



## termly reports trinity 2003

### Sabbatical Officers

**Will Straw**

**President**

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The last year has been extraordinary, both for student politics in general and for OUSU. Student politics and student issues are back on the mainstream agenda and OUSU has been at the forefront of much of that coverage. When I came into office just under a year ago, I had two main aims. First, to raise the profile and visibility of the Student Union and second, to make OUSU relevant to students. On the first point, I feel my year has been a success, on the second there is still much work to be done. There are some who will say that OUSU's high profile this year has only been because of an accident of birth, I disagree. The Oxford University Student Union should be the highest profile Student Union in the country. After all Oxford is the most famous University in the world. It is extraordinary that until this year we had not formed proper links with the local press, the NUS or the Aldwych Group. These networks are now in place and through carefully handling can be entrenched next year. We have also had more coverage in the student press than ever before during my time in Oxford (although not all of it positive!). Finally, I think that our branding this year (especially at events like Freshers' Fair) has been excellent and I was very pleased that our website ([www.ousu.org](http://www.ousu.org)) became the most visited on oncampusuk's book's following our relaunch at Freshers' Fair.

Making OUSU relevant is a trickier issue. OUSU is very, very good at welfare provision both for individual students and for Common Rooms. It also produces excellent publications, and campaigns vigorously on many important issues. However, its biggest problem is that it does not have the normal facilities, budget or centrality of other student unions, which would allow it to reach out into student's lives. Birmingham Guild of Students has a turnover of £6m (with 26,000 students), OUSU has just under £300,000 (with 16,000 students). What we manage to produce on that budget is pretty staggering and must easily make us the most efficient student union in the country. However, it is true to say that OUSU is often seen by students and common rooms as an insurance policy – something that is there if things are getting tough. Our constant battle is to innovate and reach out to students at every level of their student experience. On this front, the tide is turning. The move to Thomas Hull House should mean that a new generation of students will use our facilities, including the OUSU shop and publications suite, to a much greater extent. It would be very prudent to begin tours of OUSU to coincide with Freshers' Fair. The new Vice President (Charities & Community), which people often forget is funded entirely by HEFCE next year and which can be funded entirely by RAG in future, will add a new dimension to OUSU's work bringing new faces and activities into the building. OUSU Entz is in stronger shape than ever before. The alliance with rockstudent has been successful allowing our logo to be spread around the University at no cost. I am hopeful that by the start of next term OUSU should be taking a regular income through entz (not to mention the extra income through the publication of the Entz Handbook). The new Clubs and Societies Committee and is another excellent extension of OUSU's work. But there is still plenty more that can and should be done. Everyone involved with OUSU should be constantly attempting to create new alliances and initiatives to help the student union overcome the oddities of the collegiate system.

However, it is crucial that the collegiate system is not seen as the enemy. It is the fabric of Oxford University and what makes the place so unique. Although it does make our work harder, it offers us one of the best student networks in the country. One example of this is the hardwork put in by well over 100 people on election-day (both administrators and candidates) who ensure that the turnout is regularly over 30% of undergraduates (20% of all students), a figure that is overwhelmingly higher than the national average (about 8-10%). Nonetheless the collegiate system does need reform and everyone needs to remember that we are first, and foremost, a University. If OUSU is a centralising force in a college dominated University then that is to be encouraged. I have been astonished by the conservative nature of the Conference of

collegiate system does need reform and everyone needs to remember that we are first, and foremost, a University. If OUSU is a centralising force in a college dominated University then that is to be encouraged. I have been astonished by the conservative nature of the Conference of Colleges (especially on representation). They are so attached to their autonomy and sovereignty, that they are often unprepared to make simple changes which would benefit everyone. OUSU's new policies on college inequality and admissions make it the most progressive force in the University. The danger is that if reform isn't forced from within, then external forces (i.e. the Government) will push for reform along their lines. Margaret Hodge, Minister for Higher Education, told me last week that she didn't see how Oxford University would pass an Access Arrangement (therefore allowing it to levy top up fees) unless a centralised admissions system was introduced. Although we'd obviously prefer Oxford not to charge top up fees at all, it is clear where Government thinking lies on the issue of admissions. Unless, we want to lose any form of college choice, then the University must start moving in that direction.

I won't pretend that OUSU's had the smoothest of years internally. In fact, it's been one of the rockiest in living memory! It's very difficult to put your finger on why this year has produced so many resignations but I do think that these internal issues have been hugely overplayed by the student press. Students are singularly unimpressed by the squabbles of those in elected office – it's probably the reason most people never get involved in the first place. Sadly the media's concentration on these issues turns people off and distracts from the important side of things – OUSU's production. This year has been exceptional. To name a few things that have stood out as highlights: Freshers' Fair was organised brilliantly with many added bonuses; all our publications, especially the Oxford Handbook, came back looking professional and well researched; Diversity Week, with over 1000 students at the events, was an overwhelming success; our ability to get HEFCE grants for much of our work has almost been cheeky; the *Report into the Provision of Equitable Standards in the Collegiate University*, the Battels Support Guide 2003, and the Report of the OUSU Admissions Working Party show us to be an issue-focussed, proactive campaigning body; Environment Committee's success with recycling in Oxford following on from the University's switch to Green electricity is a huge success; and the Finance & Funding Campaign are clearly winning the argument on fees and have shown incredible dexterity to shift their focus to rents while managing to pull off two innovative campaign strands ('Take the Shirts off my Back, Tony' and the invoice campaign) which made the front page of the *Oxford Mail* at the weekend. Next year's sabbatical team are probably the best qualified ever to continue and extend OUSU's work. However, there are going to have to be some difficult decisions.

OUSU can no longer rely on advertising income to the same extent that it used to. Unless we diversify our income (through entz or sponsorship etc) then we need to think very carefully about our spending. Our reserves will have been depleted by £140,000 in just two years. Any future losses and we will go bankrupt. The worst-case scenario would mean the University funding an office in Wellington Square with one sabbatical and one administrative support staff. While it's on the political agenda we could probably get a grant to maintain an Access Officer. After 29 years of OUSU, this is not something that we want to see. So what can be done? The sabbatical salary heading can and should be reduced. There is more than one way to do this and I am not suggesting any specific constitutional changes, but the present level of expenditure is over one-quarter of our total budget. This is far too much. We should also be pushing the Government through the University for more grants for much of our welfare work. Finally, a proper investigation of why OUSU receives absolutely none of the block grant from HEFCE must be undertaken. Difficult decisions need to be made to ensure the permanence of this fine institution, which does so much for the students at Oxford University.

Over the course of the year I have met and worked with many people who have inspired me. It is this that has given me the most pleasure. It would be too difficult to individually thank every single person who has been a help this year but I would like to single out the following individuals who I have worked closely with all year and whose hard-work and energy have impressed me tremendously: Josh Bellin, Penny Berrill, Linsey Cole, Stuart Colville, Ros Dampier, Alex Denner, Abby Green, Tom Hart, Luke Haywood, Torsten Henricson-Bell, Katie Higgins, Lyndsay Lomax, Ryan McGhee, Sarojini McKenna, Daniel Mitchell, Conor O'Neill, Louise Radnofsky, Alistair Richardson, Omar Salem, Georgia Toynbee and Laura West. Thanks to all of OUSU's Executive, all the co-chairs and officers and of course to the sabbaticals and the Business Manager – upon whom I shall be elaborating at Council. Finally, to OUSU's long-suffering staff, who have seen a near cull of their former colleagues this year and who continue to dedicate themselves to the good of Oxford students. Nothing would be possible without you and we are all eternally grateful.

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## **Sean Sullivan                      V-P (Finance)**

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Finances – As I have made clear in my presentation of the budget OUSU's financial position is dire. Recent budgetary deficits mean that for future financial years we simply do not have any reserves to rely on. This is why it is essential that the budget produces a surplus. I have found debate surrounding the budget interesting. Our problem was created by past mismanagement and OUSU expanding too quickly and to too great an extent on an advertising boom that has not lasted. The income ebbs away, but the expenditure remains the same. It is correct to suggest that changes to the way the block grant is distributed should be made, moreover it seems fair that after six years of no above inflation increases in subscriptions that OUSU can ask for a little bit more from its constituent members. However to present subscription increases and block grant reform as the solution to our problems would be complacent. We must look at our own finances. It is inconsistent to ask common room treasurers to find extra money for OUSU when OUSU is unwilling to examine its own finances fully and make necessary savings. I also reject completely the argument that savings cannot be made. Within campaigns, publications and sabbatical salaries significant savings could be made if there was the will from those involved. That the defence of year on year budget headings seems to be put above the long-term financial viability of our student union is disheartening.

The budget once passed must be adhered to. This will be a difficult task for my successor. His sabbatical colleagues must be entirely supportive of him and I hope students involved in the running of the student union will understand that he will have to be strict for our own good. I hope that a forum for long-term financial planning is created. I would recommend this should take the form of meetings of the trustees of the student union that report regularly to the executive and student council. Part of this long-term planning should involve a review of our major financial commitments.

Publications – Our publications this year have continued to be of a high quality. The Freshers' guide was delivered to students' home addresses well before they came up to Oxford. The Oxford Handbook was very well received. Editors have already been appointed for these publications for this summer. The production of the Careers Handbook falls to OUSU this year. I have already negotiated with the design company employed in the last two years and I am confident of another high quality edition. I have been pleased with the amount of money I have been able to save in printing costs simply by seeking a number of quotes and entering negotiations with printers. These costs should be able to be kept at this level for a number of years to come.

Savings can be made on the cost of publications. We need to seriously examine our list of publications and the way they are produced. We cannot expect the basic norm to be one of a copy for every student with a glossy cover and on good quality paper. More publications could be produced every other year rather than annually. Less copies produced, lesser quality copies and combined publications are all options that should be considered.

Buildings – I was heavily involved in the move to Thomas Hull House. From the logistics of the physical move to meeting with the surveyor's office about our needs in the new premises. The new location must be fully utilised. Signs should prominently advertise our presence in Bonn Square and hopefully this year's Freshers' Fair will involve Freshers being shepherded from Exam Schools to OUSU to pick up their handbooks and be shown the offices.

OSSL – the OUSU shop has been struggling of late and will require further subsidy from OUSU in the next financial year. Our improved location and continued work on college orders should see matters improve. Staffing levels have been cut to a bare minimum and I am confident that the shop is being run as efficiently as is practically possible. I believe the shop is a service that OUSU should continue to provide and one of two paths should be taken in the future. Either the shop should be promoted like never before very much relying on the benefits of our new position, or a franchising agreement should be considered with OUSU placing the terms it felt necessary on that agreement.

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that agreement.

Freshers' Fair – a huge success this year and a service that even in the most OUSU-sceptical common room we receive credit for. I was fortunate in having superb organisers in Edd and Eleanor this year and Digo is equally blessed with Sarojini and Laura. OUSU should be far more heavily branded at the next fair and should link in strongly with our new premises.

Clubs and Societies – although this committee's creation came unfortunately late in my term of office I think it has a great future. It is the route through which OUSU will provide a quality service for those students involved in clubs and societies. Its inaugural meeting was eye-opening. We need to utilise our presence on university committees to a far greater extent than previously. We are also in a position to provide helpful information and advice to societies generally that they would find problematic getting a hold of individually.

Advertising – our advertising revenue has continued to be poor this year. I am not willing to attribute this to general economic conditions. OUSU has an incredibly strong brand. Our university is situated in a vibrant town with hundreds of businesses seeking our members' custom. Our members, as Oxford Students, are nationally sought after to advertise to. Our publications are of a higher quality and more effective at reaching their audience than any of our competitors.

I strongly recommend serious investigation of a permanent non-sabbatical Business Manager. Oxford and Cambridge are the only student unions without one. Such a huge responsibility should not be placed in the hands of a recent graduate, the quality of whom can vary massively. A long-term position would also lead to a much greater level of continuity which would be appreciated by our advertisers. I also recommend that proper staff structures be created within OUSU. The VP (Finance) as line manager for all our non-sabbatical staff would face regrettable difficulties in dealing with a lazy or simply incompetent staff member on a one year contract unless proper procedures are in place.

Vice-President (Women) – after a year working alongside this position I cannot honestly believe that it provides effective representation for women or value for money for the student union. To make such a statement is not to attack the individual holders of the position and it does a disservice to our responsibility to plan the future of the student union to present it as such. A truly open debate must be had on the future of this position. The supporters of the position, if they are confident of its worth, should value such a debate for the opportunity to convince those who currently are doubtful. Instead there has been a worrying tendency to close down debate on the issue and this is to the detriment of us all.

Ultra Vires – although we had a bumpy ride in Michaelmas I am pleased that the strict approach taken then has had the effect that ultra vires motions have not had to concern council recently. I hope this trend continues as it removes easily a potent area of potential disenchantment with OUSU amongst students.

Oxford Student – I have been constantly impressed by the professionalism of those working on the Oxford Student. Being publisher of the OxStu has been one of the most enjoyable parts of my job and I am proud to be associated with the paper. I have made significant savings in the printing costs of the OxStu and it should expect to run at a profit in the next few years even if current poor levels of advertising continue.

It has been a busy and exciting year. Highlights for me have been the return of some pretty fine looking publications, accompanying the Oxford delegation to the NUS National demonstration in London – we were an impressive contingent and walking through a stunning silent protest to represent students' anger at the university's contempt for our stance on fees.

Thanks – I will mention my fellow sabbaticals in council and hope to thank all those who have been of help and supportive during the last year in person, but a few of special mention: Maria and Sue have been rocks in some pretty trying times. I am unable to express properly, here, my appreciation of the support they have given me. Rachel, Bex, Linsey, Daniel and Laura are/were fine executives who put getting on with the job first. Lyndsay is just the sort of officer OUSU needs more of and she is free to stroke my thigh whenever she damn well pleases. Tom for not being involved in any of it, but listening, caring and then getting drunk with me. Nick for being a fine RO, shop manager and friend.

being involved in any of it, but listening, caring and then getting drunk with me. Nick for being a fine RO, shop manager and friend.

Good luck to all the incoming sabbaticals. I'll leave the words of wisdom until handover, but it's a unique job and I hope you all enjoy it.

## **Andrew Copson V-P (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)**

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'Would you do it again?' by Andrew Copson

I suppose I would do it again. In spite of the volume of ignorant, unthinking and ill-informed criticism which the Student Union has been forced to bear recently (mainly in the student press), the good work which its officers have done and the ways in which they have shown such commitment to the principles that they believe the Student Union to embody has made me happy.

**The Student Advice Service** has had a good year. We have seen more students than ever before and extended the system of the Student Adviser's visits to colleges for listening sessions by appointment, study skills sessions and examination stress workshops. The move to Thomas Hull House has placed us in a far more central position and I have managed to secure money for a big publicity drive for next term, some materials for which have already been designed or ordered this term and the rest of which I will draw up with my successor in ninth week. I have significantly improved Student Advice Service relations with the Counselling Service, and we now have a very practical system of referrals between the two agencies that overcomes the needless antagonism of the past; we have also been able to contribute constructively to the running of the University Counselling Service and I was happy to follow my predecessor in meeting with the Counselling Service's Executive Committee and making what seemed to be considered as constructive suggestions on the way in which the Service reaches students (as well as relaying the concerns and praise of common rooms). The committee thanked OUSU for the part it plays in the diverse welfare structures of the University.

As embodied in OUSU policy, I do believe that a full-time Student Adviser should be a priority - it will relieve the casework burden on the overworked Student Advice sabbaticals by allowing the takeover of long-term cases that sometimes require day-to-day action and by giving the incumbent adviser a viewpoint that aids long-term expansion of the service. In line with the mandate given to myself and the Vice President (Finance), I have been looking for ways to make this a possibility. I have had preliminary discussions on the matter with the Junior Proctor and the University's Committee for Student Health and Welfare and have come to believe that recent government guidelines may offer a way to achieve this. *Widening Participation in Higher Education* recommends that institutions ensure that they are providing a central advice service for their student members, which can advise on a range of practical issues. I will be advising my successor to use this recommendation to our advantage and push for funding which will enable the OUSU Student Advice Service to be that provider. Many thanks go to Dr Annily Campbell, the OUSU Student Adviser, who has been a fountain of professional wisdom and guidance for me and, I know, for many of my colleagues.

Relations with **common room welfare officers** have often been difficult to maintain – OUSU is too uninformed and individual welfare officers too often uninterested in what OUSU provides for them. I have tried this year to meet and assist them all but it has proved too onerous a task to be completed in its entirety. The co-chairs of the Health and Welfare Committee have provided excellent sessions throughout the year which have been advertised extensively but, although those officers in attendance have obviously been dedicated welfare providers in their common rooms, we've never exactly run out of complimentary cookies. Without central control of common room welfare officers, it is difficult to know how a professional system of student led provision can be run in the colleges.

It was a real pleasure to follow my predecessor in working on the **College Inequality Committee**. College Inequality did take up a lot of time – much of the Easter vacation was absorbed by the writing of it and the questionnaires were only completed on Christmas Eve (thanks to Katherine Wheatley). When the report was presented to the University's Joint Committee of Council with Student Members, the one Senior Member present who had not already seen the report (the low turnout of Senior Members was very disappointing) was of the opinion that it was a great improvement on the report of last year, which she described as "the best I've ever seen".

already seen the report (the low turnout of Senior Members was very disappointing) was of the opinion that it was a great improvement on the report of last year, which she described as "unreadable". We should obviously be pleased that this year's report is receiving more serious attention than its predecessor but we still face problems – the willingness of Senior Members to be so dismissive of last year's report being one of them. Although the Chairman of Conference of Colleges has discussed the report with me, she has made it clear that the Conference had no interest in discussing the substance of it and that OUSU would have to take portions of it to sub-committees of the Conference which is difficult for reasons later explained. All in all, however, the only thing I would add to my previous reports on this subject is praise for all those who worked on the report and thanks for their invaluable contributions.

People who have attentively absorbed my reports all year will remember that we are not too happy with the review of the **University's Equal Opportunities Unit** – we are now making some progress in stating a student viewpoint on the implementation of the review committee's recommendations, through valuable meetings with the Assessor and with help from Max Todd from the University Offices but this represents a too late concern about student views on this matter by the University. The fact that the University's General Purpose Committee is deciding the restructuring of the Unit without student representatives is a matter which my successor will have to address. OUSU came out of the review report very well, as the body within the University which is doing the best work in this area and we must be allowed a role which reflects this (justified) praise.

That said, the **OUSU Equal Opportunities Campaigns** have, structurally speaking, had a rough year. The three week old constitutional situation which I inherited was in many ways a beneficial one in that it gave autonomy to minority groups in their own affairs and in the position they choose to adopt in our Council but the mere ratification required for their policy to stand has sometimes led to a marginalisation of the issues on which they choose to campaign and a certain invisibility which does nothing to boost their attendance. I appointed three co-chairs of the Equal Opportunities Committee whose concern would be to assess both the Equal Opportunities structures in OUSU and in the Common Rooms at the beginning of this term and my successor will have their report and my comments on it to guide her when she comes to consider this area of the Student Union's work – I did not wish to mess about with structures after only a year's experience of their workings but I hope that the review will give us a better picture of how things stand next year.

The structural problems associated with the autonomous campaigns has not prevented their individual success. **Queer Rights**, and the great work done by Phil Lavender in particular throughout my time in office has been a highlight of my year; all the co-chairs of the Campaign have my thanks for their dedication and I'm sure they will continue to thrive under my successor. The Campaign this year has demonstrated and campaigned for equal rights of civil partnership and for queer rights across the world as well as considering rights in the workplace and producing the first ever QR banner (much more efficiently than the yet-to-materialise OUSU banner). They have also moved their meetings to Oxford's Lesbian and Gay Community Centre at the Northgate Hall and integrated greatly with the LGBSoc, moves which I hope will bring agencies working to common ends in our city closer together in the long term.

I found the **Anti-Racism Campaign** in a poor state – a sad fact when I remember the active campaigning body that it was in my first year – and my first act was to find it co-chairs. Justin, Zakir and Jack have worked hard on the campaign and are currently reviewing its structures. There is a place for this group in our Student Union and I am confident that they will have the vision to find it. **Disabilities Action** has proved rather more disappointing. More than any other of the Equal Opportunities Campaigns, it requires a receptive University in order to do its job well and, since the University dissolved its Advisory Panel on Disabilities and has not yet constituted a replacement body, this is precisely what it has lacked. Nonetheless, those who have attended the campaign have proved no less innovative and committed than chairs of the other groups and I would like to thank them for their hard work throughout my year. The **Diabetes Network**, established under the aegis of DA, has also been a great success and it may be that a decentralised system of support networks which combine to campaign on common issues is a structure my successor wishes to explore.

All the Equal Opportunity Campaigns came together for **Diversity Week** in Hilary which was a great success. We were lucky that I was able to find £4000 of funding for this week and I do not know if we will again but it was a week in which we attracted almost 2000 students who were not those normally inspired by OUSU and I hope it can at least act as a model for future if

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The same must be said for **Holocaust Memorial Day**, which again attracted students not used to OUSU and was a moving occasion which I was grateful to have assisted in bringing about.

One of the things I most enjoyed this year was the campaign for **Sandi Toksvig for Chancellor**. Although we did receive some misogynistic and homophobic abuse over the election period, I was pleased by the way that OUSU was able to draw attention to the many issues which face our University in the current national climate. The many people who hacked for Sandi should be proud of themselves

There are many other things that stand out in the past year – it was fascinating to host representatives of the Indian Youth Congress in Oxford (and discover in particular how their organisation puts ours to shame in terms of its active involvement in the politics of its nation), my work on University Committees as varied as the Harassment Panel, Health and Safety Committee (a barrel of laughs and the only body that knows precisely what the University's response will be to chemical warfare in Oxford), Property Management Committee, Disabilities Panel, Security Sub-Committee etc. etc. has been illuminating. I was overjoyed to speak at the University's Alcohol Seminar and to get their stupid policy of raising bar prices overturned, to be involved in the first ever Oxford Pride and to work with so many other local community initiatives in the town with which students should have more contact (and with the new sabbatical hopefully will). I enjoyed, more than anything, the feeling that we were all doing useful work for students in this University, even if it was sometimes obvious that most of them would never appreciate it.

I would like to thank the Proctors and the University Officers who have been helpful this year and all those officers of OUSU and the Common Rooms who have made the time bearable – you know who you are (and yes, Shruti, you're one of them).

**Melanie Marshall**

**V-P (Women)**

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This term has been dominated by the Women's Open Day, which is tomorrow and seems to be on track for a vibrant event that will showcase Oxford at its best. I've been pleased by the take-up and by the eagerness of volunteers. I'm really grateful to Sonia for all her help on this throughout the year. I'd like to make a few points on an access note: one is that there are still too few people from the North, SW, Wales and (especially) Scotland coming to the open days, doubtless because it's too far and too expensive. I'd like to see us target these areas better in future. The other thing is that there's a real gap in information and events for parents, which might be worth looking into. Perhaps most importantly, however, graduate women's access to this university is a disgrace. Women are outnumbered 2 to 1 in MCRs and no one seems to be interested in doing anything about it, or, indeed, helping me to do anything about it. The admissions office didn't respond to my questions about how I could look into support and funding for graduate access initiatives; the shambles that has been the University Equal Opps Unit and Committee on Diversity and Equal Opportunity has meant that I can get no one to give me reliable (or indeed any) information about where this access problem stems from and whether it is Oxford-specific. A Graduate Women's Open Day may not end up being the best way of tackling this issue but I would have liked the concern to be taken seriously enough so that I could find out what the solution may be. If these figures of glaring inequality pertained in undergraduate access there would be an outcry. I hope Catherine will find the time to pursue the investigations and projects that I have undertaken with successive VP Grads and Grad exec officers. I am grateful to Helen Cook who shares my concern and eagerness to do something about it. Best of luck.

"Show me the Money" has now been started with a poster campaign on your noticeboards now and a brief guide to hardship funds is in the offing (though realistically I doubt I'll finish it before Wallis takes over). I hope this campaign and women's officer awareness campaign can be run again next term and perhaps periodically thereafter – the changes to higher education funding have left student poverty a real issue, and (in Oxford at least) it affects women disproportionately. I hope in a year or two we will see equal numbers of men and women

again next term and perhaps periodically thereafter – the changes to higher education funding have left student poverty a real issue, and (in Oxford at least) it affects women disproportionately. I hope in a year or two we will see equal numbers of men and women applying for the money that's available.

The Nightbus admin workload has gone down this term for two big reasons. Firstly, insurance complications have made private hire impossible so I haven't spent half my life sorting those out. They are lucrative but rather time consuming. However, regular, large-scale hires are probably the way forward as far as reliable income for the bus goes: this is an area I have expanded this year and I hope Cat will continue the process. We are not that far from a position when we could pay for the running costs out of hires. The other big break I've had is that all my supply of drivers bar one has dried up. Two terms ago I had too many people competing for the nights available – this term one person has had to do it all. Nick Cole and I are advertising for more drivers, which should be attractive because the pay is good and the time commitment is minimal compared with other part-time jobs. The bus has been unbelievably expensive in terms of repairs this year, and that is not sustainable, but I anticipate it can't continue to deteriorate, and that this year's many improvements will be an investment.

Ethics has been ace this term and indeed, all year. I am really pleased with the SRI Guide and I hope that loads of common rooms will start pushing to get their colleges to invest their money ethically: now that the info is available, our project is to get people using it. The dedication of the co-chairs of this committee is second to none, although the meetings are not well-attended. They work like troopers and really get things done. I hope more students will get involved as there is clearly widespread interest in the work of the committee but meantime we are lucky to have this core of devotees working on these issues on our behalf.

Promoting Choice committee is up and running again. We've got a brilliant co-chair and exec who are already working on a big push for next term, and I couldn't be ore pleased with the work the three of us have put in to getting this far. PCC was silent for over a year – I was the last co-chair in fact. I understand the political temptation to let it lie, and I sympathise fully with the position in which Antonia found herself. Nevertheless, it is a disservice to women students not to make all the debates and practicalities around unplanned pregnancy (that most universal of phenomena) a priority in our Student Union. Huge numbers of women in Oxford experience this problem and the support available to them is inadequate and often biased and scare-mongering (in both directions). Whatever your views on the morals of it, this is the quintessential welfare issue, and it deserves the hard work which Bex and Bridget will undoubtedly continue to give it.

On childcare more generally, the situation is parlous. Provision within the University has been inadequate for a long time, and notwithstanding the tremendous amount of work Antonia put into this issue, there have been few practical improvements. The VP (Women) is the official point of contact for student parents with childcare queries, because there isn't enough staff in the EO Unit. The EO unit can only deal with childcare queries by email, because there is no one to answer the phone. The Deputy EO Officer spends about twice as much time on Childcare as she is supposed to according to her job description because otherwise it simply wouldn't be done. There is total consensus from every single member of the Advisory Panel on Childcare that a full-time administrator is needed. And yet nothing is done. There are hundreds of student parents in the University, and they are some of the most marginalised among us. A student parent event once a term is a start when it comes to offering support and contact, and that's the sort of thing OUSU can do. The practical commitment to childcare shown by the university this year, despite many fine words, has been in my view dismaying. Indeed, similar remarks could be made about the university's approach to equal opportunities issues more generally. Council should be aware what a huge contribution OUSU, especially the VPs (Women) and (Welfare), make to provision and prioritisation of these matters. The University wouldn't do it if we didn't.

Working with Women's Campaign, this term as always, has been a joy and privilege. A series of elections to the OUSU executive has meant that we've been playing musical chairs with the Co-Chairships for most of the year, but since everyone has remained heavily involved, it hasn't been too much of a problem. The focus of the group has been more reactive than perhaps we would have liked, but they have been effective in these matters and also found time to do social, celebratory and educational things which have been popular and fun. They are a truly inspirational bunch, full of energy and conviction. On a related point, I led a "Speaking with Confidence" group this week. The interest in it was massive, and it attracted many women who



celebratory and educational things which have been popular and fun. They are a truly inspirational bunch, full of energy and conviction. On a related point, I led a "Speaking with Confidence" group this week. The interest in it was massive, and it attracted many women who don't usually come to Wom Cam. That was good, but also showed how many women still lack the confidence to express themselves in front of groups, especially mixed groups. I found that sad, and telling, and (on balance) unsurprising given what I know of Oxford. I hope we can do more similar things in future, and I hope it makes people aware that few Oxford women are as forthright as those who come and stamp their feet at Council and JCR meetings.

To all the women I've worked with this year: we fought to make the review women-only, and we won. We fought to keep Hilda's for women, and we won. Keep fighting. You can keep winning.

A few words about women's issues in Oxford. This is still a difficult environment in which to be female. The university does not prioritise women's needs in education or welfare, despite plenty of evidence of discrepancies and deficiencies, and it does not demonstrate much interest in doing so. Disability, race and, increasingly, sexual orientation are the subjects of new legislation, and are receiving a lot of attention, and hurrah for that; but it does throw into focus how gender equality is not a fashionable or current concern in most of the work the University does on equality of opportunity. Increasingly I gear women I colleges tell me that while there is implicit support for ethnic minorities reps and SWD reps, they are made to feel like 70s throwbacks or harpies if they voice women's concerns. This is a pernicious trend that Wom Cam and my successor are going to have to look at. As far as my job goes, in an ideal world it would be finite in nature, ie we would achieve equality and recognition for women in Oxford and then there would be no further need for such a job. This would delight me. As things stand, we are even further from this state of affairs than I had begun to imagine when I took over in this post. Not only are the central university, many colleges and many common rooms ignorant or antipathetic to the concerns of Oxford's largest marginalised group, but even within the student union itself there is more ignorance, prejudice and closed-mindedness than I would have hoped from those involved in what I had once believed was a progressive organisation. If I felt that women's issues were taken seriously at all levels and by all officer holders, I would feel less negative about a reconsideration of women's representation at the highest level. Alas, over the last year my contact with all levels of university life has shown me everything from total misunderstanding and lack of awareness of these concerns and a complete unwillingness to appreciate or engage with them, right down to blatant misogyny. I am not satisfied that the positions of power across Oxford's institutions are held by people with any interest in tackling discrimination against half the population, and that needs to change radically before we can dispense with representation of the kind my job offers.

Thanks: may I indulge? This list is not exhaustive...

Rosalind Dampier, you have been an inspiration: three cheers. Georgia, Lesley, Liz, Laura M, Helen, Saoirse, Louise, Wallis: the face of strong, clever, kind Oxford women. Everyone who came to women's campaign in Michaelmas. Tracy Perkin at the University. Vinca for Nightbus duty par excellence. Annily, the incomparable Sue and Maria: sine quibus non. Bridget, Bex, Charles, Katriona. John B kicked ass. Hilda's in Hilary. Kirsty, Jane, Anneliese, Joshie, who started it. Andrew always understood, Sonia always sympathised, Wheatley always listened, always cared and always drove the bus. Big Up: Nell, Peter, Dan, lovely Cie, Jenny, Mater: the best of friends under the worst of circumstances.

**Chris Griffin**

**V-P (Graduates)**

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This report for Trinity Term 2003 covers my activity in office since the last Council as well as my plans for the summer. In brief, since 5<sup>th</sup> Week, I have spent most of my time coordinating efforts across MCRS in response to the fourth year fees proposal. I also have drafted a response to the Keble MCR report on disaffection and disaffiliation, which is nearly ready for release. Finally, I also should advise that I will start a full-time schedule on the Monday of 9<sup>th</sup> Week.

With respect to meetings, in 6<sup>th</sup> Week the EPSC discussed, among other topics, the future composition of the university student population and any proposals that may be sent to University Council regarding changes in total numbers. I expressed support for an increase in places for postgraduates, particularly in taught courses, with an eye toward streamlining the transition to research courses. I believe this would be beneficial for the university in its effort to attract more overseas students, diversify the student body and promote research initiatives at Oxford so long as it does engender negative side effects for undergraduates and the quality of

transition to research courses. I believe this would be beneficial for the university in its effort to attract more overseas students, diversify the student body and promote research initiatives at Oxford so long as it does engender negative side effects for undergraduates and the quality of their learning experience. I also attended an informal meeting on rent increases and expressed concern that the university-wide debate has focused almost solely financial hardship within the undergraduate population. As most colleges seem to be proposing identical increases for both Junior and Middle Common Rooms, sufficient attention should be given to the number of weeks postgraduates are expected to stay in Oxford and to the fact that many of them are able to pursue advanced study conditional on external funding (which often is not increased by more than inflation) covering the cost of non-academic costs. I am encouraging graduate common rooms to continue holding special meetings and discussing formal motions or negotiations with their governing bodies

I attended the Joint Committee of Council with Students in 7<sup>th</sup> Week at which the recurring issue of graduate fees was brought up. A reprint in the Gazette has corrected the effective date from which fourth year fees would be instituted (from 2003 to 2004), yet there is still more that can and should be done. I have received the support of the Tutors for Graduates in an effort to have the proposal rescinded entirely so that a more sensible system can be arranged and am encouraging MCRs to pass motions against the current proposal before the end of term as a complementary source of pressure

As I have not yet served a full term and have submitted only one previous report to Council, it seems more logical for me to report in this space what I plan to do over the long vacation when Council does not meet but when I will be undertaking the majority of my Vice-Presidential work.

Top priority will be the reorganization of the VP (Graduates) office and a revisiting of issues left unresolved since the transition. I also will be making substantial revisions to relevant sections of the OUSU website in order to provide postgraduate students with as much electronic information as possible, including links to MCR websites, information on postgraduate services, research funding sources, career pages and accommodation listings. I also intend to meet with as many MCR Presidents as are available to discuss avenues for increased postgraduate involvement in OUSU, especially in Council. As mentioned in 5<sup>th</sup> Week, I will be devoting substantial time to the preparation of the students' Self-Evaluation Document (SED) postgraduate section in conjunction with the University's QAA Audit. It is also apparent that no thorough study has been conducted to investigate college-specific use of OUSU services, and in particular, among postgraduate students. Not only will this help shed light on the more popular services that OUSU provides to MCRs, it will also, I hope, reveal areas in need of improvement or refinement.

I also intend to work with the incoming VP Access and Academic Affairs to discuss a potential paper/proposal regarding modifications to the graduate admissions process. As I view my role in terms of mediation among members of the postgraduate community, I of course welcome any suggestions for projects or action that should be pursued in the near future.

I also will be working closely with my successor over the course of the summer to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible. Much of the data at the VP Graduates disposal is either missing or outdated, and I aim to resume or analyze surveys/questionnaires that will be of great use in enhancing representation. On that note, I am hopeful that someone will formally stand in 1<sup>st</sup> Week Michaelmas (my immediate successor or otherwise), as postgraduates vitally need someone working on their behalf while the university and OUSU both undergo significant structural change.

In closing, I sincerely appreciate already the opportunity to serve my fellow students as the VP-Graduates and to have worked with the outgoing sabbatical officers this term. I have been very pleased with the renewed attention to graduate-specific issues and the willingness on the part of other members of the Oxford community to consider more fully the effect of collegiate/university policy on the well-being of all graduate students. I look forward to meeting and collaborating with the incoming team of sabbatical officers and eventually to continued participation in OUSU affairs after I leave office in Michaelmas.

**Sonia Sodha**  
**Affairs)**

**V-P (Access & Academic**

**A Belle Epoque**

*Another vintage year...*

*Another vintage year...*

This year has been rewarding, though definitely with its ups and downs. In many ways, it's been a difficult year for OUSU, with much criticism leveled at it – some of it fair and much of it not.

This can make it hard to remain motivated in the job and to consistently work for the beliefs and goals that formed the platform I stood on way back in Michaelmas 2001. However, I feel proud of what I've achieved and I think it's been the third great year running for the relatively new position of Vice-President (Access and Academic Affairs). I hope I've built on the work of my predecessors, and laid the groundwork for some new projects for my successor.

So here's a summary of what I've worked on throughout the year....I promise it won't take as long to read as my speech to the last Council on admissions took to listen to (sorry everyone, didn't realise it lasted 18 minutes....but surely I am now due the prize for the longest speech in Council this year?!?)

### **Target Schools**

I'll start with one of the most visible areas of my portfolio – Target Schools. It's been a great year for TS, and we've continued to expand this year as we have done in previous years. When my position was originally created, OUSU members were worried that the new sabbatical would spend much time just doing work that was formerly done by the part time co-chairs. The way that the role's developed means that this certainly hasn't been the case – I've been involved in TS since my first year when there was no VP AcAcAff sabbatical, and the scheme has both expanded greatly and its publications and events have become more professional.

I edited and improved upon the TS handbook in Michaelmas – it's now better laid out, with clearer and better-ordered content. It also has a beautiful hot pink cover...no one believed me when I originally said it was going to be hot pink, but it worked very well! We also took the decision in Michaelmas to scrap the teacher's guide and transfer most of the information into the handbook, because it is pertinent to prospective applicants as well as teachers, and because the university is now producing its own guide for teachers that gets sent to schools (and is very good) and we don't want to duplicate literature. The feedback I've had from schools is that it's a very useful publication in getting people to think about applying to Oxford, and we have requests throughout the year from schools for more copies, which is a good sign!

Copies of the handbook were sent to every state school/FE college in the country together with invites to our events. The events this year have gone very well. For the first time, I organised an open day in September – this was a lot of work for me as it involved sending another mailing out to schools (a couple of exciting days in the Meetings Room stuffing envelopes...) but it was really worthwhile, as it's been our most over-subscribed event (places went within 3 days of the letter going out) and I will definitely be recommending to Louise that she continues this practice. St John's went great and hopefully so will Wadham in 9<sup>th</sup> week (also very over-subscribed). The only disappointment with the open days has been the necessity of canceling the New College open day during Trinity – unfortunately it was in the middle of AS exams, but I think in future because of the way they're spread out it's going to be difficult to ever have an open day during Trinity that doesn't clash with exams and thus has a low uptake. We've organised a supplementary smaller open day at Brasenose in 9<sup>th</sup> week to complement Wadham, and I'd definitely recommend two open days in 9<sup>th</sup> week Trinity in future.

The regional conferences were very successful, and we had good feedback from those who attended. For the first time, we organised an extended program of events/visits in the two areas we focused on this year. In Northern Ireland, we did two (rather than one) regional conferences, and a day of school visits in Omagh; in Birmingham/Sutton Coldfield we did an additional day of school visits and helped with an FE conference too. The disappointment this year with the regional conferences is that it has been much harder to fill them to capacity and pull in the same numbers that we have done in previous years. I think this can be attributed to a number of factors. Schools are less willing to let students out for a whole day due to increasing exam pressures, and the Admissions Office has greatly expanded its operations in regional conferences since it started doing them a year after Target Schools. In future years the regional conferences could perhaps be shortened to half a day and more thought needs to be given to how we work with the Admissions Office in their conference (see below).

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For the Easter Visiting Scheme, about 600 schools were allocated to undergraduate volunteers.

For the first time, we asked for feedback from undergraduates, with book tokens as remuneration for those who get the feedback back to us. Unfortunately, we have been having problems with the [target@ousu.org](mailto:target@ousu.org) alias which means that I haven't had as much feedback back as I would like, but this will be fixed in future years.

There's also been better coordination between the various access initiatives in Oxford this year, both student-led and university. I approached the Admissions Office and the Access Scheme about doing a joint leaflet for freshers' fair about outreach work in Oxford and produced this, which I think is a positive step. We are holding a joint thank you party with the Access Scheme in 8<sup>th</sup> week for all those who've helped with outreach initiatives throughout the year, or who are interested in getting involved – it's at Kiss Bar, Tuesday of 8<sup>th</sup> week 8pm-late, everyone interested in access is welcome. From next year, there'll be a joint TS-Access Scheme-Admissions Office e-mail list which will send out details of all access activities in Oxford each week.

Funding hasn't been a problem this year – I think I'm very lucky as I'm one of the only sabs who doesn't really have money worries with one of their major portfolio areas (although it may not be like that forever, depending on how long the government's political commitment to access, and the wonderful pot of money that is HEFCE Widening Participation lasts...). As usual we got the £14,500 core university grant, plus a few extra thousand from HEFCE for various projects. Another bonus is that I secured funding from HEFCE this year for £5000 of my salary (I wish it could have been added on top!).

It's always been difficult to change the views and perceptions of teachers who may be prejudiced against Oxford, and doing this is often the key to opening up Oxford those who may not have otherwise been encouraged to apply. I think a beneficial thing for next year would be to contact the teaching unions to see whether we can work with them in any way.

I think it's important for TS next year to assess its activities and where it's going. The world of outreach and access has changed dramatically in the last 20 years since TS was started, and even in the last four years that I've been involved. It's really only in the last 2-3 years that the university and colleges have hugely expanded the outreach work it does – which is absolutely fantastic. However, it's crucial that we still have student-led access initiatives – very often it's the fact that students care enough about access to produce their own publications and events that help to challenge stereotypes and preconceptions in the minds of prospective applicants and their teachers. But the huge Oxbridge conferences that accommodate up to 10,000 students are necessarily more high profile than any events we can organise, so we must ensure that we don't miss out on the huge numbers of students attending these events held by the Admissions Office.

## **Mentoring**

Like my predecessors, I have worked closely with the university's Department of Educational Studies to ensure the success of the National Mentoring Pilot Project in the Oxfordshire EAZ this academic year. Things have gone a lot more smoothly this year as the university has employed a part time organiser from their end. It's gone well this year, and there are another 30 mentors recruited and trained for the scheme next year (unfortunately we had to reduce numbers due to changes in schools in Oxfordshire, which mean that next year's mentors will all be in the same school).

## **General Access**

I have represented students throughout the year on the university's Admissions Executive and Working Party on Admissions and Selection. The latter has been particularly interesting to have been involved in, and has convinced me that the only way for Oxford to have an admissions system in which chances of success are not affected by college choice is to adopt the more co-ordinated system which is now OUSU policy. We're ahead of the university on this one, but I hope that pressures both internal and external will mean that progress is made on this issue in the near future.

I held an OUSU Admissions Working Party which met four times in Hilary to inform some new policy on admissions.

held an OUSU Admissions Working Party which met four times in February to inform some new policy on admissions.

### **Support for interviewees**

One of my manifesto commitments was to produce a guide to the interview process for those being interviewed. This wasn't necessary as for the past couple of years the university has produced a very good guide of its own which is sent to all those invited for interview. However, I have worked to improve support in other ways – OUSU ran with the Admissions Office a 'meet and greet' scheme at the train station during the interview period which I hope will continue in future years, and I held a support forum for those JCR officers involved in the interview period in Michaelmas.

### **OUSU Writing Workshop**

This has been a really good initiative started this year. I worked with Stephanie Frank from Exeter over the summer on this initiative, and we have been in touch with Senior Tutors throughout this year to publicise the scheme within the university, as well as producing a lot of publicity for students. Usage has been good, though not as good as I'd hope, but I think this is because it will take a little time for it to become an established resource for students. A very positive step is that I have secured the promise of HEFCE Widening Participation funding for the Workshop for the next academic year, which means we will have about £1000 to place adverts in the student press and with which to thank the undergraduate writing tutors, who give up their time very generously to the Writing Workshop.

### **Study Skills Provision within the University**

Study skills provision within the university (or lack of it) has been a concern for me throughout the year. I therefore presented a paper to the Undergraduate Panel of EPSC at the beginning of Trinity comparing the provision in Oxford with that of other universities and arguing that the university needs to improve its provision and make sure it is equitable across the colleges. The university administration is now doing an audit of study skills provision at the moment in faculties and colleges, with a view to spreading best practice.

### **Student Charter**

I have campaigned for the introduction of a Student Charter on academic rights within the university. Getting one adopted will be a long process because of the way in which our collegiate university is structured. However, some JCRs have now successfully lobbied colleges for college student charters. The university administration is also sympathetic to the idea, and the Student Contract currently in the process of being drafted by the university should hopefully include some form of a student charter which lays out minimum standards.

### **Libraries**

I've sat on the Curators of the University Libraries Committee and its Bodleian Subcommittee for the academic year which can be as exciting as they sound (although the Committee for the Management of the Language Centre provides some stiff competition!). I have made a submission to the Pro V-C (Academic Services and Collections) on longer weekend opening hours, and this is currently being considered within the review of staff contracts taking place as a result of the new Osney Mead site. We should hopefully hear the results of this in the next academic year.

### **Academic Affairs Committee**

AcAff Committee has, I hope, been a really useful support forum for JCR AcAff Officers this year – attendance from them has been better than ever before. It also acts as a very good information exchange. However, attendance from JCC reps is (as has always been the case) very low and having JCC-specific forums hasn't helped, although this may be due publicity too. I hope having a JCC forum a term is something that will be built upon.

### **Senior Tutor's Committee of Conference of Colleges**

This year I have secured representation for myself and one other student representative on Conference's Senior Tutors Committee. I've only been to one meeting but I think representation on this committee will be very useful. It should also be a preliminary step to getting representation on the Conference of Colleges itself. This is absolutely crucial if we as students are to be properly involved in the democratic structures and the decisions made by our collegiate university.

collegiate university.

### **Quality Assurance issues**

Ensuring quality assurance is difficult in a university as disparate as ours. My main concern is with the functioning of the undergraduate Joint Consultative Committees in each faculty. The university's guidelines state that each faculty should have a JCC and should consult them, but that's pretty much it. The lack of standardisation in this areas means that the way in which JCCs are appointed and consulted varies from faculty to faculty. I have brought this up in various university committees, and I hope it's something that will be improved in the future.

The structures for student consultation have I believe made the issue of stint reform difficult for the student body. I am concerned that the nature of the issue (presented as a personnel issue, through Conference of Colleges) means that students haven't always been properly consulted in the stint reform process. I think this is something I have addressed this year with the university.

Its governance structure is relatively new, and I have made points about quality assurance and the role of university committees which I hope will help to address this in the future.

I have worked with the IAUL in the publicisation and design of the student experience questionnaire. This is really positive for quality assurance in general. Results on issues such as study skills help us as a student union to make a stronger case on academic provision issues. I also distributed a questionnaire for those JCRs not taking part in the IAUL one this year and have helped JCR AcAff officers to interpret the results.

### **Institutional Audit**

I attended a UUK/NUS conference on the new QAA audit process over the summer, and this term have been in dialogue with the university about Oxford's audit which will be next Hilary.

Myself and Louise will be attending the university's institutional audit management board in 8<sup>th</sup> week, and I will have completed a skeletal plan for our student Self-Evaluation Document by the time it gets to handover. It's really positive that OUSU will have a role through the student SED, and it will address some meaty issues including college inequality and admissions.

### **Finance & Funding**

My access portfolio means that I've liaised closely with Will and the F&F campaign on these issues. I put together OUSU's response to the government's HE White Paper. I also attended the NUS Lobby of Parliament. I spoke in the Congregation debate on the White Paper proposals, and together with Andrew organised a protest outside first week Council this term.

I have also contributed to the OUSU submission in response to the Estate Bursar's Committee Report and have attended meetings with the Estate Bursar's to oppose the recommendations in the report.

### **College Inequality**

I was involved in putting together the College Inequality report. I have presented it to AdEx (which failed to see the access implications of different colleges charging different rents), and the libraries section has gone to the Conference of Colleges Group on Library provision (on which we don't have representation, but there will be a report back to the 8<sup>th</sup> week CUL meeting which I'll be at).

### **Student Advice Service**

I have also been a member of the student advice service, doing casework particularly on academic and exam issues.

It's no longer viable to produce the AcAff handbook as a separate publication due to shortage of money. Andrew and I are therefore recommending an expanded academic welfare section in the Survival Guide (which should get to more students anyway) with separate booklets on being a JCR AcAff officer and JCC rep.

One of the most frustrating things this year I've found in getting things done is the structure of our collegiate university. The limited power of the university and faculties, and the more extensive powers of colleges mean that it's very difficult to get any kind of change within a reasonable timeframe. It's a problem I've come across time and time again with respect to many different issues, including admissions, the student charter and college inequality. Short of knocking down the colleges, I'm not sure how it can be addressed...

A number of institutions are... OUSU... all institutions of... W... in... all th...

knocking down the colleges, I'm not sure how it can be addressed...

Another frustrating issue for OUSU more generally is the issue of finance. We are virtually the only student union in the country not to receive at least a portion of the government block grant to finance our student union activities. This means we have to levy common rooms for subscriptions. It's certainly an issue which should be examined in future.

### **Thanks**

My report wouldn't be complete without a huge thank you to the people I've worked with throughout the year:

Thanks to my fellow OUSU sabs; to Katherine and Shruti; to the OUSU office staff – Maria, Sue and Barbara; to Annily for all her advice and help; to OUSU Exec old and new; to the TS team – Alison, Chris, Kike, Linsey Rob and Sian – who are all fantastic and great stars; to the AcAff team – Nick, David and John (then Linsey!); to everyone who's helped at TS events throughout the year; to Andrew for his work on College Inequality; to John Fox, the university mentoring co-ordinator; to Stephanie Frank and Gareth Lloyd for their great work with the Writing Workshop; to everyone whom I've worked with in the university on academic issues and admissions who've (mostly) been very helpful; to my predecessors John and especially Rhodri who encouraged me to stand for this position. Whew – I think that's it, sorry if I've forgotten anyone...

Good luck to the new sabbatical team, especially my successor Louise, I'm sure they will all do a fantastic job...

Well, that's it folks....it's time to crack open the Perrier-Jouet!

## **Business Manager**

### **Katherine Wheatley**

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Over the last year my role has been to secure advertising revenue for OUSU's publications, in order to fund the entirety of the welfare, service provision and campaigning side of the student union. I'm going to break this down into stuff this term, and then a brief re-cap of the year term by term, with some more general structural stuff at the end.

**This term I have mainly been...** Before I started I was told that Trinity term was the lightest of the three for the BM, and all the terms were less than the summer. This may be true, but it still feels pretty hectic. Obviously the on-going (and now finally finished) cycle of canvassing for and printing of the Oxford Student is a major drain on day-to-day time. I very please to report that our income for this term is over 100% higher than it was this time last year, and around £2000 more than the year before. A lot has been put in place for this to continue, and I am proud that our relationship with our advertisers and agencies has gone from strength to strength. The Alternative Prospectus is a saga on-going, but the money we have raised for this is at a similar level to two years ago, so hopefully this publication can not only serve as a powerful brander for Oxford and the Student Union, but also provide much needed top-ups financially. There are plans underfoot for the long-term revenue of this project, but sadly (as with so much in this job) I'll not be here to see it.

Other plans are underway for the Careers Handbook – meetings with myself, my counterpart in Cambridge, the VP (Finance) and the CUSU VP (Services) have happened and will continue to happen with the aim of making the 2004 edition the most wide ranging and professional publication yet. This will be achieved through building on the templates already created and working to expand the sectors we cover, giving our readers greater choice. This will also have the knock on effect of increasing our revenue and hopefully pulling us away from the currently depressed world of 'City recruiters'. Canvassing has begun, and already we are up on this time last year; leaving Edd in a position to build on work already done, and not thrown into the deep end with such a vast publication.

For the rest of term I'll be focussing on writing my handover, unpacking my office (it's only been 2 and a half months) and building on OCCH and the other publications/events in advance of Edd taking over.

### **OLD NEWS**

## **OLD NEWS**

### **Summer**

In my vac report presented to council way back in October, I noted that the summer was the busiest time for the BM and her assistants. This was all the more true because of the publication of every bi-annual guide and handbook, on top of the regulars. As I promised in my application, I worked in the main on publications that would give us the highest yield (such as the Freshers' Guide and Fair, rather than the Disabilities Handbook). Revenues increased for the Termplanner, Careers for Queers, Freshers' Guide and Fair and the LGBT Handbook, which were worked on by myself in part and my lovely assistants P. Duncan Weldon and Rodrigo Davies. The Careers Handbook was disappointing, and this is something we must bear in mind for future – back in my vac report I said 'there must be a re-evaluation over the course of the next two terms that must take into account the fact that commercial companies are cutting back heavily on their ad-spend, and in some cases are not recruiting at all.' This has been done in conjunction with my counterpart in Cambridge, the VP (Finance) and the CUSU VP (Services), and we are widening our main base of advertisers to include management trainee schemes, engineering and technical careers, NGOs and potentially trade unions. This will not only provide us with a more stable base of advertisers in future years, but will give the publication added value for each reader. (more on this later)

### **Michaelmas**

OxStu mania in Michaelmas meant that many a happy night was spent working on broken PDF distillers, faulty picture separation in EPSs and non-embedded true-type fonts in Quark. Tuesdays at 2am aside, the non-stop OxStu canvassing makes up most of this term. Having frozen our prices to remain competitive, we managed to retain all our main advertisers and develop our base – hopefully we can become more and more stable the more we pull away from the recession. I am fully of the belief that, with careful consolidation, the OxStu can go from a huge deficit last year, to breaking even this year, to a profit next year. The work has been done in cutting the costs, making the OxStu very tightly run financially, and putting in a great position for the future.

### **Hilary**

Living Out Guides and Diversity week, plus a huge bulk of work on invoicing, database cleaning and preparing for the move added to the usual on-going OxStu dramas and joys. After Stonewall pulled out of the sponsorship of what was a superb week of events across Oxford, time was spent working with the VP (Welfare) on the financing of this. Having attended almost every event, it was a superb achievement and bringing together the disparate sections of the Oxford community is something OUSU should be proud of. The Living Out Guide was produced with more funds raised this year than before, and the University, recognising the importance of this publication, stumped up half the remaining cash. The OxStu was an ongoing joy, and despite some hitches with the printing on the first edition, we have improved relations with some of our biggest clients. The move has also happened and the BM is now settling into beautiful new offices, and OUSU is now slap bang in the centre of town.

### **Structural review:**

The position of the Business Manager is a very difficult. Appointed as a recent graduate (because the salary wouldn't attract anyone else), they start at the beginning of the busiest time financially for the Student Union and have to work their most, when they're least experienced. Every year, I would estimate that huge tracts of money are squandered because the BM is not efficient enough at reeling in the big clients, whilst keeping all the smaller, local business on-side. At the same time, in many ways the BM is given the chores of any of the Sabbs. Heavy lifting, van driving, OxStu delivering (on numerous occasions) and general dogsbody all fall on the BM far more than any other member of staff, quite simply because of the temporary nature of their post and the fact that they are a contemporary of the sabbaticals. OUSU needs to ask itself if this is appropriate for a position on which we rely so heavily. At the same time, there is no contact between the BM and the students of the University, or even the sabbaticals or executive (at least in any formal). Without a voice in Sabb meetings, Exec or Student Council, any information about the income has to be relayed through someone else. The indirect levels of communication make it impossible for OUSU members to directly question the person who deals with advertising and income on a day-to-day basis. No matter how well briefed their spokesperson may be, it is impossible for every piece of information (from relationships with advertisers, to predicted revenue for future budgets, to issues over distribution and circulation affecting potential income)



income on a day-to-day basis. No matter how well briefed their spokesperson may be, it is impossible for every piece of information (from relationships with advertisers, to predicted revenue for future budgets, to issues over distribution and circulation affecting potential income) to be fully conveyed. Finally, the role sharing between the BM and the VP (Finance) needs to be clarified. Each year, depending on the skills of the two office holders, tasks such as designing and setting OUSU adverts, dealing with technical issues with printers, liaising with editors of advert positioning and general admin of finance and publications, fall on whoever is capable of dealing with them, irrespective of workload or responsibilities in other areas. OUSU needs to assign these jobs to one or other of the two and then demand these skills in them.

Ultimately, this leads me to offer two solutions. The first of these is that things continue as they are, with the addition of a part-time member of marketing staff whose role would be two-fold. It would include overseeing all the invoicing, maintenance of long-standing contracts and, most importantly, a voice of continuity with regards to what can and can't be achieved. This would mean that someone could work with the accounts department on auditing, the VP (Finance) on the budget and the Business Manager on all areas marketing, and hopefully overcome the problems of such a high turnover of staff. In conjunction with this, the Business Manager would be required to not only submit a report, but present it to council once a term, and would answer questions (within the realms of what financially sensitive information can and cannot be disclosed in a public forum). They would also work with the VP (Finance) on both the publications accounts and the budget, hopefully incorporating the overview of the VP (F) and the day-to-day know how of the BM. Finally, the Exec should interview the BM once a term, to ensure that each and every member of the Executive is fully aware of the very changeable financial situation. Hopefully this would allow for a greater level of scrutineer over the BMs activities, and allay fears that the financial situation might return to the situation it was in two years ago (at least, not through the activities of the BM).

The other solution would be to make the BM permanent and the role would go to a professional. This would immediately eradicate the problems of constantly changing contacts (which loses us business simply through businesses either not knowing who to contact, or information going astray). This would also allow for the rapport built up between BM and advertiser to not have to start afresh over each summer, and the possibility for long term plans to be put into motion, and overseen all by the same person. Contracts the last outside the academic year can be easily maintained, and companies have the same contact should spontaneous advertising opportunities arise. There are innumerable problems with the BM coming into a job at the busiest time of the year – personally, I feel that the Careers Handbook and other publications could be handled far more expertly by someone who had **some** experience of selling before they start their job, and because of the nature of the student experience there are no guarantees of this. This would go in hand with the reforms listed above to give OUSU members greater access to information about OUSU's financial state. Of course, to attract someone with experience, and someone prepared to take on this job permanently, the salary would (to conform to those of comparable institutions) have to double. Whilst this is something council may naturally balk at, it would pay for itself after a year, and would eradicate the problems of the BM taking on time-consuming laborious tasks of the Sabbs, and the problems of the BM being isolated from the other staff.

Either of these options would cost OUSU money, but you've gotta spend it to make it in this case, and because of the way the post of BM grew (it has only existed for 6 years; before that, advertising was sought by ad hoc teams of students built around individual publications), it has taken on more and more responsibility, leaving it over-stretched if held by a student, and in no position to implement plans for OUSU's long term financial gain.

### **Thanks (briefly, I promise)**

First and foremost, thanks to the lovely Sue for advice, chats and invoicing notes (I'm on it I promise...), Barbara for my constant interruptions and general distractions, Maria for compensating for my lack of OUSU knowledge and providing iced buns. All you lovely current exec peeps for keeping me entertained, all you former exec peeps for throwing red wine about and eating Snickers Cruncher. Snickers Cruncher for being so tasty way back in October. The OxStu for ruining my Tuesdays. The van for ruining my driving. My glamorous assistants P. Duncan and Digo – I'm still better at Snood than you. Steph for continuing to be amazing even though you've left. Shruti for moving in, trying to understand the madness that is OUSU and being a mate (and legal drugs). And all the current Sabbs for going through this too, especially Andrew for sharing that same life as me without even making contact, Sonia for eating half a

being a mate (and legal drugs). And all the current Sabbs for going through this too, especially Andrew for sharing that same life as me without even making contact, Sonia for eating half a chocolate bar and being a Hilda's star, and Mel for chats, wine and orange squash throwing.

## **Executive officers**

### **John Blake**

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I started the term as Executive Officer for Academic Affairs and International Students. As AcAff Exec the major issue is the upcoming QAA investigation of the university's teaching standards, a meeting about which I attended with the Vice President (Access & Academic Affairs) and her successor, the President and the President-elect and the Vice President (Welfare and the Equal Opportunities) in order to discuss OUSU's submission to the report. Given that one of the issues of major interest to the QAA team is whether all students receive equal provision from the university, this presents a genuine opportunity for us to make clear and have incorporated into an independent, public document the many and varied inequalities between the colleges. I have since handed this portfolio on to Linsey Cole in recognition of her position on the History JCC with regard to the dispute over tutorial teaching, and I wish her and Louise the very best of luck with everything next year.

The International Students Committee continues to run and although I have been unable to attend this term, I remain available to assist with anything they need, and will continue to work on the implementation of the policy passed with regard to their fees last term.

I have now taken over as Exec to the Ethics Committee and we have produced a Guide to Socially Responsible Investment which has been sent to all JCR Presidents. I urge anyone who is concerned about the way their college invests its money to get a hold of this report and come along to Ethics Committee and get involved. The Committee will offer full support to any JCR wanting to engage in a campaign for SRI, and we ourselves are investigating the University's investment policy.

Beyond my portfolios, I have attended a majority of Exec meetings which, it is sad to report, have become less personable as members of the Executive have failed to distinguish between discussions attempting to hold people to account in a professional capacity and personal attacks, which has led to the almost total breakdown of personal relations between members of the Executive. At the same time, I have had considerable concerns about the direction of OUSU, and whether it was genuinely seeking to operate as an effective student union rather than a confederation of Common Rooms. This is extremely difficult and I have considered my position on numerous occasions during this term, especially in the wake of the resignation of another Executive officer sharing many of the same concerns. I stayed after discussions with the President and others, and generally things have slowly improved and will I hope continue to improve. Furthermore, I have actually been greatly heartened by the discussions surrounding the Budget, which although extremely badly presented by the OxStu, have suggested that Common Rooms are willing to have discussions about the work of OUSU and do appear to have a general sense that it is value for money, and in light of the rent negotiations also appear willing to acknowledge the necessity of central and collective action.

To all of the outgoing Sabs, I would like to say goodbye and to those who haven't suggested that they would rather be injected with a debilitating, sexually transmitted disease rather than talk to me, I say good luck. I would especially like to thank and wish well Sonia Sodha, Melanie Marshall and Andrew Copson, who have been the Sabbaticals for my committees throughout my time, and who have all been enormously helpful and hard working.

### **Linsey Cole**

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Target Schools has continued to function effectively, following the success of the Regional Conferences and the Open Days over the Easter vac. I've helped the co-chairs co-ordinate the two open days on Monday and Tuesday of 9<sup>th</sup> week in BNC and Wadham College. With the amount of commitment and dedication that has been put in by the co-chairs this year, I'm sure that these events will be a huge success. We've also been collecting feedback from the visiting scheme and improving the website, to ensure that we can start the next academic year in a position to further our work and target as many schools as possible. A huge thanks to the departing co-chairs-Alison, Chris, Kike, Rob and Sian - for their work over the past year.

Accommodation committee has been working towards creating a web-housing bank. We've designed postcards, asking for simple information about the property, its condition and rent, which came back from the printers last week. I have sent them out to welfare officers, so if you

Accommodation committee has been working towards creating a web-housing bank. We've designed postcards, asking for simple information about the property, its condition and rent, which came back from the printers last week. I have sent them out to welfare officers, so if you live or have lived out of college, please get a postcard off your welfare officer, fill it in and send it back to OUSU, as only with your responses can we create a really worthwhile service. We hope to put the responses on the accommodation section of [www.ousu.org](http://www.ousu.org) as soon as we get a significant number of responses and create a resource that can be regularly updated. Thanks to Daniel Mitchell for his ideas and perseverance with the project.

It has been a difficult term for Disabilities Action, as there were no applications for the vacant co-chair positions until the end of 5<sup>th</sup> week. Now, with one co-chair on board and a new exec officer, I hope that DA can flourish next term and be a point of focus for those who are concerned with the needs of disabled students.

I took over Academic Affairs from John in 5<sup>th</sup> week. Although we've only had one meeting since I gained this portfolio, the work of this committee as both a source of support for common room officers and faculty representatives and a focus for voicing the concerns of students will be crucial with the current moves towards Stint Reform. We are having a JCC forum on Tuesday of 8<sup>th</sup> week at 1pm in OUSU, so if you are a JCC rep, please come along and share your experiences and concerns.

More generally, I have attended all exec meetings, duty mornings and OUSU Councils and I went to JCC earlier this week. I have thoroughly enjoyed my portfolio work and working with other members of the Executive. I feel that we have worked together effectively this term and have achieved a great deal this term in the face of often-constant criticism. It saddens me that there is little enthusiasm among Oxford students for their own student union; I'm sure that if OUSU did not exist, students would soon realise what it actually did for them.

Best wishes and good luck to the sabs and Kat for the future-the work that you have put in this year, with the move to a central student venue and furthering the work of many campaigns has helped to take this student union in the right direction. Although pressing financial concerns have dominated the past few weeks, I hope that the new sabbatical team can lead OUSU out of these difficulties and continue to provide a campaigning, service-providing student union.

## **Stuart Colville**

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Trinity has been another difficult term for OUSU. Now admittedly the same could be said for most terms in its recent history, but the last eight weeks have revealed that OUSU as an institution is suffering acute financial problems, OUSU as a set of officers is suffering disillusionment, and OUSU as an organisation of student members is suffering from what is often a complete lack of knowledge or interest. Still. It could be worse, and I rather suspect that the doomy predictions of mass disaffiliation represents little more than mischievous hand-rubbing by those persons of dubious intent that have always wished us harm. The press in particular is always going to be nasty, mean and horrid, and it is perhaps a sign of the health of the OxStu's independence that we are willing to pay large sums of money for it to publicly condemn us. Certainly, though, constant negative press from journalists desperate for a story will not help the Student Union in its efforts to communicate its advantages, services and opportunities to students - something that is vital if it is to regain the respect and involvement of members that it so deserves. Our response should be, as ever, to correct the inaccuracies and broadcast our activities to as many people as possible - however tiring this might become. Shoddy journalism aside, I remain hopeful that the influx of new officers next term can be combined with a concerted effort at awareness-raising in CRs that will slowly begin to improve our current situation.

Unsurprisingly, Battels this term has been somewhat time-consuming. In addition to meeting with various JCR treasurers/presidents, certain Sabs and I have been talking with Bursars and representatives from Estate Bursars Committee to discuss their now famous report and our various concerns with it. A large number of issues have come up including our lack of representation on Conference of Colleges that has effectively prevented us from putting our case to Heads of Houses this year. We will continue to make our points, and I shall continue doing whatever I can to support Battels negotiations in colleges. I am pleased that various CR officers have told me they found the Battels Pack useful, and I hope everyone knows that both Will and I are more than happy to provide any other information or advice as required. I hosted a preliminary meeting of the newly-constituted Clubs and Societies Committee this term at which a number of clubs came along with some very useful ideas. Not as many societies attended as I had hoped, but this is due to our slightly dodgy and out-of-date contact details for them all. I have spent the last couple of weeks compiling a comprehensive and modern set of data for every club and society in the University. This has just been finished and involved cross-

attended as I had hoped, but this is due to our slightly dodgy and out-of-date contact details for them all. I have spent the last couple of weeks compiling a comprehensive and modern set of data for every club and society in the University. This has just been finished and involved cross-referencing a large number of sources for a high degree of accuracy and breadth. I have set up a new mailing list which will use these updated addresses and, hopefully, allow me to begin implementing the various measures requested by clubs. I am confident that OUSU will be able to begin providing some really useful services to these organisations from this point on.

To end on a slightly less interesting note, I have also been attending duty mornings, meetings of the Executive/JCC/Council/Proctors & Assessors/F&F and generally doing Execy type stuff like putting up posters and pidging flyers. And while the job might well on occasion be tedious or thankless, I remain of the opinion that the Sabs and Exec officers continue to make a significant positive contribution to students throughout the University (even if they never know it), and I think this is reason enough to keep slogging on. Thus, while being somewhat unsettled by the fact that mycolleagues seem to be dropping like flies, I have no intention to follow them over the cliff edge just yet.

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**Helen Fisher****Graduate Exec**

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**OUSU general:** Since starting the role in 3<sup>rd</sup> week, I have spent much time familiarising myself effectively with OUSU. I have also attended PGA, weekly Executive meetings and Council every fortnight and I am one of the graduate reps at JCC.

**Portfolios:** I have been given responsibility for OSS (Oxford Student Scholarship scheme) and have had a meeting with the President to familiarise myself with it. I am in the process of drafting letters/e-mails to relevant people in preparation for Michaelmas term, when this year's applications will be considered.

*Caretaker portfolio:* As of 6<sup>th</sup> week, I am also responsible for Finance and Funding with another Exec. member until a new officer is elected.

**Graduate issues:** Informally, I have spent much time discussing OUSU with a range of graduates, particularly those from the international community, to ensure that they are familiar with the organisation/structure and that they are aware of the services it provides for them.

I have collated any informal questions/concerns from graduates regarding the role of the college adviser, continuation fees and the reported introduction of 4<sup>th</sup> year D.Phil. fees and have ensured that the information is passed on to the President and VP (Graduates) and raised at relevant meetings.

At PGA, I proposed/seconded motions for a more structured college adviser system and for opposition to 4<sup>th</sup> year fees without the provision of adequate funding. As PGA was inquorate, the motions were taken to Council and passed in 5<sup>th</sup> week.

The VP (Women) and I met to consider how to further support graduate women at Oxford; MCR/GCR/CR Women's Reps will be contacted in due course. The possibility of providing additional support to graduate women to encourage them to apply to Oxford was also discussed.

I have prepared a response to the MCR Keble report ('Disaffection, disaffiliation and subscriptions') with the VP (Graduates). Over the summer, the VP (Graduates) and I shall also be completing a qualitative study, to explore graduates' views and understanding of OUSU.

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**Lyndsay Lomax**

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Without the responsibilities of the RO's role this term, I have had a lot more time to dedicate to my portfolios and other areas of the student union. I swapped the ethics portfolio for environment committee after the departure of Georgia because I was finding it difficult to re-integrate myself into the discussions and activities of the ethics committee after so much had been done on the main campaign, that of enforcing an ethical investment policy across the university, in my absence the previous term. The environment committee have all been very welcoming since my arrival in fourth week. The committee have a great deal of enthusiasm and ideas and it has been a pleasure to work with them in the past few weeks and, as a result of being able to actively facilitate some of their ideas, I feel more valued as an executive officer of the student union. I think that this is especially important at the present time when many executive officers have become fatigued by the job. One of the areas for concern which was raised at the environment meetings was the drastic cuts in the budget. However, both the co-chairs and myself had a long discussion as to how money can be saved and corners cut so that the campaigning of the committee will not be damaged entirely and the success of the committee can continue.

I have been to all of the Health and Welfare meetings this term, apart from one, which I had to

the campaigning of the committee will not be damaged entirely and the success of the committee can continue.

I have been to all of the Health and Welfare meetings this term, apart from one, which I had to miss for personal reasons. I have also been busy sending out posters, photocopying booklets and the like to JCR welfare representatives about exam stress and the benefits of eating properly. It has been worrying that the number of CR welfare reps has been very low. I think that this is concerning as it ultimately means that the constituent bodies might be ignorant of some serious welfare issues. Next term I would like to work closer with the co-chairs to see if there is any way that we could boost attendance so that CR have necessary information about welfare issues that affect students.

In addition to this, I have attended a meeting of Pubs Board which appointed editors for the Freshers' Guide, the Oxford Handbook, Freshers' Fair organisers and the Assistant Business Manager. I have been appointed to the OSSL Board of Trustees as well this term. I have distributed postcards advertising the new premises of OUSU, which offer a 10% discount on goods bought from the OUSU shop. I am currently in the process of putting up stickers advertising the shop as well in colleges, libraries and the like.

I have been to all OUSU councils this term, despite having to pop out for the odd hour to attend tutorials. I presented my RO's report in fifth week which council passed. I was elected to the Reserve Panel of Junior Election Tribunal. I have attended all my exec duty mornings, every exec meeting, told a national broadsheet to fuck off and have basically spent this term living and breathing OUSU, as every executive officer should!

Finally, I would like to say that it has been a pleasure working with the current sabbaticals, who I will be sorry to see leave after all of their hard work and dedication.

Some may wish to dramatise their departure as 'the end of OUSU'. Nonsense, I say! They were good but not irreplaceable. I looking forward to working with the next sabbaticals who, I'm sure, will be as just as lovely as the old ones. Bring on Michaelmas!

## **Helen McCabe**

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This term has been slightly less busy than last, with all being quite on the Diversity week front. However, College Inequality successfully launched the OUSU College Inequality Report, which has been well received and we are now looking at ways of pushing forward the findings. Unfortunately, the other campaigns I facilitate have been less active this term. Anti Racism is spending the weeks until the end of term consulting on what the main focus of this campaign should be in the coming terms, and what facilities they should concentrate on providing within the University. This is an exciting (though quiet) time for the committee, which will hopefully produce good, productive results for Michaelmas. Mature Students, which I took on from Daniel Rees this term, despite the hard work of its co-chairs is having hard work getting off the ground, which is a tragedy as they have had a good response from many mature students through the University who cite loneliness and feeling not part of the undergraduate student body as major concerns for their enjoyment of Oxford, and the success of their degree. Hopefully this committee will pick up next term because I feel they would cater to a sadly-neglected area of the student body.

On more general points, this term may have revealed some problems with OUSU, with three resignations. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Georgia, Matt and Daniel for all their hard work in OUSU over the past two terms. However, I think the concerns Georgia and Daniel expressed in their resignation letters need to be addressed. Perhaps this is something that will be covered in the up-coming structural review of OUSU promised by Helena. Perhaps a new term and a new team will mean some of these problems can be stopped before they start.

Speaking of a new team, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the out-going sabbaticals for their hard work over the past year. My especial thanks go to Andrew Copson who also works with the campaigns I facilitate, and has been extremely dedicated in all the areas I have worked with him on, and to Mel Marshall for being my OUSU buddy and answering any questions I had. My thanks to her too, on a Hildaís note, for speaking so eloquently at our meetings last term and her general support over the referendum. Thanks are due finally, as always, to Maria for endless patience with me (and the photocopiers).

## **Louise Radnofsky**

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"Lions, and tigers, and bears - oh my!" It's seventh week council again.

My campaign portfolios represent in so many ways what is good about OUSU. I'll start with them.

As I wrote last term, Equal Opportunities Committee would be getting off the ground once

My campaign portfolios represent in so many ways what is good about OUSU. I'll start with them.

As I wrote last term, Equal Opportunities Committee would be getting off the ground once Diversity Week had wound up, and it has. The VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities and I) have appointed three promising co-chairs, Madhvi Pankhania, Sarah Dustagheer and Jack Roper. With them, we have agreed two chief projects for which this body is potentially very useful. The first is a survey of all common rooms and their individual equal opportunities provision. A survey has been sent off to OUSU reps. The response rate has been promising, but there are many reps who haven't replied and unfortunately for them, I know who they are. **DO IT BEFORE THE END OF TERM, PLEASE!** (It's a green, A4 double sided sheet of paper. I will give you a replacement copy if you ask.) The survey is really helpful so that we can work out what is already going on at a college level and how a central body can best support and/ or supplement it.

Their second project is investigating how all of the equal opportunities campaigns (Disabilities Action, Queer Rights, Women's Campaign, Mature Students, International Students and Anti-Racism) are currently operating under the structures put in place by the previous VP (W and EO), and whether a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to diversity campaigning has done them well. Both projects will continue into next term.

Queer Rights has suffered as all clubs, societies and campaigns has from it being Trinity Term, nonetheless has done considerably better than most. The co-chairs will be working on a development plan for the group over the summer to ensure its continued success next year. It continues to meet weekly on Thursdays (5.30pm, Northgate Hall), has welcomed a few new participants, taken its rights as an autonomous campaign to consider its stance in Student Council, and discussed other issues relating to the LGBT community in Oxford and the UK. It has also organised events within its meetings, a successful speaker meeting with Daniel "Trotgimp Extraordinaire" Murphy from NUS LGB Campaign, and - a plug for this for those receiving the report on OUSUmail in advance of Council - an event to ensure increased participation of women in QR - LADIES MUFFINS, Thursday 12th June, 5.30pm, Northgate Hall, on SAFER SEX FOR WOMEN. All (men and women, queer and otherwise) welcome. If nothing else, come check out that wonderful contraption known as a dental dam.

A welcome to QR's new female co-chair, Helen Lewis, who has jumped in and got going well with Laurie Burton and Phil Lavender. They have also developed an exciting new campaign which we intend to take through and implement in full next term: recognising the impact of cultural influences - especially the media - on how LGBT people are able to live openly and comfortably in UK society, they are in the process of setting up a web-based project in which press, advertising, TV and radio portrayals of LGBT people are considered, and positive representations commended to the broadcasters, negative representations condemned. There is currently no project like this in the UK, although in the USA a very successful national not-for-profit organisation has been a leading force in queer activism for a decade. We hope to encourage other SUs to take up the challenge of gaining a UK equivalent, starting with launching the concept at NUS LGB conference in eighth week where Laurie Burton is organising the delegation (if you're a college LGB rep planning on going, and haven't got in touch with him yet, please do!)

Following reshuffling of portfolios, I have taken on Disabilities Action now, and after an initial meeting last week will be looking next term to ensuring that it gets off the ground again to carry on its previously excellent work especially in supporting college SWD officers and campaigning for improved access within the University. An additional plug for the beautiful Students with Disabilities Guide, available from OUSU, which is filled with lots of helpful information. A quick thank you at this point to Linsey Cole for her work in facilitating the campaign so far, and especially to Penny Berrill for setting up properly high expectations of what should be being done. We have appointed one co-chair to take responsibility for getting the campaign going next term, but still need at least one other - please get in touch with the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) if you're interested. I am also currently acting as one of two Exec Officers 'caretaking' for F and F, and attended their last two meetings in that capacity. The three co-chairs (and again, a welcome to the new one on board, Alice Robson) are finding an excellent balance between discussion - with a particularly interesting expert speaker on the American system of HE funding - and action. Next up, Tuesday of 8th week, protesting at Estate Bursars Committee, meet 1pm Lamb and Flag passage.

If I've stuck to the bland stuff in evaluating, I've hopefully ensured that I'm still up for coming back next term. "Going so soon? I wouldn't hear of it. Why my little party's just beginning." I have attended all Exec meetings and my share of duty afternoons this term. The latter may have been more productive as a means of 'ensuring the smooth running of the student union', and I look forward to exploring next term ways in which sabbatical officers in particular can be more effectively held to account. The current mechanism is not, I believe, one that is necessarily

more productive as a means of ensuring the smooth running of the student union, and I look forward to exploring next term ways in which sabbatical officers in particular can be more effectively held to account. The current mechanism is not, I believe, one that is necessarily working and I would welcome input especially from past Officers as to how it could be improved regardless of the full time team in place. There have been many frustrations this term that I think most Execcies have shared (incidentally, "boredom" is not one of them). The 'reward' for the often unseen but extensive time and effort put in by part time officers on no pay, and that of sabbaticals on ridiculous and illegal quantities of time and effort on next-to-no-pay, is pitiful. This is not an effort to start scraping at the smallest violin in the world. Maybe OUSU has not been as strident in promoting itself this year as it deserves to have been. That said, when it comes to what what we are or are not, what we are or are not achieving, and do or do not need, the Scarecrow says it the best. Dorothy: How can you talk if you haven't got a brain? Scarecrow: I don't know... But some people without brains do an awful lot of talking... don't they? With that, the credits. "My, people come and go so quickly around here!" To Andrew, who could quite reasonably be pissed off at not having been mentioned by name once in this so far (blame omnipresence, alright?). Andrew has been an incredible VP, \*and\* in doing (Welfare and Equal Opportunities), for this year, just incredible. Don't know how to say anything more strident than that, because it simply doesn't need to be stated. (No, I don't intend to head up the promotion drive.) Similarly, Mel has made it, in style, through a year in which her position has been rendered practically untenable solely by individuals, rather than any diminishing need for full female representation within the University. "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain", Council. To Will, who's made a great buddy sab, to Sonia and Kat, who I've caught only glimpses of in action, and to two years' worth of Exec Officers for each of their own bizarre traits which have ensured that situations that might have been 'aggravating' have been substituted for just plain 'surreal'.

## **Laura West**

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This term has been an extremely busy one, with my portfolios taking up much more of my time than before.

The Entz handbook is well underway, with an advert in the OxStu last week to recruit an editorial committee and contributors. Anyone who is interested in getting involved please e mail me, this looks to be one of the most fun and interesting projects ousu has undertaken in quite a while, and hopefully one which will provide an invaluable service to ousu members. A preliminary mailing to companies was very successful, with a quarter of firms mailed interested in participating.

I have also been involved in trying to organise entz for freshers' week, mostly consultation with common rooms to find out what they would like to see happen, and also consultation with Will and Sean with regard to promoters.

OUSU reps, as mentioned in the report by the co-chairs has slowed down this term. However, I hope that Dom and I will be able to significantly build on the handover booklets which were used last year over the summer, so that they will be ready for the new reps in October.

More generally I have found the last term as an exec officer hectic but enjoyable. The apathetic tendencies of Oxford Students are as, ever, frustrating, but perhaps we have seen the worst of this over Trinity, with the distractions of pimms and punting.

Working with the current sabs has been worthwhile, at times enjoyable and at times frustrating, with the slow down seeming to affect them as well!!! I would like to thank them all, and Kat for all their hard work.

## **Rebecca Wilkinson**

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As the new kid on the block the last three weeks have mostly been about getting to know the job and it's requirements. I have taken on NUS committee, and went to a meeting with Will, Sean and 'the NUS', to discuss it's relationship with Oxford colleges. I look forward to meeting with college NUS reps to hear their views on this issue. The NUS president seemed very keen to meet with all the reps next term, and I will endeavour to put this into practice as I think a three-way conversation is vital, as it is the colleges, not OUSU who are affiliated.

I also took over promoting choice and have met with Mel and Bridgette to discuss plans for the committee next term, and we have also held a well attended meeting where we discussed possible speakers we might like to invite for Michaelmas and potential events, as well as the direction we would like to see the committee take. I think this is a committee that is vital and I hope that next term we can turn it into the campaigning forum it always should have been. I would like to thank Mel and Bridgette for all their work and encourage anyone who's interested

direction we would like to see the committee take. I think this is a committee that is vital and I hope that next term we can turn it into the campaigning forum it always should have been. I would like to thank Mel and Bridgette for all their work and encourage anyone who's interested to come along and have your say.

I have also recently stepped into Daniel Rees' position as exec responsible for freshers week, and am working on creating a spread sheet of all relevant college organisers [please get in touch with me if you are one and haven't yet].

I have enjoyed being re-enfranchised at council and the other perks which come with being an exec officer – such as long exec meetings and Tuesday duty mornings.

I would like to say goodbye to all the sabs and the business manager and good luck in the future. I will miss you all [especially the ever lovely Sean who has been my main source of inspiration in oxford]. Also thank you to Matt Richardson and Georgia Toynbee for resigning and thus giving me this great opportunity! –and to Rachel for sucking me in.

## Committees

### Anti-Racism

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The Anti-racism campaign has, this term, lain almost completely dormant. This has been due in part to low turnout, and in part to a lack of innovative new campaigns; and these things have been due largely to a lack of direction in the focus of the campaign.

However the co-chairs have met and agreed on some restructuring to the campaign, including renaming it the ETHNIC DIVERSITY CAMPAIGN and writing a new mission statement:

"The ethnic diversity campaign, by consulting ethnic minorities and those with an interest in multiculturalism, seeks to counter all forms of racism and to serve as a forum for the discussion of race-related issues in and out of the university."

These changes, it is hoped, will alter the focus of the campaign away from the negative appeal of "anti-racism" to a more positive emphasis on multiculturalism.

In addition to these changes, the campaign is also going to consult with Ethnic and Religious societies within Oxford University to gauge opinion on what the campaign should be doing; if this consultation process goes well, we should hopefully be able to relaunch at the start of Michaelmas as a vibrant, busy new campaign.

### Environment

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Environment Committee is happy to report that Trinity Term has been both productive and exciting. We have made significant progress on College recycling, public outreach and other environmental issues. We have developed several new projects and initiatives, and our programme of activities will expand still further next year. Our meetings consistently attract over 15 college Environment Reps and other interested students, helping us build a strong network of environmentalists across the University.

We would like to take the time to thank three people who helped make everything happen. Our out-going co-Chair, Luke Haywood, contributed seemingly boundless energy, enthusiasm and experience to make Environment Committee one of the most productive and enjoyable communities at Oxford. Georgia Toynbee, our out-going Exec, was always helpful, supportive, and was quite simply the best exec we could have asked for. We will miss her, but we are incredibly excited about working with Lyndsay Lomax, who has already proven to be a wonderful source of assistance and advice.

**RECYCLING:** Thanks to the efforts of our Committee and its partners at Colleges and City Council, the seemingly intractable problem of college recycling seems likely to come to a resolution in the coming months. Pilot schemes were implemented in Jesus and Exeter College at the beginning of Trinity Term, and students in those Colleges recycled over 3.5 metric tons of waste in the first four weeks of the project. The program has subsequently been extended to the St. Cross/Brasenose graduate annexe, and will hopefully be available to all Colleges at the beginning of the coming year. We will continue to work toward our goal of having every College implement some form of recycling scheme by the end of Michaelmas 2003. We have also implemented a paper recycling scheme in the new OUSU offices, and would like to encourage all office users to be conscientious about paper use. Reduce, reuse and then be sure to recycle! The system is quite simple so there are no excuses for non-compliance.

**ENVIRONMENT DAY:** The Environment Committee sponsored Environment Day on Saturday 3rd May. There were three main activities:

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The Environment Stand was in Bonn Square and presented passers-by with a variety of information on environmental issues and how to be more environmentally friendly. There was a hand-stamping green commitment activity, where people would make a commitment such as to reduce their use of plastic bags, and stamped their handprint onto a huge banner. By the end of the day, we had collected several hundred commitments.

The second activity was a clean up of the area around the boat-houses on the Isis. 10 people helped clear rubbish from the waterline and around the boathouses, significantly improving the appearance of the area. About 15 bin-bags of rubbish were collected, and the event has now become a regular twice-monthly activity run by the environment committee, cleaning up various areas of Oxford. In addition it was uncovered that a number of colleges did not appear to be disposing of waste properly; this should now be improved. Thirdly, a community space improvement project was held in the church yard of SS Mary and John Church, near Manzil Way. The overgrown, littered area was cleared to make an attractive community space.

Environment Day was the major public event of the environment committee this term, and was generally very successful. In future we seek to have better publicity, to get more people involved, and attempt to further involve the public and university students in environmental issues.

**OTHER CAMPAIGNS** Aside from the above headline campaigns, the committee was active on a broad range of smaller issues this term. The committee conceived, wrote and proposed a policy to OSSL to charge customers for plastic bags at the OUSU shop, a motion which was subsequently passed. We hope to follow this up by pressuring university and college shops to do the same. Members of the committee also engaged in the creation of a second ESSO motion that will be put to council in 7th week. Finally, in order to take advantage of the large core group of dedicated people that attend Environment Committee regularly, we are planning to restructure the committee, giving members other than co-chairs responsibility for tracking campaigns and issues. This will, hopefully, enable us to not only involve more members, but also pursue a large number of campaigns. Next year, the committee is planning to tackle energy efficiency, college codes of environmental conduct, environmental league tables and regular information bulletins for JCR environment reps; watch this space.

## **Equal Opportunities**

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OUSU set up the Equal Opportunities Committee to 'provide information, training and support on issues around equal opportunities and to work with the equal opportunity committees to ensure that relevant information is as widely disseminated as possible' (<http://www.ousu.org/main/campaigns/equalopps>).

This term we have begun reviewing the Equal Opportunities structures throughout the university. This has involved designing and sending out an initial exploratory survey to all JCRs and MCRs across the university. We are waiting for the results and will collate these to give a comprehensive picture of what Equal Opportunities representatives there are throughout the university, how they function and what support or information they need.

In addition, we have been attending the meetings of various equal opportunity campaigns and we hope to compare the workings of these different groups to see how different groups are being represented.

We will report our findings to Andrew Copson, who will present them to OUSU Council, by eighth week.

## **Ethics**

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After the announcement last term of the EC's decision not to include education on its list of requests of sectors to be opened up in GATS (the General Agreement on Trade in Services) negotiations, Ethics committee turned its attention firmly back on to the Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) campaign.

We completed the college guide to SRI, which I hope presidents and JCR/MCR members will find comprehensive and useful. We really encourage people to have a read and – more importantly – have a go! Getting colleges to invest according to SRI criteria is not as hard as it may seem if you take a step by step approach and the benefits this would bring to wider society make it well worth the effort. I am MORE THAN WILLING to help or advise *anyone* who is interested in forming a working group in their college with the aim of getting their bursar and/or trustees to agree to SRI, so come and hassle me!

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After looking into the steps taken by the University towards SRI after the "Not in Our Names Campaign" run by Ethics Committee and People & Planet over a year ago, we have decided to re-launch the campaign next term. The University Council did decide to request their fund-managers to actively engage with companies in which investments are held to adopt the guidelines laid out in the Good Corporation Charter. However, there is a feeling amongst members of Ethics committee that, although members of Council seem to be receptive to the idea of SRI, the policy adopted so far may not be particularly effective. We will be looking into this next term and look forward to working with the new sabs on this campaign.

I'd like to say a big thank you to Mel for all her work this year. Her input on the layout, form and content for the SRI guide was invaluable and over the year Mel has done an excellent job of helping us clarify and articulate precisely what we wanted to say in our letters, consultation documents and reports. And she brought us sweets. Thanks Mel and good luck with everything! Thanks also to Chris Hanretty (particularly for all his research into SRI!) and Lyndsay Lomax for the great work they've done as Exec officers for us this year. We promise to work John just as hard next term!

## **Finance & Funding**

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The term has been dominated by the University's response to the White Paper and the looming co-ordinated rent increases. On both fronts students are justified in feeling that their views haven't been listened to so it is absolutely vital that we don't let them silence us.

Following the meeting of congregation in 9th week, where a University Council amendment passed that gave the University £pro-fees, policy; a postal vote was called at the start of term. The postal vote confirmed the £pro-fees policy, but the shocking aspect was that only 5% of those eligible chose to vote. We have invoiced all the pro-fees tutors and Oxford educated MPs for the costs of their education (with proceeds going to hardship funds) since they think current (and future) students should pay for theirs.

Penny Berrill and Sonia Sodha wrote an excellent response to the White Paper, which highlighted the failures of government policy. We'll greatly miss Penny and would like to thank her for all her dedication and commitment. Penny was responsible for thinking up the £Take the Shirt off by Back, Tony, protest and in 6th week we rolled the shirts across central London to No.10. Alice Robson has ably stepped in and is in the process of collecting £case studies, of Oxford students, financial situations.

Rent season has seen huge rises and it soon became apparent that bursars were colluding in setting rent increases. There's been a lot of solidarity between Common Rooms in fighting rent increases and Silent Halls were held across the University in 4th and 5th week. Whilst the co-ordination between Colleges has been quite good this year When Conference of Colleges met to discuss the £rent report,, which had been kept secret, we slow clapped them into their meeting at St. John's. They've finally released the report; most of which is poorly written and justified, and a response should be available by Council.

The Tories promise to scrap tuition fees shows that opposition to fees spans the political spectrum and that scrapping fees isn't £politically impossible, or £unrealistic,. We've written to Damian Green with a long list of questions to try to find out exactly what Tory plan for higher education are and as soon as we get a response we'll send the info round, so that Council can decide if OUSU should have particular policy on the Conservative's proposals.

Finally, we'd just like to say thank to Will and all the Sabs for all their hard work, and wish them well for the future.

## **OUSU Reps**

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Another term where, hopefully, we've managed to provide a space where OUSU reps can discuss all sorts of issues in an informed and productive context. Things have tailed off a bit towards the end of term, due to exams and the summer weather, and there hasn't been the turnout and level of activity that was achieved in Hilary, but there have nonetheless been some important things discussed.

The end of the year means losing quite a few old hands and, with luck, getting their successors to join in. Please do encourage any new college OUSU reps to come along next term - at least send back your JCR/MCR personnel forms so we know who they are. It also means bidding farewell to Ollie (much to the sadness of the remaining two-thirds of the team!), so there will be a vacancy for a Co-Chair of the committee. Please do apply next term - it's minimal work and

farewell to Ollie (much to the sadness of the remaining two-thirds of the team!), so there will be a vacancy for a Co-Chair of the committee. Please do apply next term - it's minimal work and good fun.

## **Promoting Choice**

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This term has seen the Promoting Choice committee getting off the ground again after a period of inactivity. We have been looking at what to organise for Michaelmas, with a relaunch at Fresher's Fair and speaker meetings and discussion groups planned. We also plan to look into the activities of Pro-Choice groups in other student unions. In addition, we intend to lobby the university for a full time childcare officer to be appointed and investigate the provision made by colleges for pregnant students.

Hopefully the committee will be fully up and running in Michaelmas, with many more people becoming involved.

## **Target Schools**

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The action-packed Target Schools 2002-2003 year comprised:

- ❑ writing, publishing, and distributing the Target Schools handbook, which this year combined the teachers, and students, guide into one publication;
- ❑ organising of conferences and school visits in Sutton Coldfield, Belfast, Coleraine, and Omagh;
- ❑ arranging the school visiting scheme, and rewarding of volunteers with book vouchers commensurate with the number of visits undertaken;
- ❑ organising open days at Somerville, St. John's Wadham, and Brasenose;
- ❑ organising, in conjunction with the Access Scheme, an event at Kiss Bar for all those who had volunteered in access work over the last year.

## **Womens Campaign**

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It's been a rollercoaster of a term for Womcam, with some changes in co chairs and Exec. A huge thank you to Georgia Toynbee for all her time and effort as Womcam co-chair, and also to Ros Dampier, who has moved on from co chair to the heady heights of Exec. The current Womcam co chairs are now Laura Moys, Saoirse Cowley and me. This term WomCam has had its fingers in many metaphorical pies, assisting JCR Women's Officers in maintaining their profile in colleges, discussing and disseminating information on women's health issues, and holding a public speaking workshop and co-ordinating with Queer Rights to promote women's sexual health in Ladies' Muffins. Our last big event of the term will be a barbeque in St Hilda's field, next Monday from 4pm. Hope to see you there!