



# termly reports

hilary 2002

# OUSU Sabbatical Officers

**Ruth Hunt**

**President**

It seems a little bit odd to be writing a termly report on Thursday of sixth week. The end of term is very far away and there is still a lot more to do before I am going home. Publically, my term seems to have been dominated by four key things: VP (Graduates), Diversity Week, NUS and Finance and Funding campaign. I'll address these things first but will then try and explain what else I get up to. I have found Kirsty's old reports very useful this year. I did a little bit of handover throughout the year, always kept in touch with things and it is interesting to see how those events were surmised and explained in reports. My reports are a little bit different. I tend to explain why I reached the decisions I reached and some of the motivations behind my actions. This does make my reports a little lengthy but I think it is important to do it this way.

Right. VP Graduates. I cannot deny that this position has caused me difficulties. There was Storch in Hilary 2001 (not that I want to open that can of worms but it should be nodded to), a bi-election in Trinity 2001, no-one running in Michaelmas, a bi-election for this vacancy in seventh week and then, of course, Catherine's resignation. My response to these situations have all been motivated solely by a desire to ensure that graduate representation is the best it can possibly be. Representation is the one avenue of the work of OUSU that people trip off the tongue and never really acknowledge its significance. It is one of the most low profile but important things we do. Every time I speak with someone in the university, I am representing you and it takes time and effort to develop respect and to ensure that we are representing you fairly. We change every year but the grown ups who we work with do not. One dud year can destroy our position completely. We have to be careful and it is for this reason that every effort is made to ensure that graduates have an excellent advocate. So, it seems complicated and shoddy on our part, but if we were to ignore the events outlined above, things would be much worse. But it is difficult to work out whether this is a series of coincidences or there something wrong in the system. It worked well under Rachel Hall, Jason Dorsett and Nick Smith which implies that it could work, but perhaps changes are necessary. A separate graduate union is not the answer. Firstly because graduates voted to be part of OUSU. Secondly, we have the resources and facilities, and the flexibility in the budget to produce non-profit making publications such as The Graduate Guide. Graduates are better in than out, but if any of you have any thoughts on how to make things better then let me know. I am very open to change.

Number two: Diversity Week. My thinking and logistical input into this was limited thanks to the efficiency and excellence of Mr Rowlands. This is not internal sycophancy but I am trying to subtly make the point that if a president does not work with excellent vice presidents, the president cannot achieve much. It is essential that all the sabs are good, that they know the requirements that are made of them in the constitution, standing orders and job description. They must also have the confidence, intellect and motivation to pursue their projects efficiently and effectively. Any cock up, however slight, creates work and anxiety for the others. We want to get it right, we want to do things as well as possible. When this doesn't happen, it is difficult for all. In the past I had noticed a steady decrease in motivation in certain sabbaticals. We spend a lot of time on our own, in our room, working away and to be honest, we could sit up here and do nothing and only a few would really know though the consequences would be seen. Whether the consequences were always associated with a weakness in the sabbatical is not clear but it is a very dangerous situation. Not many know the job descriptions to quote, and so it falls to us to regulate each other. It would be easier if more knew what each sabbatical was supposed to be doing and I am thinking of ways to achieve this. However, back to opening statement, whatever the problems and difficulties encountered in Diversity Week, James stormed it.

Number three: NUS. On the march, Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> week, Owain James the NUS President made a speech to sixteen thousand students. A minuscule fraction of those he represents. Everyone in Trafalga Square was on his side. They all believed that the current method of funding higher education was wrong. He spoke last, and like any rally, the anticipation could be felt in the air (!). This was his chance to tell us what he had been doing to communicate the need to restore the grant and scrap tuition fees. He told us that in *NOVEMBER* he was talking to a Labour backbench MP who, when told of the difficulties students face, did not believe Owain James. His point was that we should tell our MPs which is a valid point but if I had five minutes to tell representatives from every university exactly what I had done for them, this would not be the example I would use. So perhaps he is not great at writing speeches. Ok, but a national representative should recognise how stupid he looks if he has just publicly admitted that he cannot

persuade back bench MPs that there is a problem. I think that sums up my view of the NUS. I am intolerant of incompetence at any level, be it your tutor, your college, your student union, the government or your national representatives. I resent you lot paying for incompetence. Disaffiliation is irrelevant really – just don't tolerate rubbish. So, send representatives to NUS conference but make sure your college votes for someone who can speak with clarity, is persuasive and competent. This goes for OUSU as well. Finance and funding campaign. This is one of my biggest, most public portfolios and I am glad that we have clear policy on what we believe and want. It is a message I constantly drive home whenever I speak to tutors, press, and the VC. The current situation is a shambles but the key thing that I failed to recognise and I write this now so the same thing does not happen next year, is that every year we need to go back to the beginning and discuss the situation with students. I have been here for four years and the issue of student funding is second nature. It is not for others. Each year it needs to be discussed again with a new generation. Helena, Daniel, Laura, Andy and Julia are all fantastic and the regular attendees – Penny, Nick C, Oscar, Nick A, Sacha and Ed demonstrate a dedication that must be acknowledged. The campaign is perhaps not as high profile as it could be but I do believe that an occupation at this time of government flux would have ostracised more people than it included. I talk a lot with the press and ensure that our views are reflected in their coverage but you do not need to go on record all the time. It would be easy to ensure that Oxford was always quoted but this needs to be handled carefully. We are more vocal and better at campaigning but I do not want to damage access by implying that Oxford is different financially from everywhere else.

Now on to other stuff. I have worked extremely hard to make OUSU relevant to all Oxford students. I know it sounds like a cliché now, but it didn't a year and a half ago and the concept is not redundant even if the phrase is. I have identified several key areas in order to try and make this happen. Firstly, this term we distributed the OUSU reps pack. These included new posters that listed OUSU services and a booklet that explains how OUSU works. Included in this booklet was a letter from me that explained where I think OUSU could go wrong and where it has gone wrong in the past. When I was in my second year, I had a vote in OUSU council. It was the year of Bacardi bans, stagecoach bans, and many, many motions that I neither understood, and if I am honest, did not really care about. I'm sure I would have cared but I felt I was at OUSU council to find out what was going on in the university and how that impacted on St. Hilda's. Perhaps this was selfish and naïve, but I worked hard, had a degree to do and Friday afternoons were either going to help that or provide a time for me to get a bit of kip. Maybe if I had thought more I could have voted in a way that would prevent OUSU doing daft stuff or I would have voted with good knowledge that I could have communicated to the JCR and explained why certain things were important. This anecdote does have a purpose; I think the best way to make OUSU relevant is for all the constituent colleges to vote wisely and sensibly and not be pressured by passionate speeches and the fear that one might appear 'so right wing' if you vote in a certain way. The second method I have adopted is talking as much as possible to representatives of common rooms. Listening to their concerns, acting on them and allowing my work to be shaped by their issues. I attend common room meetings not just to talk about OUSU but to listen and learn exactly how common rooms work. And you are all very different but are fundamentally the same in certain areas. You are concerned that your degree goes well, that there are places to relax in Oxford and if things go wrong there are facilities to help. OUSU shares these fundamental concerns.

I have also been working to reduce some things that OUSU currently does and expand into areas that may be more useful and wanted by students. This is a difficult process and the consequences will be seen in motions to come in Trinity. They range from greater support for events such as Future Outlook and complete overhauls of other independent organisations in Oxford. A central student venue is, of course, still on the agenda, but the difficulties are the same and next year candidates will promise the same but you never know.

As usual, this report is quite subjective. It explores not so much what I do but how I do it which I think is more important for this report. I wouldn't be able to take this tone however, without the knowledge that the exec officers who have my portfolios are tuned in and dedicated to the work they do give their own account about the literal things that are happening. Praise must go to Rachel Logan who manages Entz, Phil Thompson who gives TLC to environment committee, Andy Thomas and Julia Buckley who think and work for F&F, and Julia who works for OUSU reps, and Duncan who works for NUS reps. The exec this year, albeit with a few teething problems, are very impressive and it is a testament to the efficiency of the system that they are all so different and therefore effective. Full respect to you all, including Mr Stoneham, who despite being absent a few too many times from council has ideas and enthusiasm that redeems him. Thanks also must go to the sabs and the staff in OUSU.

### Student Radio

This promised to be quite an exciting project when I was first approached by the eFusion (as they were then known) gang. The idea of OUSU's supporting a student radio station is still, I believe, a good one. Due to our current financial situation, it will be impossible for OUSU to invest money in a new venture. Unfortunately it would appear that setting up a radio station in the current OUSU building would actually cost a great deal in terms of sound proofing and so on. Additionally, it has become clear as the term has progressed that a radio station would need considerably more space than the fairly redundant cupboard we have offered them for a studio. With space already hugely pressured in the OUSU building (none of the case-working sabbaticals have regular space for that side of their work), we cannot really be too accommodating to a student radio station without severely hampering and damaging the work we do and the services we provide already.

### The Budget

The deficit was a great disappointment and I am annoyed that my year of office will be responsible for further eroding reserves. I hope that we can look to a brighter future. It will be a long time, however, before that bright future will include advertising sales of the level we have seen in the recent past. The brighter future will hopefully include an increased level of steady income stream – an organisation of OUSU's size, activity and productivity cannot effectively operate, plan or serve with such a fluctuating income. The fact of the matter is that if there is a bad year of advertising sales, our members will not get as much from OUSU as we could possibly provide. It would be good if the university recognised this fact.

### Staff

At the end of this term, our long-serving Accounts Manager, Jenny Murray will retire. Jenny has worked for OUSU for the last twenty-one years and we are very grateful for the work she has put in to the student union as it has developed over the years. I'm sure all the generations of V-P (Finances) would join me in wishing Jenny a very fond farewell.

### Shop

Unfortunately it has been difficult to fully promote the shop this term. Usually adverts have appeared in the *OxStu* every week. Due to financial constraints caused by the general lack of advertising there has not been the space or the money to carry such ads. Many of the colour posters have gone out, via the OUSU Reps to whom I am extremely grateful. The AGM of the company looked at the draft accounts as prepared by our auditors. They remain in draft format because KPMG are unwilling to close the accounts until some decision has been made about the future of the shop as this may affect the assets it currently holds. As a result of this, I think that I managed to chair one of the longest OSSL AGMs in OUSU's memory.

### Publications

The Living Out Guide has been a great success. The new relationship with the university is an excellent one and we hope to retain it as a joint project for next year as well. Distribution was better managed because the University Accommodation Office contacted college authorities who often pay more heed to university departments than the student union. Feedback has been very good and it seems to be one of the key services we provide.

The Business Manager and I are meeting our CUSU counterparts to discuss the *Careers Handbook* stable. We will strive to ensure that this remains the very highest quality publication. The good news is that there is already some interest which I think is testament to the fact that it is an exceptionally good resource for the job seeker that far outstrips its rivals.

The *OxStu* has generally been very good this term. The dedicated team continue to produce a very high quality newspaper week on week. I was very disappointed that the editorial staff were not rewarded with an affirmation of their editorial independence by Council this term. We continue to operate the newspaper under an 'independence' that is undermined in the appointments process and I think that such a situation does the neither the *OxStu* nor OUSU any favours.

### Diversity Week

I was tremendously pleased with this innovation. It was a fun, if exhausting, week that went very well. The week of events was considerably boosted by the sponsorship that we secured. This did not entirely surprise me. The big graduate recruiters still want to recruit and keep their company profile. Increasingly, they wish to put their money to interesting, innovative, equal opportunity projects/events such as Diversity Week. Hopefully OUSU can continue to exploit this in the future.

I have found myself dealing with an increasing number of issues that come under that rather expansive banner of 'equal opportunities. Almost as a mirror to that an increasing number of colleges have equal opportunities officers or at least officers with a specific remit for that area. While such a general post cannot replace the important work of those issue specific posts (such as LGBT, Women's, Ethnic Minorities Officers to name a few), these are a welcome addition. A more holistic approach to issues of harassment, discrimination, diversity and equal opportunities – in terms of both access and study at Oxford – can but help challenge the preconceptions of our society and help keep the University and colleges on their respective toes. In OUSU the efforts of queer rights, anti-racism and disabilities action committee continue unabated and my thanks to their co-chairs and exec for all the hard work.

I spent a long time on Diversity Week in my last report and will not repeat myself here. Suffice it to say, I think it was a success and the lessons we have learnt will enable future years to become bigger and better. We can and should celebrate the diversity of Oxford at the same as we look to the questions that still linger on in our society around questions of diversity. As the University looks to implement the Race Relations Amendment Act, and finds itself faced with a positive duty to promote good race relations, I think we can only be encouraged by the possibilities for the future.

Disability provision was one of my major interests before becoming a sabbatical, and has remained so. Much progress has been made throughout the University yet the situation is still too often unacceptable. There are soon to be around 650 students in this university who have declared a disability – an 8% increase in one year. There are many more in my opinion who have not declared, the majority of those being dyslexics and students with mental health issues. In the later case we must ask why so few people remain unwilling to take advantage of mental health services and the rights afforded, and soon to be increased, under a number of different equal opportunities policies and legislation. The Oxford Student Mental Health Network continues to identify the absolute importance of promoting awareness of mental health issues, and of encouraging mental well-being. This is an issue where a pro-active University could reap significant benefits. Oxford as always seems to be, despite the efforts of many good University people, reactive and this remains a great shame.

OUSU remains inaccessible, although the Advisory Panel on Disability (APD) has recently supported a paper I submitted, noting the importance of the services provided by the student union and recognising that in order to secure an accessible site OUSU needs the active support of the University. A paper is going to JCC outlining why the University is obliged to assist OUSU. Whatever the outcome, and the principles are not something to which anyone can really reject, I remain sceptical about the ability of the University to seize the initiative in this area. The case remains however that while it may not, OUSU will. I look forward to the implementation of part IV of the Disability Discrimination Act with no small sense of anticipation and the impact on exams, course delivery, funding and provision will be hugely significant.

Funding in general remains a concern. I am thankful to the APD for a grant of around £1000 towards the production of a Disability Guide. At the same time this is a body that through no fault of its own is faced with a short fall of funding for dyslexia assessments (of which it currently meets half the cost). That this issue should ever arise, where students may be forced to pay some or all of an assessment for a disability (for if University reduces its contribution I suspect many colleges will do likewise) is a disgrace. The good work and efforts of bodies like APD, and its members, must be matched with appropriate funding and support.

Homophobia remains a concern. I am constantly frustrated by the laziness and apathy that seems to pervade much of the student body and the university when it comes to issues around discrimination. I have said it before and will do so again: we as a student union and as individuals have a to realise that it is not simply enough to simply agree principles of diversity and then do nothing, we are all participants in each act of discrimination and that at the moment we are all often accomplices by inaction. In terms of homophobia, too many colleges remain unwilling to treat homophobic incidents as issues of real concern and hide behind mock ignorance. Lesbian or gay couples are still fair game in clubs for kissing; at the same time, as the Zodiac saga shows, going down on someone in a straight club is merely a bit risqué. When will people realise that homophobia is as serious and as real an issue as racism or any other forms of discrimination? The University and college should and will be forced to, whether they like it or not, properly incorporate sexual orientation into equal opportunities policy from 2003. At the same time legal codes mean little if people, including those who are LGB or T, remain unwilling to make an effort. Yes, Oxford is (largely) tolerant. Likewise drinks and socials are well and good – but they are not the be all and

end all, nor are they and politics mutually exclusive - and beyond these ivory towers friendly places remain all too often few and far between.

Accommodation Committee has advanced in leaps and bounds in the last term. For a start we are fast approaching a full compliment of co-chairs. The second edition of the Living Out Guide was a success and a valuable resource, and I visited a number of colleges to answer question about living out. The Committee plans to produce in the long term an on-line hosing bank that would greatly relieve the terror of house hunting. The Living In Guide also bodes well, and given the increasing number of complaints I receive from colleges acting in excess of any reason towards students living in, any information on student rights in this area will be of use.

The College Redistribution Scheme: A report on progress thus far before Council today, and I hope it clearly demonstrates the huge disparity in college wealth and the impact that this does have on standards in colleges. This is an issue that the student body can and must campaign on, and I imagine we will find surprising levels of support throughout the university and colleges. Oxford is well renowned for the cultural, social and architectural differences of its colleges and rightly so. What we should not tolerate, and what cannot be defended, is a disparity in college wealth that does affect the performance of students and in the long term does become an access issue.

Other welfare stuff includes the changes to the welfare training structures. A proposal went out about this on Monday and I welcome feedback. The new structure is designed to counter-act the all to apparent limitations of the old system, which has been left to long to wither on the vine. By using and extending the expertise we already have within the Student Advice Service the support for welfare providers can match the already excellent provision individual students can receive from OUSU. One final point on welfare provision: the question of money. Council is already aware of the large loss OUSU made this year. In my opinion any situation where much of the welfare provision students receive is dependent on the vagaries of the market is wrong. The thought of reducing the complement, or coverage, of welfare publications produced by OUSU is not to be relished. Again this is an issue where the University has a responsibility. A student union should provide independent support. This however does not mean, as is clear from experience in other universities, that adequate funding is not an obligation that the university should meet. We already receive the lowest block grant in the country, and in contrast offer some of the highest quality welfare provision. This is incongruous and should not continue. I will be compiling a paper to put to the University on funding for welfare provision and would welcome any input.

Finally general VP stuff continues unabated. It is far too easy for the day-to-day running of the student union to be overlooked. What's more with so much work going on people understandably feel reluctant to ask why something is still be waited on, has been missed or gone awry - but people need to ask questions and hold us to account. Lastly having long ago given up trying to get the Sabs together for any longer than an hour I look forward to the day when a quite drink in the pub could be just that.

**Antonia Bance**

**V-P (Women)**

What can I say? These last two weeks have been Diversity Week, Diversity Week and more Diversity Week. What a fabulous week, and one that shows that no matter what the cynics on the left and on the right claim, OUSU is a student union with a fundamental commitment to campaigning for equal opportunity and liberation for disadvantaged groups. Over fifteen events, hundreds of students involved, bridges built with the local community, and the only criticism the OxStu can make is that there were a disappointing number on a march. I was so proud to be part of this student union last week. I've said before and I will say again – we live in a world where religion, sexuality, nationality, race, disability status and gender are still grounds for persecution, we cannot afford to be complacent about equal opportunities issues. I hope next year's event will be even bigger and better.

The Women's Cabaret was amazing – thanks to all the people involved in making it happen, especially Pippa and Françoise, and all the performers. All the proceeds went to the Oxford Asian Women's Helpline, a local charity which does a really essential job, and deserves our support. The JdP at St Hilda's was a great venue, the atmosphere was really chilled and relaxed, and we were treated to a wonderful display of diverse talented women.

I've done more work on Finals Forums, which will mostly happen in 7th and 8th Weeks, and have been promoting the private hire of the Nightbus, as well as the regular service – if any clubs and societies want to hire the bus, it costs just £40 per 24hours plus petrol, email me on [women@ousu.org](mailto:women@ousu.org). Admin for the service takes up as much of my time as ever. Remember – 07754 516172, Thurs, Fri, Sat nights 11-2am, £1 from and to anywhere within the ring road, open to male and female students.

Ethics Committee has now presented the petition calling for ethical investment of the university's pension funds, and is looking forward to the conference for bursars, CR/SU officers and activists about ethical fund management in 7th week. We need another co-chair, so please email me if you want to get involved.

I'm doing lots of work on safety in Oxford, as you'll see from my motion, and enjoying the Elections Review. All OUSU members are encouraged to attend – the next meeting will be 3-6pm next Thursday in Jesus, to finish weeding and anglicising the existing regulations, but what I really want is for YOU to email me YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT THE ELECTION particularly if you are a stakeholder, like CR PRESIDENTS, former CROs, CANDIDATES last Michaelmas term, or former ELECTORAL OFFICIALS. The email address is [women@ousu.org](mailto:women@ousu.org). It would also be great if lots of people could come to the meeting of the review next Friday at 3.30pm in Jesus, where we will be discussing feedback from the last election, and the opinions of stakeholders, as well as comparing our elections with Cambridge and other unions.

Other than that, I've been doing general OUSU stuff, casework, (lots of it – must be the fourth/fifth week blues!), university committees and representing OUSU to the City Council.

I still love my job – last year if people had told me that I would involve being a publicist, typesetter, signwriter, barbecue technician, spin doctor, removals operative, support worker, secretary, balloon blower-upper, interior designer, events promoter, cleaner, bouncer, negotiator and so much more, I would never have believed them. OUSU should thank its lucky stars it has as dedicated a team of sabs, staff, execs, co-chairs and other willing volunteers – the work involved in Diversity Week was immense, and most of the worry was carried by James, who deserves a round of applause, if such a thing were allowed in Council.

**Catherine Sangster**

**V-P (Graduates)**

This term has been a busy and challenging one. I have achieved some major goals, contributed to various successful OUSU initiatives and events, and dealt with some difficult problems. This term has also been my last as OUSU VP (Graduates), so I see this report to Council as an opportunity for me to assess my time in the post. This report has also been presented to Postgraduate Assembly in 6<sup>th</sup> week and can be viewed online, along with Postgraduate Assembly agendas and minutes, at <http://www.ousu.org/current/news/campaigns/graduates/meetings.html>.

Rather than giving a long list of all the committee meetings that I've attended as a graduate representative this term, I'll outline a few of the particular achievements that have resulted from these meetings.

- One of my manifesto pledges was to fight for better provision for graduate students who teach. A paper proposing simple written agreements for such students and the Colleges or departments for which they teach, which includes a draft version of such an agreement, has this term won the support of the Graduate Committee of the Conference of Colleges and will now be passed to EPSC, the Senior Tutors' Committee, and Personnel for their consideration and (I hope) implementation.
- I've pursued the mystery of the disappearing travel grants. (After the old practice of making central applications via the GSO for money to attend conferences and make research trips came to an end, divisions/departments should have been offering these grants themselves, but in many cases they were not). This matter has been raised by me at various committees, and a shift back towards central administration of these funds now seems likely.
- I've made sure graduates were included in the Committee on Diversity and Equal Opportunity's consideration of the University's new Equality policy, and spoken up for them at the CDEO and its sub-panels on Childcare and Harassment.
- I've defended the three-year fee liability for graduate students whose studies continue into a fourth year.
- I've contributed to the EPSC's 2002 Notes of Guidance for Graduate Taught Courses and Research Degrees, available now in draft form for final publication at the start of the coming academic year.

Outside University committee meetings, I've done a good deal of other representation work, in MCRs, with Exec, and with OUSU groups like the International Students' Committee. Graduate representation in OUSU, however, has never only been my concern. The other sabbatical officers never fail to think about graduates when planning events, offering services or representing Oxford students. The OUSU Executive includes John Cook and Liz Chare, your Graduate Exec Officers, but all twelve members of the Executive work for all students. I owe my thanks to all the sabs and exec members for their support over the last term.

As well as their GEO roles, Liz and John are reps for Social Sciences and LES divisions respectively, and Liz also represents graduates on JCCJM while John takes care of the Careers Service committee. There are

other graduate representatives whom I'd also like to thank for their work over the last term: Kirsty Hooper (GCCC and Humanities division), James Wilson (JCCJM), Trista di Genova (ICTC), Maria St Catherine Sharpe (Language Centre), Heidi Kurtz (Accommodation and Finance), Andrew van der Vlies (Libraries), Ed Turner (Clubs), Michael Izzo (Rules) Andrew Ross (MPS division) and Ed Pooley (Medical division).

I'd like to finish by considering the role of VP (Graduates). The graduate sabbatical officer's job has many elements. Some of these, like campaigning for better graduate provision or visiting MCRs to talk about OUSU services, are very public. Others, like representing graduates on university committees or dealing with confidential casework, go on behind closed doors. Over the last two terms, parts of my job have been formal and ceremonious (sitting, gown-clad, on University Council); other parts have been anything but (hauling boxes of OUSU publications around, or washing the OUSU Nightbus). A lot of my work in the Student Advice Service is in acting as a conduit for enquiries, helping countless graduate students and their representatives find the people to whom it is best for them to address their queries (about accommodation, funding, examinations, immigration, health problems, disciplinary matters and more), although some work is much more involved. In addition to these various elements, the VP (Graduates) is very much part of the sabbatical team, and involved in the day-to-day running of the Student Union. This is vital: working as an integrated part of the student union is simply the only way to represent graduates effectively. Altogether, being VP (Graduates) is a challenging, varied, and full-time job which requires dedication and commitment to do properly. It is for this reason that, once I knew I would no longer be able to give it the commitment it deserves, I felt it best to resign. Ultimately, I believe that graduate students will be better served and represented by an Acting VP (Graduates) to do the job, until the winner of yesterday's byelection takes over in September. To both of these successors, I offer my wholehearted support and best wishes.

**John Craig**

**V-P (AcAff)**

Rightly or wrongly, this term has been dominated by Target Schools. Organising a Party, Visiting Scheme, Handbook mailing, Open Day and two Regional Events has taken up a lot of time. However, the combined effect will be that information about Oxford University reaches thousands of people who would not otherwise have considered it. Thinking about these activities a bit strategically, there are a number of issues for the future. For example, we need to consider if the massive growth in the University's activities in this area should modify our own behaviour. Fortunately, next year will be the first year in which we can very accurately assess the success of Target Schools, and I hope my successor will take a critical look at everything Target Schools does in the light of newly available admissions data. Certainly, the University's initiatives are the result of years of hard work by ourselves and the Access Scheme, but we must continue to forge ahead and set an access agenda avoids complacency. With the growth in the numbers volunteering for University events, we also need to think about how students can retain a stake in how these events are run. Finally, it is also crucial that my job continues to remain as it was created, one in which there is time to campaign in Oxford and nationally about access to university, including taking every opportunity to remind policy makers that the "grants not fees" demand is crucial to the aims of Target Schools. If 'professionalisation' of Target Schools simply shifts the workload around, then we are not adding value. When the soft money from HEFCE, and political interest, has moved away, Target Schools will still be here, and its crucial that volunteers retain a role in the leadership of the committee.

Next term, Target Schools has two further Open Days to organise. I am also keen that an online feedback form can be developed, which could serve not only Target Schools but also the numerous college-based access initiatives. It is important that the extent to which students take responsibility for access to Oxford is acknowledged, and that the Admissions Office have all the data about what is happening. I am also keen as ever to demonstrate that campaigns about student funding are not conservative responses to our own levels of debt, but sincere campaigns about equal opportunity for all. The extent of access volunteering demonstrates this.

In terms of academic representation, I am working hard to ensure that concerns about the impact of the University's financial hardship on teaching continue to be articulated. I am also working to highlight the effects of the University's still relatively new Resource Allocation Mechanism on central services such as the Bodleian, the balance between teaching and research and attitudes to the relative contributions of different subjects. I am also extremely pleased to have been allowed to join a working party of the Admissions Executive on the future of selection procedures, and already feel that I have been able to present the OUSU policy passed in 5th week of this term with some success. I am very keen that the ad

hoc ways in which interviews are tailored to individuals' educational backgrounds are acknowledged, and that such an element be explicitly included in any new selection procedures.

I have not achieved as much as I would like for Academic Affairs this term. The college contribution scheme, web provision for JCCs, work on dyslexia, prelim failure and JCR officer support are all areas in which Academic Affairs Committee has identified specific progress that we can make. I will be working very hard during Easter to delivery further in these areas. Having now had numerous informal discussion with the University about the college contribution scheme, I am now convinced both that there is a problem widely acknowledged by senior members, and that reform of the scheme is an aim we should be looking to achieve sooner rather than later. Many thanks to those JCR presidents who have spent a lot of time on this issue - proof that presidents' collective efforts can be successful when they work through the existing structures of OUSU (we are here for a reason!).

Generally, the people I need to thank know who they are. I just want to emphasise my huge respect for the Access Scheme and all their great work - the success rate for those applying through the Access Scheme route is just one indicator of the real difference that they are making. Cheers.

## **OUSU Executive Officers**

### **Rosie Buckland**

This term's been pretty hectic, as having two equal opps. portfolios, Disabilities Action and Queer Rights, meant I was heavily involved in Diversity Week. It's been a really successful term for both committees though, so I'm pleased with what I've done, especially since when I took office Queer Rights' attendance was very low and now it's much better. It also has two brilliant co-chairs, Vinca and Patrick. I began by organising the term card for QR with weekly, rather than fortnightly, meetings, which seems to have paid off with some good discussion meetings, including bisexuality, the national blood service and homophobia in Oxford. For Diversity Week, we held a speaker and discussion meeting about religion and homosexuality, with representatives from the national Muslim lgb organisation and its Catholic equivalent, to which about 40 people came. I also organised a speaker and discussion meeting on Queer Theory, with 3 Oxford academics, as well as a showing of the documentary 'The Celluloid Closet', which, together with the anti-homophobia bop (thank you Rachel)! Made for a really varied and successful set of events. I've arranged a speaker meeting about Partnership Rights and Section 28, with Peter Purton from the TUC and a local teacher for next week to round off the term.

Disabilities Action committee has been a bit more complicated, especially since it's not been possible to launch the Disability Guide on paper as was hoped. The committee too is not as active as some, but again, attendance has been quite good and, as with QR it now has a regular meeting slot. The election of a new co-chair was a good start to the term, as Penny has been fantastic. For Diversity Week I had hoped to be able to run a series of stunts whereby people could spend an afternoon blindfolded or in a wheelchair, but unfortunately that didn't happen. The committee instead held a discussion forum which was really successful, with representatives ranging from an SCR member with MS to the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind. Several issues were raised which I want to pursue with the committee and it was really thought-provoking. Unfortunately, a planned joint event with the green party couldn't go ahead in case it were too political, but it was brilliant that both disabilities and queer rights were represented by the speakers at the Diversity Fair.

There are quite a few things in the pipeline for both committees; for Disabilities Action a survey will be sent out to colleges which will hopefully highlight some of the issues facing students with disabilities, some work on careers is going to be done, the Disability Guide has yet to be launched, I'd like for someone able-bodied to spend a day in a wheelchair and their experiences written up in the student press and to hold some more

Speaker meetings. For Queer Rights, I've written parts of the lgbt officers handbook that is going to be revised, the committee is going to think about compiling a draft job description for lgbt officers, more speaker meetings are being planned and more work is hopefully going to be done with supporting and contacting lgbt officers within colleges.

I've also been doing general ousu stuff alongside portfolio work, such as the duty afternoon and I also helped take a group of schoolchildren to the Diversity Fair as well as attending other Diversity Week events. It was a shame some events weren't better attended, but I think that was mostly to do with a lack of publicity. I'd like to thank Jmes, Penny, Laura, Vinca and Patrick for their help this term.

## **Julia Buckley**

My first term on Exec has been spent doing the usual stuff almost on time - attending Council, Exec meetings and duty afternoons. My portfolios are F&F and OUSU Reps. Though F&F attendance seems to have dwindled a bit, and we haven't staged anything quite as exciting as an occupation, Helena, Laura and Daniel have broadened the campaign by establishing links with other groups, such as International students. Action-wise, I've made loads of posters for the campaign. Making and printing flyers on an hour's sleep was nothing if not enjoyable, particularly with the lovely Ms Santana on the front. Other than that, the demo at/outside St Johns would have been great if we'd got in through the front gate rather than the kitchens. The flyering at the Union was really successful and is definitely an idea to repeat. Finally the NUS demo was fun, the press coverage was good and the OUSU banner even got on the BBC website. More stunts are planned for next term so watch out for that.

OUSU Reps this term has seen the appointment of two new co-chairs - Sarah and Josh have been brilliant in contacting everyone, and attendance has been really encouraging. Every college OUSU Rep now has a full array of OUSU publications and the sabs are making guest appearances each session to be grilled by OUSU Reps.

Without wanting to gush, I've really enjoyed my first term on Exec - it's been really rewarding and everyone involved has been so supportive. Thanks to the co-chairs I work with, all the sabs and especially Maria for consistently tolerating my lateness, inability to grasp rudimentary photocopying skills, and more importantly for supporting me at every point. I hope next term will be as fun for all concerned.

## **Liz Chare**

I have been continuing to represent graduates at all the Exec and council meetings this term, and also as the graduate rep on the Life and Environmental Sciences Divisional Board meetings. I have also been present at all the Women's Campaign meetings. At the end of last term I organised a bop for graduates at Linacre (undergrads were welcome). The live band, 7-9 Split lived up to their fantastic reputation, as did Charlie Talbot as a very talented DJ. May the party fever continue at the next graduate bop which will be on \* SATURDAY 9TH WEEK- 9pm-1.30pm 16TH MARCH! \* There will be 2 DJs (Charlie T and Linacre's own Duce), and 7-9 Split will be back again. We ran the last bop 600 quid into the black; hopefully we'll make a little profit this time as well...which will help with running a some summer entz for both undergrads and grads.

I had fun in Diversity week: the Women's Cabaret and the bonfire party being particular highlights. I also enjoyed helping organise the queer bop at St Cross, even if it wasn't on my home Linacreite turf :)

## **John Cook**

Over the past term, I have attended OUSU Council, OUSU Executive meetings, and the Postgraduate Assembly. I have been representing graduate students on the Social Sciences Divisional Board and recently attended a meeting of the Rules Committee. I will also be serving on the Career Services Committee when it meets.

## **Chris Hanretty**

In my first term on Exec, I have been blessed with two extremely active committees: Target Schools and Ethics. It has been a pleasure to work with both committees, and I am certain that our work next term will only get better.

Target Schools has had a hugely exciting term so far, going so far as to bring some colour and excitement to Mansfield Old Bar. The committee certainly hasn't suffered from a dearth of people attending: all our meetings are well attended. However, it seems that the same people are rarely present at consecutive meetings. Having some continuity of people present who aren't involved on an institutional level would allow co-chairs to receive a better quality of input and feedback.

Certainly, the 'input' was there when it counted: our marathon envelope stuffing session in 4th week. Enveloping 10,000 Target Schools handbooks is no mean feat, but our decision to bring in pizza and snacks more than paid off. A thousand thanks to all those who helped out.

The second significant point in the term was the Target Schools party in Thirst in 6th week, designed to get people signing up to [www.targetschools.com/](http://www.targetschools.com/). Our first entz event, it was a great learning experience, and I'm sure we have the potential to build on it. In retrospect, we ought to have started billing the event earlier and more aggressively, but this is something we can work on.

Ethics committee has had a very very impressive term. Our main focus for the first half of the term was collecting signatures for our ethical investment petition: this was presented in 5th week to the Junior Proctor. At the moment, we are working on a conference for college bursars, in order to persuade them of the benefits of investing ethically. Planning for this is going well: an impressive line-up of IFAs and fund managers should be able to make the case with more gravitas than students might be able to (contact [christopher.hanretty@st-annes.ox.ac.uk](mailto:christopher.hanretty@st-annes.ox.ac.uk) for more information).

I do feel that Ethics is running at full capacity, and would greatly benefit from another co-chair. Unfortunately, no-one has been forthcoming at this time. If, upon reading this report, you feel a need to help out, please do pick up a co-chair application form from OUSU. Having said that, our efforts this term haven't been hampered by the lack of a second co-chair, largely due to the infectious energy of co-chair Jung-ui Sul.

One thing I must apologise for is my absence from Wednesday of 5th to Monday of 6th week. This meant I was unable to attend a number of committee events. I do not anticipate that I will be out of Oxford for such a long period again, either this term, next term, or Michaelmas next year.

### **Rachel Logan**

After my few weeks on exec in Michaelmas, it has been great to get properly involved this term. My portfolios, Health and welfare and Entz, represent respectively one of OUSU's most consistently welcomed and useful endeavours, and one that will be so in the future. H&W is in the process of a radical shake-up, which I'll leave it to James to go into detail on, but which should transform an already excellent committee into one that provides college specific training for welfare officers and a solid support system, a hugely worthwhile thing. This term has been quiet but useful, and attendance should rise dramatically with the new system if feedback is anything to go on.

Entz has been more active this term, and has taken up most of my OUSU time. After lying dormant for far too long, Entz is being revitalised to be one of OUSU's most important committees, and one which I think is of real importance to the functioning of a decent student's union. Hampered as ever by the lack of CSV, massive regular OUSU events are not an easy thing to provide, and instead we have been concentrating on organising events when they arise, such as in Diversity week this term. The Queer Bop and Bonfire&fireworks parties were a great success and really fun to organise, even with the teething problems that occurred. The Pride Not Prejudice bop is something which I am particularly proud of, as despite certain little challenges there was still a great turn out and an excellent atmosphere, although I have to offer apologies to Welfare for panic attacks and blonde ditziness when stressed. The QR bop will hopefully now be a recurring theme in OUSU entz, and I'd love to repeat the BBQ and fireworks party type event in the sunshine. In addition, the actual committee is being restructured to provide direct support and a vital forum for college entz providers, with an open email list currently being established and termly meetings to be held from Trinity. This should help college reps to discuss ideas and also problems such as clampdowns on bops and interference from college authorities, as well as plan joint events or even buying/renting consortiums if wanted.

Outside of my direct portfolios, I've finally got to grips with at least one of the photocopiers in the office, and generally spent too much time sitting in Little Clarendon Street, and seeing the sights in the lovely van. I also went on the NUS Students in the red, demo, which was a great success. It helped to show that student activism is alive and kicking, and as with the Close Campsfield campaign, can have a direct impact on government policy. On that note, I was really pleased to see OUSU council re-affirm its commitment to the involvement and interest of students in the wider world, and the relevance, of that role. End of term thank yous go to: Maria, obviously. Ruthie, for being cute., James for keeping me sane, Antonia for her skill with a megaphone, Eleanor for Frogs-nest farm and John for the voice of sanity. Also to the rest of the exec, particularly Nicky, Phil, Duncan and Chris for loads of support and Liz for being essential. Also to Sean, Anna, Bex, Helena, Laura, Stuart(see) and Sacha. Finally, to Nat, Alice and Spike-boy.

### **Anatole Pang**

This term I have worked hard to fulfil my electoral mandate, and have attended to my duties and functions with a certain regularity.

### **Marc Stoneham**

During my first term's involvement in the Student Union I have been simultaneously impressed by the services OUSU offers - such as welfare provision, the Nightbus, and its publications, and underwhelmed by the myriad number and variety of committees. An unnecessarily large amount of Exec. time is spent in the appointment of people to these committees with little tangible result, or reporting back to the Exec. From the point of view of efficiency and accountability therefore I am planning to lobby for a substantial rationalisation of these committees. I also feel that this would give Exec more of the power they were elected to wield, rather than distribute as is now the case.

I have been very impressed by the Sabbatical officers, and the professionalism they bring to the provision of Student services, yet feel that OUSU council can still provide a platform for unnecessarily political point-making and posturing.

My portfolios (Fresher's Week and Careers) have been fairly moribund - the first for obvious reasons, the second due to the fact that OUSU has little role in the provision of careers services - these being taken up by the careers service, ManSoc, Guild Soc etc.

### **Andrew Thomas**

My focus this term has been working together with the co-chairs of the Finance and Funding campaign and Alistair Crosby as the Battels officer.

Finance and Funding:

This term has been a one of consolidation for the F&F campaign as well as a broadening of the work that it is pursuing. The fight against tuition fees and for the re-establishment of the grant has remained central but we have also begun to work together with other groups. We had a successful meeting with the international students committee from which we have set challenges for the future.

International students, for instance, have experienced problems with opening bank accounts in the UK because of the different policies of the banks and building societies in Oxford. To improve this situation for international students I have contacted every bank in Oxford and asked them for information on this issue. The information when collected will be put onto the web site so that international students can easily discover what they require to open a bank account when they come to Oxford.

We are also investigating how international students could have a voice in how increases in the College Fee are decided. At present JCR's are able to negotiate battels increases with their SCR's but no such forum exists for the negotiation of increases in the College Fee which is paid by international students unlike British students.

The campaign against student hardship has continued and on wednesday of 6<sup>th</sup> week Oxford participated in the NUS's National Demo in London. The event was enjoyed by everyone who attended and has presented the campaign with a platform upon which to build.

Next term is currently the main focus for the campaign with a number of events being planned so keep your eyes open.

Finally, student involvement is central to this campaign and it is our goal to maximise both this and student's general awareness of the issue. The Labour government may be reviewing the method of funding of higher education but this does not mean that tuition fees have been abolished.

Battels:

This term I have worked together with Alistair Crosby and Eleanor Fletcher to produce the 'Battels Support Pack' and, with the much appreciated help of Jason Dorsett, to provide information for CR/SU's President and Treasurers to decipher the Franks Accounts.

I hope that this information has been helpful to CR/SU Presidents and Treasurers as they enter into battels negotiations with their SCR's. If Presidents and Treasurers have any queries then please do not hesitate to contact either Eleanor ([finance@ousu.org](mailto:finance@ousu.org)) or me ([andrew@ousu.org](mailto:andrew@ousu.org)).

I have also peripherally been involved with the Electoral Reform Commission although this is not one of my assigned portfolios. With regard to this commission I would like to thank everyone and every CR/SU which has given input into the review process. I would also like to give special thanks to Antonia Bance without whom the review would not have the direction that it does, Mel Marshall who has slaved over her

laptop during many meetings and explained some of the more obscure rules, and to Eleanor Thompson and Adam Booth who have given welcome advice and input.

I would similarly like to thank Helena Puiglarrauri, Laura Santana, Daniel Harkin, Alistair Crosby and all of the Sabbatical Officers who have helped me so much during my first term on the executive.

I look forward to next term.

### **Phil Thompson**

Environment committee has taken the largest share of my time so far. We have been setting up an email list, sorting out strategies for the forum to improve in the future and generally making a fresh start. We have moved from fortnightly to weekly meetings and I'm very pleased to report that the committee seems to be reinvigorated this term. We now get about 20 people (from a wide range of colleges) coming every week. In fifth week we had a really useful session with the City Council Employee responsible for the new council waste recycling scheme. Come along: Mansfield Council Room, Wednesdays 5pm. Big thanks go to Sally and Christina who have been wonderful.

AcAff ctte - i have been to AcAff Ctte and have sought out a fellow JCC President totake part with myself and Eleanor in creating the first JCC webpages to go on the OUSU domain. This project I hope to see to fruition in the next week or two. The Committee meets in odd weeks at 1.30pm in New College LR4.

Other than this I have been doing a duty session in the OUSU office each week, have attended Exec meetings and have been involved in general SU activities. Many thanksto Maria for all her help.I'd like to give other random thanks to my dedicated team of cheerleaders: Maud, Betty, Magda, Wilma, Babs, BludgerBoy and all the Mafia - they know who they are.

### **P. Duncan Weldon**

In my first term on exec I have been quite busy, aside from duty mornings, exec meetings and the joy that is council I have been involved with two committees. I am very pleased to say that both of my portfolios are now blessed with very effective co-chairs. Although there is still space for further co-chairs on both of my committees and applicants are always welcome.

This term, with the build up to conference, is the most important of the year for NUS committee, and I am glad to say that meetings of this committee are well attended and very rewarding.

Accommodation committee has been relaunched this term with the aid of James Rowlands and a very dedicated co-chair. So far we have had two meetings and are planning to produce some very useful information, such as a living in guide as well as laying the ground work for the forthcoming web based housing bank.

I have really enjoyed my first term on exec and look forward to continuing to work with my committees, the sabs and the rest of exec next term.

## **OUSU Officers and Committees**

### **Press Officer**

Hilary is always a key term for OUSU because this is the time when sabs and officers can forget about the Michaelmas elections and focus their time on providing services for students.

For this reason OUSU has received a good deal of positive press coverage. The imaginivte and highly successful events during Diversity Week showed OUSU doing what it does best. I was also involved in publicising Holocaust Memorial Day and the work of Target Schools. It is unfortunate that in recent weeks there have been several instances of student journalists misquoting and misinterpreting the words of OUSU sabs, or just failing to get their facts right. We do not nick advertising; sabs are not well-paid; Diversity week was not a platform for extremists. Standards of journalistic integrity need to be upheld. OUSU officers should also be particularly careful about their use of OUSU resources, particularly if the results are likely to fall into the hands of Evelyn. If these problems are resolved then we can be optimistic about next term.

Thanks to Ruth for all of her support; James, Antonia, John, Catherine and Eleanor for giving me stories to press-release, and Maria for doing everything before I even thought about it.

## **Accommodation Committee**

Following its recent reactivation, the accommodation committee has met twice. In the course of these meetings we have discussed general collegiate accommodation issues and decided upon two major projects. We aim to produce a living in guide which would propose minimum standards that students should expect and inform them of their rights as inhabitants. We are also working on a rented accommodation web database which would include a search engine linked to a map to enable students to specify their requirements and easily identify the location of suitable houses. This ideally would be ready before next year's freshers arrive. Legal clarification as to what we may publish is still required, however, and there may be some motions which would have to be put through council before we may proceed. Publicising the committee is a priority and we hope to increase college representation next term. In short, we are at the planning stage of some good ideas and are working on their realisation.

## **Anti-Racism**

This term has been extremely busy for Anti-Racism Committee, largely due to preparations for Diversity Week. Hilary 2002 began in the usual fashion with a committee meeting followed by a discussion in 3rd Week. The discussion, entitled "perspectives on Islam" was, although not widely attended, highly successful and informative. Similarly, the Diversity Week discussion "How British are you?" proved the high point of Anti-Racism's contribution to events, eliciting interest from undergraduates across many different colleges and of various cultural backgrounds. Although the afternoon and evening events received a poorer turn out, the frank, honest and illuminating discussion was a success that the committee intends to build upon. In the 6th Week committee meeting the strengths of Diversity week were analysed and areas of improvement suggested and more information was provided for those seeking to establish Ethnic Minorities Officer in their college. Also in 6th week a co-chair of Anti-Racism committee met with the University Equal Opportunities Officer (along with other undergraduate representatives and the Welfare and Women's Sabbatical Officers) to discuss the university's implementation of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. The Act imposes a positive duty on public institutions, universities among them, to promote good race relations: the 6th week meeting represented the beginning of an ongoing consultation process. In 7th week Anti-Racism Committee hosted a discussion provocatively entitled; "stick to your own kind!" an exploration of inter-racial relationships. Anti-Racism Committee intends to raise its profile during Trinity term. Suggestions so far have ranged from a provocative yet ingeniously clever poster campaign and an entz event to be held in conjunction with another college. Next term will also see the election of a new co-chair (as Angela Saini finally gives in to the joy of finals!) and preparations for a new edition of the Anti-Racism Handbook.

## **Disabilities Action**

Despite low attendance, DA have had a productive term.

Work is still continuing on the disabilities guide, which will be going onto the web soon. We are also instigating a survey to assess what students, who have a disability are wanting from their SU committee, so we can serve the interests of all students, irrespective of their involvement with DA. The highlight of this term was undoubtedly Diversity Week. Although one of our events has been postponed ("Oxford Uncovered, how accessible are we?"), the evening discussion "Disability Explored" was very productive. The stall at the diversity fair engaged many people in discussion about provision for people who have a disability as well as discussions surrounding attitudes and awareness. Hopefully, over the next few terms, we shall see some exiting speaker meetings to raise the profile of DA.

Disabilities Action is also seeking to have a regular, fortnightly slot for it's meeting which we hope help to increase attendance. Details of this time will be sent out early next term.

Hilary also saw the election of a new co-chair, Penelope Berrill (St. Hilda's) who joins Laura Timms (Oriol). If anyone would like to contact us, for information about DA, they would like to be involved, or simply to be put on the mailing list, please contact us at [penelope.berrill@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk](mailto:penelope.berrill@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk), [laura.timms@oriel.oxford.ac.uk](mailto:laura.timms@oriel.oxford.ac.uk) or via [welfare@ousu.org](mailto:welfare@ousu.org). Our new executive officer is Rosie Buckland.

Lastly, we have many people to thank - our regular attendees, your support and input is invaluable. To all those who work in the multitude of University Committees, we also thank you for your tireless

determination. To all those who attended and helped with Diversity Week, your hard work did pay off. To Emily, who has co-ordinated the Dyslexia Support Network, thank you, and good luck with your finals. And to James, for your tireless dedication this term.

## **Finance and Funding**

Finance and Funding Committee met every week at 5pm on Tuesdays this term. We started off the term concentrating on the non-payers that still hadn't paid up. First week saw two stunts in support of non-payers: one at St John's another outside the OUSU offices. We also distributed leaflets outside the Union before the debate on Higher Education funding. The leaflets were very effective - most people in the room had one, and one of the speakers quoted from it. The F&F campaign seemed to have gone a bit quite this term, and so we put out a poster explaining the government's new proposals for higher education funding, and why we think these are still not acceptable. We also leafleted outside Exam Schools and on Broad St to increase awareness of the F&F campaign. In an attempt to widen the campaign, we have discussed the redistribution of wealth amongst colleges, an issue which OUSU has recently taken up after a motion was passed in council. We have also tried to identify funding problems affecting international students, and several members of the international students committee attended a meeting to discuss this. At the meeting we identified a number of practical finance and funding problems which affect international and/or British students: managing bank accounts, paying in instalments, etc. The committee also noted that we should begin to question why Van Noorden is used in Oxford (we will follow this up next term). Wednesday of 6th week was the NUS national demo against student hardship. A group of us went down to London, with the F&F banner, and I think it would be fair to say we were the most musical delegation. The government is at the moment suggesting a system with no fees, grants only for those with a joint parental income of £9000, commercial loans and graduate tax. That doesn't make for a short and sweet slogan of the sort of 'grants not fees'. It is harder to communicate to many students why the F&F campaign is still relevant, why we must keep up the fight. But it is important, because students are still in debt, and the new system will not stop student hardship, even if the government sticks a 'free education' label on it. Next term we will probably be making a wall of debt to try to get as many students as possible involved and aware that the current situation is unacceptable, and the proposed situation is unlikely to make it any better. Our thanks go out to Julia, Andy and Ruth, for all their hard work; and to the regular F&F goers for their support and contributions.

## **Health and Welfare**

Health and Welfare committee has met three times so far this term, though not fortnightly as planned. Our first meeting in First Week was about accommodation. Clendon Daukes, bursar of St Peter's College spoke on the practicalities of dealing with agents and landlords as well as the pitfalls of actually living out. Copies of the Living Out Guide were distributed.

The second meeting was about Rape and Sexual Abuse. Grace Purshouse from a support organisation for survivors of sexual abuse talked to the group. We also did some practical workshops on dealing with survivor support situations.

The third meeting was on the subject of international students issues, particularly those surrounding access to health care. We had a speaker from the international students' office.

The fourth meeting is yet to happen. It will likely be on further aspects of sexual abuse, focusing on child sexual abuse survivor support skills.

Health and Welfare is only to have four meetings this term as a new system of more practical, targeted welfare training is being introduced. This seems to be a more appropriate system, as Health and Welfare is only sparsely attended. Whilst speakers can be extremely useful and practical, not all welfare providers will necessarily be interested in the subject, or at least perceive it as being irrelevant.

Health and Welfare will continue to meet at least three times a term as a forum for common room welfare providers across the University in conjunction with training organised by the VP (Welfare).

## **International Students**

The main focus for the term were the events during Diversity Week. These consisted of a round table discussion and an international soiree on Tuesday of 4th week.

OUSU International Students, Committee (ISC) Diversity Week ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION - Tuesday Lunchtime 4th week 'Is Oxford an International University?' At 2pm Tuesday of 4th week, international and local students gathered at the Wadham Old Refectory to take part in a round-table discussion on the question: „Is Oxford an International University?%. Free pizza and drinks were provided to encourage creativity! Louis Atallah, OUSU International co-chair, chaired the discussion, which was split into several subject headings: Arriving at Oxford, Living in Oxford, and Plans are for Cēaprès,-Oxford. Amongst those who attended were several Presidents of national interest societies along with various welfare representatives from OUSU and other colleges. The main issues that arose were an increase in awareness of the international orientation scheme; international students, bank accounts, international student fees and its influence on people,s attitude to international students; and the relevance of national interest societies. At the end of the discussion, suggestions were made that the ISC needed to increase its profile within the colleges and establish a regular meeting time and venue. There were also further talks about surveys on the local banks.

**INTERNATIONAL SOIREE** The International Soiree took place at The East Oxford Community Centre on Cowley Road. There was an array of international food and an excellent concoction of music from literally all over the world. In addition there was a stunning salsa performance courtesy of OU Salsa Soc. The event was well attended and those who came thoroughly enjoyed themselves. There were also several people from the local community at the event who were very appreciative and inadvertently their presence helped to turn the event into a real celebration of diversity beyond the academic confines of political correctness.

**PLANS FOR TRINITY TERM** The International Students Committee is looking to raise awareness about the level of International fees and ways in which we can help International students with their finance, which is one of the biggest problems most students face. We are aware of the difficulties Internaitonal students face with opening a bank account and we are planning to do a bank survey to produce a leaflet for International student either before they come to Oxford or just when they arrive to give them the information of the requirements of different banks. Secondly, we are concerned with the increas of International fees in the last academic year (about 4.5%) and are trying to work out ways in which to control the increase. Finally, we are seeking to encourage colleges to allow International students to pay their fees in instalments. We are going to work with the OUSU Finance and Funding Committee to meet some of our objectives.

## **NUS Committee**

It has been an eventful term for NUS committee as several colleges have put through NUS disaffiliation motions (some more deliberately than others). We have had some useful meetings regarding arguments in favour or against affiliation. The committee is still lacking in members, and I have asked my JCR President to put a message out on Preslist asking all Presidents to email me the names and e-addresses of their NUS reps. The committee continues to provide a useful forum for discussing services provided by the NUS and the disaffiliations have had the positive effect of making us more aware of the services available, and thus better able to make use of the NUS as a service provider. The arrangements for national conference are underway, and we look forward to seeing lots of college reps there (possibly in stylish matching t-shirts - come to committee meetings @ 6:30 in the Turf, on the Mondays after OUSU council to find out more...). If you know of an NUS rep who doesn't know about the reps meetings, please send them along, or get them to email me (eleanor.murray@univ.ox.ac.uk) to find out more.

## **OUSU Reps**

This term's OUSU reps meetings have hopefully been really informative (and fun!) for all those who've attended. The aim of the meetings has been to provide as much information as possible to reps, to help them with their roles in their colleges, and to pass on any comments about OUSU from them to the sabs. Therefore, this term we invited the sabs to come and speak about the services that OUSU provide and answer any questions that we have. Thanks go to Ruth, Antonia and James for being so helpful and dealing with all our queries. Also, at our last meeting we discussed the elections procedureds and raised lots of points that will hopefully assist the elections review. Thanks to all those reps who've come along so far, we hope that you have found the meetings useful and they continue to be so in the future. If you haven't been able to make it yet, then please do try and come to the next one (7pm Monday 8th week, Turf) or just get in touch with one of us. As ever, we are always happy to answer any questions that any of you may have

or to find out any information for you. Sarah (sarah.livermore@new.ox.ac.uk) and Josh (joshua.goodman@balliol.ox.ac.uk), co-chairs OUSU reps committee

## **Queer Rights**

This term has been good for QR. A new Co-chair, the continuation of a successful poster campaign, several interesting debates at meetings and Diversity Week have been among the highlights of the term. Although attendance at meetings has fluctuated, but by in large, numbers have been increasing, and it is always nice to see new faces and to hear new opinions and experiences. As must be true of all of the equal opportunity campaigns, we have had some difficulty in pinning down speakers for meetings, but this problem was a minor issue in an otherwise flourishing term, and those outside speakers that did attend were more than worth the worry over whether it was all worthwhile. The run up to Diversity week was occupied by hours of fretful planning, one group discussion on Bisexuality and another on institutionalised homophobia such as displayed by the National Blood Service. The speaker meetings, film screening and bop of fourth week were all extremely well attended (despite the teething troubles experienced at the bop) and thanks must be offered to all of the Exec and Sabs for their hard work in making sure that this particular event was a success. The discussion on Homophobia and Religion and the talk on Queer Theory exemplify the way that speaker meetings should ensue, and we hope that the rest of the meetings this term, including the talk on Section 28 and Partnership rights, will follow the same blueprint. Plans are already underway for next term, which we hope will surpass this one, both in terms of attendance and in terms of campaigning and publications.

## **Trades Council Rep**

Due to prior commitments and problems with mailings, Ruth and I have not been able to make many Trades Council recently. However, I attended the Council,s AGM in 5th week, and the meeting raised a number of issues which I believe should be brought to the attention of OUSU Council and the wider student body.

i) The Home Secretary announced last week that Campsfield House immigration detention centre (essentially a prison for asylum-seekers) is to close next year. This comes after eight years of intense local campaigning supported by both OUSU and the Trades Council, but it is a partial victory at best, because the government is maintaining its draconian asylum and immigration policy and continuing to expand the use of detention. Oxford Trades Council was central to the founding of the national Barbed Wire Britain Network against the detention of asylum-seekers, and the campaign will be continuing under the auspices of this organisation. I am very glad that 5th week Council reaffirmed OUSU,s policy on this issue and hope that Oxford students will continue to play an important role in the campaign.

I urge everyone to go to [www.closecampsfield.org.uk](http://www.closecampsfield.org.uk) for more information.

ii) Bill MacKeith is stepping down as President of the Trades Council after 20 years of service. As well as being involved in local community work such as the campaign against Campsfield, he has been a very effective labour movement leader, organising large-scale struggles to defend his members, living standards in the early years of his term of office, and fighting to maintain a tradition of solidarity as trade unionism declined during the 1990s. He has been also been a steadfast supporter of OUSU,s free education campaign, proposing a motion from the Trades Council to the TUC in 1999 which committed the trade union movement to support us on this issue. I believe that OUSU should show its appreciation for the work he has done in some lasting way; watch your agenda for more news as it happens.

iii) The new Trades Council President, Denis Kilgareth, is a postal worker. At Monday,s meeting, he reported details of the Communication Workers, Union,s fight against privatisation or deregulation of the postal service, a campaign in which his union branch has played a prominent role. Even if we did not feel an obligation to reciprocate the support the trade union movement in Oxford has shown to us on the issue of education funding, the maintenance of a universal, low-cost public mail system is an issue which effects us all, and I hope OUSU will support the Trades Council,s work in this area ^ providing of course that this receives the support of OUSU Council.