisted ankle and I don't want fire exits blocked. I'll stop whingeing now.

Peer Support

The Peer Support Conference is around the corner, and I've been investigating possible sources of revenue, without much luck. I'll keep working with Anne Ford to sort this out and make it successful. I'm also helping to craft a website and mailing list for the Peer Supporters. Peer Support rocks.

Nightline

I've also been helping Nightline when I can. They want to run over 9th and 10th weeks so that they can answer calls from interviewees and they've been using OUSU photocopiers for this. Nightline is great. Call them on (2) 70270.

Committee for Student Health and Welfare

The Committee for Student Health and Welfare met again this term, as it always does. There were many things that were discussed but all the main points have already been discussed elsewhere. The main point to note is that Laura Gilbert is the new Graduate Representative and she's keen to see some changes in the way the Committee is discussed and how the student representatives are held accountable. I've been trying to organise some support for her as best I can in the form of a website and mailing list for discussion of the Committee, but we're both busy most days, so we're leaving that until after 8th week. Laura is awesome and she's a Physicist.

Accommodation

In spite of (or because of) my best efforts the Accommodation Committee has not met once this term. I promised that they would (and they will, next week) to brief Housing and Welfare Officers about what help is available. Next term there will be a housing surgery, organised by the Accommodation Office in OUSU, just in time for the housing lists. The Living Out Guide is also on its way. Apologies for slowness with Accommodation Committee. All is in hand.

Housing Bank

The Accommodation Office is doing some great things this year. They have developed a fully working prototype online housing bank. Sue Jacobs (Accommodation Officer) seems to talk a great deal about "making links". I'm not entirely sure what she means, but if it involves a housing bank then this is a good thing. Oxford students have clamoured for a housing bank for a couple of decades, and now it is actually happening. I want OUSU to put it's full support behind the housing bank and will bring motions to that effect next term. Sue does a great job.

Legal Aid

Sue has also found Legal Aid for students with legal accommodation disputes. There has been a gap in legal advice for about a year which is now being filled, bit by bit. (There used to be the Oxford Student Legal Advice Service, known as OSLAS, which was run by students for students, but it was closed down by the Proctors' Office without any alternative system in place.) Accommodation enquiries make up about half of OUSU's legal enquiries, so I'm glad to see that this is being dealt with. Sue is also sorting out video-conferencing for legal aid so

that students don't have to go outside the University for help. OUSU may well have sourced another lawyer for other legal disputes too, (especially those involving disciplinary procedures) which is good.

Student Finance

The Student Funding Officer, Morag McCormick resigned around a month ago and since then there has been a part-time member of staff working for the Student Funding Office. This isn't ideal, especially when not all the government hardship funds were used last year. I would like to launch a mini-campaign next term to address these issues. In the meantime, if you want to know what you're entitled to then get in touch with me. Otherwise you could be missing out on free money.

I've probably missed out something really important, so feel free to ask loads of awkward questions. I love you all. Peace out!

Ellie Cumbo	V-P (Women)
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Bullet points are good. Endless prose, even with my trademark offbeat humour and genius typing errors, are less good. Therefore, in roughly chronological order, this is what I have done this term:

- Updated and distributed the Women's Officers' Handbook, Unplanned Pregnancy: A Guide to Your Options, The Eating Disorders Guide and The Student Parents' Handbook.
- Stocked up on attack alarms to be purchased by Common Rooms; these have very much in demand and I am shortly to order more.
- Had £4,000 Women's Campaign flyers printed with a brand new design; many were picked up at Freshers' Fair, and more will appear in pigeonholes at the start of both Hilary and Trinity Term.
- Organised the Wear It Pink Party, with the VP (C and C), and produced Women's Campaign Pink Party Bags containing breast cancer awareness information (plus slightly more fun stuff). This raised in excess of £700 for Breast Cancer Campaign.
- Liaised with the University Childcare Officer, promoted the new Childcare Network to students, submitted an article on request to the alumni magazine Oxford Today outlining the need for better childcare provision, accepted an invitation to participate in the University's childcare review, made initial enquiries into the possibility of a central student parent list.
- Constructed the Promoting Choice mail list, and met with the co-chairs to decide our strategy for next term, as attempts at introductory events have been thwarted by time constraints and speakers' unavailability this term.
- Conducted the Finals Gap Survey, analysed the results and taken them to EPSC Undergraduate Panel. The findings will now be sent to all Senior Tutors and Heads of Department, and the VP (AccAcAff) and I are discussing plans to take it further.
- Registered as official Oxford organiser of VDay College Campaign 2006. This means we have secured free rights to Eve Ensler's Vagina Monologues (approved 2006 script) and will produce it in HT, between February 14th and March 8th. VDay specify that no-one who wishes to be involved may be turned away, so this could turn into a massive-scale production with its own marketing army.
- Investigated the possibility of a joint event next term to tie in with Amnesty's Sale Must End campaign against sex trafficking.
- Arranged for the Reclaim the Night March to take place on Tuesday of 8th Week (meeting at Cowley Place at 6:30pm, speaker meeting in Balliol at 8:00), in association with Ruskin College, and hopefully Oxford Brookes too. We have secured some excellent speakers to give expert accounts of poor street safety and the rise of domestic violence in Oxford, and have begun publicising the event widely.
- Dealt with a steady stream of casework, which has mostly centred on childcare difficulties and harassment.
- Tried, so far without overwhelming success, to promote the role of Women's Officers within Women's Campaign. I insisted upon a 5:00-5:30 slot especially for them, which has steadily grown in popularity, but not fast enough. For some unknown reason, many Women's Officers are materialising now that there is a free dinner at Le Petit Blanc in the offing.....but seriously, Women's Campaign needs them if it's going to be truly accountable, and we really will go out of our way to give them whatever they need. Please spread the word!
- Responded to a Women's Campaign call for action on the unsatisfactory state of colleges' approaches to harassment, by proposing today's Council Motion.

- Started the process of putting together material on general street safety with the VP (Welfare), to be sent to Welfare/Women's Officers who can then add some college-specific information and distribute it to their students. This will take place in 0th Week of next term.

That's the gist of the story so far. I wish you all a snugly Christmas and a bubbly new year - and PLEASE talk to your Women's Officers!

Oliver Russell

V-P (Graduates)

This term has been overly eventful and I rather hope in the future we can avoid lurching from crisis to crisis.

To start with the most obvious I probably should mention the **elections**. As most of you probably know I was Acting President for the middle portion of the electoral process until Senior Tribunal struck out the Referendum and Emma could therefore rejoin Elections Committee. I will try not to steal thunder from either her or the Returning Officer's reports but there are some aspects of the election that particularly concerned me.

Firstly, while I appreciate that some students were unhappy with the wording of the question that I presented to 5th Week Council this would have passed even if it had required a 2/3rds ratification rather than refusal. In the light of this I must ask all concerned to respect in future the democratic responsibility that Council holds and that I expect the rules of Council behaviour in refraining from political attacks directed at a particular individual to be beholden upon all members of Council even when we are not in session.

Secondly, the voter lists. These finally arrived on my desk on Tuesday in four separate files for existing and new postgrads and undergrads. The process of combining them into one list was fairly straightforward but I then discovered that: a) there were some names on multiple lists and b) the University had changed its method of listing students (introducing commas and middle initials) so that duplicates could not be automatically removed. Having only one Masters in a quantitative science I was unable to devise the formula to solve this problem before the lists had to go out. Hence the duplications complained of by some CRO's though I would have hoped that everyone could have been sensible enough to realise that this was an obvious mistake and not allow anyone to vote twice.

Thirdly, the ballot papers. Is it sufficient just to recommend that in future the VP (Finance) not run for JT or some other position that isolates them from the Elections Committee so that the person ordering the papers has the same information as those running the election?

Fourthly, the ballot boxes. Some other system is necessary to deliver and collect them that does not involve relying on us being able to borrow the Safety Bus at 6am, since we would have been in severe trouble without my pre-existent permit to drive it.

Rant over.

Another main achievement this term has been the revitalisation of the **International Students' Committee**, though I will let the Exec officer and Co-chairs talk more about that.

Post Graduate Assembly has met and discussed, amongst other things the future shape of the position of the Vice-President (Graduates). MCR Presidents' Christmas dinner will hopefully get together a larger number of Graduate Common Room representatives than at any point since the merger of OUGU with OUSU's Graduate Representative Committee.

I have attended two **MCR affiliation** debates (Magdalen and Hertford). Both were passed unanimously and the latter gave rise to one of my favourite quotes of the term from the MCR President: "OUSU is a bit like the A-Team; most of the time you don't need them, but when you do there's no one else who can help."

Charlyne Pullen

V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

Well firstly I would like to clarify for everyone that I have never been, nor plan to be, a member of the Socialist Workers Party. I have in fact never been a member of any political party and wish to make that clear.

Right, now what have I been doing in the past term? Well I have discussed and tried to create policy (most of it unfortunately comes to this council for various reasons) on Post Qualification Admissions, the Burgess Report, the Governance Discussion Paper, the Education White Paper, the Admissions Working Party Report and more. I have brought with me a summary of Post Qualification Admissions and it has hopefully also been seen on the OUSU website. This made at least the first half of term's worth of Target Schools meeting the policy forums I

believe that should be, at least in part. While we have looked at the outside world for most of this term, we hope to look within the University for change next term, with the launch of OUSU's College Inequality work and the discussion of many reports within the University.

The Finals Gap Survey was excellently prepared by the VP Women and I am glad we are able to work together on this. Having taken it to one University committee, we hope to take it forward and expand its readership whilst focusing on how best to achieve action.

The National Student Survey has been a headache this term, and I will be attending a session on it run by Ipsos on Monday of 9th week in the hope of some discussion and change, although I anticipate it will revert to the tried and tested method of sitting with the Cambridge delegation and expressing concern. However, I do strongly feel we should have constructive policy and criticise the NSS in a way that shows we do not think it is entirely useless but that we suggest ways in which it could be improved. Whilst I am sure this happened behind the scenes last year, I would prefer a council mandate for constructive criticism. The combined force of the Aldwych group, although still only the research-led institutions, is a more powerful lobbying tool than Oxbridge alone and a far more politically acceptable one, and we are currently looking to be able to combine with the other Russell Group universities to lobby for change in the NSS.

Libraries. Not my favourite topic in the world, most people will tell you, but having taken the summary of the library survey to the meeting of the Curators of the University Libraries and being asked for more information, I feel that the University are most definitely interested and concerned about the views of students as users of the libraries. I feel we missed out on further consultation due to our lack of representation on the Planning and Resources Allocation Committee and we have made this view known to those compiling the responses to the Governance Discussion Paper. As Marx said: 'From each, according to his ability; to each, according to his need'.

Elections. I feel I should at least mention that I reverted back to being a member of elections committee after the decision taken by Senior Tribunal to rule out the referendum and spent all of Thursday night counting votes and validating boxes. This to the extent that I feel I have only just recovered from that night and upon trying to sleep started to dream about ballot boxes. Maybe I am just getting old.

Casework. This has increased sharply due to a few complicated cases in the past couple of weeks and has been time-consuming. However I feel it is our duty to provide all the most up-to-date information possible and I speak for the whole SAS when I say we endeavour to this.

Tomorrow Academic Affairs Committee will hopefully compile a list of questions to be part of OUSU's survey for College Inequality to be launched at the end of this term, whilst also sending out a survey to Academic Affairs Reps in colleges to ask for statistical information on the casework they deal with within college.

So to everyone, enjoy Christmas and your holidays (while we're all slaving away in the sweltering heat of OUSU towers) and I hope to see you all in the coming term. Thanks to all those who helped with everything, especially Target Schools and Academic Affairs and everyone who works in the building.

Hannah Stoddart

V-P (Charities and Community)

This term has been very productive, as it has given me the opportunity to try out lots of new things and see what works. Fortunately for Rag, everything we've done has worked. Unfortunately for me, this has meant that I have had no life and am struggling to get everything done. Next term this problem should be alleviated, as a new RAG exec has been elected who are all very keen an enthusiastic and should be able to take the pressure off me somewhat, and leave me more time to work on community projects and the Alternative Careers Fair.

RAG updates

Eclectic, the fundraising night at Love Bar thought up by myself and a Laura Bunt (Wadham), has been going incredibly well, and we're starting to build up a solid network of Djs and students who are very enthusiastic about the night. Advertising costs have been low, as the design was done by a contact of ours who didn't charge anything, and we've just been photocopying the designs onto A3 paper in OUSU.

Speed dating has been hugely successful, with over 50 people participating at each session. At £5 per ticket, that makes quite a lot of money for RAG

One-off events:

Bungee jump – this was really successful this year, raising over £1000 for charity. There were less sign-ups than last year, perhaps partly to do with the unusual lack of interest at Freshers Fair. The next one is scheduled for Trinity term and we hope to get more people down

Wear It Pink: We raised in the region of £800 for Wear It Pink this year, what with the individual events in colleges and the a capella night in Wadham.

The Poetry slam at The Vaults turned out to be a great evening with loads of talent. It was refreshing to hook up with local groups and turn it into a town and gown event that wasn't focussed entirely on students. The next Poetry Slam aims to be bigger and better, with wider community involvement

Film nights: These have been rather poorly attended, despite poster and email publicity. We will have to consider whether or not we continue with them, although they cost nothing to put on so make us money even if not a huge amount of people come

Book sales have increased considerably this term, as I decided to hold a book fair in OUSU, rather than just selling the books on line. Lots of students turned up and we sold nearly half the stock! RAG will be organising another book fair for next term.

Raids - the raid for Action Aid this term raised over £200, and we have a lot more raids lined up for next term. The RAG exec has decided it's best to have them every other week.

World Aids Day – we have a street collection, a college carol singing bar crawl, and a fundraising night at eclectic to mark World Aids Day. The proceeds from the street collection will go to THT, and the bar crawl and eclectic will go to HIV/AIDS related charities to be decided at the next reps meeting.

Cancellations – Some events were cancelled this term due to the sheer volume of work I had to do. Rather than two poetry slams, we just had one, and the night of Vjs and Djs planned for Freud was also postponed until next term.

Publicity – this term we had both term-cards and posters, but I think next time I will invest more money in advertising specific events, such as a valentines ball that we might be organising. Due to the amount of work involved in organising events, they are likely to be subject to some changes, and it is difficult to know a week in advance of term whether the dates are definite or not. As such, it is better not to have a term-card which sets dates in advance and reduces flexibility.

Names of new RAG exec:

President: Susanna Herbert, Teddy Hall

Raids Officer: Ellie Ereira, Teddy Hall

Charities Liaison Officer: Laura Wathen, Univ

Events manager: Roxanne Keynejad, ChCh

Publicity: Ceri Lloyd-hughes, New

Treasurer: David Hunter, Univ

Secretary: Rachel Winny, St Johns

I do not know the exact quantities of money raised this term, as I am still waiting for colleges to get me money from collections and events, but at a guess I would say we have raised in the region of £10,000. I will let Council know exact figures next term.

COMMUNITY

Oxford Get Involved – I have been in contact with a number of local groups to get them to sign up to the new and updated website which is proving to be a useful facility for recruiting volunteers. I have been advertising the website through weekly 'volunteering emails' and through posters in common rooms. There is still much to be done to expand the site – more publicity is planned for next term

Olga Primary School – the project is now up and running, with 8 volunteers visiting the school on a fortnightly basis. Each student has been teamed up with a teacher, and they are arranging times to visit that suit them both, as well as planning lessons together over email

Volunteers recruited for local projects:

Cuttleslowe Homework Club

OxDox Film Festival

Local hospital visiting projects and helping to run smoothie bars

Students helping out at the North Oxford Community Centre

Christian Aid Campus group

Oxfordshire Association for Young People

Oxford Sleep Out – a fundraising and awareness raising project run by the gatehouse.

Poetry Slam – the slam was a a great way of joining up with local community projects by getting student and local performers together. We hope to make it an even wider community event next year

Future Outlook Careers and Volunteering Fair

There will be a number of local organisations attending the fair, recruiting volunteers for their projects. Do-It and Student Volunteering have both also agreed to do some workshops. Progress on the event is considerable – we now have over 15 confirmed speakers, as well as a number of organisations running stalls. I have also teamed up with the One World Oxford Trust to arrange a post-fair drinks session where students will be able to talk to alumni and people who work for local organisations about careers and volunteering opportunities.

Oxford Muse

I am working together with the Oxford Muse to publicise an initiative that Roman (who works for Oxford Muse) and I came up with for World Aids Day. We're going to try to get students to write the profiles of members of the community who have been involved in AIDS/HIV related campaigning, or who have been personally affected by AIDS/HIV, either themselves or in their family.

Community Co-Chairs

There will be two new community co-chairs elected at the end of this term, who will assist with forging contacts to local organisations and community centres.

Funding

Nothing new to report really – HEFCE still haven't announced how much funding will be available, but they are asking for reports about how we recruit more volunteers and generally benefit the community. I have submitted one to Jennifer Noon, who seems positive about my post receiving continued funding, albeit perhaps less than the last few years.

I am also liaising with Jennifer Noon to get some funding for a paid member of staff to take on the administrative responsibility for CRB checks, which are proving rather time-consuming for the VP CnC at present. This will help towards developing a centralised system of CRB checks, where students can use OUSU resources to get them done.

Rob Vance

Business Manager

This term I have been working on advertising in the Oxford Student as usual, distributing the newspaper, Oxford and Cambridge Careers Handbook, Women's handbook, and Graduate guide and building up online advertising with our internet expert, Matt (Mini) Foster. There are going to be lots of exciting things coming up in the New Year, including a new deal on Champagne for JCRs, a new online advertising model for JCRs should they choose to become part of the scheme and two really exciting reports: one on OSSU's structures and how they fit in with the Student Union and can be reformed which I have been thinking and talking about for a long time with Chris Allan and the rest of the board and sabbaticals as well as local businesses, lawyers and accountants. The second concerns a Central Student Venue. Whilst, potentially a long way off, I think it would be useful to compile a detailed list of what we would need, likely cost, potential structures and again, tying in with the first point, how this would fit into the rest of the OUSU Institutional framework. I think this is necessary and a useful mode of passing on a range of other information and knowledge to our successors.

Another project which is coming up is the overhauling of the OxbridgeCareers.com website which is a potential goldmine, but needs to be tapped into and restructured, we are currently working out the best ways of exploiting these commercial opportunities.

The Radio Station has been great fun, and whilst it is not making money for the Student Union yet, I think it is a great way of investing in the talents of our students and will be a fully profitable venture within a couple of years. We have now secured sponsorship for its flagship show with HMV, are continuing negotiations on station sponsorship, and looking to launch the first sets of jingle adverts next term.

The plan is now very much to diversify OUSU's revenue streams, whilst consolidating its existing ones, ensuring that all this works in conjunction with OSSL's explicit remit, which is to provide services to Oxford Students and make money for the Student Union.

Thanks must go to Chris firstly for being the other half of the team and also to all the Sabbaticals and Executive with whom I have had potentially the most cordial relations of a business manager for a while. Thanks as ever go to Naz, without which nothing would really get distributed. Congratulations go to Rob Lewis for editing a fine paper this term, all 7 of them, and to the Radio people: Tim Partridge and Sam Evans in particular, a fond farewell to the former who is stepping down as Station Manager, after being involved since he turned up in Oxford 2 and a half years ago. Thank you also to all the people I have forgotten, who pigged stuff, stood on Park End or worked in any part of the OSSL 'Empire'.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas, Hanukah, Divali or any other relevant seasonal religious festival and a Happy New Year, whenever it is, see you in January.

Madhvi Pankhania

Entz Manager

This term has been an interesting one for ZOO. It has been the first time that we have taken on this number of club nights and their success has varied considerably, not always matching the expectation when contracts were signed last year. Michaelmas has been in a term that has provided a useful trial and error for these new nights.

In general the nights continued from last year have had a similar rate of success this year – these include Po na na on Thursdays and Park End on Wednesdays. The majority of Zoo nights this term are at new venues or on new nights and have needed to be relaunched. It is these nights that vary their door figures from week to week – generally speaking many of these nights have worked but it has taken up time to build up a regular following, especially when competing with other promoters whose nights have run all throughout last year.

The running of Zoo has also changed dramatically from previous terms. In general the way in which we now run the accounts has tightened up so that there is a regular process undertaken in the way in which figures are recorded and there is always a board member to supervise at each of our nights. The admin work has been slightly increased but this can only be to the benefit of OSSL in making our figures transparent and providing information that was not recorded last year.

A new year means new staff, which also means another teething problem. Although there are a few important individuals who have continued to lend their knowledge and experience in being night managers, initially new staff has proved difficult to find. Training them up has meant long hours on my part but we now have a solid base from which to work at the start of the new term. The lack of staff at the beginning of term has put constraints on the time spent dealing with various other aspects of promotion. Delegating has become an important part of the way in which Zoo is run and has proved easier as time has gone on.

The sheer number of nights has had an observable impact on Zoo's success across the board. What the team is able to do for next term is focus time and energy on fewer nights so that each of these will get the attention to make sure that they are promoted as successfully as they can be. This is a considerably important factor given that in general, the number of students going out decreases from Michaelmas to Hilary and then again in Trinity with the arrival of exams.

There is much to be achieved over the Christmas break and the time when the students go home will be the perfect opportunity to focus on long term promotion projects for Zoo such as the website, targeting new markets such as the sports teams, the analysis of our recruitment methods and allowing a clearer view of ways in

which Zoo can improve. The nights this term have shown that in reality there have been unforeseen difficulties not accounted for when projecting how successful every night would be. Our successful nights are still our strongest and the emphasis next term will be on solidifying these and expanding as much as our resources will allow.

Helen Bagshaw

Exec

Almost everyone who knows me knows that I love being involved in OUSU. Regardless of all the problems, I don't ever regret getting involved. However I am going to use this term's report to reflect on the more negative, rather than positive aspects as I see them. To my mind they are less numerous, but still need addressing and I hope to do that here.

The one overarching problem with this organisation is communication, and this spans all the areas of OUSU. Lack of communication between members of the executive, between OSSL and OUSU, between OUSU and common rooms, and between OUSU and individual students is what creates problems, and is what leaves many with the impression that you have to be a member of the so-called OUSU clique, with special insider knowledge to get anywhere near being involved in its campaigns and structures. As one of the members of the "OUSU clique" I would probably have to agree with this view. It isn't that those people who are involved in the day-to-day running of OUSU wish to have only certain students involved, hand-picked from amongst the people they know. In my mind at least, it's quite the opposite. OUSU exists for its students, because of its students, and the more people we have involved the better.

But without proper communication to our members, how are they ever supposed to know how to get involved? The Statutory Annual Elections are a prime example of how a lack of communication can be a problem. The nomination form went out this year in the 3rd week edition of the Oxford Student, as it normally does. This is a perfectly legitimate way of advertising our elections; after all, it reaches many students and it distributed in all common rooms. However, not all students read the OxStu. This is something I continually brought up last year, and something that was never rectified. We cannot rely on this method and this method alone to reach people. With something as important as this for the future of the organisation, it is not too much effort to make some posters advertising the elections, and put them up in the Common Rooms of Oxford. The same goes for many of the other things we do, but getting more people running for positions is something we should care about. Nice as it is to be in an uncontested election, it does not look good for the organisation, and I am well aware of how much this single issue emphasises the view of a clique stitch-up in the mind of students not intrinsically involved in OUSU. I state now that although I declared my intention to run for VP (Access and Academic Affairs) a long time ago, I in no way wanted to prevent people from standing against me, and would be horrified if anyone genuinely believed that to be the case.

Onto the elections themselves; first and foremost, thank you to all those who attended husts and voted in the elections last Thursday. I think we may have all let ourselves in for one of the most challenging years in OUSU history, but I look forward to tackling the challenges with a great team and I intend to try my hardest to implement all of the ideas I had for both my portfolio work and for the organisation. Many people have accused me of standing for an OUSU sabbatical position because of a belief that the organisation is perfect as it is; they would be wrong. I fundamentally believe in the idea of an organisation that allows the students of Oxford to be collectively represented, and which provides the services no single Common Room could provide; however I do not feel that the current structure is not one which allows us to be most relevant to the majority of students, and it does not lend itself to greater involvement of the Ordinary Oxford Student. That is, one that may consider themselves to be apolitical yet believes in one very specific issue stemming from one of our current campaign groups.

As for getting involved by running for an actual position within OUSU, I can well understand why some may not wish to stand in the SAEs. When everything runs smoothly, it should not be difficult to be a candidate in the SAEs. Rather it should be much easier, but based on my experiences of this year I have to say that this was not the case. You have the Returning Officer's report to read, and can see some of the problems this year as related by him. However, from a candidate's point of view, I do not think the election ran as smoothly as even this report assumes. I can appreciate that being the RO, DRO or on elections committee is not an easy job, but it seems to me that with a bit more experience, organisation and communication many problems would not have occurred. Issues from this year have bad implications for the organisation, and yet with some institutional knowledge could

have been easily rectified. Procedures need to be set down in the Constitution and Standing Orders, not just assumed.

The role of the executive is something that also needs to be set down; reading through the constitution and standing orders, it is clear that there is very little concerning the executive as a whole, and particularly the part-time executive officers. This makes being a part-time executive officer very difficult, especially with the change over in sabbatical teams. This term has been very different to my first two terms in office, and in many ways it has been a hard term to deal with. When you are used to the priorities and quirks of one team of people, it is particularly demanding to have to change the way you work for your final term. This is not so much the fault of the individuals involved, but more of the structures in place. Where there are no rules laid down, the interpretation of the role of the exec is down to the sabbatical officers. This cannot continue to happen. Both full-time and part-time members of the executive are meant to have equal status, and this needs to be restored. We as a whole are there to implement the will of Council, not to dictate to each other the way in which this should be achieved or to decide our own agenda.

Council itself follows on from this quite well. This again has been difficult to adjust to this term. For the whole of my time on the executive I have been astounded by the way in which members of OUSU feel it is legitimate to criticise others for holding views that do not agree with their own. Whether you agree or not, debate in Council is necessary and you should listen to everyone and respect their right to speak. One of the other issues I have with Council relates to the way the executive approach it. Council is consistently dominated by the executive and this needs to stop. I have made an effort this term to try and sit away from other members because I think sitting all together emphasises the idea of a clique. I think these efforts need to be made by every member of the executive. What has particularly shocked me this term is the belief by one member of the team that "Council is exec's bitch". This is not the case, and anyone who holds this belief is very misguided. As I have already said, the executive exists to fulfil the remits of Council, not to dictate to Council what they should think or do. Please remember this.

Thus far I have neglected to mention my portfolios – my termly reports for Hilary and Trinity detailed much more about these than I can write here but if anyone has any questions please do ask as these are what I like most about being an executive officer and I don't mind talking about them! As a quick mention though, Target Schools continues to be the thing that I favour above all others. It was what originally got me involved in OUSU, how I found out about the job of VP (AccAcAff) and ultimately how I made some of my best friends. This year there will be some new initiatives and I'm very sorry that I can't have a greater part in setting them up, but finals must take precedence at the moment. Target Schools currently has a good remit and only goes from strength to strength, and I look forward to being able to work for another year promoting the creation of an Oxbridge tradition in all state schools.

It is traditional to thank people at the end of your report, and in previous terms my thanks have been extensive. This term they shall be shorter, with very few people thanked extensively. The ones that deserve the thanks the most have or will receive them more personally than here.

The only people who I will thank to any great length are the office staff. They will also get personal thanks, which I am aware mean much more, but it needs to be said that without our permanent non-elected staff we would be very stuck. The most under-appreciated people in the organisation, who have gone through the worst periods of OUSU's recent history and yet still stick with us and always work hard alongside the executive teams, whether they be treated with the utmost respect or treated as objects and slaves. This is to their extreme credit and is very wrong. OUSU may be different to some companies in many respects, but it is an office and a working environment, and everyone in there has the right to be treated as an essential part of the team at all times. I hope this year has been easier for you all, and just wait until next year! Thank you to Maria, Gill, Sue and Barbara.

To last year's sabbs and pseudo-sabbs; John, Nicky, Bex, Linsey, Ian and Dan. Thank you so much for two terms of fun, friendship and giving me faith that there are actually people who care!

To this year's sabbs – Emma, Chris, Aidan, Ellie, Ollie, Charlynnne, Hannah, Rob and Madz. It's been an interesting term to say the least, and you know I'll be in OUSU next term so it's not really goodbye! But good luck with the next two terms anyway!

To the co-chairs I have worked with closely on Target Schools; Eric, Maighread, Kum and Irene. It was an amazing year, thank you.

To the new team; Rob, David, Jess, Amy and Nus. It's been fun to get to know you a little and I hope you have as enjoyable a year as my first with Target Schools.

To all the non-OUSU people who have put up with me in this year; the Biologists, my ex-housemates, Rich, Alison, Steve, Lucie and Jane. Also Mihir and Steve, who made me stand for Target Schools co-chair.

Finally to the part-time executive, who I think I will dedicate this report to. To the past and the present, every single one of you I've worked with. You were there through the tough times, and you understood. There are some who deserve special thanks, for many reasons. You know who you are I hope.

Matthew Baker

Exec

Thus ends my year and a bit in OUSU as an Executive Officer (having started back in MT 04). Usually people have a lot to say but I'll make this report short enough hopefully that some of you might read it. At times, from an OUSU perspective at least, it seems that we move from one problem or crisis to the next with out necessarily progressing forward. However although I have suffered from such a view at times, this is far from true. My tenure as seen the progress of OSSL from strength to strength, which for all its faults will be integral to the financial viability of the Student Union for the foreseeable future. Perhaps the most fundamental aspect, for which the Union exists, the representation of students either through Campaigns or the role of the Student Advice Service, has certainly been something, which has progressed through my time in OUSU. During the past term we have consolidated work on Queer Rights, with events planned for 8th week for OUSU Queer Action Week. Such awareness raising will be vital in speaking of further interest in campaigns as well as in its own right. Academic Affairs has been able to consult with many common rooms and this has been able to provide the background to some of the many motions that have been brought to Council, most notably will be the ones this week on the NSS and Burgess Report which will also be useful for future terms. Much progress has been made in policy and other groundwork this term and this will prove fruitful in the future, for example the College Inequality campaign and AcAff will closely liase to develop a campaign. Above my own portfolios, many of other campaigns have been developed and have increased involvement and effectiveness, the most potent example being the Socially Responsible Investment Campaign (SRI).

Always a perennial issue, involvement remains a concern for the Union and indeed for many members of OUSU. Unfortunately, for many, OUSU is seen as another one of those many projects that people engage with as students. That is not a bad thing per se and one would be lying if not to suggest that one of the motivations of entering OUSU is the same as other Union, for example; but that the Student Union is different from other organizations. It is different because it is a body, which is there to allow students to shape their lives when they are here in Oxford. That can only really be done authentically when we have involvement from members of the Student Union. I suspect that this will always be an issue and one that will always be hard work. I have also been DRO this term, the highlight of which was a 6am drive through Oxford as well as delivering ballot boxes through the morning (Ollie and Rob being absolute stars). Freshers' Fair took a significant amount of time during first week as an organizer and this also meant that my OUSU capabilities were curtailed for a short period as I recovered.

Thanks (in no particular order): John, Bex, Nicky, Linsey, Ian, Dan, Lee, Gareth, Emma, Chris, Rob, Charlyne, Ellie, Aidan, Ollie, Hannah, Madz, all of present and past part time (Grad) Exec, Maria, Sue, Barbara and Gill, Alan, Rejin, Nick. And anyone else my poor memory has neglected many thanks.

Tim Bennett

Exec

Emma and I are currently looking over applications for the Oxford Scholarship Scheme that OUSU helps to administer. It is a pleasure to read the personal statements, written work and references of candidates, many of whom would walk into Oxford were they studying in the UK. Some are quite simply among the brightest and most driven in their countries. OSS is designed for overseas students who have no other way of funding a decent University education. Scholarships are funded jointly by the university, colleges and JCRs, making the scheme virtually unique. Unfortunately, at best only half a dozen colleges will have a place for one of the 113 candidates. I would urge common rooms to lobby their colleges and consider helping to fund a scholar, as it is clear that we are having to turn away young people who are desperate to be at Oxford and who would use their great talent to give back much more to the university than they receive.

My other portfolio is the NUS. We are currently in negotiations with them on moving to a fairer affiliation system. It has been well remarked that CUSU affiliate centrally for £7,000. It is not clear that such an offer is on the table for Oxford, or even sustainable for CUSU. It would also require colleges to be affiliated even if they do

not want to be, if a majority of all students across Oxford favour affiliation. Thus OUSU is looking first at trying to secure a better deal for those colleges which choose to affiliate. If achieved this would help to stem, and possibly reverse, the continuing round of disaffiliations. However, I am not convinced that common room attitudes to the NUS are merely shaped by the cost of affiliation. Furthermore, OUSU's position is arguably strengthened by being the only body to which colleges are affiliated.

I wish now to turn to more general comments about OUSU. I confess to having never been its greatest fan, and I stood for exec after many people said to me that I should work to try and reform it from the inside. Having seen it for a year I remain as sceptical as ever about OUSU's effectiveness and relevance, though my reasoning has changed somewhat. None of what follows is aimed at any particular individuals. Indeed, as a member of exec I am as responsible as anyone for OUSU's continuing failure to gain the interest or popularity of students, or to be the representative force that it could be.

Oxford needs a student union, especially when great change is being debated and decided within the university. We need a union to help provide an identity for Oxford students over and above colleges, we need a union to fight for our interests over tutorials, libraries, the hugely significant governance reforms and welfare provision within the university, and sometimes we need a union to fight government for a student's individual interest (as with the Azim campaign) or to work with other student unions on matters such as top-up fees. This work is the *raison d'être* of a student union. OUSU does this. Of course, by virtue of being the body with a monopoly on university-wide student representation, OUSU sits on important university committees and is sometimes listened to. The question is not whether the work OUSU does is vital; the questions are *how effective is OUSU in achieving its aims* and *how closely do those aims match the beliefs and wishes of those whom OUSU represent*. It is after all the student body that helps to fund OUSU and that gives legitimacy to OUSU's claim to speak on behalf of students.

OUSU tries to do too much. There are too many sabbaticals, too many publications and too many conflicting interests. The latter is principally the result of OUSU's commercial operations. This year we have managed to avoid the problems of last year but those problems were so great that their return at some point in the future cannot be ruled out. Quite simply, OUSU's own interest as a bureaucracy will not always match those of its paper, radio station or the extent to which it seeks to make money. As Nicky Ellis said in her Trinity report, "if you want a successful entz operation, interests clash." There will always be a demand for two papers in Oxford, and there will always be clubs for students to go to. But continuing with these commercial operations makes OUSU too open to wild fluctuations in income, less focused on its core mission and too likely to find itself torn between contrasting objectives.

Publications are something that OUSU does well but also something it does too much of. Each loss making publication should be reviewed. They should only continue if a) the information has to continue to be given, and b) it could not be given more effectively in an alternative format. The harsh truth is that most students do not read most of our publications (despite the considerable time and effort that undoubtedly goes into their production) and if they ever do wish to consult one will probably have thrown it away. Why not simply put all relevant advice on a section on the website, as much already is. If a student needs advice with a welfare issue from OUSU they will surely find it easier to surf the website than refer to a long lost publication or have to request a publication in person. Information can then be updated as necessary, without the need for complicated and expensive production.

Despite being the union for a collegiate university (and so not having to carry out many of the tasks that in most universities would be left to the student union) OUSU has more paid sabbatical officers than most student unions. One chart in the OUSU offices shows how one more sabbatical officer has been added about every 5 years. I think John Blake proposed the best way forward at the end of last term (a position he came to reluctantly but as a result of hard experience): ask women how they wish to be represented (this issue will not go away); ask graduates if they would prefer to have a sabbatical or some form of separate union (2 of the sabbaticals have resigned during their term of office in the last 3 years and graduate participation is extremely low); seek a return to the independence of RAG that existed until very recently; and, combine the VP (Finance) and President positions. OUSU would probably be left with 3 sabbaticals covering academic affairs, access, welfare and the most important campaigns of the day. Some things would be lost but I think the important things would gain a new impetus. Sabbatical positions are required for necessary political roles. There is a case for OUSU to have more permanent staff for technical positions. For instance, it is illogical to have an appointed Business Manager for one year. Either the position is political (and mostly it isn't) or we think it is beneficial to any commercial operations OUSU does undertake to change the Business Manager each year, in which cases he should be elected, or the only important qualification is business skill, in which case the Business Manager shouldn't be automatically changed each year. As it is we have a system combining a lack of electoral accountability, a lack of continuity and

(as with so many OUSU appointments) a lack of transparency and an element of 'cliquery.' On this point the OUSU appointments process should be opened up to include those who are not just OUSU insiders.

But the most worrying feature of OUSU is its relationship with democracy. There is, by and large, democracy in the formal sense. We have elections and votes but a closer examination of our democracy shows severe problems:

- only 5 of the last 21 annual elections (i.e. 3 years) for sabbatical posts have been contested. In 2 out of the last 3 years no one has nominated for the post of VP (Women). On one occasion no one nominated for VP (Graduates).
- there were fewer nominations for both part-time exec and delegates than available positions, both this year and last.
- as a consequence of the above we will today have elections for the remaining exec members. Yet it seems there has been virtually no publicity for these, as with the election for RO. So often it seems that Council is asked to appoint people to positions or committees through elections which only OUSU insiders have known are coming up. It is no surprise then that in these we normally see a number of candidates that exactly matches the number of positions available, meaning no real choice for Council.
- voter turnout in the elections last week was about 15%
- despite agreement on the need for reform, there are still no members of OSSL board who are not either there ex officio or through 'election' by the executive.
- women were prevented from having a referendum on whether the position of VP (Women) should continue
- despite the petition of more than 500 students for a referendum, the question was so perverted that those of us on the 'YES' campaign would seriously have considered resigning and campaigning for a 'NO' vote, had the referendum gone ahead.
- only 10-20% of common room representatives are generally present for votes in Council
- the budget for the whole year was debated for less than 30 minutes, while each Council lasts about 4 hours.
- OUSU claims to speak on behalf of students on non-student issues following policy passed by as few as 20 common room representatives, and with Council often having very little knowledge of the complex political issues in question.

The above examples are a mixture of those reflecting lack of engagement with OUSU among students and a wilfully casual attitude to the wishes of students from OUSU, but OUSU has to do all it can to change these depressing facts. I believe that the chances of competitive elections, higher voter turnout and higher council participation would all be greatly increased by having a leaner but more relevant OUSU, as outlined above. Who can blame people for not voting in elections in which they have a choice between RON or one candidate, or not standing in elections which they have not heard about, or not turning up to represent their JCR in Council when matters of absolutely no relevance to their JCR are continually debated?

I haven't touched on other problems, such as the lack of real control that Council exerts over exec, the inefficient internal workings of exec, or the reasons why most of the original part-time exec have resigned over the course of the year. But these issues also need to be addressed.

Having said all this, I should stress that I have enjoyed working with all of the 30+ members of the exec this year, without exception. Everyone in OUSU works with good intentions but this does not mean that we can afford to ignore the real and pressing problems we face. It will take more than spending students' money on a glossy pamphlet telling them how good OUSU is to improve matters. Fundamental structural reforms and fundamental changes in attitude are needed. No student union will ever be universally popular and OUSU has particular problems navigating its way through a collegiate system, but at the moment we are not adequately doing our job of representing and fighting for student interests.

Charlie Steel

Exec

I was fortunate to have been elected in 3rd Week Council and have very much enjoyed the last four weeks of term serving as a Part-Time Executive Officer. In the short space of time that I have been involved in OUSU, I can only say that I have been very impressed at the level of commitment to the organisation which has been displayed, not only by other members of the Executive, but also many from the University at large. However, I am concerned that a number of people feel that they cannot relate to OUSU. I hope everyone will agree that this is merely a perception and we must endeavour to act in a way which will dispel this image without impact on services which OUSU provides for Oxford students.

This will primarily be achieved through transparency. Many people currently find the OSSL/OUSU relationship far too opaque, especially considering OSSL is owned by OUSU-affiliated organisations. Whilst OSSL supposedly reports to the Executive, very little information is related. I would urge the incoming Executive to address this issue.

I have so far enjoyed one of my portfolio on Reps' Committee and would like to thank Iain Simpson for his support. I would like to move this Committee more towards an information-gathering session rather than merely an information-dissemination one. One possible strategy is to ask Reps to bring two concerns from their JCRs to the Committee each time it meets which can then be discussed. This discussion can then be reported back to the Executive or Council and enacted upon quickly and diligently.

Although the end of my time as a Part-Time Officer for this year, I am fortunate to have been re-elected and therefore am looking forward to serving for another academic year.

Emma Jones	Exec
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Thank you to all of my colleagues on the executive and in committees, it's been great working with you. Though this is my last term in the Executive (not over quite yet), I hope to stay in touch with OUSU and wish everyone in the 2005-6 team all the very best for the future.

AZIM ANSARI UPDATE

(As featured in the student press at the start of term.)

I'd like to thank you all on Azim's behalf for supporting him throughout the past year and to apologise for the recent lack of news. I want to assure you that this silence is at Azim's request and in his interest.

Azim will be taking this year off and has asked that the campaign give no statements at present, beyond thanking everyone very much for their solidarity.

Azim is aware that there is a whole network of people in Oxford and throughout the student (and wider) community in the UK who will be available to help him in future, if he should need us. (There have been over a thousand signatures to the petition in the last few months.) I look forward to seeing him in Oxford again.

Thank you for your understanding regarding the lack of further information.

If you are interested in continuing the fight for asylum seekers in Oxford, please email star_oxford@hotmail.com or welfare@ousu.org to find out more the campaign to Close Campsfield House Detention Centre. OUSU has policy against Campsfield. (Join the demonstration this Saturday!)

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE & ALTERNATIVE CAREERS FAIR

A big thank you to the hardworking Co-chairs: Dominique Chaput, Eleanor Coombs and Rowenna Davis. It's been a useful and productive term, with well-attended meetings and welcome fresher input!

An ongoing project this term has been to produce a laminated and professionally designed poster for inter-collegiate use to demonstrate to students some of the many ways that they can be $\text{C}\text{E}\text{green}$, at university (e.g. recycling, saving energy, saving water, using household products, food, transport, second hand shops etc). We're also working to expand the Environmental Handbook into a Guide to Ethical Living in Oxford: a source of information, debate, statistics etc. to enable students to make up their own minds about the issues and to have the resources to support the lifestyle of their choice.

The term's campaigning culminated in a massive day of action on Thursday 17 November ^ the NUS National Action Day Against Climate Change. This included a bike ride through the city centre, which was both a great display of Oxford pedal power and an advertisement for the December 3rd climate march in London. Thank you very much to the over 50 of you who talk part! There was also a stall on Broad Street for students to sign letters to our representatives (government & university) and to make pledges to consider the environment in their own lives. Which leads onto next term ^ in which a big push on recycled paper is expected

This is a good place in which to remind JCRs/MCRs that Environment Committee (meeting every Tuesday at 5.30pm in Bonn Square) exists to provide a Forum for College Ethics & Environment Officers to discuss College as well as University Campaigns, providing moral support and discussing best practice. See the website for more: <http://www.ousu.org/main/campaigns/environment>

Before I leave the Exec I hope I can be of use in collating more information about college strategies.

I also hope to finish some work on the Alternative Careers Fair, helping to build up a database of ethical firms. Under the leadership of Hannah and Alice, I think this Fair is likely to be the best ever with proper emphasis on ethical companies within every sector. I think it's important to show that there are ways in which we can use all our talents to make the world a better place, even if we won't all end up working for NGOs.

WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN

I've really enjoyed working with Ellie, Claire, Hephzi and Maria this term. Wom Cam has been reinvigorated with a strong campaign on the Final's Gap, culminating in Ellie's excellent report to EPSCE, detailing student suggestions to combat the problem based on an outline survey. I would recommend everyone to read the report, which should be available on the website.

This is a reminder to JCR/MCR Women's Officers and Women's Welfare Officers that Women's Campaign has a new format designed to cater for your needs. The campaign meets every Monday at 5pm in the Massey Room, Balliol. The Women's Officer slot between 5 and 5.30pm is YOUR TIME: a chance to discuss issues in your College, to plan joint events with other Women's Officers, to collect posters/resources for your College etc. Please do make use of this facility: whatever your ideas, approach to the job etc., this is your forum and we're here for you. It's then a matter of choice whether or not you attend the general campaign meeting at 5.30pm. Anyway, hope to see you at the Women's Officer dinner on Thursday of 8th week!

Also, a reminder to everyone to join the forthcoming Oxford Reclaim the Night, march, which is being organised by OUSU in conjunction with Ruskin College and Brookes SU. Sadly, we still live in a culture in which one in three women will be sexually assaulted and one in four women will be subject to domestic violence. Reclaim the Night, marches are part of a national and international campaign to demonstrate that women have the right to be safe on the streets at night, while highlighting local safety concerns. Of course, violence is not just an issue for women but these marches focus on challenging the attitudes behind sexual violence, which remains one of the most pervasive yet hidden forms of human rights abuse throughout the world.

We invite you to come and support this event on TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER, which is also part of OUSU's Queer Action Week. The march will begin at 6:30 at Cowley Place, and will take in Magdalen Bridge, the High Street, up to Carfax and then along Cornmarket Street and onto Broad Street. The march is for women only but men are invited to line the route in support (bring candles) and to attend the Vigil and Speaker Meeting afterwards (8pm, Balliol). I believe that Reclaim the Night, events, for women, supported by men, provide a positive affirmation of women's strength and survival and that all will benefit from a culture of safe streets and empowered people to walk them.

Otherwise, one issue which has come up this term and which I feel strongly about as a Co-chair is that of grassroots women's democracy v. virtual representation.

I'm not saying that men cannot be feminist supporters and that we should not join together on gender equality (and other) initiatives - I'm personally in favour of us seeking Council's support whenever we can. Yet, I feel that OUSU as a whole needs to be more confident of the PRINCIPLE of semi-autonomous campaigns. For example, while I'm not adverse to a debate on the future of female representation in Oxford, I feel that the proper people to have the debate are the women of Oxford, in their own forum. The idea that Women's Campaign could be portrayed as anti-women's democracy because we unanimously objected to a referendum proposal which would have involved the men and women of OUSU Council voting to instruct Oxford women to debate the worth of their sabbatical representative struck me as absurd. I didn't just speak against the motion because I believe that the need for a VP Women is incontrovertible (the view I would have supported in the event of a referendum). I spoke because I objected to the principle that a motion brought by two people to a male dominated Council could compel the women of Oxford to have this debate.

Whenever the closed caucus, nature of our campaign comes under discussion, I feel the need to reiterate why I believe that we must represent ourselves. Virtual representation, was the argument used to delay the granting of female suffrage on the basis that men already adequately represented women, men could speak for women etc. The women of Oxford must speak for themselves. Women's Campaign is designed to be a forum for all Oxford women; it is certainly open to all and all are welcome, regardless of political affiliation. You are also welcome to join the discussion list: email women@ousu.org for more.

ONE WORLD ISSUES

Please do support today's motion (if I'm allowed to say that here) on the facilitation of One World events. I was really encouraged by the many students who expressed an interest in a One World Group at the freshers and refreshers fairs. I'm confident that this committee would serve the needs of the many Oxford students who are concerned about international issues, (implementing Council's mandates etc.) while enabling the International Students committee to focus on student issues. Part of our role as OUSU is to enable student societies to function effectively and I would like to extend this communication beyond One World Week. We are all involved in the wider world by default ^ there is no opt out clause(!) ^ and I think that students are especially conscious of the major international issues with which our generation is confronted. If the motion passes, I intend to work with my successor to help implement its clauses.

CO-ORDINATION AND SUPPORT

Firstly, many apologies for the lack of Student Union News emails. I had a fraught start to the term, exacerbated by commuting and computer problems.

I'm now back in Oxford however and hope to complete my stint on the Executive by producing an online survey for Common Room Officers on the all-important issue of OUSU-CR relations. This should be with you before the end of term I hope it will be useful and I do urge you to encourage your JCR/MCR Committee to take part. The idea is for OUSU to build up a proper Common Rooms database, which will give us the information we need to support you, while also finding out what you think of us and what you would like us to do better. I'm also working on a User's Guide to OUSU, which will be online soon, aimed at helping people use the SU to help with their own projects.

Otherwise, packs of posters for your JCR/MCR Office and/or Common Room noticeboards are available at the front. Please collect yours today!

I wish everyone all the best for a happy and peaceful 2006.

Tom Packer

Exec

So at long last the time has come for me to leave OUSU exec after two years. As far as I know this has not been matched on the OUSU executive – almost certainly not the graduate executive. For me in another way it is even bigger since this is when I say goodbye to student politics in general at LSE before (and even more than) Oxford. I have for many been passionately committed to the idea of student representation-and what I say that may sound harsh in the following is to a large degree motivated by that passion and a certain frustration. I also apologise for any inelegance-this had to be done quite quickly!

I will first of all go through some of the issues which have come up constantly (and I do mean constantly) about the running of OUSU, then look at the most important areas of OUSU representation and its internal scrutiny before moving on to my technical portfolios and conclusion

The Problems with OSSL-

So many of the problems of OUSU are sadly all too well reflected in its corporate arm. Having been a long time critic of some its actions and procedures I have now been a member of the OSSL board for several months. This has confirmed my previous instinct that OSSL should not be used as the vehicle for so much of the Student Union's services . After is a relatively recent development in OUSU and is not the norm in the majority of student unions in the UK- indeed I don't know of one with a similar structure.

- Firstly being a company involves a great number of legal issues and rules inherently particularly if it does a lot- this has been a constant trouble for OSSL .
- Secondly the relationship between a company owned by a student union is fairly obviously not very clear- as can be seen in the clashing accounts of what OSSL can do/ be bound by that have been given by the last 2 presidents-neither of whom is stupid or dishonest. This shows the potential legal ambivalence- and I would submit that potential legal ambivalence is potential legal disaster.
- Thirdly the fact is companies structures are not designed for the type of openness and accountability that is key to student unions to function properly-this was shown very clearly last year and I am sure this will continue to be the case.

For these reasons I would submit that as far as possible the functions of OSSL should be transferred to OUSU- the paper is of course the one question mark on this, due to the potential legal liability. Even there however I would point out many other student union papers function perfectly well without being held by a holding company.

There is however the separate question of those areas-(essentially the union's commercial operations) covered by OSSL I think there are two problems.

1. The first is that many of them –including some of the new commercial operations do not provide a stable source of funding- as John Blake so rightly pointed out in his report. I was once much more optimistic on this than I am now- in this case I was over influenced by the example of LSE where like most universities there is a central student venue located on a central campus which dominates students life. This makes income much more secure than is the case in Oxford with its many scattered centres of student life

2. The second is that many of them-the newspaper is an obvious example -provide a potential clash between the role of a student union to make policy, to represent its students (right or wrong) and to look after their welfare and the necessities of that role-both commercial and political. A newspaper owner has different responsibilities (even his moral ones) from a welfare officer and the current situation .

For once I agree with John Blake-the best long term solution is a large scale pullback from commercial operations. . I would submit to Council that something that John and I agree on is worth looking at-if only for its rarity value!

Structures

I have of course now been involved in OUSU's structures for two years now. For a year or so this has been as chairman of Standing Committee which has the duty of day to day (or rather month to month) running of OUSU? Here are my observations

OUSU has too many sabbaticals and too few members of staff. -I think we have more sabbaticals for our budget than any other student union in the country (at least multi-Saab ones). We simply devote too much of our resources to sabbatical officers, it costs money and reduces efficiency. Particularly absurd has been the position of business manager where we have sabbaticals who are not even elected. We need to re-focus-sabbaticals should exist a) to provide student representation and b) political control of the student union bureaucracy. They should not exist to provide jobs, technical work or to make an ideological point. Sadly these are all the case at the moment.

I would say however that I would cautiously defend the position of VP finance (albeit it needs radical reforming) - the failure to hold a by-election last year and Council's unconstitutional decision not to have one (which I would point out I opposed) did a great deal to help the lack of accountability and I believe that at least as currently ordered the budget and services of the union need political oversight-the lack of it was one of the greatest problems. I would also note the current VP Finance Chris Allan has been both hard working and very competent.-though more generally it is important when we make reforms to separate our feelings about the holder of a position from the substance. You may like somoen and think/know they are hard-working, that does not mean their job should continue after they are gone.

A similar problem is the way the exec has been expected/ encouraged to do so much of the routine and non-routine administrative work that in other student unions is done by paid staff. I think this has its roots in the lack of paid staff compared to elected staff . Again this is a very bad idea a) because that's not what the exec is for b) it's been v stressful and emotionally wearing for some of the hardest working members of the exec c) It's unreliable – exec members wiliness to work changes over time thus making OUSU's labour supply very insecure and unreliable d) You don't get tailor made labour v often you have people doing tasks they're not necessarily competent to do-or even if they do lack the time to do it (I must say I have been very impressed by the dedication of so many members of the part time executive) . I think to be fair this is one problem that is getting better-but too often we have a system built around the existence.

The problems with OUSU Democracy

Of course the whole point of a student union-indeed the reason why one has a student union rather than a student office of the university is for students to be represented. There are a number of interlocking problems

with the way our democracy currently works. I should note that quite a few of these problems have roots either in the structural problems of OUSU outlined above- or the nature of being collegiate university but there are additional steps that could be taken to redress this. I also think they are mutually reinforcing so people don't go to Council because they regard it as hideously unrepresentative so it becomes less representative and so on.

- Lack of competition-OUSU from the top down (and we all know there is a hierarchy in practice) is too often a self-perpetuating oligarchy- simply from Sabbaticals to OUSU reps there is too little competition. This I think flows for Saabs from the sheer number, for "undergraduate/ normal" exec from the amount of work involved and for all positions from the problems of representation outlined below (talk about self perpetuating cycles!). Obviously the last two elections have been very obvious examples of this-and in the latest one this was reflected in a relatively poor turnout. This prevents the issues being argued in sabbatical campaigns (and Sabbaticals in OUSU like just about every other student union probably have the most influence on a yearly basis). It also helps lead to the next problem

- Lack of attendance- this problem is further aggravated by the tendency of most of council not to be there-we've had key policies passing with 40 votes out of a 180 strong or so membership. Again its disproportional relative "outsiders" who don't make it.

- Lack of representation- This problem helps lead to the next which is that OUSU Council's views are so often unrepresentative of what the average student thinks. This is true even when one allows from the fact that the average student is much more likely than council to believe that student unions should not have policy on non-student issues-indeed in Council this is often treated as an inherently illegitimate notion. This can be seen more or less whenever you talk to someone outside Council- I've talked to a lot of people about the Coca Cola ban and found about 2 supporters (In Council it was passed by over 15 to 1). Another example of how Council's unrepresentative- nearly 2/5 of students voted to oppose having a policy on abortion- council passed a new policy by over 15-1. Another example is the boycott of the Said business school – something that reduces to absurdity when we start boycotting part of the university whose students we are supposed to represent.

- Alienation- The constant passing of motions like this undoubtedly alienates students from involvement and paying attention to OUSU. Just as bad the constant pressure to take positions on political issues often alienates-entirely unnecessary, strong minorities of the students. The constant passage of political motions alienates enough groups of students on particular issues, it probably adds up to a majority. So for example any student who supports the immigration policy of the current government or thinks it should be tougher (a majority of the British population) or any student whose against OUSU taking a policy in favour of introducing US abortion law (it's no secret that has permanly got one common room refusing to affiliate to OUSU) . Or perhaps the most obvious-the Said Business School boycott/ ban. /no platform. An utterly ridiculous piece of legislation that alienates every student their- when two attendees got on the exec and tried to get it repealed-it was upheld 2-1. All these things alienate students and it's not suprising they do frankly.

It is important to note that this does not just harmlessly annoy some of the students whose cause we're supposed to champion. It also means that the representative work that is the core of what we're supposed to do loses support, credibility and activism of those whose politics a majority of OUSU Council chooses to attack.

- Exclusion- Something that links in with the other problems is the exclusion of people from even being allowed to run or vote for certain offices-or even ask questions at huts. This is obviously the case with VP Women and in my opinion it reached absurdity when it was asserted this term (on grounds I disagreed with and voted against) that men wouldn't be allowed to vote on the continued existence of the position! One support of VP Women reluctantly said to me they were rethinking somewhat after seeing huts where no men were allowed to ask questions to someone who was supposed to be representing them the next year.

I would acknowledge that there are similar problems with VP Graduates. I would argue the cases are somewhat different- graduates (like undergraduates) choose that status -women don't. Moreover in practice graduates are so much less inclined and able to get involved in OUSU otherwise that I think it does serve a worthwhile function. However I do acknowledge there is a case in simple justice-which is another reason why have come round to supporting a postgraduate Union.

- The power of electoral machines , this is a fact due to the low level of interest in OUSU, the similarity of candidates and Oxford's collegiate system-it means victory tends to go whoever has the log hacks and the

machine to produce them -regardless of anything else. As a student of American politics it sometimes reminds me of old urban machines in the US cities.

Aside from the last (problem which could perhaps best be dealt with by a revival of the electronic voting that worked well both in Durham and when it was tried here) it strikes me that this is fundameally a set of reinforcing problems- the key is to widen the basis of policy making more towards the student body as a whole (which is why I tried to bring a referendum to do so) –and to stop passing policy that needlessly alienates people. If there was some way to get higher attendance (higher quorum?) that I think would help a lot as well.

Elections procedure-

I have to say the last 2 elections particularly the last one has shown real gaps in OUSU's election procedures in my opinion. This is not so much on the technical side (despite the holes on that) but on the most important issue of all- fairness and impartiality.

Partly this is in terms of the rules- for example the lack of ability to appeal to senior tribunal except by junior tribunal and the possibility of the president and RO to rewrite a question to absurdity (which happened last council of course) . Partly it is in terms of the judgements that have come out from RO's and JT (though I should say I think JT has performed much better this year) . For example a view that cross-slating is different from cross-activism (this year) , that if you are campaigning to change OUSU policy you are not allowed to “undermine” it (last year)?

I hope very much indeed there is a way of resolving these types of issues. It is frankly key to OUSU gaining or even deserving the confidence of students . Reform will mean nothing unless the election system is sound. If a student union is not democratic then it is pointless.

What OUSU does which it must do

Scrutiny- This I think is what OUSU council does best-indeed what it is there for. By big criticism here would be that it doesn't do this enough-partly this was true of the VP Finance issue last year. I would point out that the budget- the most important issue all year passed in something like 30 minutes with only 2 amendments-overwhelmingly rejected., and then latter common room representatives complained about aspects of it they were not aware of. In the abortive referendum campaign one (incidentally extremely left-wing which I think shows that this is not a right-wing point) campaigner made the very good point that they spend days on it in German Student Unions. Even at LSE (where there's disgracefully little scrutiny) there is more.

I would say that one of the biggest causes of this problem is the power of other issues in Council outlined above-and another same factor that contributes so much to them which is the lack of wilingness to challenge sabbaticals and disagree with many of the leading members of council. Scrutiny is one thing OUSU council should do more of.

Representation- This of course is what OUSU is for and does best- however the dominance by and the lack of scrutiny-and also I would argue the way our structures are built around administration rather than representation in my opinion has detracted from that- in that it has prevented us focusing on what is the core of OUSU . I also think that the alienation of so much of student opinion from our support can't but weaken us both in losing us touch with student opinion and in terms of the clout we would gain if we had that support.

We should have more about the governance review or academic changes and less on coca cola or the government's asylum policy.

Dan Simpson when he left exec stated he felt we paid far too little attention to representation which was our most important function- I would agree and say also that that is still true

Parochialism- I would say that there is a tendency to a kind of limited parochialism in OUSU.

One is simple ignorance of the (itself v small) world of British student unions outside Oxford. Most student unions do not have hard to hold account corporations running their student service, most do not have sabbatical

women's officers and some actually say there is no policy on anything without a referendum etc . There should be more awareness of the possibilities and lessons outside OUSU.

I would also make a broader point that too often when we are called to "engage with the wider world" too often only one half of the world is thought of (and this is certainly not limited to OUSU) . Key freedoms to buy and to sell- to associate with whom you wish to pass laws as your elected representatives choose to get a job rather than none are too often ignored in the desire. I repeat I personally feel that such issues are largely irrelevant to student unions-but I would say so often when do take sides we not only do so wrongly we choose the wrong one.

My "portfolios"

Graduate Involvement- I think I could fairly be said to have personally done a great deal to increase this by my own actions. As is no secret I have been one of very few graduates to be active in OUSU council and probably the most active (at least unpaid) by some way. I would also say it is fair to say I have been the most active graduate exec officer. It is no secret that all the problems OUSU faces in involvement are much greater with graduates. The graduate campaign faces the problems that OUSU has caused for involvement along with the problems that involve in getting graduates involved in an mostly undergraduate body- the combination is very deadly. Given my activity in the wider world of OUSU I have not been involved as much as I would have liked in graduate involvement (though I would argue that I have still done my "fair share"). More fundamentally I think that the longstanding problems with OUSU generally and the difficulty of getting graduates involved in an undergraduate union-particularly our own are almost insurmountable problems for graduate involvement. All the VP Graduates (an excellent post) I have known have been competent, concerned and hard working and have done their best to increase graduate involvement- but the institutional factors have been working too strongly against them. I would say that recently graduate involvement and support for OUSU has actually been ebbing (though of course this varies a great deal from college to college). There is some insensitivity (would the Said Business School ban had been passed if it involved undergraduates more than postgraduates?). Making it easier for people to run for VP Graduates should help with that (the campaign does tend to collapse without one)

However the big problem is that most the things that make OUSU difficult for undergraduates work much more strongly for postgraduates.

Having been opposed, even strongly opposed to the idea I have reluctantly come round to the conclusion that the only long term solution to these problems to have a postgraduate union with its own sabbatical president in place of the VP Graduates. This would allow an institution that was focused and had to justify its existence to graduates. It would allow graduates to come together in a more satisfying body for them than Council.. Given both the growing number of graduates in the student body and the proposed changes to university structures (which as far as they effect graduate representation will I suspect go through) I think this would actually be very doable in the next few years. It is a worthy idea which already has considerable unformed support-and I think could grow. I have come round to the idea reluctantly-I used to be a strong sceptic

Clubs and Societies- This area I am increasing coming to the view doesn't really need an executive officer though it's probably nice to have one. . The most important thing is be able to pass on information for people-which perhaps needs an exec officer to do it but I think would survive without it.

This has been a real contrast with my previous union where Clubs and Societies were one of the cores of what the student union did. But in Oxford practically everything from funding to registration is done at the university level (and very well I may add). What I think might be worth looking at might is representation-how clubs could benefit from OUSU representation in fighting their corner institutionally-though even that I think is frankly limited. I still think a publicity leaflet would be a good idea though that has had to be put on hold for now for internal OUSU reasons.

NUS- This is the portfolio which I've only had for the duration of this year. In terms of NUS nationally I have to say I have remained disillusioned as I was when I gave my report last year. The fact is that "moderates" and "reformers" are now in control of NUS-but the basis of their moderation is tepid and often careerist. And the reform seems to be based on the premise that the big problem with NUS is that it's too accountable and democratic to which my response is scepticism to put it mildly.

On OUSU and NUS we have for the 2nd or 3rd time (in my knowledge) being tried to work out how the relationship could be changed. NUS have throughout this period been confused and even contradictory. They are now resisting the idea that colleges could affiliate through OUSU. If they do not and we try and go for central affiliation anyway this will raise the question of whether a) OUSU should try and get all the affiliated common rooms affiliated to NUS as well and b) what about the status of non affiliated common rooms (such as my own?) . I personally would be very opposed to both. Common Rooms should only be affiliated if they wish it.

I think the key to get Oxford more involved in NUS is for NUS to give people more than they offer at the moment.

I think the training sessions this year were useful-and recommend they continue. NUS conference is a bear pit and people who haven't been before should have some idea of what they're letting themselves in for! Otherwise one tends to spend the days working out what's happening-and be fully trained as a delegate when you leave never to return!

I should add that both John and Emma have been hard-working on NUS and Tom Dale presented an awe inspiring example of commitment.

DA-disabilities action I took on the basis that my contact would be minimal except in emergency (unlike my excellent predecessor Wen Sui) when no one else on the executive wanted it. I have been very impressed by the level of dedication and activity of this campaign-and its v sensible focus on helping students at the university who we can help.

Thanks

It seems customarily here to give some thanks so here goes.....

I would like to thank the current exec and also others of old including, Helena, Dan, Siobhan , Lorna , Steve Tom and John for their help and company.

I would particularly like to thank Tim who since he came on exec has been both a v good friend and a

I would like to wish the new executive particularly Charlie and Lydia who I have served with briefly and who I am sure will be very good for OUSU over the next year.

To Sue , Barbara and Maria thank you for being so patient and putting up with my hopeless inability to tell voices on the telephone!

I would also like to thank both occasional allies and friends over the years for help and/or support with OUSU whether personal or political. These include (but are not limited to) Ed, Nick, Ali, Lucy, Shaun, Sarah, Ian, Katie, Francis, Tim A, Peter, Daniel, Herve and Sven.

I usually find I get slightly annoyed when left off these lists so I apologise to anyone I've unintentionally offended by leaving them off.

Conclusion

I know my many points may have sounded rather negative and downbeat. Such is not my intention. I do support the concept of student representation and think it's of great importance. Indeed that is why I have spent perhaps too much time and emotional energy on it. Often friends of mine who do not share this view have been baffled or repelled. But I do think it is important- which is why I have got so frustrated when I see the student union failing to meet its potential. Student unions do matter not more than a lot of other things but they're unusually important in the context of being a student when to be frank none of us matter very much in the greater scheme of the world

Too often when I have been involved in OUSU I find myself the only person (or to be fair more often one of very few) to speak against an idea. Though this may surprise people who have heard me do this very often I really don't find it fun. One friend of mine a long time ago said of their involvement in student politics reminded them of part of Les Miserable "speak and I am condemned, speak not and I am damned" . I find this a bit melodramatic but

for people who are not used to the unfriendliness of being in a minority or find it pointless I can understand why they might feel like this. . I know that some of the time I find myself the main opponent of a measure it's because no one in the room agrees with me (however many outside). Sometimes it's because "the best lack all conviction whilst the worst are filled with passionate intensity"-. However often it's because people think it's pointless, depressing, futile or unwise to speak up. My advice is ignore that! An extra voice is nearly always helpful even if it simply repeats if you see 4 people arguing and you think they are wrong

The key point I would say is to urge people who are wondering whether to speak up against what might be the tide to speak up and be heard. Many times –for example with VP-Finance last year the majority has been shown to be wrong. OUSU will only change if people change it!

I would like to leave you with part of a poem I think relevant to this sentiment . In deference to general OUSU insider sentiment it's a form of an anti-war poem. I think it has broad application for life-for when one can't stand up against what's wrong in a student union-what chance does one have in life afterwards when the stakes are so much higher?

Once to every man and nation
Comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood,
For the good or evil side;
Some great cause, a new beginning,
Offers each the bloom or blight
And the choice goes by forever
'Twi'x't that darkness and that light.
Then to side with Truth is noble
When we share her wretched crust,
'Ere her cause brings fame or profit
And 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses,
While the coward stands aside
Till the multitude make virtue
Of the faith they had denied.
Though the cause of evil prosper,
Yet 'tis Truth alone is strong;
Though her portion be the scaffold,
And upon the throne be Wrong,
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own.

Alice Wilby

Exec

I believe that fundamentally OUSU is a good thing. It does a lot of work in Oxford that no other institution could do. However, it isn't perfect. These are a few of my ideas on how OUSU could be changed to make it more accountable to students, and encourage it to act more in their interests. They aren't intended to be a criticism of specific people, and I hope they will be taken constructively.

Things I have done this term...

Publicity; I haven't done as much for publicity this term as I would like. Iain and I produced a sheet on the things that OUSU does to go into freshers packs; it was a bit last-minute and could have contained more useful information, but it's something that I think will be valuable once we get it right. I will also be producing a 'what OUSU has done this term' type of newsletter to go out over OUSU news at the end of term. I think there is huge scope for OUSU publicity to go on the website, and once the new design is finished hopefully it will be much easier for people to find out about the things they are interested in.

Academic affairs; Lots of academic affairs things have been going on this term, and hopefully council will be debating motions on various important bits of policy. The academic affairs reps meetings have been happening every fortnight, with very committed attendance from some reps, but not much input from the majority. It's clear

that the current system of meetings isn't as effective as it could be, and I think a good way to change this would be to make the meeting open to all, and have specific policy debates, for example on inequality of tutorial provision. I think there is a lot for academic affairs committee to do, and I'm sure the new exec and co chairs will be kept busy by it next term.

Housing; I've only taken this portfolio on recently, so I haven't done much for it yet. Hopefully I will be helping Helen with the living out guide, and meeting Sue Jacobs from the accommodation office to think about ways to promote her new housing database.

Non-portfolio stuff and my opinions

Future Outlook; something I've been quite involved in, I would have liked to do more, but other exec members took it on as their portfolio. It's a really great idea, and very ambitious, but I'm concerned that the guide and fair may not be done in time. Hopefully a lot is being done on it, and I just haven't been told.

Freshers' week took up a lot of my time, but much more of other people's. I'm sure to the outside it looked superbly organised, but from the inside it really didn't feel that way! More forward planning would be useful – it's always going to be difficult when new Sabbs have taken over, but more needs to be done over the summer and less in a mad rush in the week before the fair.

Target Schools; I love target schools, it got me into Oxford, and it got me involved in OUSU. It is the only part of OUSU I plan to come back to defend next year. It needs to be prioritised more in OUSU, and appreciated, both as a good thing in itself, and something that gets more people involved. We can't afford to let the admissions office and university dictate the policy or scope of Target Schools; it needs to be something we do because we believe in it. I don't think there is anything wrong with the current remit of Target Schools; it does a brilliant job, and should continue to do so. For this reason the Alternative prospectus has become my obsession. It's still not done! Along with Target Schools, it does more to encourage Oxford applications than anything else, and again, it should be prioritised for this. It is absolutely crucial that the AP is done in time for the Target Schools mailing, and that it gets sent to every school. There are no excuses for failing to do something so important; there are people willing to help.

Everyone who is likely to still be reading this report knows that mentoring has taken up a lot of my time this term. As my motion to the last council showed, I wanted to bring mentoring in as a formal part of OUSU. I've changed my mind. I no longer think OUSU is an appropriate place for a society which needs to be consistent, year after year. Campaigns and committees within OUSU rely too much on budgets which can fluctuate and be cut at short notice. Mentoring has a huge level of participation from all Common rooms across Oxford. By being so rigid in its structures OUSU has lost what could have been a popular campaign and much-needed participation.

I think this is a huge problem with OUSU. If campaigns have to fight for their share of the budget they can't plan in advance; this needs to be changed. If the OSSL profits aren't stable then we need to look at alternative ways to fund OUSU campaigns so that they can happen every year, regardless of the work of the business team. I think either OSSL and OUSU should be separate in what they do, or OSSL should be more accountable to council, and there should be some way of spending money that already definitely exists, rather than the money we don't know we've made yet. I think without this there is no way for OUSU campaigns to be fully effective.

Politics alienates people. The political fights get in the way of the good work OUSU does too often. I wish people in Oxford would realise that there are more important things to care about than the latest OULC or OUCA slate. I also think it is time that some members of OUSU (from both parties) behaved like adults and treated each others views with respect, and listened to concerns. There are OUCA loons. There are also OULC loons. But the majority of people from both parties have valid views, and shouldn't be dismissed just because we might not agree with everything they say.

However, certain people's conduct during the election was embarrassing. To hear that an agent will try to send down a ballot box because 'it might not go our way' shocked me. Maybe I'm naïve, but I didn't expect candidates or agents to behave in this way. I thought people would play by the rules. As someone who considers herself to be part of the 'OUSU clique' people are so fond of criticising, I had no idea about all the regulations that were being quoted. I think elections should be won on the basis of who has the best ideas, experience, and if necessary, campaign. Not who knows how to turn the rules to their advantage.

The same applies to Council. Too often votes are taken on party lines without anyone stopping to think about the issues. I don't often agree with Tom packer, but I do think debate is a good thing. If council becomes a place

where the wishes of the labour club are passed without question it will alienate even more JCRs. We need to be relevant to students. To do this it is necessary to engage with them on issues they care about and help people to feel comfortable bringing motions to council. If everything that hasn't come from a JCR president or the exec is refused, then students will not bring motions. Equally, if discussions degenerate into a debate about the standing orders, with no reference to the substance of the motion everyone will get bored. Yes, the rules are important, but they should not be used to detract from the important substance of a debate.

I think the exec (and by this I include the Sabbs) need to remember that council is not there to do as they ask; rather we exist to fulfil the mandates of council. Things must not be pre arranged, particularly between the full time exec, so that issues are not fully debated, or the agenda is altered. Hopefully the excessive use of emergency motions will be curtailed next term. Council isn't just there as a formality to approve the wishes of the exec (or the JCRs). It is there to represent ALL students, and we should ensure it continues to do so. The structure of the exec is relevant to this; too often the part time exec are dictated to by the Sabbs, and made to feel like they are obliged to follow their wishes without question. In fact, only council mandates should be followed religiously by the exec. There is supposed to be a flat structure in OUSU. Let's get it back. The difference in the attitude of the two sabb teams was instrumental in making the start of this term more difficult than it needed to be. A lack of communication over summer, combined with little knowledge of how exec should work led to problems of overwork, under appreciation and resignations. It is fundamental that the Sabbs appreciate that the part time exec gives up a lot of their time for free, and often prioritise OUSU over their academic work. Often a few words of thanks, rather than rude and demanding emails, are enough to make the difference.

Finally; I believe that the OUSU of the future should be better run, more accountable and involve more participation. I don't think this can be done without an overhaul of the way that the sabbatical team works. I am not criticising anyone personally; I am sure everyone does their job to the best of their ability. Instead I am criticising the structures for making those jobs even more difficult. In my opinion an elected VP finance is never going to work, you might get one with lots of technical knowledge. Equally, you might not. We need to give the political (i.e. budget forming) roles of the VP F to the president, and remove all other roles to an appointed publications/website person. Also, the VP women role is untenable as it stands. If the women of Oxford want a full time, elected representative then I will not argue, but I don't think that the criticism is going to go away unless there is debate on the issue. There are other ways to represent women to the university, and I'm not sure a full time member of staff is in anyone's interest. If these changes were implemented it would leave a very small full time team, whose accountability to council could be further questioned. I think that a good way to combat this is to increase the size of the part time exec, and for council to be more interested in, and critical of their work. It is far easier to criticise a member of the part time exec and do something about incompetence than it is to do the same for Sabbs. I think this is the only way to make OUSU more accountable to the jcrs, and the students it claims to represent.

Thanks...

If you've bothered to read this far, then I'm sure you won't mind the self indulgent bit (and realistically, you're probably going to be mentioned). I think thank you is an underused word in OUSU, so I'm going to make up for it! Firstly, last years Sabb team – John, Nicky, Bex, Ian, Dan and especially Linsey – thank you for encouraging me to stand for exec, this year has made me realise just how good you were. Please go get on with your lives and stop reading council reports! The current Sabbs and business team; you had a hard year to follow and I appreciate that. I hope you take my comments constructively; they aren't meant to be personal. Thanks to everyone I've worked with on exec, I would rather thank you in person than here. You've been great fun to work with, and particularly this term, I've been impressed by people's willingness to stand up for things they believe in. The office staff; I don't know why you put up with us, but I'm very glad you do! Maria - probably the most underappreciated person involved in OUSU, your knowledge of OUSU (and gossip) is brilliant and should be used more. All the other people who've helped me this year in one way or another (in no particular order); the co-chairs of Target Schools and academic affairs, the mentoring committee, Leigh, Rich, Claire, Eric, Alison, Steve. David (and all my non – OUSU friends), thank you for reminding me that there is life outside OUSU.

Finally, good luck to the Sabbs-elect, you're going to have a lot of work to do, but I'm sure you'll do a great job.

Accommodation Committee

The Accommodation Committee has not had a "proper" meeting as such because we've had no Co-Chairs. However there has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes. The Accommodation Office has been

working with OUSU to coordinate efforts for early next term when the housing lists arrive. The Accommodation Office has a working housing bank for the first time and this will be advertised far and wide. They also have a Legal Aid service operating. The Living Out Guide is on course for next term too. The first meeting of the year will be next week on Thursday and the Committee will really take off next term.

Dyslexia Network

The Dyslexia Network is a support network for students with specific learning disabilities. It's not been particularly active or well advertised recently so there have been efforts to resurrect the Network with more resources for students. There should be more resources in place by next term and there will be much advertising to people.

Community

Hannah has done a brilliant job of furthering the work of the Community Committee. The website www.oxfordgetinvolved.org <<http://www.oxfordgetinvolved.org/>> has been completely re-vamped and there are lots of new members using it, all of whom are able to update their own section of the site. Regular e-mails have gone out regarding new volunteering opportunities. RAG and the Community Committee have worked together this term to run a joint Town/Gown Poetry Slam. It is hoped that the links with the community for this type of event further develop. We have been in contact with the Oxfordshire Association for Young People who the Community Committee and will be working with them to recruit more volunteers. The OxDox Film Festival was a great opportunity for lots of students to get involved and it attracted at least 20 volunteers throughout the week. As a part of World Aids Day Hannah will be liaising with the Oxford Muse to get students involved in writing the stories of those whose lives have been touched by HIV/AIDS. The Olga Primary School Project has started off well. There are currently eight volunteers who will be teamed up with particular teachers at the school and will be visiting every other week. There has been some delay in getting people down to the school due to the need for CRB checks and making arrangements around general busy schedules. However, this should be sorted by next term when a routine is established for both the volunteers and the school.

As my last report as a Co-Chair of the Community Committee I wish to thank everyone who has or will in the future take part in volunteering while they are at Oxford. Volunteering is an amazing thing to do as it gives something back to the community which we often take for granted as students at Oxford. There is such a wide range of voluntary opportunities available to us as students that I encourage anyone who has even considered the possibility of volunteering to have a look at the options. All that is required is your time and it can make a real difference to the people you help and the community as a whole by doing lots of different activities. I have no doubt that you would be able to find something that you enjoy doing.

Disabilities Action Campaign

We have continued collating the findings from a Freedom of Information Act request to see colleges' Access Audits (to demonstrate how they are implementing SENDA)

We are currently looking at previous documentation relating to the now defunct Dyslexia Network with a view to re-establishing this next term.

We have tried to bring a motion to OUSU council calling for the creation of a Disability Advisory Group (on the lines of the Race Strategy Group)

We are also investigating a programme student volunteer program to help disabled students. This will be organised on a college basis, involving JCRs and MCRs and a pilot scheme will be launched next term.

We will also be looking to appoint new editors to produce a revised version of the Disability Handbook.

Health and Welfare Committee

This term has seen many meetings with various welfare providers, including the Accommodation Office, Harassment Adviser, Counselling Service, Nightline and Disabilities Office. There have also been workshops for listening skills and long term health issues. We've said goodbye to James Frew, but after a success in the elections he'll be back next year.

Pro-Choice Campaign

The term feels to have been one more of planning and preparing which shall hopefully come to fruition in campaigning next term. The policy passed by Council last Trinity leaves us well placed to work for greater support for women who want to come to Oxford as parents, abortion provision which better respects a woman's right to choose and proper advice on reproductive health along with the provision to see that people can make decisions which are best for them.

Our presence at Freshers' Fair gave a strong start to this year's work as our stall attracted a lot of interest and gathered many e-mail addresses which now form our mailing list. If you'd like to be added to this please e-mail Ellie (women@ousu.org). From then we've been exploring possibilities for the focus of the campaign including a screening of Vera Drake in 5th week which was plagued by technical difficulties but did offer an opportunity for discussion. Further, I also attended a public meeting organised by Abortion Rights to launch their campaign to defend the current 24wk time limit against anticipated attacks in the near future. A number of speakers, drawn from Parliament and beyond, underlined that along with a strong defence of later abortion (a little used but necessary provision), work should be done to highlight the failures in provision on a local level which damage women's ability to choose what is right for herself and her situation.

Hopefully such work, on these issues and the others discussed above, shall begin properly next term. I do very much believe that the agenda and priorities of this campaign should be set by the students who want to get involved (so long as OUSU policy is still respected!) and thus would be keen to hear from any OUSU members or common room officers where they feel work most needs to be done. Such comments, along with any other questions or queries can be got to me by e-mailing claire.chalmers@univ.ox.ac.uk.

Queer Rights Campaign Report MT05

Much of this term has been spent resurrecting what was at the start a defunct campaign. Now the main focus is on Queer Action Week next week, with a whole array of different events, so something should suit anyone. Hopefully the week will be successful in raising money for Terrence Higgins Trust and getting people more interested in the campaign. Next term we will continue to build on this success with more fun and interesting events.

RAG

As I am sure that Hannah will go into more detail in her report I will only give brief details of the events which RAG has carried out this term in my report. RAG's new night Electric seems to be going really this is possibly due to the brilliant marketing and publicity which has been carried out. It also targets a new group of people which may not have attended RAG events previously. Speed dating is certainly going much better this term than it did last year, proving that it is better to limit the number of times that it is each term to increase interest. Merton's seems to be a good venue for this event particularly when it is possible to negotiate for the provision of drinks deals. Although the night of the "Wear it Pink" Event had to be move it was still a brilliant success. Due to the date change the event was held on National "Wear it Pink" Day and despite the many other events being held in colleges across Oxford, Wadham JCR was packed full of people listening to the brilliant music. I wish to thank all of the performers who freely gave their time to help this worthwhile cause and the members of WomCam who helped to organise and advertise the event.

This is my last report as President of RAG and as such I would like to take the time to thank everyone who has been involved in RAG for the past year without them RAG could not happen. Special thanks go to the RAG Exec; despite the problems we've had an amazing year and raised a lot of money for the charities selected by the members of the University. This has taken a lot of hard work and I consider myself lucky to be a member of such a brilliantly dedicated team. In no particular order they all deserve specific mention:

Imran (Charities Liaison Officer) - Imran has done a fantastic job of keeping the termly charity nominations running smoothly and has always been on hand to help with the considerable number of events which RAG runs. What is even more amazing is that he has managed all this while being President of OXAB.

Jess (Secretary) - If ever something needed doing you could rely on Jess to do it brilliantly and with enthusiasm. She does so much else on top of her RAG responsibilities that it's a wonder she copes with it all- but she does and she usually has a smile as well.

Ellie (Raids Officer) - Ellie has been amazing at organising timetables for raids, events and has been willing to do just about anything to make sure an event succeeds. From walking around hundreds of shops asking for freebies and discounts to being in OUSU at 9am on a Saturday to welcome collectors.

David (Events Manager) - David has been best at doing just what his title says, managing events. He always works really hard to get his events of the ground and has even jumped out of a plane for RAG.

Tsz (Treasurer) – Tsz, after a year of the RAG Exec, is an expert in all things pant-related. He has always had time to go shopping for pants and help out at various events throughout the year.

Vishal (Reps Chair) – Vishal has been responsible for all things social in RAG for the past year. An approachable guy, Vishal spent a considerable amount of the year organising a jailbreak by encouraging other people to get as far away from Oxford as possible.

While they did resign before the end of their time with RAG, both Lorna and Iain deserve a mention in this list as well. They are both exceptionally busy people who spent a lot of time doing RAG-related things over the year and for that I am very thankful.

I wish everyone who has been involved in RAG all the best for the future. Hannah has done a great job as the new VP (C&C) and the RAG Exec wish to thank her for all her hard work this term.

At the end of this term the new RAG Exec will officially take over (though in practice they have done so already). I wish them the best of luck with everything they chose to do, I'm sure they'll do a brilliant job. My successor is Susanna Herbert and her Exec is, Roxanne, Rachel, Laura, Ellie, Dominique, Ceri and David (back for a second year). At the time of writing this report the elections for Hannah's successor have not been held. However, I wish them every success for their year as VP (C&C).

I have been involved in RAG since the start of my first year and this is the end of my second year on the Exec. I have had an amazing time, met lots of brilliant people and helped to raise a considerable amount of money for charity. It is sad for me to leave this all behind but I am confident that Hannah, the new Exec and her successor will continue to help RAG grow and be a continued success.