



Termly Reports Trinity 2005

SABBATICALS

Rag

Raised so far this year £54206.23

**Nicky Ellis
Opportunities)**

V-P (Welfare and Equal

The last fortnight first;

The University has, for the time being at least, abandoned its plan to sell off the graduate housing to the colleges- a good thing. We raised objections in various quarters, and so, it seems, did others.

The PCT have reported that there have been no significant developments in the Health centre plans and that therefore they think it best to re-engage with students in the autumn. Samir and I wrote up a summary of our concerns and suggestions for progress, which they said was useful and which I hope will provide the basis for the autumn consultation. It will be important to keep an eye and make sure this actually happens, if there is still a want for this amongst the student body.

I attended my last university committee for student health and welfare meeting, and Aidan also attended to observe; this ought to be my most important university level engagement; however, it hasn't always felt like that. It meets once a term, which I think curtails its capacity for action, and often lacks the power to be much more than a forum for idea sharing. Obviously that is important in itself, but I don't think it is enough. In my response to the governance review I suggest the forming of a committee for student services, which would form the core of a revised health and welfare committee, with the addition of PCT representatives and so on; I think that it is important that this committee is reformed in some way.

Condom machines- the whole VAT issue becomes daily more confusing and is taking up a fair amount of my time; however I hope still to have a solution by the end of term.

DA met last week; many colleges have responded to our FOI requests, so we now have a whole selection of college disability audits, which makes for an interesting read... we're in the process of going through those, which should provide the basis for some solid campaigning work next year.

And in general-

Some re-thinking.

Rather than VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) and VP (Access and Academic Affairs), I think we should have a VP (Academic Affairs & Welfare and Equal Opportunities) and a VP (Access and Equal opportunities). The first would be responsible for heading the Student advice service, for co-ordinating and campaigning on all areas of academic policy, including academic policy relating to 'equal opportunities'. The second would be responsible for our access work, for increasing the equal opportunities focus of access work, and for coordinating, and, where appropriate, driving, equal opportunities campaigning at university level and beyond.

There's a glaring equal opportunities overlap there; a small digression while I try to explain: equal opportunities is the vaguest of terms, and encompasses an awful lot of things. As far as my job goes, it extends from trying to sort out proper arrangements for people with disabilities to sit their exams, to working on harassment cases, to campaigning for better rights at work for LGBT employees. A lot of it doesn't sit particularly conveniently together, apart from in as much as it relates to issues to do with 'minority groups', and in as much that the experience of dealing with discrimination or marginalisation in any area ought to make one more sympathetic to it everywhere. But where our jobs here are concerned, we need to be more specific about it. Where academic policy is concerned, equal opportunities matters need to be considered from the

first moment. In this university, they are still tacked on after the event. This means that when planning a course, we need to consider how that course can (and can't) be adapted for people with disabilities; when planning library opening hours, we need to consider the needs of students with particular religious observations to fulfil. When thinking about exams, we need to think about how men, women, and people from different backgrounds may be affected differently. And so on. Often this year, one part of a discussion has been had in one part of the university by the VP (Access and Academic affairs) and the implications of that discussion have been considered in another part of the university by the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities). Part of the blame for this lies in the university, but we could better argue it with them if we combined the portfolios ourselves. I've had excellent communication with the VP (Access and Academic Affairs) this year, but had one of us had combined responsibility for the welfare side of equal opportunities and academic policy; I think we would have achieved even more. This type of equal opportunities work is informed by case work- one sees a repeated problem with, say disability provision, and then takes it forward to the university as a thing that needs changing.

In the same way, welfare. Mental health and academic policy go together as much as physical health and academic policy. We need a far more inclusive approach to these things at university level. Depression is both a welfare issue and an academic one. The intellectual demands of this place create and exacerbate a whole range of mental problems; an oxford education is in some ways rightly terrifying, but the university must acknowledge this and work towards a more holistic approach to student support.

In terms of student advice service work, The VP (Access and Academic Affairs) and I have worked together very closely on a whole number of cases this year, as the majority of welfare cases touch on academic matters and vice versa. One cannot handle the majority of disability cases without a sound knowledge of academic procedure, and so on. We would thus gain from having the same person responsible for both. There would be no problem in the same person handling the small number that fall neatly into one category or the other.

VP (Access and Equal Opportunities). This sab would have responsibility for the access work we already do, and would push to extend the amount of focused access we do for different underrepresented groups.

Some quotes keep coming back; the previous VP (Access and Academic Affairs) said:

'So often I feel like the two parts of my job are in conflict. In academic affairs casework and sitting on University committees I see this place at its worst, racist, sexist, socially elitist and sometimes just absurd. If you're then faced with a group of particularly cynical prospective students from South Yorkshire it's rather hard to sell the place. We really should have two sabbaticals, one for Access and one for Academic Affairs'

For me, this is true also of the equal opportunities work; on the one hand, this is to do with sorting out the provision here, on the other with sorting out the balance of people here (else we'll never really change anything). We need to do a lot more do get under represented groups to apply, something I've often felt the equal opps campaigns could usefully be more involved with; this sort of work goes well with campaigning widely on equal opps issues, on racism, sexism, homophobia as they appear outside of the dry world of university policy. But we need to continue to do the casework, to report back to the university on how what is happening affects students. And its very hard for the same person to do that- its as much about priorities as conflicts; its hard to prioritise organising a campaign when there's welfare work to do, but if we don't campaign, we'll never lessen the amount of welfare work, which must be our aim.

The Student Advice Service

should be renamed the 'student information, advocacy and support' service, as that would more accurately reflect what we do and ought to do (It would also probably be good, if sad, for us to stop thinking we're in the SAS).

Last year, Rosie did excellent work in acknowledging that the Service needed to tidy up and clarify its remit. In overturning the policy in favour of a full time student advisor she responded to the changed nature and needs of the service. That was followed through this year when we decided not to re-appoint an adviser when the then holder of the position resigned. We have moved away from describing the service as a larger version of the college welfare rep system, which we shouldn't seek to duplicate. We can't provide counselling (and neither should they); we can't advise on any issue. What we can do very effectively is represent students to the university and colleges when they run into difficulties, and help them navigate the extremely complex rules and regulations that govern this place so that they can better represent themselves and claim their rights. We can put pressure on the university and colleges on their behalf, and make sure they get special provisions if they need them, that if they face disciplinary proceedings any special circumstances are taken into account; we can help if they have faced disciplinary or harassment proceedings. We can of course be there just to listen, if that is what they want.

However, a whole lot more student service provision should be done at university level- advice on hardship and accommodation, for instance. The university has people that work very hard in these areas, but it needs to do more- we should be there to point people in the right direction for that advice, and to step in on their behalf if they do not receive what they are entitled to, but the basic provision should be provided by the university. We are there to respond when things go wrong- so it is quite right that we support people through disciplinary proceedings- there will always be a role for the students union there, as although both the colleges and the university should do more to support and advise people in this area as well, there will always be conflicts of interest, and there will always be a need to student representation. But people should not have to come to us for advice about accommodation in the private sector- that is a permanent service, and the university should provide it. It is important for us to step in and fill the gap when the university does not do all it should- but it is important also to remember that there are some things that it is fitting for a student union to do and others which we should lobby the university to do itself. In this way we can also provide a more coherent and understandable service for students.

One of the themes of my year has been student services. Scattered about the place, the university has some excellent people working to support students- the disability office, the accommodation office, the student funding officer, and so on. But people often do not know they are there, when they find out they have to find their way into the depths of Wellington square or some other obscure location and access people in their office environment. This aside, there is an urgent need for communication and coordination between these services; despite the excellent efforts of many of those working within these scattered departments, this cannot happen effectively unless they are combined into a single department, with joint management and coordination and clear mechanisms for communication. That should happen ASAP. The long term aim should be to site these services together in a single 'student services' building, that students could easily identify and find and that would allow these people to work together. Many other universities already do this. Often these services are sited with the students union, which leads some people (at student and university level) to assume that the students unions provide them. That is a misconception; it should be a unified university service, and is in many other places. It is long overdue.

Welfare

Getting in experts to run specific training sessions has, on the whole worked well. It is sometimes difficult to give them a clear enough picture of the Oxford welfare system for them to tailor the sessions effectively to the audience, however. Also, I remain a little uneasy about our role in the training of college officers. For some, OUSU training is the only training they receive, and whilst we are capable of running very good sessions, we can't provide an intensive

training programme that takes up as much time as the nightline or the peer support training programmes, say. I would be happier if there was an established programme of (perhaps compulsory) training for all welfare officers, that we could then complement or challenge.

For instance, we might decide that the training other programmes offered on self harm was not quite good enough, or that officers would benefit from a workshop run by people who had themselves self harmed, and so organise that. We might want to take a more active role in challenging or affirming non-directionality as the appropriate way of listening. I do feel that we need to do more in terms of monitoring other trainings available, both with a critical eye and to see what we have to learn, and I hope that this is something that will be done formally next year.

In summary, I think we need both to pressure the colleges and the university to fund and expand a permanent training programme which welfare officers and all others who have a welfare function have to attend, and adopt a more critical attitude towards such programmes. We ought still to run additional training sessions, but these could then be more radical in nature, or cover other elements, such as academic advocacy, that we are in a unique position to supply. This sort of training needs to be given to welfare reps as well as academic affairs officers. It is also important that people understand that the need to listen in a non judgemental and non directional way does not preclude stepping in to help people who are facing unfair disciplinary procedures, in danger of being sent down, or denied the proper special provisions for exams that they require and are entitled to. The hardest thing this year in training has been trying to correctly convey that balance.

Equal Opportunities.

I think we've moved in the right direction by abolishing diversity week. We need to be much more mature and less tokenistic about equal opportunities campaigning. Some excellent people have got involved in the disability action campaign, and are making a lot of progress. In many ways, that is the easiest of the campaigns, as there is so much within the university that needs to change, and so much that is easily identifiable. However, I think this group operates far more as a campaigning group and less as a representative and deliberative body. The other equal opportunities campaigns are harder. Against my instinct, I did not move to abolish these, as people were enthusiastic to see what they could make of them. However, I still do maintain that we can't set up caucus for people; if there is a demand, I'll happily back it, but we have to accept both that there may not be and also that such a lack would not mean that we have full equality. Holocaust memorial day worked really well, and we have been approached by some people who are keen to run some events on race and racism next term; this I think is a very effective way of working, facilitating other people's ideas, without trying to take them over and institutionalise them- we to often seek to replicate events and projects which should have been one off affairs. Good luck to anyone who gets involved next year; be prepared to question, don't be too cynical.

OSSL

I sat for two terms on the OSSL board, stepping down for Trinity to concentrate on the other elements of my job. I stood because we were in a transitional phase and I thought it was important to help marry the student unions' aims, particularly where I was concerned our welfare and equal opportunities stance, with our expanding commercial side. There has been much vocal criticism of OSSL. A lot of it I understand, and some I sympathise with; that notwithstanding, the majority of it I think is deeply misguided and founded on an incorrect identification and analysis of the problems. Parts of it are quite simply slanderous and unkind, and those responsible should think more carefully about their own conduct before trying to hold others to a higher standard.

Overall, there are a few things that in retrospect I think we should have handled a little differently; none, I think, in such a way that would actually have changed the way people felt about the company. I would like to stress that when people criticise the Business Manager and the President for OSSL decisions, they ought rather to criticise the board. If people stopped and thought for a while, they would realise that to single individuals out for personal blame for group decisions is little more than cheap political point scoring. Above all else, I would like to stress that the Business manager has led OSSL to do exactly what council asked it to be and do. By all means review and re think, but remember that.

Entz

I argued long ago that we shouldn't run entz, and that services shouldn't be all that important. I'd say the same things now, though some of the reasoning is different. I used to think that we should keep away from club nights because in my experience OUSU entz were rather unsuccessful central bops. I also thought that it wasn't really our business to put on this sort of thing. This year, I have been shown, overwhelmingly, that the first argument was false. Our club nights have gone from strength to strength. I also think we've done something quite important in helping diversify the market- when I arrived in oxford, I was disappointed that there wasn't much clubbing out there beyond the filth and bridge-esque cheese. I wish Zoo Na Na had been around when I first was, for instance. I also think we've done something important in avoiding cliquey guest lists, and in thinking carefully about student safety. We've done exactly what we were asked to do, and none of this would have been possible without the vision and hard work of this year's Business Manager.

There are some things that people need to realise. Running club nights to an 'ethical' or higher standard means not putting profit over student safety, means thinking about what might be degrading to women, or anyone else, and not endorsing it, means thinking about the impact of drinks prices and how people are getting home, means making an effort to avoid homophobic and racist songs. Nowhere does it involve committing commercial suicide.

If we want to survive in the entz market, that means defeating competition, some of which will be student led, it means lots of advertising, and it means preserving a degree of commercial sensitivity. If people don't want to accept these things, they had better stop wanting us to run entz, or had better start offering vastly increased affiliation rates by which we may fund our non-competitive, advertisement free nights. All these things need pursuing within reason, but they must be pursued.

I suspect that people will never fully accept this, and we will always hear the repeated chant of 'OSSL is putting commercial success over student interests'. I would very much like it if some one could show me this universal 'student interest'; as someone that has long been a fan of collective action, I would sore love to see this one point on which we all unite. However, I have a suspicion that in reality there are whole number of often conflicting student interests. There are the interests of those that want to attend club nights, those that want our club nights to subsidise their subscription fees, those that want their subscription fees or our commercial success to subsidise their door entry; those that want to run rival nights, who's whole (student) interest clashes with the interests of the zoo club night attendees (who have an interest that the clubs exist), and also those that think the whole drinking culture is problematic. Now, moderation is key, and not many people like a monopoly, and I don't think anyone would like us to have the whole market. Nor would commercial interest mean that we need to do every similar night out of business, and no one in OSSL has ever argued that. But if you want a successful entz operation, interests clash- you chose. But please stop it with that naive 'student interests' mantra. When have you ever seen students agree? Personally, I think the best solution would be to encourage the setting up of a separate student focused Entz Company, which would have safety and certain principles as part of its mission statement. I think it would be better able to take on the competitive nature of the thing without undue criticism; it could work together with OUSU where appropriate, but remain independent. But you choose.

The Paper.

There's a thing. I don't think editorial independence works. Nor do I like the idea of OUSU stepping in and imposing its own line. I suspect the problem comes with us owning a paper at all. I was surprised when someone told me this year that they thought the biggest problem the Ox Stu had was that it was seen to be rather pro- OUSU. In seeking to counter this, the paper is put, I think, into a rather awkward position, where it seeks to engage in a certain quota of criticisms as not to seem biased.

I am more than happy for OUSU to take its fair share of criticism (though I'm not convinced that either paper has a good track record of criticising us for the right reasons, of which

there are many; that is simply one of the perils of the free press). We are in an impossible position as a students' union, being the publisher and also the subject of vitriolic attack.

I think there are a number of solutions. One, some little curtailment of independence- other student unions have this. But, better I think, set the paper up independently. Editorial independence is preserved; an impossible conflict of interest is done away with. If people feel this is too drastic, then I think a sabbatical editor is the next best solution. This would be more democratic, as the editor would be elected in a cross campus ballot and accountable to council; they would also be able to represent the needs of the paper to the rest of the sabbatical team, have a sound understanding of any conflicts of interest, bring valuable publications knowledge to OUSU and also have a whole year to develop the paper. This would give it greater consistency, and also be fairer, as at the moment, in order to get involved beyond a certain level, people need to be able to devote an awful lot of time to it, which is harder for those in some subject groups than others.

The radio

is a wonderful thing (and again, to the Business manager's credit). But already we can see the problems coming, the same conflicts. If you want us to run commercial activities, you can't also expect us to host a radio that works against them. I don't think that most of the people engaged in the radio station are very interested in either our commercial activities, or in criticising us as an institution- I think they want to involve themselves in student radio, which has very little to do with either. But if we fund them, then we have to place some limits. If people are not prepared to accept that, they need to consider very carefully whether they think we can have a radio.

In general, it is clear that we do need to work to harmonise OSSL and OUSU, and many suggestions have been put forward that may help. Have representatives from council on the board if you want- I don't think it will make a shred of difference, as I think that what people actually object to is fundamental to our commercial activities; it also has various practical difficulties-but give it a go. Introduce a charter of standards- that's no bad thing anyway. Think about the relationship between OUSU's name and OSSL. Have minutes that are 'declassified' once market sensitivity is passed. Aim to have board meetings that are open unless they need to be closed, and get council to decide on what they think is acceptable to keep secret, but be prepared to take the commercial consequences.

Ultimately though, I think the conflict goes to the heart of what we are. I think we should scale back commercial activity to a bare minimum; I don't think its compatible with representation and campaigning, which I think need to be subsidised by common rooms and the university.

In General (again)

We should abolish the VP (finance) role; what is needed is financial and computer expertise; these are not things one wants to elect for, any more than one wants to elect for the business manager. The political decisions about the budget and expenditure should be executive decisions; we've managed that this year. The role of VP (Finance) has been problematic through out the time I've been here; it unnecessarily politicises financial decisions- some of these are political decisions, but they need to be settled collectively by the executive and by council, not rest in the hands of one individual who can use them to polarise debate. It is much more accountable and democratic for the executive and council to have this role and we have found this year that it is a perfectly practical way of doing things. We can then employ someone to provide IT and further accounting support; if we had a sabbatical Ox Stu editor, then they could take over much of the publishing workload; if not, then it can be a joint BM- IT employee responsibility, given that we now have an

entz manager to take over that side of the BM's job. The remaining administrative functions of the VP (Finance) should be combined with those of the president.

I never thought I'd say this, but I think we need less sabs. We need to strip away many of the things we repeat on a yearly basis; the jobs we do should be shaped each year far more by our manifesto pledges and by the mandates of council, not by what we have always done in the past. Unlike others who have made this argument in the past, however, I believe that we need to cut services quite substantially and concentrate on campaigning and representation. This is not because I don't believe that service provision is a good thing, but because on the whole I don't think that we are the ones that ought to be doing it; commercial enterprise I have covered already; many other things we need to lobby the university and colleges to take on themselves, to do for them- as with student services mentioned above. Campaigning and representation, however, we are in a unique position to do. However, unless this rationale is behind the cutting of sab numbers, I would urge against it, and would not wish to be quoted as being in favour of it. We need far more student and part time involvement; there needs to be less administration work in the sabbatical portfolios.

Thanks

First to those in the university who also work tirelessly for students, and who actually have a far more difficult job than we often give them credit for. The staff in the Disability office stand out above all, and Hannah Young, who has sadly now left, and Ann Poulter deserve my particular thanks, for being so helpful and supportive through out this year; my job would have been a lot harder without them, and I have a great deal of admiration for their hard work and genuine care for students. Elsa Bell, the head of the counselling service, has also been patient and helpful, and also displayed a refreshing ability both to understand student mental health issues and to keep them in perspective; because of our role, we do sometimes need to take a contrary stance, and it is important that we are critical. There are times when I have not agreed with her, but many more when I have, and I think that she and the staff at the counselling service do an excellent job. Sue Jacobs, the accommodation officer has also been extremely helpful, and has shown a willingness to consider student needs, to think flexibly about the way the accommodation office works and to develop new ideas, which is rare within the university. There are others who I will not name, and more behind the scenes; its also worth noting that although I spend much of my time criticising the way the university works, there are people at every level who see the same problems and who genuinely want to do things differently. More often than not they lack the structures to change things, and on other occasions there simply isn't an easy answer. There are of course those who are entirely culpable, but it is important that we don't lump them all in together.

As for OUSU, thanks first of all to those exec members of the past who made me value this institution so much, the sabs and exec that I first worked with, to Ruth, and to Andrew Copson, for whom I retain great respect and admiration. Thanks to our part time exec in Michaelmas. Chris Allan and Dan Simpson deserve a special mention in this category for the time they put in and for their on going dedication to the organisation, and Emrys for coming back as Health and Welfare co-chair after being on exec, which I really appreciated; that said, the part time exec as a whole were very good.

My thanks to my co-chairs, Jamie, Emrys, Leonardo, Ram; to Samir for much good work on CSHW, and all the others that were involved, Good luck to you.

Thanks to Gareth. I'm sorry the year ended as it did (though I stand by there being reasons why it had to), but I really appreciate all the hard work you did for us while you were here.

Thanks are long overdue to all the office staff for their patience and putting up with us.

Thanks to Leigh, for stepping in, working hard, and remaining remarkably un-phased by it all.

Thanks then to the current part time exec; almost without exception they have shown an impressive dedication to the organisation; some I disagree with frequently, but at the end of the day, it's the participation that counts. It saddens me that this cannot be a universal thanks; it is important for exec officers to realise that standing for the position entails a time commitment, and one cannot serve if one is not willing to come to exec meetings and council on a regular basis. I would recommend to next year's team the re-instigation of the 'three strikes and you're out' rule, harsh though this seems. We began with it and should have carried it through.

To return to the positive, those that deserve a special mention the first two may surprise, but there's an important point here- Tom Packer, who has a very different idea of what OUSU should be, but who has put consistent time and effort into this union regardless, and remained calm and dedicated throughout. The same goes for Tim Bennett; again, I often disagree, but I appreciate the time taken for OUSU, and the patience with which you put your ideas; we seem to have managed this year to avoid the schisms and in fighting along political lines which has so often slowed OUSU down in the past, and I am very pleased about that, and on a wider point, impressed by the ability that everyone has shown to make up their minds based on an assessment of the issues in hand, rather than voting as their 'faction' votes. There are of course some people that are more likely to vote together than others, but this has been because of ideology rather than habit and stubbornness, and everyone has shown themselves able and willing to vote as their judgement dictated; we have moved away from the factional divisions of the past. I think that is to everyone's credit, and an achievement in terms of exec democracy; there has been very little glancing around the room to see how everyone else is voting, and I feel confident this will continue. Genuine exec participation is one thing that I really think we have achieved, and John deserves the credit for being the president that let, indeed made that happen. I fear that very few people who haven't had the mixed blessing of being involved as long as me will quite see the value, and the achievement, but trust me.

Thanks are very difficult; its also important to remember that we work with some of the part time exec on portfolio work and others only as fellow exec members; thus if one person gets more detailed praise than an other, it doesn't mean they did more over all; there are many members of the part time exec who I wish I had got to work more closely with; all those who worked with me on aspects of welfare and equal opportunities were indispensable; there is no way I could have done my job without you, both in terms of time and ideas. Lorna didn't share any of my portfolios, but deserves a particular mention for hard work, and often for saying whatever most needs saying- much admiration. Bryn too, though I haven't worked with you directly, thanks are due for your continued work and patience, and for making me laugh. Thanks to Matt and Iain for all your hard work for Health and Welfare; to Matt, Claire, Wen, Emma, and Tom dale for all your help with equal opportunities work; Iain deserves a mention for taking on the minuting of executive meetings, a thankless task if ever there was one, and general for his willingness to help out and constant support. Matt deserves his own mention for coming in at a very difficult time and not only sticking with OUSU but very quickly getting to grips with it, and remaining perceptive and dedicated through out. Emma has deeply impressed me with her campaigning ability, tolerance, patience, and ability to get things done; Claire deserves special mention for the coordination of Holocaust memorial day and hard work as an executive officer, but beyond this for a certain rare wisdom and eloquence, as does Tom Dale, for an amazing calm and ability to listen and work with people, and for making me feel rather uncomfortable in my cynicism; those last few have also a lot to answer for in making me realise how little I know, and that there are better ways of working with people. I hope I'll become better for the lesson, not hopelessly bitter. Finally, to Helen for reforming the accommodation portfolio from top to bottom, including

heroically stepping in to sit on one of the more intimidating of the university committees at the last moment so as to carry this work forward; I am confident that Helen will be able to sort out the housing bank situation next term, something I failed to do; also for endless hard work, support and friendship, and for reminding me why we do all of this.

Thanks to Chris Allan. I realise that I have treated you as if you were already in office; I hope that has been a mark of respect, rather than an irritation. Thanks also for ZO Na Na also, which has much of your mark about it. Good luck for next year: I have every confidence, and trust also that you will have enough around you to show from where we came and what gives us power.

Thanks to Aidan, who has been dragged from meeting to meeting in my over enthusiastic attempts to ensure a good handover; I hope that it doesn't impact on finals too much, and that it has been helpful. Its refreshing to be in the position of handing over without alarm; I have every confidence that you will do an excellent job; We do not agree on everything, but that is not what matters, and I am genuinely looking forward to seeing what you make of the year.

Moving on. Many thanks and an expression of admiration go to Dan Finley. Some straightening of the record is in order. Through out this year, Dan has been the subject of some of the most unfair and childish attacks I have seen; it takes an impressive strength of character to carry on working hard and successfully while facing criticism on so many fronts. Dan has had the good sense to realise that the majority of students are oblivious to this unholy clamour, and are extremely pleased with what OSSL, and particularly Zoo, have achieved under his guidance. Dan has done exactly what Oxford students, through council, asked him to do, and done it far better than any one could have asked. I have been extremely proud to be part of all of this, which is his achievement, and none of that changes because I do not share all of council's views about service provision. He has been a source of inspiration, and beyond this both great fun and supportive to work with, and an excellent friend.

Ian- I suspect that our view of OUSU has little in common; however, I appreciate that you have worked hard and successfully at what you believe in, and what you stood to do. I suspect also that working with us lot was at times harder than we may have realised, and you have been throughout patient and good humoured to work alongside.

John, Linsey, Bex- as Sab colleagues, I would have had no others. I do not know how we will be remembered, but I know that you are and will remain the only sab team I would wish to be a part of, and that I would do it all again for you. Those who know how hard and trying I have found this job will know that is the highest praise that I can give.

There are of course many non- OUSU people who have been necessary to me this year, but in my mind this is still an official record. I will therefore allow myself only two digressions, both with an OUSU history. My thanks to Oscar- we're a still a long way for being a proper union, but we had a go. And finally my thanks to Duncan are long overdue. I haven't used this as a chance to analyse the French referendum result; that aside, you have provided constant advice and support, and I suspect that I would have made a dreadful mess of this without you.

Thanks also to everyone that has helped and contributed but that I have not named; there has to be a limit to these things...

EXEC

Tom Dale

Involvement, democracy and communication

These three things are the lifeblood of OUSU, and they seem to fall by the wayside too often. Of course, they're considered to a certain extent by everyone, but I think that they're yet to be placed centrally enough. To do this, OUSU needs to spend more time on developing and executing a concerted strategy for communicating with its members. A magazine of the variety that has been suggested is a good start. We should also look to be having ¼ of ½ page adverts for events in the Oxford Student, whenever relevant. We need to phase out the headporter e-mail system, and replace it with mailing lists whose membership we can control. Developing an efficient and accurate electronic system for collecting people's details at Freshers' Fair is absolutely essential to this, as is some way of being in touch with the substantial numbers of people who don't make it to the event. It has taken me two terms on exec to come close to understanding how OUSU works, and it seems to me that we need to do something to bridge this gap for ordinary members in order to ensure that debate over these things will not be dominated by the exec. Another thing: OUSU needs to think about whether it is productive for it to, as it were, get back on the streets. High profile public campaigning has been a feature of OUSU's campaigns far more in the past, as I understand it, than in this previous year. Being on Exec is very hard. It takes up a phenomenal amount of time, and occasionally can be very stressful. This is exacerbated by a number of things, not least that most of the part time exec hold CR officer posts, and some are also involved in running University societies or co-chairing a campaign as well. We need outreach and a broad understanding of what we do, not least because if we don't have that, people can't get involved. The time it takes to go into a CR and talk to people about OUSU, or a campaign

NUS

OUSU now has its own guide to the NUS, which I hope that people will find useful in future. It can be found, along with John's report from Annual Conference at www.ousu.org/nus. We have learnt an awful lot in the past few months, which we should attempt to make good on in future. This means: working out what Oxford Students have to say on a national level, and taking steps to ensure that this agenda can be advanced in NUS. We need to increase the level of involvement and understanding of the national union before this can happen.

OSSL etc.

I'm aware that some people will advance the argument that the past year has shown that OUSU should drop OSSL altogether, and accept whatever necessary shrinkages result from that. I don't think that this would be a sensible course of action, for these reasons:

- OSSL made £158,000 profit, or thereabouts this year. While there may be some financial hit from OSSL taking decisions differently, there is no way that, in my view, it need amount to in excess of that.
- It's dubious how far the problems we've had/have with OSSL are all attributable to an overly commercial attitude. Consider: the 7th week OxStu incident was hardly a good decision, either financially or politically.

However, there continue to be problems with OSSL:

- Oxide: the current contract which presenters have to sign in order to go on air is totally unreasonable. It is so broad as to allow OSSL to do essentially whatever it wants. I understand why OSSL feels the need for this de jure security, but it is not fair to place people under such broad restrictions when so many of the implications of the terms are so manifestly ridiculous.
- Our capacity, as either a Student Union or as members of OSSL to impose ethical limits upon OSSL is as yet unclear. This relates to ethical purchasing and advertising bans.
- Very few people have anything approaching a basic knowledge of how OSSL is legally constituted, and how they can influence it. This needs to be changed. The biggest worry for me, even once everyone understands, is that it takes 10% of company members to bring a

motion and call a meeting. OUSU should establish an OSSL members e-mail list to help members communicate directly with each other.

- Apparently, the average amount of time which OSSL directors put in each week is 15-20 hours.

Socially Responsible Investment etc.

The campaign continues to do well, but it's increasingly clear how much work needs to be put into this to make it as much of a success as it should be. The Freedom of Information Act has substantially improved our position, but there is still a hard and Byzantine slog up the hills of college and University bureaucracy. The Ethical trading thing continues to go well, and we're on course with the timetable I've described in my previous report.

BIG stuff

We need to think in the long term about things like University governance, and the increasing marketisation of Higher Education. We've all sat through a debate on the former, driven by the latter: the government and HEFCE combining to require that Universities be placed under the control of, essentially, business people. Unless we want a University with the values of a corporation, I suggest that we need to resist this, as well as think about the wider trend that it embodies. It is not so long before we will have to be fighting again on education funding, for a University education to be as accessible to all as possible.

Anti-Racism

Myself and Claire have been dealing with this portfolio – though admittedly not a great deal. We have been able to assist, to some extent, efforts to organise against the nearby National Front presence in Bicester. Various students have expressed interest in organising more broad based anti-racism campaigning and discussion through OUSU. I think that all we can do for now is encourage this and continue to talk to those people, and broadcast our willingness to talk to and involve more people.

Thanks

First of all; thanks to everyone on exec, and to all those who've attended the committees I've been part of – ethics/social justice, NUS and OUSU reps, for your incredibly hard work. Especially, thanks to John, Nicky, Claire, Linsey, Helen, Lorna, Bridget, Tim D, Mary and Anna. It's been an education. I don't particularly like saying this sort of stuff in this forum, because I feel it's more personal than that, really. But I've received a lot of support and learnt an awful lot from you, and I'm very grateful. I won't go into more detail, largely because I've no doubt I could write a page each for many of the people on exec. But thank you all.

Iain Simpson

The two terms on exec so far have come as a bit of a shock, and the role has been very different to what I expected in 7th week Michaelmas when I stood. A lot has happened within OUSU as a whole over those two terms, and a lot of my previous opinions have changed. Having said that, we did manage after over a term and a half of trying to get the entire exec together for a meeting, so it's not all bad.

Publicity:

I've only just acquired this portfolio, which I'm sharing with Alice. Still not sure about specifics, but the main aim is to try and improve communication in both directions between OUSU and students. I'll get back to you on this one once we've had a bit of a think about how best to manage this, email me with any bright ideas.

RAG:

By far the most fun portfolio. As an exec officer assigned to RAG exec along with Lorna (who is great by the way), so far I've been handing out Minstrels at Thirst and spectacularly failed to organise a punting event along with the far more mundane tasks of pasting stickers onto collection tins and helping Ian (who is also great by the way) count the money from raids. I've also helped out with the alternative careers fair, which was a huge success, and been along to supervise at the bungee jump; as well as photocopying blind date forms long into the night. Overall this year RAG has raised about £10,000 more than last year, and I think a lot of that is the direct result of the

dedication and talent of the RAG Exec and Ian. I am very conscious that occasionally other commitments have stopped me spending as much time on my RAG portfolio as I would have liked, but all in all it's been a good year, and Hollie has done a great job as RAG President.

Health and Welfare:

Health and welfare work so far has been a little sporadic, especially given an initial confusion regarding emails. The meetings have been excellent in terms of spreading best practise around college welfare reps and also some very useful workshops have taken place; possibly why in recent weeks attendance has increased significantly. I'm currently producing a list of law firms in Oxford for the Student Advice Service (which you'll have very soon, I promise Nicky), proofing the Disabilities Action guide as it goes on the web, and trying to work my way through and rationalise the entire welfare rough guide, hopefully some weeks from now I shall emerge triumphantly waving a lovely edited, updated version. Other than that there's been the two days spent emailing and phoning every external organisation we had a record of, trying to talk them into giving us free resources, which was a mixed success. This has been a tricky portfolio to get to grips with, all credit to Nicky for having been as patient as she has.

Secretary to the Executive and Council:

Minutes. Lots of minutes. My feeling is that whilst this is an immensely tedious role, it is necessary. This has been the first time in recent years that there has been one individual responsible for minuting, and I think it has helped, if for no other reason than that everyone knows who to moan at when these things aren't done. At some point there needs to be a serious trial of recording equipment to see if it can be made feasible, as with the best will in the world I am yet to find a way to verbatim minute Council or a 3 hour exec meeting. Laptops appear to be essential though, the alternative can lead to typing up 15,000 words in one go....fun.

OSSL: This has been the most challenging portfolio this year. It has ranged from weeks requiring no action to spending days on end in the OUSU offices, and carrying heavy freezers large distances. Some of the decisions made have been very difficult ones, in retrospect some of them were likely wrong. Hindsight is wonderful. On the positive side OUSU's commercial income has never been higher, Zoo has expanded to seven nights a week, becoming the largest club promoter in Oxford, and Oxide radio has been successfully launched on FM. This is thanks to both the vast numbers of hours put in by huge numbers of people; Dan, Chris (who is also meant to be sitting Finals this term), Matt, Leigh and Garath (until Easter) included, but also the literally over a hundred other people, far too many to be named here, who have made everything work. Nothing OSSL does would work without the sheer number of hours so many people have put in.

On the negative side there have been very serious problems with OSSL in the last two terms. Huge questions regarding not only accountability and decision making, but also the fundamental objectives of OSSL, still remain unanswered. Hopefully some of these questions can be answered in the ongoing consultation process. The corporate governance of OSSL has at times been seen as deeply unsatisfactory, and it is my belief that the Board as a whole has on occasion failed in its role to adequately scrutinise decisions, for which I must accept some responsibility and blame. It may be that changing the composition of the Board, to include some directors elected by Council, will solve some of these problems. The fundamental problem in my opinion remains an inherent contradiction present in the nature of OSSL, which I do not believe changing Board composition alone can solve. OUSU's ability to spend money has grown in proportion with OSSL's ability to make money. It is inevitable that exec members will be placed in the impossible position of having to balance their role as student union officers with the knowledge that OUSU remains solvent as a result of OSSL's commercial success, as well as their legal obligation to act in the interests of the company, rather than in the interests of OUSU.

This is a very difficult dichotomy to resolve, and I believe has been one of the fundamental driving forces behind many of the problems. OSSL was created to make money for OUSU, this it has done spectacularly successfully. In doing so, it has moved into a position where some of its actions are at odds with the fundamental beliefs and purpose of OUSU as a whole. At some point Council must decide if it believes that this is a price worth paying for the extra services OUSU can provide

as a result of OSSL revenue. I believe the personal abuse levelled at various Board members, Dan Finley in particular, has not been helpful; and has had the result of pushing various individuals into a siege mentality. The aim of OSSL as it currently stands is to make money, if there is dissatisfaction about some of the inevitable consequences about this the solution is to change the objectives of OSSL. The situation as it now stands has forced people into making decisions where everything is the wrong answer. I do not see a way in which people can act in both the best interests of OUSU and OSSL simultaneously in certain circumstances, and I cannot see an easy solution to this given the extent to which OUSU now depends on OSSL revenue. I'm fully aware that this section probably comes across as hand-wringing without knowing what to change, at least in my own head it has crystallised some of the problems. The events of the last two terms must not be allowed to reoccur. Solutions on a postcard.

Conclusion and thanks:

I've had a pretty broad portfolio this year, taking advantage of the lack of real work for a 1st year PPEist. All in all it has been rewarding, with a very steep learning curve. Some major decisions have to be taken next year about certain aspects of what OUSU should be and should do, but that's a discussion for another day. Communications and common room support are probably the areas where it's most immediately obvious to get improvements, but we'll see what happens next year.

The inevitable round of thanks to all; John's gift for managing to say in a few sentences what we've all been trying to express for several hours has been invaluable (even if more sentences invariably follow), Bex has stopped anyone taking themselves too seriously and provided me with much needed cigarettes on occasion, Nicky has been incredibly patient with my inbuilt inability to comprehend the meaning of Tuesday 5pm and has managed just about to keep everyone sane. Linsey has worked hours I never knew existed (and still regard as largely semi-mythical) as well as baffling us all with her inexplicable love of Ronan, Ian has put loads of time and energy into an amazingly successful year for RAG when he's not been keeping me and a piano company in a broken lift. All the other part-time exec have been great as well, we've just about made it through everything so far with sanity intact, just don't mention the degree.

Alice Wilby

Firstly, thank you for electing me! I'm looking forward to working with the exec over the summer and next term. As I've only just been elected I haven't had chance to do much on my campaigns, but I have started to update the JCC reps for the academic affairs portfolio, and have been discussing some ideas for publicity. I have also attended my first exec and council meetings, and helped to appoint my Target Schools successors. Over the next term I hope to become more active in my campaigns, particularly in increasing co-ordination between JCC reps and departments as part of academic affairs. I think OUSU's work in campaigns and welfare are amongst its most important roles, and they need to be focussed on and publicised to let everyone know about the support that OUSU provides. Finally, thank you to John, Bex, Nicky, Ian, Dan, Leigh, the office staff and the exec for doing a great job this year and encouraging me to apply, and extra special thanks to Linsey, Helen and the Target Schools co-chairs for getting me involved to start with – I wish I was involved earlier!

Claire Chalmers

It has been another busy term in OUSU. In terms of my general exec responsibilities, I'm not sure how much there is to say. Executive meetings seem to work well for all members of the exec, sabbatical and otherwise, to discuss where OUSU is and where OUSU should be going in an open, equal forum and the minutes posted on the website mean that people can see exactly what's been up for discussion. It's been good to see Council deliberating on the ethical priorities our university and our union should have in its activities as well as responding in an incredibly

constructive and coherent way to the University's proposed changes to governance structures. Although, it has been disappointing to see how quickly we can lose or come close to losing quorum. Beyond that the majority of my work for OUSU this term has been centred on my portfolios, as outlined below.

Women's Campaign

The work of Women's Campaign has continued to demonstrate the will that exists to support and further the place of women in our university and beyond. Although the campaign has suffered from a considerable lack of numbers (a problem which needs to be constructively addressed and moves towards this are being taken) those who have attended underline that whether it be in the Finals Gap, the attitudes of some tutors or college members women still meet with blocks on their progress and enjoyment of their time here. This is not to say that women are unable to gain or give huge amounts from Oxford. The work I've done this term and the women I've worked with have all confirmed that opposite is indeed true. Rather, I feel that attitudes and actions still exist institutionally and in individuals which need not and should not be accepted. It should also be said that although WomCam has acted as a forum for these issues to be raised this term it has had some difficulty in moving forward and drawing them into concrete campaigning work. This has been due to a number of reasons, many of which are identified in Emma's co-chair report. Harnessing and sustaining the will to action is perhaps the biggest challenge we will face as we take the campaign into next year. Nevertheless the term hasn't been without some successes. In terms of the work I've with and for the campaign since my last report, the Women's Open day that fell in the 9th week of last term proved to be a success and despite the shared stresses of organisation. Everyone there on the day itself seemed to have a great time and were able to really gain a sense of the joys that Oxford life holds – something that wouldn't have been possible without the time and energy of the students and tutors who were involved. The success of this event was matched by the Reclaim the Night events which were rescheduled into the beginning of this term. The planned march was preceded by a well attended speaker from the Oxford Rape Crisis Centre, the organisation our Women's Cabaret fund-raised for. Coupling the speaker with the march rather than the Cabaret is a change I would advocate for future years as it seemed to offer a far more appropriate environment to be able to engage with and take on the important work this organisation do. The reception was organised along with the St John's Women's Officer, Poppy Riddle, who should be thanked for her work on this and for making sure that WomCam's always had a home this term.

The middle of term has seen WomCam fail to attract a good attendance, with only a few women being in attendance. As mentioned above, this is something that needs to be addressed and indeed is, beginning with a open consultation meeting which was held last night (Monday of 7th). The meeting was well attended and hopefully the constructive discussions which happened will be taken forward into the work of the campaign next year.

I have also been helping out with work to see WomCam take part in One World Week, organising letters and flyers for stalls which link in our campaigning work with Amnesty International's current campaign to stop violence against women. We were at the Fair Trade Garden Party held in St John's on Sunday where many signatures were collected. Thanks go to the women who helped out with manning the stall. Hopefully, with these moves WomCam will to end the term on a stronger note.

Emma has continued to be an enthusiastic and engaged co-chair and it's been great working with her, Bex and all the other women who are involved with the campaign over the past term.

Promoting Choice

The majority of my work on this has been focussed on helping to research, draft and present to Council the renewal of OUSU's pro-choice policy. I believe that the policy, which passed with the overwhelming support of Council, has strongly affirmed our Union's commitment to supporting a women's right to choose. The work it has mandated will see OUSU push for better support within the university women who wish to continue with their pregnancies and study here as parents as well as students as well as better defining exactly how OUSU believes abortion law

should exist and be implemented in this country. The campaign should be present at Freshers' Fair and hopefully next term will see it become an active and positive presence in our union once again.

Anti-Racism

It feels that the work I've done for the anti-racism has involved as much thinking as acting. To begin with the latter, the work I've done this term has been mainly to see if there are the people and ideas to fill the anti-racism space which currently exists in OUSU. Along with Tom Dale and Nicky Ellis I met with a Muslim student who opened up a number of possibilities it would be great to see taken further, although the demands of exams have put a break on being able to take things further. I've also spoken with the organisers of the Aegis Society, a new group within the university doing excellent work to campaign against genocide and whose energy is currently focussed on the situation in Darfur. I've tried to give support and guidance as to how they might be able to use the resources OUSU has to offer and pass on to them relevant experience. I very much hope that we can work together where it will be beneficial for the campaigning they want to do.

Over the Easter vacation and into this term I've been part of ongoing thoughts as to how OUSU can most successfully campaign on the broad range of issues which fall under the 'anti-racism' title. This is where the thinking rather than acting has come and I'm unsure how constructive I've been able to be. I do feel that that I've done has underlined the need for OUSU's campaigns to be 'bottom up', with the ideas and energy for work coming into OUSU's structures from the wider student body and we executive officers hopefully being able to support this and help in taking it further. I also feel that the need for OUSU to think about black student representation within its own structures has been confirmed, although I don't have the experience or understanding to be able to set down what should be done. Tom Dale has taken these issues forward through OUSU Reps and a forum should be held next term which will hopefully mean that proper discussion and consultation will be seen.

Eating Disorder Support

I haven't found myself doing much on this portfolio this term. The guide has been quarked beautifully by Bex and looks great – it's just the continuing matter of finding the money to print it and the front cover to finish it off. Hopefully both will shortly be forth coming as I feel this is a publication that many members of the student body will find of great use.

All that remains now are the thanks I have to offer, and I'm aware that Council, particularly after this rather long report will have little wish to read much more. I would however like to take the opportunity thank all of the Exec – it's been great to work with them this term and I do feel that all of the sabs have engaged with the part-time exec in such a way that we're actively involved with the work they're doing for OUSU rather than simply on the outside looking in, something which not only makes it more enjoyable for us but hopefully makes OUSU stronger in its representative capacity. I'd also like to more specifically thank those sabs and exec officers who I've worked with more specifically through my portfolios – you've all taught me a lot about OUSU life and life life. If anyone has any comments, ideas or questions arising from any of this report or relevant to any of my work for OUSU please don't hesitate to speak to or e-mail me (claire@ousu.org).

Tim Bennett

OUSU Officers

Dan Finley

Business Manager

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Business Manager of the Oxford University Student Union and Managing Director of Oxford Student Services Limited. It has been a gruelling year in which I have never failed to work less than 100 hours a week but it has undisputedly been a phenomenally successful one. We have made seismic changes this year which should secure the financial future of the Student Union for years to come. OSSL has turned a £17,000 deficit into predicted profits of £200,000+ and whilst doing so has vastly increased the service provision to the students of Oxford University by their Student Union through, for example, organising 197 club nights, the foundation of Oxide Radio and the creation of Oxfordhandbook.com to name but a few. It would be impossible to cover all that has gone on this year and so please find below selected highlights.

Zoo

Zoo has been the phenomenal success of this year. The annual income it now generates, projected to be up 1000% on the 2003/04 financial year, will now exceed the total amount paid in subscription fees to the Student Union each year.

Yet Zoo is far more than just an additional income stream. Providing reasonably priced, diverse, safe, accessible and top quality entertainments to the students of Oxford University it is an immensely valuable service. Six thousand students attended the Zoo Freshers' Week Entz events alone and we now have in excess of 3500 students attending our nights each and every week during term time. Zoo runs at least seven nights every single week, including the biggest student night in town – Wednesdays at Park End – and has now established itself as the largest entertainments provider for Oxford University students. We brought Chesney Hawkes and Uniting Nations to Park End. We have sponsored Merton Winter Ball, Pembroke Ball, Keble Ball, St John's 450th Anniversary Ball, St Anthony's Ball, Torpids 2005 After Party, University College Commemoration Ball and Summer Eights 2005 as well as Absolutely! {perhaps}, East, I Was a Rat, Orpheus in the Underworld and Endgame.

This year we have run *Scratch* on Sundays at Thirst, *Twelve Inch* on Mondays at Po Na Na, *Taboo* on Tuesdays at Thirst (in aid of RAG), *Zoo @ Park End* on Wednesdays, *Zoo Na Na* at Po Na Na on Thursdays, *Filthy Fridays* at Filth and now *Bar Med* and *Saucy Saturdays* at The Studio Lounge. In addition, we have held the Battle of the Bands with IMSOC, a charity night to raise funds for the DEC, a charity Battle of the Bands with RAG, ten Freshers' Week Entz nights and we still have an LGB night and a Rave to come this term.

Moreover, the increased competition generated by virtue of Zoo entering the market has served to not only increase the diversity of going out options for Oxford students but has also served to moderate and even reduce the prices that students pay. For example, we have worked with Thirst to lower their drinks prices to as little as £1.50 a cocktail and we have introduced £1 a pint on Friday nights at Bar Med. We have worked tirelessly with Park End to create a night tailored to the demands of Oxford University students and the revolutionary refit that we have worked tirelessly to secure and shape is taking place ahead of the start of the next academic year and is testament to our commitment to providing Oxford students with the best nights out possible. Additionally, we have arranged bops for most colleges now and held launch parties for loads of different clubs, societies and organisations; we have established and held termly Entz forums.

The zoozoo.org website has been completely overhauled and redesigned. It now looks fantastic, has many interactive features, thousands of photos on and receives more than 5 million hits a month.

Zoo also held a Tsunami disaster relief night (in conjunction with other Oxford promoters) that raised more than £12,000 for the Disasters Emergency Committee.

Zoo has run 197 club nights this term (bear in mind that there are only 189 days of full term in this academic year) and I have personally overseen each and every one of them. This Monday will see the launch of the new LGBT night called Clue at the all new G-Bar and Thursday of Eighth Week will see the first ever (and first of many) Zoo Rave at The Coven.

I have put in place a phenomenal line up for Freshers' Week and beyond, having determined and put in place all of our nights for next year already, leaving the competition scrambling to pick up our scraps.

Publications

This year, we have revolutionised *The Oxford & Cambridge Careers Handbook*, completely revamped *The Oxford Student* and vastly improved *The Freshers' Guide*. All of these publications have seen massive increases in income and profitability but for *The Oxford & Cambridge Careers Handbook* and *The Oxford Student*, the real gains to this investment will be reaped over the course of the next financial year. For the significant investment in terms of both time and money undertaken this year has created two products that are now undisputedly the premier titles in their respective fields. When our commercial partners come to consider which publications to support and advertise in this coming year, there is no longer a choice to be made.

The increased investment though has not merely been undertaken in order to reap greater financial rewards. These publications are now more comprehensive than ever – the *Careers Handbook* is now undisputedly the premier careers resource for Oxbridge students. Now A4, full-colour and 350 pages in length; where else can you draw on the collective wisdom of so many outstanding Oxbridge alumni (including Jack Straw, Michael Foale, John Simpson, Julian Fellowes and Anita Roddick).

I believe that this year *The Oxford Student* has, without a shadow of a doubt, been the best student newspaper in the country and I am confident that we will make our strongest claim in years for the accolade of *Guardian Student Newspaper of the Year*. We have doubled the budget of the newspaper, substantially increasing the number of pages, the amount of colour and significantly improving both the print and paper quality; revised our deadlines to minimise the turn around time and allow us to accommodate late breaking news. The design and style of the newspaper has been completely overhauled. Moreover, *The Oxford Student* has consistently brought the students of Oxford the biggest news stories first.

Oxfordstudent.com has been overhauled with a searchable archive dating back to 1999 added; we have tripled the number of visitors to the website and it now receives well over a million hits a month and circa 15 million per year.

The increased profitability of our major publications will also enable a £15,000 investment to be made in the new *Alternative Prospectus*, which will now become A4 in size and full colour throughout. Much time has also been spent on the other publications, all of which I believe have improved relative to previous editions.

Oxfordhandbook.com

Founded this year, oxfordhandbook.com is a one-stop online informational portal that reviews every pub, club, bar, restaurant, cafe and cocktail bar in Oxford. It also chronicles all of the major upcoming events in Oxford, as well as providing details of the abundance of activities, amenities and events that both the city of Oxford and Oxford University have to offer. It contains details of all of Oxford's clubs and societies, as well as being home to the online Freshers' Fair application procedure. This is a phenomenally useful resource that we have created this year and which is

proving to be immensely popular. In the coming months, it will prove to be an immensely profitable venture.

Term Planner

This valuable service was reintroduced this year and has provided to be a lucrative income stream for us.

Academic Dress

Oxford Student Services Limited successfully entered the academic regalia market this year and supplied Freshers' with their cap and gown for the reduced price of £35 – some £15 less than established retailers Shepherd & Woodward and Ede & Ravenscroft. Not only has this been a highly successful commercial venture, but it is also an enormously valuable service that has also served to provide the students of Oxford University with high quality academic dress at prices substantially lower than those afforded by the traditional high street retailers. Further, our entry into the market has forced our competitors to rethink their pricing structures and consequently they have lowered the prices that students have to pay at their outlets.

Clothing

I began to put this project into action at the same time as sourcing the gowns: last Easter – well over a year ago. We are now in a position to provide an extensive range of personalised clothing – ranging from T-Shirts and Hoodies to Jackets and Sports Gear from ethically sourced suppliers, at prices substantially cheaper than they are available on the High Street and which make the Student Union, the University and the JCRs money. Everybody wins. This will be an extremely lucrative source of income for us in the coming years and a very valuable service to our members.

Oxide Radio

This year we have founded a radio station for Oxford University: Oxide 87.7FM and otherwise known as Oxford Student Radio. The launch of the station is the result of two terms of immense hard work in order to secure the necessary equipment for broadcast, to put the structures in place and to raise the finance to secure a permanent student radio station for Oxford University students. Listening figures continue to go from strength to strength, the content and programming this term has been great and student radio is increasingly becoming a part of everyday student life here in Oxford. The programme we have undertaken has also been extremely ambitious with live outside broadcasts from Summer Eights and Zoo Na Na, as well as a first class Election Night Special Broadcast – all complemented by a comprehensive marketing campaign. Again, this is an immensely valuable service afforded to the students of Oxford University that has for far too long been absent.

I am confident that we will put up a strong performance at the forthcoming Student Radio Awards. Long may Oxide Radio continue and not only must we now secure an FM licence for Michaelmas but we must redouble our efforts to ensure a permanent FM licence when applications are reopened later this year.

Oxford Student Card

Having initiated and launched this as an Assistant Business Manager two summers ago, I am pleased that the Oxford Student Card is now standard issue each year to all 15,000+ students of Oxford University. I am delighted to have extended the special offers that it affords to the following commercial partners: The Sony Centre, The Oxford Bus Company, Park End Nightclub, Odeon Cinema, Pizza Hut, HMV, Felsons, Gourmet Joe's Pretzels, Topshop, Topman, Schuh, Jessops, Mahogany, Snappy Snaps, Paolo Gianni, Po Na Na, Mortons, Bottoms Up, Borders,

Campus Hair Design, Boswells, Oasis, Virgin Megastore, The Studio Lounge, Cycle King, Toni & Guy, Klick Photo Point, STA Travel, The Townhouse and Thirst amongst others. The Oxford Student Card is now required identification at all Zoo club nights and is an extremely useful service provided to our students.

The Complete Graduate Recruitment Package & Careers Fairs

We have introduced the 'Complete Graduate Recruitment Package' this year, which has proved highly successful, very lucrative and immensely popular with employers. Basically, it is an integrated solution to all of their recruiting needs – encompassing everything from email campaigns to recruiting dinners to careers fairs - and employers pay a premium for the service. We have also started hosting Careers Fairs, the first of which will be for Finalists on Wednesday of 8th week and the next is scheduled to be part of the Refreshers Fair on Saturday of 0th Week Michaelmas Term 2005. This is yet another example of a provision of a great service for students as well as being a lucrative revenue stream.

Finance

Making money is not easy. Making lots of it is even harder. The increase in revenues this year has been phenomenal. Income from Entz is up 1000%, advertising revenues for *The Oxford Student* and for the *Oxford Student Card* are up nearly 100%. The Cap & Gown initiative has proved lucrative, as has the reintroduction of the Term Planner. **Overall, revenues are up about 140% (approximately £275,000 in real terms) and a £17,000 deficit has been turned into projected profits in the region of £200,000.** At the same time, massive investments have been made in *The Oxford Student*, where its annual budget has been doubled and in *The Oxford & Cambridge Careers Handbook* where the budget has been quadrupled. These massive investments this year will yield even greater returns over the course of the next year and beyond. As new commercial projects such as the Refreshers' Fair, Clothing, Careers Fairs and Oxfordhandbook.com become established and realise their commercial potential, they will become extremely lucrative income streams.

We have significantly diversified our income streams this year. For too long we were largely dependent upon advertising revenues as our primary source of income, leaving us particularly susceptible to economic downturns. Now, however, we have a much broader range of equally significant income streams.

When I first joined the OSSL Board, we were a failing stationary shop standing on the verge of bankruptcy. Today, we are a formidable commercial force that has enjoyed an exceptional turn around this year and which has an incredibly bright financial future ahead. Equally, the financial success of OSSL is the bedrock on which the finances of the Student Union depends – funding at least half of everything that OUSU undertakes.

Freshers & Refreshers Fair

Originally part of my Business Plan that was presented more than a year ago, we have now extended Freshers' Fair to a third day and instituted a Refreshers' Fair. This additional day has been provided at no extra cost to clubs and societies, is great news for all those who wish to revisit Fair and will be a highly lucrative additional source of income for us. Commercially, Freshers' Fair has gone stale in recent years and the addition of a third day is just the impetus needed to significantly boost revenues.

OSSL

This year has seen a seismic shift with the past. OSSL has been transformed from a failing shop into a thriving commercial enterprise – revenues are up 140% - from £200,000 to £475,000 - and a loss of £17,000 has been turned into projected profits in the region of £200,000. This has been

no easy task. The company has been completely restructured and the role of Directors massively expanded. It is important to recognise just how much of OSSL's work is new this year and how much is radically improved: almost everything. Take Zoo, for example. This time last year it was virtually non-existent and certainly no more than a failing night every Sunday attended by 50 or so people maximum. Compare and contrast. Then and now. The structures that we have now are a prerequisite for such commercial success and it is the changes that have been put in place for this year that have enabled so much progress to be made and such great deal to be achieved.

I co-authored the Future and Finance Report last year, which recommended the radical overhaul of OSSL. Over the course of last Hilary and Trinity Terms, successive OUSU Councils and OSSL General Meetings approved the changes (almost unanimously). This year we have put them into action and the results have been phenomenal. So much progress has been made this year due to the fact that OSSL has been stripped of any potential petty political wrangling, enabling it to concern itself with getting real things done for the students of Oxford University and to ultimately raise the funds necessary to finance the Oxford University Student Union.

A lot has been said about accountability over the last year. The OSSL structures make the Managing Director (OUSU Business Manager) and Chairman (V-P Finance/President) more accountable than they have been ever before. Ultimate power rests with the OSSL Board who have the powers to overturn any decision made. Seven of the nine Board members have been elected in cross-campus elections by the students of Oxford University and each week at OSSL Board Meetings, I am held to account for my actions by SEVEN elected officers of OUSU. Not only that, but we are publicly held to account at OSSL General Meetings, the Chairman answers questions put at OUSU Council and the student press frequently ask us to justify our actions. We have created oxfordstudentservices.com and this contains lots of information about the company, its work, its directors and its actions.

This year we have not shirked difficult decisions. I would like to reiterate the belief of both myself and the OSSL Board that it remains our absolute conviction that the decisions we have made have been the right ones, that all proper procedures have been followed and that we believe our actions have been vindicated. We are stronger as an organisation because of the decisions that we have made and will be increasingly successful because of the challenges overcome.

The prevailing attitude of unaccountable arrogance amongst the staff of *The Oxford Student* this year has been both extremely disappointing and detrimental to the interests of the newspaper. They must learn to take constructive criticism and discharge their duties in a manner befitting the responsibilities that they bear. Equally, they must show a great deal more respect for the organisation that facilitates their every need, funds their journalistic indulgences and assumes complete financial, legal and corporate responsibility for their actions.

A lot of nonsense has been written about this year's goings on, both on the pages of newspapers and on anonymous online gossip forums, and even more has been propagated by individuals ill acquainted with the difference between fact and fiction. I would hope that everybody would take note of the numerous corrections and apologies recently issued by the *Cherwell*. Criticism is welcome but have the courage to take responsibility for your own opinions and make sure that you have got your facts straight – there are two sides to every story and I am disappointed that supposedly intelligent people rush to judge and condemn when they are only privy to one side of the story. Equally, people should ask us more questions and we will give more answers – don't just make assumptions, and seek to establish the facts of the matter before casting your judgements.

In Summary

This has been an incredibly rewarding and phenomenally successful year. I am delighted to have been able to put into practice the recommendations laid out in the F&F2 report and my Business Plan. Seismic change has occurred this year and it is change very much for the better. It is no small task to turn a £17,000 loss into a £200,00 profits, to increase revenues by 140%, to establish a radio station and transform Zoo into the number one Entz provider in Oxford (c.75,000 tickets have been sold for Zoo events this year), to run 197 club nights, to publish twenty-four editions of *The Oxford Student* and to produce the premier careers resource for Oxbridge students to mention just a few of my responsibilities. In this line of work, criticism is plentiful and praise rare but I believe that the record indisputably shows 2004-2005 to be a year of phenomenal success for Oxford Student Services Limited.

AND... don't believe much of what you read in the newspapers – those who know me know the true story. If you don't, then why don't you just ask?

Thanks

Perhaps I am guilty of not expressing sufficient appreciation to those many many people who have facilitated the great work done this year. I hope to rectify that now and please forgive the indulgence.

Thanks to all the Editors of all the publications that we have produced this year and to all those who have contributed and worked so hard on them; to the organisers of an exceptional Freshers' Fair; to the Founding Station Controllers of Oxide Radio; to all those who have helped advance the Zoo juggernaut; to all those who have worked on the websites; to all my Business Team; to all my Assistants; to the Accounts Staff and Office Staff; to all the students who have helped make Zoo what it is; to everybody involved in Oxide; to all those who work so hard each and every week on *The Oxford Student*; to all the OSSL Board; to all those to have worked in OUSU over the past year for their contributions to the work of our organisation; to the Entz Reps, Ball Committees, Presidents and Common Rooms who have facilitated our work this year; to all those too numerous to mention.

Patrick Foster – for being an absolute legend over the course of the last summer and then a constant source of amusement and aggravation thereafter; **Peter Cardwell** for making *The Oxford Student* the premier newspaper in the land and for your wise counsel throughout the year – undoubtedly Editor of the Year; **Will Brown** – one word: legend; **Kim Hardman** – recently we have had our differences but I will never forget your dedication, commitment and tremendous work over last summer and through Michaelmas as well as your personal support through difficult times – you were exceptional; **Mary Morgan** – recent differences aside, you have been an incredible source of support – thank you so much; **Roger Waite** – for breaking great stories; **Tom Rayner** – for a fantastic redesign of *The Oxford Student*; **Zoe Flood** – you are quite simply the very best at what you do.

Zoo Management. Dom – thanks for shouldering some of the burden and being immensely reliable and organised; **Lorna** – for managing the staff throughout HT and generally being an amazing help; **Charlie** – a fantastic trouble shooter who brought a certain je ne sais quoi to Sundays & Tuesdays; **Lisa** for taking charge of the formidable Filthy Friday and putting up with my constant demands; **Caroline** – you may drive a hard bargain but you've done a fantastic job with Sunday nights, the Summer Eights After Party and the Summer Eights Supplement - your breakfast show is pretty good too! **Dale** - a rising star so long as you stay out of trouble – keep up the good work and in a few years it may well be all yours; **Suzie** – for being an absolute superstar since Easter and throughout Trinity Term, organising all of the staff and taking enormous weights off my shoulders – I hope you enjoyed Uniting Nations!

Oxide. Tim & Tom – for having the determination to get things sorted and the dedication to get us on air; **Joe** – for your technical expertise and improvisation, as well as the patience and understanding you have shown in dealing with others. **Rick & Josh** – a legendary breakfast show. **Alex** – the Sound of Oxford University (and Zoo).

Alison K – for musical provisions, constant support and keeping me in check; **Ian** – for raising some money too; **Helen** – you've done so much for OUSU already and I'm sure there is lots more great work to come – don't let them get you down; **Chris** – for tireless devotion to the cause; **Matt B** – for doing many hours for little (if any!) pay. Your Freshers' Fair will be amazing and you will make a great future successor – thanks for all the help; **Matt Foster** - you have never failed to deliver; **Steve Burn-Murdoch** – for (in)consistent dedication and hard work; **Laura** – I hope all is going well for you now; **Rowenna** – thank you for so much 😊. **Gareth** – for all the hours that you put in and sacrifices that that entailed: to the future; **Leigh** – its been a steep learning curve but you have been an absolute legend. The hours that you work are phenomenal. Thank you for all the great work you have done – you are undoubtedly the best designer Oxford has seen for a very long time. **Naz** – lifesaver.

To the Balliol Old Guard: Andrew Copson, Mark Wardrop, Adam Turnbull, Richard Stanton, Anne-Marie Bryceson, Rob Coombes, Alan Choi, Denise & Maureen... my, how times have changed!

Bex – Socialiser-In-Chief: a pleasure as always and a dedicated Park End staffer to the last! Apologies for the early morning phone calls; thanks for the sympathy (or lack of) proffered and for the constant smiles, lollies and pasta sans sauce a la Bex.

John – for courage under fire; never afraid to make the tough decisions and to provide the support that is needed during times of challenge. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to get great things done.

Linsey – probably the most organised, efficient and effective person I have met; whilst you may be slightly crazy and have very quirky interests, you are an absolute star and the students of Oxford are fortunate that they've had you fighting their corner all this year. Thanks for your support.

Nicky – for many wise words and infinite wisdoms; for endless support during times of difficulty; for always being there when needed; for providing an understanding beyond all of our years and for instilling an enduring sense of calm and rationale during difficult times. This year you have become a dear friend and there are few people for whom I have more respect for than you.

The Future

I would strongly recommend that an immediate review of staffing needs to be undertaken. I am submitting a lengthy report on this matter for both OUSU and OSSL to consider but in short: given the colossal expansion of our commercial operations, I believe a full-time accounts staffer and full-time administrator should be employed as soon as is possible.

Good luck to all those taking up their positions this summer. With regard to the work of OSSL, everything is now set up for an extremely prosperous future and now just needs to be executed. The experience and expertise that has been brought to bear this year will not be replicated for a long time to come. Chris, Madz and Rob: you should be under no illusions – the workload will be enormous. The impossible has been done this year: follow the tried and tested formula and it will all be fine. The nature of the commercial world that we operate in means that just one mistake

can bring the entire company down: whether that be a libel suit, allowing the broadcasting of offensive material, a failed club night or just one botched venture. Consolidate the work that has been done and don't take chances. You will have a steep learning curve as you are all somewhat inexperienced in the areas for which you are responsible. Chris – you have been with us through the course of this phenomenal year and the institutional knowledge has been instilled in you. I have every confidence that you would lead us through the next year – but lead you must.

COMMITTEES

Womens Campaign

Despite a successful 'safety night' with an informative talk on rape crisis followed by our 'Reclaim the Night' March, Women's Campaign has experienced some difficulties this term. After a very busy 'events-based' Hilary, we had hoped to run a big campaign in Trinity, but this proved unrealistic due to a combination of factors:

1. There was no money left for a big postcard/glossy poster campaign.
2. Trinity itself may not be ideally suited for a major campaigning drive on 'women in Oxford' – certainly, we were worried about the effect on morale if we sought to raise the issue of women in academia in the midst of finals revision – and some of our other initiatives (i.e. tutorial workshops and academic careers events) seemed more suited to Michaelmas and Hilary.
3. There is also something to be said for starting a big campaign in Michaelmas that sets the tone for the year – by Trinity, it is difficult to attract new women.
4. While we have some understanding of the problems that beset women at Oxford, (whether academic – from lack of applications/admissions in certain colleges/subjects, to the 'finals gap' and the shortage of women in academia– cultural – from the lack of female representation on some JCRs and the form that student politics can take, to the fears for women's safety in clubs and on the streets – or pastoral – from the lack of awareness on eating disorders and mental health issues, to the need to highlight women's rights when faced with subtle forms of discrimination and harassment – or concerning 'choice' in pregnancy – which is often little more than a word, if students do not have access to crisis information (e.g. emergency contraception), are not given the appropriate unconditional support from the university in the event of unwanted pregnancy, and do not have all the options, e.g. proper provision for student parents) – it is difficult to campaign on these issues without clear statistics and information on existing policies. I had hoped at least to highlight the issues and open the debate with a newspaper spread, but realised that to do this properly we need more information from the university and colleges, (perhaps using the Freedom of Information Act), which would have to be thoroughly researched (i.e. during the holidays) before it can be presented to students.
5. We also need to do more as a campaign to draw in graduate students, female academics, other sabbatical officers, outside organisations and women with a variety of expertise who can help advise on the issues and the kind of recommendations that we ought to be making to the university. Only when we have some specific demands or recommendations or questions for the university, will we be able to mount a high profile campaign of action.

These are some of the problems of running a major campaign – Bex and Claire have discussed other general Wom Cam difficulties in their reports. My personal feeling on the Campaign/Committee debate is that while Wom Cam should continue to incorporate an element of Women's Officer support, the Campaign has to look at better ways of providing ongoing support to College Women's Officers apart from Wom Cam, while using its meetings to campaign more effectively on the big issues of relevance to all women in the University, translating discussion into action. We should also recognise that dedicated individual Women's Officers (in certain

colleges) have had a lot of success at stimulating interest in the issues – we should be able to mobilise such women, when we are ready!

One real positive has been the Women's Campaign consultation on Monday 6th June – which brought together a group of interested women with the outgoing and incoming Vice Presidents – to discuss these wider issues and consider ways ahead. I hope that such an analysis will prove an extremely useful Trinity term activity – enabling us to take the campaign forward effectively next year, from Fresher's Week onwards.

Disability Action

RAG

Target Schools
