

**O U S U**

**termly reports**

**michaelmas 2001**

I have been in this job now for five months and the learning curve has been steep. I started the job with an open mind. I was not an OUSU insider - I had never been a co-chair nor had I served on exec. My objective was to come in, examine the structures, support those structures and do my best to improve how OUSU works. In my second year, as JCR President of St. Hilda's I was somewhat of an OUSU sceptic. I did not understand why OUSU could get so distracted and anxious about different views and different agendas when they were in such an excellent position to provide direct support for common rooms. I often felt that council was prolonged, unnecessary and egotistical. In some ways, it still is but I am pleased that common rooms are now taking much greater responsibility for their votes and the views of those they represent. I am very keen to communicate that OUSU is whatever you make it and only through neglect does it cease to represent the majority. We should discuss issues that students believe to be important and we should keep providing a forum for such issues to be raised but it is vital that representatives, the executive and the delegates are sensible with their responsibility to represent students.

However, OUSU council is but one small aspect of my job. The guidelines for President are somewhat vague. My role as major officer and chair of the company are perhaps only legal requirements to allow VP (Graduates) and VP (Women) to be elected by a section of our community. It is unclear however, whether my role should be one where I manage the student union or act completely separately from the other VPs. I have tried, in this flat organisation, to do a little bit of both. I try to provide an environment where the others can work without distraction, on their portfolios, yet provide support when required. This has led to me becoming something of a shielder of trouble whether it be elections, the press, or individual complaints against OUSU. The VPs do so much that is good (and frequently unrecognised) that they must have a healthy environment in which they can work. I suspect that my ability to do this will improve but at the moment the balance seems to be about right.

This takes much time and more time than I anticipated. Being the public face of OUSU ensures that there is rarely a forum where I am not OUSU president. I do not object to this and I think that much good is done in the drunken conversations at 2am in a college bar. It is only when people see me, do they feel able to tell me exactly what OUSU is doing badly. And occasionally, what we are doing well. The first ten minutes are invariably taken up with accusations that the ball I apparently organised was not good enough and the Purple Turtle should be open for longer hours. Once this confusion is cleared up, students are often very keen to engage with OUSU but I have to acknowledge that the confusion does cause a few problems. However, students do know what OUSU is even though it is through being involved in Target Schools or as a welfare officer or a women's officer. And the general conclusion is that we do good stuff. Oriel has taken up some of my time, and though they are paying for a lot of our services (contrary to popular belief in the student body) I hope we will reach a stage where Oriel feel that they can rejoin OUSU.

In terms of manifesto pledges, the current finance and funding situation has somewhat weakened my negotiation point. The university do not really see the urgency for students to be able to pay in three instalments when tuition fees are likely to be scrapped but I am still working on it. There seems to be a greater need to have greater consistency in colleges and not leave students to the mercy of their random bursars. Finance and Funding is my portfolio (despite the convenient reallocation during election season to VP Finance). The co-chairs and exec officer work extremely hard and I hope equally dedicated students will replace them. Next term, I

hope that the survey on student finance will be circulated in common rooms so we can actually gauge the extent of student hardship.

Entz is a big priority this year and I desperately need co-chairs to help with this. Pop Ya Cherry is rumoured to be the best club night in Oxford but our numbers are still low. Unless we can compete with Brookes, OUSU will cease to be involved. The drunkenness and the nudity worry me slightly but as I am not overly familiar with straight clubbing, I assume this is normal. I hope. Objections have not been flooding in. I hope that more deals like this can be developed. In terms of a central student venue, I am resigned to the fact that we will only be able to achieve a split site. The disabilities act means that the transfer of the shop and the welfare centre is now a legal necessity and the university supports this. If I can wangle some office space and a pub and club at the same time then I will do so. Liaison with Rag and the Sports Fed is mostly taking the form of entz co-operation and ensuring they have places on university committees but things are going well.

I'd like to finish this somewhat long termly report by thanking the executive who finish their term of office at the end of this term. Thanks and acknowledgement must go firstly to Vino, Heenal, Regan, Sean and Sonia who served for the entire year but also thanks to Stuart, Eleanor, Laura, Jin Yu, John, Heidi and of course Rachel for taking over when others decided that they could not commit to a year after all. I wish you all well for the future and hope that you have enjoyed working with the student union. I must also acknowledge that the elections would not have gone so smoothly without the hard work of Colin, Anthony Fairclough and Eleanor Thompson. You all go above and beyond what is expected and do not receive enough thanks or acknowledgement for your work. Maria is also included in this sentiment.

**Vice-President (Finance)**  
**Fletcher**

**Eleanor**

**Publications** This term saw our busiest publication term. I was particularly thrilled with the **Freshers Guide** and the **Oxford Directory** which both underwent complete redesigns with the result that the both publications look better than ever before. This, I believe, will be invaluable next year when we come to send them out to advertisers in order to canvass for next autumn's editions. The **Oxford and Cambridge Careers Handbook** also looks fantastic and it is still the market leader in publications of its kind. Other employment/graduate recruitment publications remain almost entirely focused on the financial/management consultancy areas. It is right that the student union produces a guide that covers all areas from rocket science to social work, taking in investment banking along the way; additionally, the guide is full of genuinely helpful info on interviews and employment law etc. Hopefully, this obvious superiority should serve us well in the future as many advertisers tighten their purse strings and begin to book a few well-placed adverts as opposed to many ads everywhere.

The **website** has been worrying me all term: it is pitifully under-updated and this does damage OUSU's credibility. We are currently seriously considering a content-management deal which would allow easier, faster updates as well as the chance for us to give autonomous space to clubs/socs and even common rooms. If we decide to go down this path then expect to see an exciting launch of a new website at the beginning of next term. John Craig's work on the Target Schools website has been brilliant and I am extremely glad that that is up and running and proving such a success.

I have been very pleased with the *OxStu* this term. Winning Best Student Newspaper of the Year 2001 was testament to the hard work that generations of journos have put in since the paper began, as well as a stirring endorsement of all those who were involved last year. Unfortunately, advertising sales have been very disappointing which has led to a slimmer, less colourful paper than I would have hoped for.

The **OUSU Card** is a long-term pipe dream finally realised and I am thrilled. The cards have been hugely popular and we have been inundated with requests for more. Whilst the discount is not very extensive, it is a launch-pad for a better and more comprehensive scheme next year. Most importantly, however, it is something that can sit in individual student's wallets to remind them that OUSU *does* do something for them.

**Freshers' Fair** was a great success organisationally, commercially it was good though we could certainly have done better. In terms of provision of a service to clubs and socs (the primary aim of the fair) we must take note of the fact that there are an ever-increasing number of these which has a serious impact on space. Already, we are unable to fit them all in so I would encourage people who run a club/soc to ensure that you get your application in on time next year as otherwise there is no way we can guarantee you a stall. We did ask Exam Schools for permission to use South School (traditionally used by them for storage during FF) but they refused and I reckon it's unlikely that they'll ever agree to such a plan.

The **OUSU Shop** is in a worrying state. Not enough students are using it. I am perfectly confident that students *do* want us to run such a shop so I would like to take this opportunity to encourage people to use it more if you want to see it remain. We are working hard on expanding deliveries to colleges – if you have a JCR shop then please look at our catalogue as you'll find that we have a diverse and reasonably-priced range to offer you. Over the summer we ordered OUSU-branded attack alarms which have been selling well (especially in bulk to common room officers). Thanks to all those who put themselves forward to be OSSSL trustees, it is an essentially dull job but I am very grateful to you for giving up your time.

**Treasurers** This is an area of my job which has (unfortunately) fallen by the wayside due to time pressures this term. I find it deeply regrettable and frustrating that this is the case: now that elections are over I'm hoping that I shall be able to devote more time to this area. I would like to put together a comprehensive pack on the law regarding charity and student union spending (commonly known as Ultra Vires). These packs can be made quite specialised as I can include guideline on reserves and political campaigning by charities for those common rooms that require such information. There is a JCR/MCR Treasurers email list that has been largely dormant all term though I have been updating it with new treasurers' details. Having never been a common treasurer myself I am largely unaware of the needs for those in JCRs/MCRs but am always available to help, offer advice and work on any area you require. We have just appointed a new Battels officer which pleases me: this means that by the time the negotiation season comes round, OUSU should have plenty of information and advice for common room officers. I am particularly going to promote this service to MCRs as I think they are traditionally more unaware of what OUSU can offer them in this field.

**OUSU's Finances** My predecessor predicted a downturn in advertising sales this year as when he drew up the budget last term we were clearly heading towards some sort of recession. Unfortunately, he could not predict how great that downturn would be nor how rapidly it would set in (largely prompted, I believe, by growing uncertainty in the wake of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>). I have warned of the need for budget cuts and these will appear in the Amended Budget next term. I am increasingly frustrated by the reaction to these warnings: people tend to view a V-P (Finance) who initiates budget cuts as evil and domineering in some way. The harsh reality is that if we spend at the levels set in the budget for this year by my predecessor, OUSU will be bankrupt by the end of my term of office: this is not a path I am willing to go down. Budget cuts, therefore, are not a symptom of any domineering behaviour on my part nor any reflection of a desire to curtail any of the extremely worthwhile and necessary campaigns that my sabbatical colleagues, the Exec and our fabulous Co-chairs devote so much time to running. Put quite simply: the budget as it stands for this year promises to all areas of OUSU money that is not and will not be there for us to spend. Some of our work is not funded out the central OUSU pot which means that these things can be protected (the Target Schools

scheme is a key example, funded as it is, entirely by the university). The OUSU Goldman Sachs Nightbus is provisionally in this category and I would like to keep it there. Last year's V-P (Women) raised funds from colleges: next term Antonia Bance and I intend to launch a campaign to encourage more colleges to pledge money to the Nightbus fund. I would be very grateful if college reps (especially at those colleges where students live out or off-site) could make encouraging noises to their SCRs about what a fantastic service the Nightbus is.

**Development and Expansion** In the summer we had an exciting week when we were viewing a centre-of-town shop unit. In my manifesto I stated that moving the shop to the centre of town would be a high priority. I have therefore, been investigating the impact of this move in terms of opening hours (which could be extended), out of term opening (which would improve provision for graduate students), the impact of having to pay business rates and the thorny legal position selling to non-students (which would be unavoidable if we moved the shop to somewhere more accessible than a dingy first-floor room).

**Thanks** First of all, to all the editors (Jerome, Gareth, Alex, Tom, Rhodri, Kirsty, plus Julia and her team) for your dedication, hard work and uncomplaining forbearance at being stuck in Pubs Room in the hot summer months and sweaty Tuesday nights. To Will and Karen for excellent work on Freshers' Fair. To the other sabs, for their willingness to perform tedious and horrible vice-presidential tasks for me. But most of all to Colin – I really wouldn't be able to cope without such a supportive Business Manager.

**Vice-President (Welfare)  
Rowlands**

**James**

Firstly, thanks are due to all those in OUSU who work long hours, without a whisper of dissent, with little or no public recognition. The student union could not fulfil its duty to promote the interests of its members without such unfailing support. Second, there has been (as ever) criticism of OUSU and its officers. The student union and its officers must be held to account. But before people decide what is wrong with OUSU it would be nice, and more useful, if they checked out the facts. Hearing calls for the student union to become more 'relevant' and then having some brilliant solution proposed is useful. But when in most cases work is already being done in that area it would seem a tad disingenuous. Surprise - we have a welfare email list, and golly yes, having a stair-lift installed would solve the access issue in one stroke, unfortunately our building is so bad on that account that it cannot be done.

The **Student Advice Service** has taken up a considerable amount of time. A review of working procedures and confidentiality has helped put the service on a firm footing, and the new advertising (along with entries in most OUSU publications) should ensure that the service continues to enjoy a high profile. Without doubt the range of expertise in the Service mean that for most students who encounter problems, have queries or just need to talk we are an invaluable resource. Thanks to the hard work of Annily, John, Antonia and Catherine.

**Casework** takes up a huge amount of my time, and it is a shame that in many cases OUSU and/or other welfare providers are in effect picking up the pieces. It would take little effort by the University, the local Council or colleges to be more responsible beyond the minimum required by law. If they took action to correct, enforce or be aware of a whole host of issues from decent accommodation, to correct disciplinary procedure and (to be blunt) had some common sense/decency (delete as appropriate) there would be much less for the service to do. As it is, there are many problem areas on which OUSU can and does campaign, so that we not only help students work through current issues and problem, but also (hopefully) see some of them off before they arise. **Training** for common room officer has been useful, with training on disability awareness, listening skills and issues around harassment. Attendance continues to be a problem, but the training is invaluable and I will be running more sessions next term,

including a pink training to raise awareness around LGBT issues. **Diversity Week** is going to be a huge success, and I hope it will bring together OUSU groups, campaigns, OU Societies and the local community in a celebration of the undoubted diversity of Oxford. Events through the week should be an invaluable aid in raising awareness around a variety of issues, and will help encourage people to take a more active role in combating racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination. Diversity Week will highlight the work that is being done, and the work that still needs to be done. to ensure that Oxford and our society at large can genuinely claim to be tolerant of difference. The first reading of the **equal opportunity campaign** motion, to ensure our campaigns enjoy equal status, pursue active campaigns and contribute in an assured manner to OUSU's agenda, has passed and I trust it will be passed again. On the theme of equal opportunity, the Anti-Racism Group has had a successful term with a series of discussions, and a new poster campaign around harassment and how to deal with it have gone out. Queer Rights has had a somewhat quieter term, but the new **'think about it'** campaign will play a role in raising awareness of LGBT issues and encouraging people to report homophobic incidents and to work to combat them. Like any other form of harassment homophobia is unacceptable and OUSU will continue to combat discrimination where it is found. Disabilities Action is working on the upcoming Disability Guide and the co-chairs have some good plans laid out. Health and Welfare, while attendance has not been great, has had a successful term and I hope it has been a useful resource for welfare providers, Thanks to George. The report into the **University Police and the Proctors'** has become somewhat bogged down, but will come together over the vacation. **Sexual Health** is, as ever, an important issue and I am working with the health authority so that OUSU can distribute condoms to welfare officers. **World AIDS Day in Oxford**, to be held on Monday 26th, aims to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS, and in general about other sexually transmitted disease. Like wise, Rebekka, provided an alternative take on sexual health when she came to talk at the start of term. I have been working extensively on **disability issues**, with the upcoming OUSU Disability Guide and the disability briefing forming a key part of this effort. Legislation will be in place next year that will oblige the University and Colleges to improve access but the 'head in the sand' syndrome is still regrettably prevalent in some quarters. The efforts of some individuals to frustrate any attempt to improve provision in Oxford, be it for students with disabilities, or any other welfare service, is intensely irritating. Still, thanks to those unnamed and numerous university and college staff who do actually care. I am continuing to push the proposals for a **central college disability fund** and have been working with Josh Kern and Eleanor and John on the report into the reform of the college redistribution fund. The **Oxford Dyslexia Network** has been launched, and will provide a support and campaigning forum for students with dyslexia. This should grow in strength next term. Thanks to Emily for all her work. Mental health is also becoming a priority in the university and progress is being made. The **OUSU Living Out Guide**, the **OUSU Disability Guide**, the **Rough Guide to Welfare** (for welfare providers) and the **LGBT Officers Handbook** should be coming out next term Finally, thank you to all those who have lent a hand in some way or other this term. It is much appreciated.

**Vice-President (Women)**  
**Antonia Bance**

For me, a lot of this term has been about finding my feet and supporting existing initiatives. As I have always said, **Childcare** is and will continue to be my main priority this year. I have organised the Student Parent Welcome event, which was a fantastic success, and will be repeated twice more this year, in response to feedback from student parents. I've been working on various projects to make OUSU more student parent and child-friendly, including looking to secure funding for a nursery. Hopefully you will hear far more about this next term! I have been

liasing closely with Tracy Perkin, the University Deputy Equal Opps Officer, (formerly Childcare Officer) - it is great shame that her post was not renewed: this would have demonstrated the university's commitment to childcare provision and to encouraging parents to both work and study at Oxford. There has been a significant amount of childcare-related casework, demonstrating yet again that there is not sufficient provision for student or staff parents in the University.

Much work has been put in on the **Nightbus**, which is now running more efficiently than ever. I've regularised the payment situation, and am looking to increase the hours that it runs. This cannot be achieved without significant support from GBs, CRs and SUs – next term I will embark on the annual quest for funding.

I have spent much time this term communicating and liasing with **College Women's Officers**, answering their queries and attending their events. No matter what may be the feeling in some colleges, WOs have a vital role and one that is often unappreciated. The input of graduate students is vital to the running of OUSU, and effort must be made continually to emphasise to MCR WOs that their views are important. This is gradually changing, and the attendance of several MCR WOs at Women's Committee makes a big difference.

**The all-new Women's Campaign** is simply wonderful. The three co-chairs, Eleanor, Mel and Emily, have put in an immense amount of work on all manner of different events, and have been my support and stay while finding my feet in this job! The Women's Campaign is great because there are so many interesting women come and put forward their views – it's the highlight of my week. This term I've worked hard helping to organise events such as the Women in Afghanistan video evening and discussion, the Real Women's Careers Event and the 8<sup>th</sup> week pornography debate, and am beginning work with the new co-chairs for next term's campaign.

Other Committees I have been working with this term include One World Committee and Ethics Committee. The work of **Ethics Committee** in pushing for ethical investment via the Not in Our Names Campaign is fantastic, and hopefully we should see some results soon. I'm really glad to be involved.

**Final Forums** are once again in the process of being organised, and work on access to the University continues with preparation for the **Women's Open Day** in Trinity term. I'm also really looking forward to **Diversity Week**, which is still in the planning stages but should be fabulous! I've also been doing some work on changing the status of the representative committees so that they are more "relevant" and represent our students better as **Equal Opportunity Campaigns**. Valuing the people who put time and effort into OUSU for little tangible reward is also high on my priority list, and I have been researching schemes to **accredit student volunteering** – this could be exciting, and another service that OUSU provides to clubs and societies. I've been to several **NUS Women's Campaign** events and remain convinced that this part of NUS at least has a lot to offer OUSU, CRs and SUs.

**Casework** is without doubt the most rewarding area of my job, and something I do quite a fair amount of. I've done plenty of training this term, and am confident that this is OUSU's best service to students – confidential non-directive advice and support.

General **V-P stuff** has taken up a great deal of my time this term, as it should do. Contrary to popular belief, I am not OUSU's Women's Officer, but a Vice President first and foremost. I've really enjoyed promoting what we do in and to JCRs, MCRs and SUs and beyond – in this job, you're never off-duty, Being on **Elections Committee** can sometimes be a chore, but democracy is the lifeblood of our student union. Amongst everything I've done, helping candidates of all political persuasions and none make their manifestos in pubs room really stands out in my memory!

I'm a political woman, elected on a political platform and I enjoy being part of an intensely political union, We should be proud that OUSU (including Council) is a shining example of

student democracy, and that OUSU has officers, both full-time and part-time, who are committed to student representation and campaigning as well as service provision.

Thanks: Mel (congratulations!), Eleanor T (co-chair, exec, DRO, superwoman), Emily, Jung-ui and Laura. To the other sabs, Colin, Anthony, Annily, Maria and the staff. To Sylvia, Nic, Vinca & Helen, Helena, and the left in NUS.

**Vice-President (Graduates)  
Sangster**

**Catherine**

One of my first decisions when I began my term of office was to call an extra meeting of the postgraduate assembly early in term. This provided OUSU with a number of vital new graduate representatives to fill vacancies at the executive, divisional and committee levels. The new representatives appointed at that first assembly meeting have been a great support in my work representing graduate students, and I'd like to begin my report by thanking them all, especially my brilliant and committed Graduate Exec Officers, John Cook and Heidi Kurtz. I will be sorry to lose Heidi at the end of her term of office in December, but I'm very pleased that John will be staying on for another two terms, and also that Liz Chare will take Heidi's place as a GEO. With their help, I can continue my campaign to make sure that OUSU remains at the centre of graduate representation, and to increase OUSU's interaction with and support of the general graduate student body.

In the first weeks of term, I visited nearly all colleges' graduate common rooms to talk about OUSU and answer questions from the new and established students there. This was a good opportunity to meet and talk to MCR/GCR/JCR committee members as well as fresher graduates, and I'm grateful to all the MCR presidents and OUSU reps who facilitated this. Getting the right number of Graduate Guides out to each college in good time was a tough job in itself. I also embarked on various training courses which would go on throughout the term, to give me various skills to help me do my jobs more effectively. These ranged from a minibus driving course to work on listening skills to support me in my role as a harassment adviser. I did a fair amount of work on the graduate pages of the website, which now feature agendas and minutes for Postgraduate Assembly at [www.ousu.org/current/news/campaigns/graduates/meetings.html](http://www.ousu.org/current/news/campaigns/graduates/meetings.html), and I also built up two new mailing lists, one for graduates interested in OUSU events and news, and another for international students.

In my role as an OUSU vice-president, I've joined the other sabs in the large amount of general stuff that needs to be done to keep your student union ticking over. This includes all manner of tasks: helping at Freshers' Fair, driving publications around in the van, envelope stuffing, weekly Exec meetings, dealing with press enquiries, work on the website, and dealing with queries that come to our offices. We all work very hard at this general work, and I want to acknowledge the huge effort that Ruth, Eleanor, John, James and Antonia make, and also - at the risk of this sounding like an Oscar acceptance speech - to say "Maria, without you we are nothing".

As part of the OUSU Student Advice Service, I've dealt with a great deal of casework, some of which has been quite challenging and time-consuming. I am pleased that students are coming to their student union for help and support with their accommodation, financial, academic and personal problems, and I believe I've been effective at publicising the Student Advice Service as well as in helping the people who've come to see me personally. Annily, our student adviser, and James have been very supportive with this.

Another of my responsibilities is the International Students' Committee. The committee has new co-chairs: Cara Cotner, Miklos Gyongy and Harriet Nuwagaba join Michael Wyman in organising and directing the work of the committee. This term's activities have included a meeting with the International Office to discuss co-ordination of services, the construction of a

database of international student reps within colleges, and a drinks party, as well as planning for the ISC's contribution to Diversity Week next term.

Thanks to the determined efforts of my predecessors to secure graduate representation on, it seems, every single committee going, I could easily spend all my time attending meetings. Graduate reps Andrew van der Vlies (Libraries), Maria St Catherine Sharpe (Language Centre), Liz Chare and James Wilson (JCCJM), Michael Izzo (Rules Committee), Ayub Osman (Health and Welfare), Kirsty Hooper and GEOs John and Heidi lighten the load, but I have still spent a major chunk of my time this term representing graduate students and/or OUSU in committee meetings. Fortunately, they are almost always useful and productive, and many are crucial to my achievement of my objectives for my year as VP (Graduates). Committees on which I sit include University Council, EPSC and its Graduate Panel, the University Club Management Committee, the Committee for Diversity and Equal Opportunities, the Childcare Panel, the Advisory Panel on Harassment and the Tutors for Graduates Committee, now called the Graduate Committee. This last committee, under the direction of Oswyn Murray and Gavin Williams, has become a powerful and positive advocate for graduate students. I sit on the Standing Committee as well as the general meeting, which allows me to help steer the directions the committee takes.

The termly sixth week meeting of Postgraduate Assembly met on Monday November 12<sup>th</sup>, and included a host of all the sabbatical candidates in the OUSU elections. The assembly also debated and passed three motions, which concerned facilities for graduates who teach, our response to the Ostle report on graduate provision, and graduate finance.

### **Vice-President (Access & Academic Affairs)** **John Craig**

Michaelmas has been hard work, and I have devoted a lot of time to helping with the general running of the student union, which is of course a big part of my job. I think that we are working well together, and it is a pleasure to be a member of this sabbatical team.

Within my portfolios, I do think that genuine progress has been made. The Target Schools web site (that's [www.targetschools.com](http://www.targetschools.com), for those who have escaped my tragically monotonous spiel), really has removed any limits to the number of school visits that we can organise. This is a really positive improvement, and frees us up for a big recruitment drive next term. It also important for prospective applicants that all they now need to get information about Target Schools is a web address, and as this becomes more widely known, we hope to be able to reach people directly, rather than through their already over-worked teachers and support staff.

I have also been fortunate enough to secure generous funding from the University for Target Schools, and hope this year to be able to reach more potential Oxford applicants than ever before. Last year, only a small fraction of School Visits were initiated by a request from a school or college - by putting more resources into awareness of Target Schools, and because of the ease of online booking, we hope that this will be massively increased this year. Target Schools can then serve to match requests to volunteers, making Target Schools more responsive to the needs of schools and colleges, and allowing a rolling programme of school visits through the year. For the first time, every school we have contact with will go into a database, allowing us to build up profiles of their relationship with Target Schools. This will allow us to contact schools and colleges over email in the future, which will cut costs and allow us to develop regular and tailor-made contacts with each of them.

Our Regional Events this year will be in Belfast and Sheffield (details will appear soon at [www.targetschools.com](http://www.targetschools.com)). We fully expect that a regional break down of applications will show the value of last year's events, and that this gives some clue to the overall impact of Target Schools on applications to Oxford. Next term, we also hope to supplement our usual recruitment programme with two entz events, tied explicitly to the Visiting Scheme.

Many thanks to those who have worked so hard on Target Schools this year, especially the four endlessly impressive co-chairs. During a term when a great many other things have taken up my time, the ease with which they have taken on the responsibility of running the committee, and have look critically at what we are doing, has been hugely appreciated.

The number of Oxford students now working as Mentors in the Education Action Zone in Blackbird Leys now numbers around 50. This means that up to 200 young people in Oxford are receiving a huge boost - I never cease to be amazed by the impact that mentoring can have on young people. The calibre of the mentors who have come forward has impressed both the University and DfES, and I hope very much that the bureaucracy involved in allocating mentors and so on has not detracted from their experience of the scheme. I think there have been problems caused by the University, OUSU and DfES all taking on particular administrative responsibilities, and I am working to solve these by taking on greater responsibilities myself and by working more closely with the other agencies.

Academic affairs this term has, I believe, gone through a phase in which diplomacy and detailed negotiation in University committees has been the best way to build on the great campaigning work done in Trinity. Library opening hours, and library provision in general, remain difficult areas, and further campaigning may well be necessary in the coming terms. However, I am very struck by the effects of organising thousands of students to voice their opposition to a reduction in opening hours, and OUSU is genuinely being involved in discussions as to how to proceed. For this year at least, opening hours look to be safe - a great advert for a strong and campaigning student union.

OUSU has also made excellent progress in facilitating the work of Divisional Board and JCC Representatives, and in getting to grips with the new structure of the University. Much of the credit for this must go to Catherine Sangster, VP (Graduates). I have also done work on years abroad for Modern Linguists, and the updated Academic Affairs Handbook is waiting to be printed. As for next term, the work that Academic Affairs Committee has begun to do on establishing a charter of student rights must be integrated with the work being done as a result of the recent motion on the financial inequalities that exist between colleges. This is a high priority for next term, and I look forward to working with the VP (Welfare) on this.

Casework has taken up a considerable amount of my time this year, something belied by looking at simply the numbers of people with academic issues that OUSU has helped. I have represented individual students in their colleges, as well as dispensing detailed advice and support from within OUSU. The real difference that OUSU makes to the lives of students during often the most difficult few weeks of their time here is rightly largely invisible, but as a member of the Student Advice Service I believe that its importance to the University can scarcely be over-stated.

I know it's not customary to indulge in thanks, and you all know who you are. Many congratulations to my successor, Sonia Sodha, who has been a fantastic executive and will be great VP. She has the best job in Oxford to look forward to.

**Executive Officer  
Cheong**

**Jin-Yu**

I've been to exec meetings and Council this term as well as doing my duty mornings. Oxford Student Scholarships are now being sorted. The International Students Committee have new co-chairs this term and have published their handbook on a website [www.oxfordinternational.org.uk](http://www.oxfordinternational.org.uk). I am also looking forward to tonight's first ever International Students drinks, also organised by the committee.

**Executive Officer  
Hudson**

**Stuart**

The perennial problem facing OUSU in Michaelmas term is how to run the statutory elections while at the same time providing the range of services to students that is supposed to be the whole point of OUSU. Sabs are forced to spend too much time managing the democratic process and less on the jobs they were elected to and want to get on with. This naturally has an impact on their Exec officers.

My portfolios this term have been Press, Battels and Academic affairs. This has been the third term in which I have been responsible for Press and, although we have not had the drama of the Bodleian occupation or of the Irving invitation to the Union, the job of publicising OUSU's work has continued. As well as the Cherwell and the Oxford Student, I have had regular contact with the Oxford Mail, the Oxford Times and various national tabloids and broadsheets. Both Ruth and I have also appeared on radio programmes on Fox, Fusion and the BBC.

Provision for battels has suffered due to our lack of a Battels Officer to work with Eleanor and me on this subject. Although the Battels Buster is on the website and I have been reviewing the work done by Colin Anderson, there remains much to be done. I hope that now Alistair Crosby has been appointed, he will be able to liaise with next term's Exec officer and with Eleanor to ensure that work is able properly to get off the ground.

Academic Affairs committee continues to meet regularly. Sonia has kept John Craig, Karim Palant and myself on our toes this term. The new Target Schools website has been launched, and we have held a meeting of Divisional Board reps to answer questions and give advice on that role. Mailings have gone out to Academic affairs reps and JCC reps. Attendance at Academic Affairs committee, however, remains small and this is something that must be remedied for the committee properly to fulfil its function.

OUSU definitely benefits from its Sabs and Exec handing over at different times. I have appreciated the chance to work with a new team this Michaelmas. I very much hope that as the sabs put the elections behind them and are able to concentrate fully on their portfolios again, that next term's Exec will get stuck in with enthusiasm. Ruth is doing an excellent job as President in co-ordinating OUSU's roles and she deserves the full support of a committed group of Executive officers.

**Executive Officer  
Rajani**

**Heenal**

I've spent quite a bit of this term working on Future Outlook, which was a spectacular success. Huge thanks to everyone involved with that, and hopefully OUSU can play a bigger role in it next year. Look at stuff: [www.futureoutlook.org](http://www.futureoutlook.org). Elsewhere, I've missed a few Exec meetings because they clash with a lecture, but have tackled duty afternoons with glee. I've really enjoyed my time on Exec. It's been great to see how things work and to work with some amazing people, and I hope I can continue to contribute to the fantastic things which OUSU does.

**Executive Officer  
Sangarapillai**

**Vinothan**

Hi all! This is my final termly report as an OUSU exec. I have been responsible for OUSU reps forum and NUs reps ctte this term.

I would like to thank the ex-co-chairs Simon, Ruth and Dan for running the committee over the previous couple of terms and to thank Andrew Thomas for taking over as co-chair of the ctte in 5th week. Hopefully, the committee will be reinvigorated and will continue to be a forum where OUSU reps can gather to talk over common problems/difficulties and to find out more about what OUSU does.

Thanks to Ed Swann for his work as NUS reps co-chair and his dedication in turning up to NUS regional conferences and workshops as well as attending the main national conference in Brighton.

Finally., just a quick word to wish all the best to whoever takes over from me on OUSU exec (as yet unknown at the time of writing). I hope you enjoy your time on exec - I did.

**Executive Officer  
Santana**

**Laura**

This term has been somewhat slower than last. I have attended women's committee every week and have been a part of discussion which will see the committee's name change to women's campaign. We are also very keen to project ourselves into next term with a new and revitalised campaign. We have considered the issues of harassment and women getting fewer firsts, and seek to address these topics more thoroughly next term. I also helped out with badge-making and drawing at the childcare event held at St Hilda's as arranged by VP Women Antonia Bance.

Regarding my entz portfolio, I have endeavoured to continue the ordered compilation of information sent from various artists. I was also responsible for arranging a suitable venue for this year's Christmas party with RAG. However unfortunately this had to be cancelled, and now a joint 'Pop Ya Cherry' event with RAG is to be expected in 8th week.

I have attended all my duty afternoons and all but two of the exec meetings due to health problems. I have enjoyed my position of exec officer very much and wish the exec-elect the very best in their future roles.

**Executive Officer  
Sodha**

**Sonia**

### **Target Schools**

Michaelmas is always a (relatively) quiet term for Target Schools. We had a very successful stall at Fresher's Fair, and over 600 freshers signed up for the e-mail list. The freshers' lunch was held in second week and was very well attended, by about 100 first years – there was lots of interest in the committee.

In terms of planning for the coming year, the venues for the regional conferences (this year in Belfast and Sheffield) have been booked for the Easter vac, and colleges have been secured for the three open days.

Plans have been made to improve the Visiting Scheme which has the greatest potential outreach of anything Target Schools does. There will be more publicity in Oxford for this next term, with a couple of entz events to get more people involved. We've set ourselves the target (!) of organising 1000 school visits over the year. By the end of the term the TS handbooks and teacher's guides will have also been updated ready to send out to schools next term. John Craig has completely revamped the website which looks brilliant and should hopefully save a lot of time in the coming year when compared to previous years as schools will be able to request visits and open days, and students can sign up to help at events through the internet. It's been great to see the work of Target Schools expand year on year, and this year is going to be no exception – thanks to John, Jon, Jo, Amber and Jack, and best of luck for the next two terms!

**Anti racism** has been very active this term. There've been several issues that the group has worked on. Firstly, information has been sent to every JCR and MCR regarding the setting up of Ethnic Minorities' Officers following the successful motion to OUSU Council. If your JCR/MCR would like more information, please get in touch – a couple of CRs have already successfully created EMOs. The anti-harrassment mailing which was started last term was also sent out. We have also held a couple of very successful discussion fora – one on the issue of asylum and immigration, and another one joint with Pakistan Society on Islamophobia and the fundamental right in Britain.

This term the groundwork has been laid for making the committee a representative one – hopefully this will happen in the next year so long as the constitutional change bringing it about is successful.

Thanks to James, Robin, Sacha and Angela.

**Mature Students** In the absence of any co-chairs it has been difficult for myself or Catherine Sangster to reactivate the committee considering we're not mature students ourselves – however we will keep looking for co-chairs – if you're interested please get in touch with Catherine.

General

In addition to my portfolios I have done general Exec stuff this term like stewarding the anti-fees demo and fresher's fair and helping at the student parent welcome.

I've really enjoyed my two years on exec and wish all the incoming Executive officers good luck for the next year!

Thanks also to the sabs and the rest of exec who've been very dedicated and a pleasure to work with this term, to Maria and the rest of the office staff, to everyone involved in running elections, and to Rhodri and John for setting such a high standard to live up to next year!

**Executive Officer  
Sullivan**

**Sean**

I have enjoyed greatly serving as an OUSU Executive Officer over the past year and feel a tinge of sadness that the ridiculously early exec meetings and battles with the photocopier are, albeit temporarily, coming to an end.

Finance and Funding - this has been my main portfolio for the past two terms. It is a committee of which OUSU should be proud. I will leave any report of its activities to its co-chairs, but I would comment that it has been well attended and has kept the issue of student hardship very much at the forefront of people's minds. The co-chairs have been superb, without Rachel, Phil and Will the campaign would in no way have achieved as much as it has. Thank you.

Exec Officers - just a few thoughts (1) I wish people wouldn't run in OUSU's statutory elections unless they intend to see the whole period out. To do otherwise is to disappoint students in the mandate they have given you and disrupt the smooth running of the executive. (2) despite all the work exec officers do with their committees surely their prime role must be to hold the sabbaticals to account, they are best placed and indeed elected to do this. I would ask the incoming exec officers not to be afraid about rocking the boat or making people peeved as long as they feel they are pursuing something that really matters and has to be sorted out. (3) the Labour Club. Just because the word 'union' appears in 'student union' that does not OUSU a trade union make. Just because exec and delegate positions are swamped with Labour Club members does not make us a branch of that fine university society. It may be a shock to some, but the Labour Club are not wholly representative of Oxford Students, as if anyone can be described as being such. I would therefore urge those of other political views and none to make the effort to organise themselves for OUSU elections so that an unrepresentative stranglehold of Labour members does not find its way onto exec through lack of opposition.

Gimp motions - council should be proud of itself for rejecting highly controversial and political motions that bear no relevance to students as students. Simply because of the way council works we cannot prevent these motions being submitted, but I hope we now realise that it is no business of the student union to condemn American foreign policy or to ban barcardi. I know that those who elected me to exec share this opinion and I am glad that I have been able to use the vote they gave me to vote down such absurdities as the Afganistan motion.

I feel like I've been saying this a lot lately, but OUSU is at its best when providing services and representation to students. It is at its worse (being ridiculed and leaving itself open to disaffiliations) when it is being politically irrelevant. I hope that in the future I am able to ensure that our priorities are in the right place and that we go about earning the respect and support of students.

Traditional soppy OUSU end of term of office thanks to - the current OUSU sabs who are never properly appreciated, they are doing a superb job. The former set of sabs, it was a pleasure spending a term on exec with them, again they were never properly appreciated, especially the ridiculously committed and industrious Steph, Kirsty and Rhodri. Those exec officers with saintly auras surrounding them: Laura, Eleanor, Sonia, Stuart, Reagan, and who did the job so much better than me. Maria. Grouet and Teddy Hall. Rachel and Phil.

**Executive Officer  
Thompson**

**Eleanor**

I have enjoyed my last term on Exec, and will be sorry to step down after Christmas. Ethics Committee has enjoyed an excellent term, mainly thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of the new Co-Chair, Jung-ui Sul. Attendance at our weekly meetings, whilst still modest(!) has seen several new people get involved with the 'Not In Our Names' campaign in favour of ethical investment in the University and its Colleges. Anyone who wishes to get involved would be very welcome to join us every Thursday at 1:15pm in Wadham New Seminar Room. Thanks to the efforts of Ruth Hunt, we have been able to track the progress of the motion put to University Council last term proposing the establishment of a University Ethical Investment Committee and the full public disclosure of all University investments. The motion is currently stalled in lower committees, and so the Committee has focused its efforts this term on a petition to demonstrate the strength of student support on this issue to the University. We hope to receive a response from the University in Hilary Term.

Besides Ethics Committee, I have spent most of my time helping to run this year's statutory OUSU Elections as a Deputy Returning Officer. As I write, preparations are still under way for polling, but I trust that all will have gone well and wish the best of luck to the newly elected Exec Officers.

**Graduate Executive Officer  
John Cook**

During the past term, I have attended OUSU Executive meetings and OUSU Council and I have taken on the International Students Committee as part of my portfolio. I am also assisting with a project to reform Oxford's disciplinary procedures and I have been elected to the Rules Committee, Career Services Committee, and Social Sciences Divisional Board.

**Graduate Executive Officer  
Heidi Kurtz**

I was elected in a by-election at the beginning of Michaelmas 2001. Since then I have taken on issues relating to graduate student financing and graduate accommodation. I am also acting as co-chair on the Welfare committee relating to concerns about accommodation.

I attended the termly meeting of the University Properties Management Committee on 15/11/01. A number of issues were discussed at the meeting including the progress made on the refurbishment of some of the University graduate accommodation (Summertown House in particular), and the purchase and development of a new site for the provision of short-term lets to University staff and visiting lecturers. The possibility of rent increases was also discussed at the meeting. Up until now the Committee has set rental rates at a percentage of the rates on the open market for comparable accommodation. The Committee wanted to reconsider this approach and is now in the process of gathering information on College rents in order to set University rents at a comparable rate to comparable College accommodation. As the information had not yet been gathered and as the Committee wished to decide the matter before the next meeting, it was decided that an interim report would be issued to all members of the Committee at which point they would be able to make comments and suggestions before any final decisions would be made prior to the next meeting.

I also attended a meeting of the National Postgraduate Committee on 3/11/01. A workshop on postgraduate finance, requested by representatives of the NUS, was held before the meeting. This was in order to help the NUS get a clearer picture of the problems facing postgraduates in terms of funding and in order to help them develop their campaign to lobby the government on postgraduate funding issues. The issues which were raised included the development of a questionnaire which would be distributed to Student Unions across the country in order to gather information on how postgraduate students are funding themselves. The NUS was particularly keen to find out how many students had not taken up offers of graduate positions or had to leave postgraduate study due to financing problems. Other questions to be addressed would include how many students have had to switch to part-time study in order to manage financially.

After the workshop, the meeting of the NPC focussed in particular on the development of the NPC's position on postgraduate funding. It should be noted that the first draft of this motion dealt solely with home students who need to self-fund. The NPC believed that it was necessary to establish its policy on home students before considering the question of overseas student funding. How the NPC will eventually develop its position on overseas students will be of considerable interest to all postgraduates in the future since 38% of postgrads in the UK, and roughly 50% of postgrads at Oxford are overseas students.

## **Anti-Racism Committee**

Anti-Racism Committee has organised a number of extremely interesting discussion forums on subjects as diverse as asylum and immigration, religious fundamentalism and the nature of racism this term, as well as a very successful joint-speaker meeting with Pakistan Society on Islamophobia and the recent growth of the far right. (The Islamophobia meeting will hopefully be the start of an ongoing project involving both further discussion and practical initiatives, as requested by OUSU Council) We have also begun work on the task - another mandate from OUSU Council - of encouraging JCRs to create Ethnic Minorities Officers on their committees. There is a lot of work left to do on this, and the project will undoubtedly meet resistance in many colleges, but we cannot overstate its importance - both in terms of ensuring adequate representation for ethnic minority students and providing a more substantial basis for Anti-Racism Committee's work. Attendance at the Committee is still comparatively small, implying that JCRs do not see the issue as a priority; there is an urgent need to remedy this.

The Committee will be organising events next term as part of OUSU's Diversity Week; if you want to get involved please contact James Rowlands at [welfare@ousu.org](mailto:welfare@ousu.org)

Addendum from Sacha Ismail: After three years as an OUSU officer of various sorts, I don't think I have ever been more depressed about the state of our union's democracy and the involvement of ordinary members. OUSU does an awful lot of very good work, both political and non-political, but the vast majority of its officers seem increasingly determined to exclude the political element completely. The increasingly depoliticised atmosphere - symbolised by an almost religious reverence for the ultra vires laws - has led to the decline of OUSU Council as a forum for political discussion, the stagnation of even uncontentious campaigns and increasing indifference, both in terms of candidates and voters, to OUSU elections. The farce of 6th week, when at least one candidate with strong political views ran as an 'Independent' in order to avoid honest dialogue with the electorate, is indicative of what is happening to OUSU. These problems cannot be remedied by purely administrative means; at the very least, a fundamental change in the attitude of OUSU's leading officers is required.

### **Disabilities Action**

The work of this committee has been quite low-key this term, preparing for Diversity Week next term and gathering information for the Disabilities Handbook, which should be ready next term and will provide a very helpful resource for students with disabilities in the university, and also provide information for LEAs and prospective students. The planned open meeting on people's experience of disabilities, which was scheduled for 7th week, had to be rescheduled for the beginning of next term, and should be an excellent meeting and assist with the build up to Diversity week, in which I hope the committee will be able to play a full part, and which should help to raise awareness of issues concerning students with disabilities. The regular meetings during this term, although not heavily attended, threw up lots of good ideas.

The Dyslexia Support Network, which was set up at the end of last term, has had a successful term, with plenty of sign-ups at freshers' fair and regular meetings. Thanks to Emily for all her hard work both in setting up the Network and in making it such a success.

It has been a pleasure to help out with this committee over the last couple of terms. Many thanks to Robin, Beth, Nailah, and especially Regan and Laura for all their help and suggestions for the committee. Also thanks to James, for prioritising disabilities action and for being an incredibly hard-working and effective VP (Welfare).

### **Ethics Committee**

This term Ethics Committee has been concentrating on the 'Not In Our Names!' campaign for the ethical investment of university and college funds. The demonstration in front of Clarendon House drew attention to the issue in the student media, and launched the university-wide petition to the University Council. This petition calls on the Council to adopt the proposal submitted by OUSU President last Trinity to set up a committee to scrutinise the ethics of university investments, and we have been gathering an encouraging number of signatures. We hope to present the petition to the Council next term, and continue to campaign for such an important issue for ethics in the university.

### **OUSU Reps**

This term I have restarted the committee after the former co-chairs stood down and OUSU Reps had not met for the first few weeks of term. In our first meeting we had a lively debate about whether motions regarding subject such as Afghanistan should be considered by OUSU Council as well as a number of other issues.

I would like to thank Vinothan Sangarapillai who has been a great executive officer helping to get the committee restarted and for writing up the minutes of the first couple of meetings.

6.30pm Monday, 8th Week at the TURF.

Will Straw coming to talk about the work of F&F committee so it would be great to see all OUSU Reps there to question him on the campaign.

## **Women's Campaign**

Women's Campaign has enjoyed another highly successful term. Besides our regular and well-attended committee meetings, we have held several other events, including the forthcoming Real Women's Career Event. A showing of the documentary 'Behind the Veil', about the abuse of women's rights in Afghanistan, drew a large audience and stimulated an absorbing and topical discussion, as is our tradition. Several of our number attended the NUS Women's March in London which was highly inspirational and has whetted our appetite for our 'Reclaim the Night' march next term. We are already planning next term's activities, including more campaigning activities and a women's website workshop. Many thanks to the superb retiring Co-Chairs (Mel Marshall and Emily Hooker), they will be sorely missed, and good luck to their successors!