



termly reports to council trinity 2007

Ed Mayne

V-P (Finance)

I've structured this report chronologically as much as possible, reflecting on each project and highlighting reforms that have been or will be made.

FRESHERS' GUIDE AND GRADUATE GUIDE

The first project I took charge of was the Freshers' Guide. Although the design and format remained largely the same as the one from the previous year, this guide was a triumph and I congratulate Mark Taylor for all the changes he made to it. We took the decision this year to mail most of the guides straight from the printers to the homes of freshers. This was ideal in many respects, however the printers specified that they wanted to do the whole job in one go – which was both the cheapest and most convenient way of completing the task. This meant we couldn't send some of the guides out as early as we would have liked because some colleges got their student data to us earlier than others. It was then my task to collate this data into one huge file, which took a very long time! However most freshers received the guide at the start of September, with some receiving it later on in the month, mostly because some colleges would not let us send out the guide as they wouldn't give us the data due to their interpretation of the data protection act. I recommend that this be reviewed for the next freshers mailing. We depend very heavily on college secretaries for this project and we should involve them more in the process from the beginning of the vacation onwards.

With the help of my sabbatical colleagues, we doubled our efforts to make sure every fresher received a copy of this guide. Currently only United Kingdom undergraduates get it mailed to their home addresses before they arrive. This is because it is too expensive to mail it overseas. We therefore tried very hard to pidge it to every international undergraduate before they came up – at one point strolling around Oxford (in the rain!) with a trolley full of guides. Sadly this will probably not change for the foreseeable future due to funding issues, but I hope that every effort will be made to keep international students in the loop of this project.

This project is due to go from strength to strength this year as it will now be merged with the Graduate Guide. The latter has always been something of a poor relation to the other flagship OUSU publications. This year it was especially difficult to complete, with the Vice-President (Graduates) working on it in the USA and with me finishing it off overnight here to get it completed in time for the deadline. This guide is also far less exciting than the Freshers' Guide, meaning that graduates learn less about what OUSU and Oxford can offer. I wish my successor every success in transforming this guide accordingly.

OXFORD HANDBOOK

I am very grateful for the fact that Rich Hardiman took on the editorship of this guide when no-one else was available to do it, especially when one considers that he was co-editing the Oxford and Cambridge Careers Handbook at the same time. Once again this guide was distributed at the Freshers' Fair and the Refresher's Fair, which will probably stay the same in the next academic year. We also sold excess copies from last year in local retailers for the first time in several years, an arrangement that may well continue, depending on how many excess copies are produced this year.

However this guide is in much need of an overhaul and for that reason we have appointed 2 editors for the project this year. I wish them the very best of luck.

GOWN SALES

This was overwhelmingly successful this year. I'd like to thank the BAM agency for making their web merchant facilities available so quickly in order to ensure the success of this project. I'd also like to thank Oxford Limited for all their help in the sales process.

THE OXFORD STUDENT

The Oxford Student became the first Oxford newspaper to go full colour this year and it has gone from strength to strength since then. It was redesigned accordingly prior to Michaelmas term and a constant stream of high quality journalism has been maintained. Although its revenue potential is stifled by the amount of time the Business Manager spends on other commercial projects during the summer vacation, the Business Manager has maintained good sales for the paper all year round for which I congratulate him.

The newspaper has also finally received a written constitution of its own, a process that was begun in 2005 following a breakdown in relations between journalists and OUSU officers. I have made it a priority to have a good working relationship with the journalists who produce the paper, building on the work of my predecessor. This aspect of producing the paper has gone extremely well this year and I hope this will continue to be a priority.

OXIDE RADIO

Oxide Radio has a new website and the station is now running from a much more powerful hosting server. It has also moved back into the old studio. In terms of equipment, the station has finally received a G5 from OUSU. The station also has a written constitution of its own, giving it editorial independence for the first time and bringing it formally into the OUSU organisation.

There is much work that needs to be done to allow Oxide to reach its full potential. However it must be remembered that *The Oxford Student* started from similarly humble beginnings and has prospered ever since. I hope that the foundations that have been laid this year will allow Oxide to have a bright future in OUSU.

FRESHERS' FAIR

Although I was technically the officer in charge of this event, my involvement in it was limited. I congratulate the fair organiser, Martin McCluskey, for all his hard work, not to mention the Business Manager, who went to extreme lengths to ensure the success of the commercial tent.

Nonetheless, freshers week was hardest week of my time in office without a doubt, running club nights until 2.30am with the Business Manager and both of us having to be back at Exam Schools at 8.30 am for freshers' fair. It is easy to romanticise about this now, but this will have to be reviewed by the next sabbatical team for the sake of the sanity of the incoming Vice-President (Finance) and Business Manager.

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE CAREERS HANDBOOK

In every respect this remains OUSU's most prestigious publication. OUSU took on the publication and sales duties this year and it will do so again for the next academic year as Cambridge University Student Union (CUSU) will be moving premises. Although the revenue has gone down slightly from last year, this guide remains the priority for the Vice-President (Finance) and the Business Manager both as a service to students and as a revenue stream.

FINANCES, BUDGET AND ACCOUNTS

I hope that I have lived up to my manifesto promise to make OUSU'S finances transparent and easy to understand. Both the accounts and budget are now available online and I hope they make sense.

This sabbatical team has also made huge progress in the task of getting OUSU a block grant. Affiliation fees do not provide enough income for OUSU to survive in its current format and a block grant is the only way OUSU can be guaranteed a stable future – OSSSL revenue is far too unpredictable. We await the decision of University Council on this matter.

The President and I have overseen the successful implementation of the SAGE accounting system and we hope to complement this with a new booking system. We have also reformed OUSU's debtor chasing

structure – placing it in the hands of OUSU’s permanent staff – meaning that advertising revenue is being collected more quickly and efficiently than ever before.

NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS

This has been frustrating. Although the result of a referendum in Trinity Term 2006 decreed that OUSU would now affiliate centrally to the NUS, no plans were made as to how this should be done and paid for – there wasn’t even a budget for NUS conference travel. Now that we have a system in place for paying for it and administering it, I hope that this will prove to be a sufficient foundation for centralised NUS affiliation in the future (and I have budgeted for it this year!). The General Manager will be administering NUS Extra from this month onwards which will bring continuity to this aspect of affiliation.

FINANCIAL REFORM AND FINANCE MANAGER

Reform has been a buzzword for some time now in OUSU. It occurred to me very early on that OUSU’s biggest flaws were structural. We have perhaps focused too much on internal change and not enough on our image. However the recent referendum involved huge numbers of students in OUSU reform.

Now that the referendum on abolishing the Vice-President (Finance) position has been approved, OUSU will have a new element of continuity that has never existed before. This should allow OUSU to prosper, both in terms of improvements to student services and support given to OUSU officers.

OSSL

OUSU’s commercial subsidiary now has a new professional Company Secretary from the University Subsidiary Companies Office, who will participate in, prepare papers for and keep records of Board meetings. This will give OSSL a degree of professionalism, structure and continuity that it currently lacks. Considering that OSSL only has 2 full time staff members dedicated to it this year, it has performed very strongly. Its success is always hard to predict and plan for due to the volatility of the markets in which it operates. I hope that this will become a focus of reform in future. Students constantly demand more from their Student Union and OSSL is what has to provide for them.

ZOO

This has been an interesting year for Zoo. Whilst its core nights at Park End and Po Na Na have performed consistently strongly, bar a blip midway through Trinity term at Park End, Zoo has proven unable to expand upon this base. When Zoo has had more nights in the past, it was either because it was the primary focus of the incumbent Business Manager or due to the fact that we had an Entz Manager. It is impossible for one individual, the Business Manager, to run Zoo nights and perform the sales tasks that they are employed to do. I therefore encourage the incoming sabbatical team to review the way Zoo operates, either by reconsidering the viability of an Entz Manager or by getting more current students involved in it. My successor has passed good motions in OUSU Council about this and Zoo should remain a priority.

WEB

Although we secured a new website for OUSU and Oxide Radio, this is something that needs a great deal of attention, which will hopefully come from the web team we plan to employ this summer.

IT

OUSU has purchased some new computers this term under an agreement with the Student Media Group, who have provided the funds for them in return for a small commission on our advertising sales over the next financial year. This has been an essential upgrade. OUSU has been producing publications this year on hardware that was designed for school classrooms! Most of these eMacs were close to breaking point. I’d like to thank Apple for getting us sorted with new computers so quickly.

SURVIVAL GUIDE

I was heavily involved in completing the Survival Guide this year. With print runs for 2 academic years now completed this shouldn’t be a problem for the next sabbatical team. I strongly recommend that a proper plan be drawn up for producing the next one.

THE OXFORD FORUM

OUSU and OSSL have taken on the production of *The Oxford Forum* magazine this year. Although the first 2 editions have both made losses due to the short notice at which they were produced, I am confident that this magazine will yield profits in future. *The Oxford Forum* has also allowed OUSU to move into a new market of publications, producing a sophisticated magazine with many high profile contributors as well as student journalists.

PREMISES MAINTENANCE

One small priority of mine this year has been keeping the OUSU offices tidy, as the sabbatical officer in charge of buildings. We've finally started recycling and throwing out huge amounts of stuff that was taking up space and didn't need to be kept. We have recycled wherever possible. The sabbatical team also decided to purchase a new sofa and meeting room table at the start of our terms in office. It is hard to underestimate how significant these changes have been. Before this visitors to the OUSU building had no designated waiting area and meetings were held using wobbly tables. This project has also made OUSU a more aesthetically pleasing place to work, which helps in a very intense working environment.

I have also got OUSU registered with the University Safety Office for the first time, allowing us to finally get rid of our rotting Coca-Cole fridge at no cost to OUSU, as the Safety Office meets the cost of such tasks centrally. The Fire and Safety Officers also came round to take a look at our premises. Although they said that we were not at risk, they did highlight some problems. Most significantly they informed us that our building is now effectively inaccessible to disabled students, as the only way in is via the lift which cannot be used during a fire alarm under new regulations. Considering that disabled access was the reason for moving to Bonn Square in the first place, this is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed. It has been brought to the attention of the Joint Committee of Council for student members, although because this inspection happened so late in the term this sabbatical team has been unable to act on it.

THE FUTURE OF OUSU

I have said many times this year that OUSU has too many politicians and not enough civil servants. This is not to say that we should have fewer elected officers. However it does mean that we need more of a structure to support them, both in terms of funding and permanent staff. Currently our permanent staff work part time and do not work during the vacations when they are needed most, particularly in the summer vacations with the introduction of the new sabbatical team. This is simply due to a lack of funding.

The implementation of a Finance Manager will help the issue of continuity. But it needs to be a beginning not an end. For OUSU to provide the services its members expect and to get a new Central Student Venue, more permanent staff will be needed to oversee these long-term projects. More continuity in the Business Team is also needed to ensure that lasting relationships can be built with clients and for stability to be given to this crucially important aspect of the OUSU income stream. Currently student services are within the remit of just 1 sabbatical officer, the Vice-President (Finance), and the Business Manager. This is not enough and more needs to be dedicated to this area of OUSU activity, both in terms of permanent and part time staff and volunteers. Whilst this may seem like a radical proposal, it is the way every other Student Union in the country operates. Even CUSU has a full time administrator complemented by a Business Manager, Entz Manager and a postman. Although OUSU has a very different structure to most other Universities, this Student Union currently struggles to provide some of the most basic service requirements its students need. OUSU can provide more, both in terms of Common Room support and services for students. But this can only happen with more of an infrastructure. This should be the focus of the soon to be rewritten constitution and future negotiations with the University.

I'd also like to urge all future sabbatical officers to work with the University Finance and Personnel divisions. Although we have to oppose the University on several fronts, these administrative departments are apolitical and have been supportive throughout the year. If OUSU is to achieve the Central Student Venue it needs for long-term good prospects and if it is to expand its service provision as it should do it will need to work with these departments. Judging by this year they'll be happy to help.

THANKS

I don't want to make this section too long but there are some people who I feel it is a priority to thank: first and foremost, the Business Manager, Tom Wrathmell, for his invaluable assistance and dedication to his job – it's been a pleasure working in a team with you; the staff of the *The Oxford Student* who have

devoted so much time to the newspaper this year and have made it what it is, with a special mention going to the Editors and Deputy Editors whose long hours and work ethic has never ceased to impress me, specifically Rob Cookson, Ed Hancox, Jenny Rigterink, Cat Armitage, Andy Heath, Rory O'Sullivan, Karen Yossman, Ali Akers, Liz Bowling, Kate McMullen, Samira Shackle and Sam Wetherell – not forgetting Ollie Clough for all your help with the redesign; the staff of Oxide Radio, in particular Paul Arrich, for his dedication to Oxide Radio and his determination to lay better foundations for the future, and Joe Parker for all his technical assistance; to all the staff who worked so hard in OUSU during the summer vacation, Rich Hardiman in particular; to Jamie Ball, Sam Tombs and Francesca Rivers for sorting out 2 fantastic editions of *The Oxford Forum*; to everyone who has provided support for me from the University, specifically Phil Smith, Amy Hadden, Eleanor Burnett and Angela Vale. And finally to my fellow sabbatical officers, it's been a pleasure working with you and I wish you all the very best for the future.

Jamie Frew

V-P (Welfare and Equal Opportunities)

Preamble

It's become somewhat customary for outgoing sabbatical officers to write long reports for their final council that lay out the grand designs that they would complete if they were to have their time again. By and large these plans go unread by council, ignored by their successors and are soon forgotten by everyone apart from the sabbaticals who wrote them. As such, I'm going to largely attempt to keep the nostalgia and angst to a minimum. There is still some value in attempting to recap what has been done with a year's worth of time and money – I'm just going to try to summarize as efficiently as possible, so please don't be surprised by the comparative brevity of this report. What you may, or may not, be about to read has been broken down into four sections covering the broad themes of what I've done, where I feel welfare and equal opportunities are in OUSU and the university at the moment, a few areas for consideration for the future of OUSU and the all-important thanks.

Section One: Res Gestae Divi Jami (What I've spent this year doing...)

Publications

Sometimes I think that putting six publications a year into the hands of one of the sabbatical officers is a bit excessive. Thankfully, next year there has been something of a reshuffle and the responsibility for the equal opportunities guides have been devolved to their respective campaigns and the Living Out Guide has been allocated a budget for an editor, which will do them all no end of good. This will leave the Survival Guide and Rough Guides to Welfare and Equal Opportunities in the hands of the VP (WEO) which is much more manageable, though they should retain an 'editor-in-chief' capacity in the other welfare publications to ensure production standards.

This year's round of publications took much longer than it should have done – much, much longer. This is particularly true of the Survival Guide, which was finally produced months after the original intended distribution date. To a great extent I believe that this was a consequence of the time and effort that went into improving the guide beyond the standards of previous years. It was also a consequence of problems with OUSU being a very difficult environment in which to conduct long term project work. Efforts are constantly being disrupted by immediate concerns of one sort or another and longer and less immediate projects will inevitably take a back seat. Thought will need to go into how such projects are to be conducted within OUSU in the future.

Equal Opportunities Campaigns

The structure of Equal Opportunities campaigns in OUSU has been totally revolutionised thanks to Liv Bailey. The emphasis has now definitively shifted from the impossible task of constant OUSU orchestrated campaigns that take up considerable time and effort to student led campaigns that are responsive to the needs of the students they represent. This change will result in the immediate cessation of time wasted by sabbatical officers being mandated to manage and sustain a campaign in which there is little public interest. Henceforth, if students do not wish to campaign on an issue time and money will not be expended attempting to sustain the campaign and it will simply lie dormant until such time as it is needed again.

As is inevitable during a period of reform (both within the campaigns and OUSU welfare and equal opportunities as a whole) the campaigns have been fairly quiet overall. No en masse marches have been held, no shouting from the picket lines. Instead essential, though less noticeable, regrouping and reformation has been taking place. Students with Disabilities has had a very quiet year, though a growing

community of students with specific learning difficulties has been liaising with OUSU to ensure continued provision for their needs following the departure of the university's Dyslexia Consultant. Black, Minority and Ethnic Students has recently begun to extend links to BARS and will hopefully be working with them on an extensive lecture series to be held over the coming year. LGBTQ Students have been meeting regularly all year, but the most significant areas of contribution made by them is their production of a constitution which will be applied to each of the campaigns mentioned here and it is result of a huge effort on their part.

Health and Welfare Committee

Health and welfare has had an unusual year. There has been a colossal shift in the way in which the committee has conducted itself over the course of the year moving from a campaigns based profile to a common room support and networking remit that appears will continue into next year. I believe that this shift will better serve common rooms and will provide OUSU with a means with which to stay in closer contact with their respective members across the university. It is to be hoped that an equivalent body for equal opportunities officers will emerge to cater to their needs.

The Barnes Unit campaign that was so successful last year has been drawn to a close this year. It is with regret that the unit was not reinstated, but there is only so much that can be done when fighting budget cuts the like of which the NHS has witnessed of late. At the very least we brought the issues to prominence and in a way that will hopefully not be forgotten when budgets are being drafted for the future. Welfare Training Days were introduced this year in a newly developed format that has received a lot of positive feedback. Similar events are planned for next year.

Possibly most importantly the committee has conducted a detailed survey of common room welfare, their interactions with OUSU and what is wanted from OUSU. The results have been extremely positive and useful. 27 common rooms have responded so far and all further replies are very, very welcome. Another report is being compiled on the data gathered, but I will make further comments on the information produced in this report.

Common Room Support and Interaction

It's been a difficult year for common room interaction. When Aidan left the job last year he warned me of how difficult it would be and he wasn't wrong. Simply put some common rooms have approaching a dozen officers whose posts would fall within my remit, their job description vary hugely between the common rooms making it almost impossible to hold any universally meaningful or useful meetings or create appropriate mailing lists.

I would like to think that over the year I have improved in this field and from an admittedly poor start I believe that OUSU is now better informed of what common rooms want from and think about OUSU than we have been in years. However, it is essential that this is continued. An open forum on welfare and equal opportunities successfully brought common room officer together to discuss the difficulties they face and how best OUSU can help and further such fora have been requested (and I would advise their introduction across the board. From this basis (and that of the aforementioned survey) OUSU can now move forward

Student Advice Service and Casework

It might seem surprising to some, but the SAS has undergone a year of spirited reform. Extensive reforms have been made to our procedures and more are being developed for enactment before the end of this year. The most substantial portion of these reforms (those relating to the documenting of casework) have been presented to the Committee for Student Health and Welfare to great approval. Suggestions for revision and elaboration have been made and will be implemented as soon as possible, but overall the response was extremely gratifying. I'm genuinely proud of the state of the SAS at the end of this year.

I have completed the annual review of the Student Advice Service and its confidentiality policy. Whilst I am extremely happy with the overall performance, standards and potential of the service I have isolated several areas which require improvement and will be implementing the relevant change before I leave office.

Casework has posed a problem all year. I believe fully in the capability of a sabbatical lead, even completely sabbatical, advice team within OUSU. This is not to say that a Student Advisor would not be a valued addition to the SAS, but rather that such a post would not be, in my opinion, an essential addition that warrants the sacrifice of other provisions within OUSU. Thought needs to be given as to how to best overcome the difficulties of volume and elasticity of casework loads that can have such a drastic impact upon the lives of the members of the SAS.

Mentoring

Earlier in the year I was asked to mentor some disabled A Level and GCSE students with disabilities with the AimHigher scheme. The program provided me with an opportunity to have a very direct and tangible impact upon the lives and futures of the young people who took part in this program. The experience I gained from my participation was invaluable and became embedded in my methods and perspective on casework. It was extremely gratifying to learn that some of these students have subsequently applied to Oxford.

Oxford Student Mental Health Network

OSMHN is a campaigning group and think tank that spans both Oxford and Brookes. This year I was honoured to be invited to speak for the second time at a conference. The subject of this year's conference was to decide upon the governing principles that would guide the campaigning of the group for the next five years. I am delighted to report that the group was extremely receptive to the points made by myself and other sympathetic representatives of other organisations. It is to be hoped that the group will soon be pushing for appropriate student support training to be provided to all teaching staff. If this were to be successful it would be a huge leap forward.

Referendum and Working Party

For my own personal opinion the referendum was an absolute triumph for the students of Oxford. For the first time in ten years the members of OUSU have been engaged in a substantive debate about the provision of welfare services and they have voted against what I consider to have been a rash and ill-considered proposal. Their reasons for doing so remain a mystery to us all, but one thing is clear and that is that they will not approve reform for the sake of reform and will require more convincing than they received this year before they make alterations to services that are at the very core of their union. Next term they will be asked once more for their opinion and will hopefully be engaged in a free, fair and informed debate before they cast their votes. Next term will hopefully bring about timely and appropriate reform of OUSU's services and I simply feel sorry that I could not play a greater part in the final stages.

The working party established to review the options for reform available for students to vote upon next term warrants separate mention. I have spent some considerable time over the past two months researching the history of advice provision in OUSU. I have analysed easily more than 300 documents in the process of researching the feasibility and relative benefits of the position of a Student Advisor and believe that the conclusions of the paper to be presented to Council are fairly conclusive as a result of the diligence and efforts gone to by the working party.

Section Two: Acte Est Fabula, Plaudite Cives (Where welfare is now...)

Public Consciousness

Student awareness of welfare and equal opportunities could not be much higher than it has been in recent weeks. Stories in both student newspapers have been covering welfare and equal opportunities stories with increasing frequency and in both news and features articles. Whilst this comes with a heightened need for contact between OUSU and the media to ensure that high standards of journalism are maintained and accurate information conveyed to an electorate that has only recently begun to take an active interest in this area of policy. This development, of course, goes hand in hand with the referendum that was held last week. After 2000 votes were cast, extensive campaigning in person and widespread postering it could hardly be argued that welfare and equal opportunities has been placed squarely into the political spotlight for the coming year.

Public Image

A vox pop in the Cherwell this term asked students what OUSU did for them. I was delighted that every respondent in this small sample cited our welfare services in some capacity in a positive light. Moreover, the survey conducted by OUSU's Health and Welfare Committee revealed that the majority of common room officers with responsibility for welfare are pleased with the services that OUSU provides them. This is not to say that the provision is perfect. OUSU must always be striving to improve its services and proposals have been presented for areas for improvement in the new year. However, it is extremely uplifting to know that we are, at least, on the right track to providing as many of our members as possible with services that they want and need.

Support for Common Room Officers

It is my belief that OUSU's welfare and equal opportunities provision for individual students, whilst in need of restructuring, is currently providing an excellent overall service. Support for CROs, on the other hand, could do with more substantial reform. The Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) is expected to support often five or more officers per common room a number that is substantially more than any other sabbatical officer. The officers who provide vital services to their common rooms deserve better support than they have received during this year and for that I give my apologies, but I assure them all that I have done as much as I could. Significant reform is needed to allow for greater contact time between Welfare Officers and sabbatical officers and some system by which the myriad common room Equal Opportunities officers can be provided for by OUSU needs to be enacted because painfully little is provided for them under current structures.

OUSU, Welfare and Disaffiliation

Over the past it has been proposed that common rooms are capable of providing for the welfare needs of their students without the support of a central organisation. I have before now voiced my belief in the capability of student welfare and equal opportunities officers to undertake wide ranging roles and provide excellent services for their members. However, I would like to temper this with a need for that central organisation. OUSU provides exactly those resources that common room officers cannot provide; staff members whose every working day is and can be dedicated to working towards the welfare of students; an overview across the university which can provide coherent and sustained representation; a centralised body that can more efficiently provide generalised services that can then be elaborated upon and made more specific by common rooms as needed; a group for former common room members and officers who have experienced the difficulties that these posts encounter and are on hand to provide suggestions or assistance when required.

I firmly believe that disaffiliated common rooms are at a disadvantage as a result of their status. OUSU wants to represent all students and most of the work that we do benefits all students regardless of affiliated status, but becomes increasingly under funded and inefficient with the loss of each contribution made by a common room as it disaffiliates. OUSU is here to do what you tell us to do. The greatest problem is that OUSU will do anything that we are told to do by council, but so few people mandate us to do anything at all and so we are left to try to work out what would be the best thing to do for ourselves. If you want change you can make it happen without disaffiliation, which only makes it more difficult to provide any services at all, let alone the ones that you want to see introduced. You are our boss, don't forget that.

Welfare and Politics

It is very flattering to know that these issues matter to students, but this comes with its own difficulties. There is no way that the majority of students can really claim to be informed about welfare and equal opportunity policy decisions. Both in OUSU and in common rooms, as is my experience, welfare and equal opportunities policies tend to become their own private fiefdoms in which the relevant officers are called upon to create policy and act without being watched too closely. This seems largely to be because by and large everyone agrees that welfare and equal opportunities are good things and recognise that there is an extent to which these policy areas are underpinned by a variety of specialist information that do not often overlap with any other areas of student politics. As such, welfare and equal opportunities become the preserve of specialists who tend not to be involved in any other areas of politics.

This is not necessarily a bad thing as this system has produced hundreds of officers who are extremely experienced and knowledgeable left unhindered by any requirement to understand or act upon anything other than their specialism. The difficulty that it produces is that if OUSU is to start having open and public debates on issues of welfare and equal opportunities that are not confined to matters of finance of projects then it is essential that welfare and equal opportunities officers become more prominent in OUSU politics. It would be an excellent thing for the relevant officers to start attending council semi-regularly to ensure that common rooms have informed and experienced representatives involved in the debates that decide how OUSU's welfare and equal opportunities services are ultimately conducted.

Structural Problems

Significant reform of OUSU structures is necessary if welfare and equal opportunities provision is to improve. The following statistics should give some impression of the difficulties;

- The Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) is responsible for communication with and support of over 200 common room officers (significantly more than any other sabbatical).

- Some common rooms have up to 18 officers with responsibility for welfare and equal opportunities and up to 6 of which hold executive positions making it extremely difficult to tailor support for common room posts.
- The Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) is responsible for editing six publications per year.
- The Vice-president (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) is responsible for the conduct of the Student Advice Service, but has no authority to manage the sabbaticals that comprise the service.
- For the past eleven years Vice Presidents (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) have complained in their Annual Reports that their workload is intolerable and must be reformed.

OUSU is capable of so much more than it is currently providing in welfare and equal opportunities, but the current structures and distribution of workload make it almost impossible for us to develop as an organisation due to lack of time.

Summary

Overall, I believe OUSU is providing an excellent service to students, but that it fails to communicate its successes effectively to the common rooms and their members. This is particularly true of welfare and equal opportunities because of the very small special interest groups with whom we currently have the most contact and the requirements of confidentiality. This said, students appear to know that welfare has a welfare role and are content with the services we provide though it would be wonderful if this vague perception could be brought into focus in the minds of the students for whom we work.

This could be the beginning of a new era for welfare and equal opportunities and, at the very least, we live in interesting times. Appropriate reform is good, but it must not be isolated and parallel reforms in practice must be witnessed throughout OUSU and the common rooms if welfare and equal opportunities are to become widely discussed political issues. If not there is a great risk that inappropriate, even dangerous reforms could be passed through a lack of appreciation of the issues and this must be prevented at all costs. One of the most fundamental roles of OUSU is to protect the rights of students and ensure their personal and academic welfare and we cannot afford to make any mistakes in the provision of the relevant services.

Section Three: Vigilando, Agendo, Bene Consulendo, Prospera Omnia Cedunt (Some areas for improvement next year...)

Move premises

OUSU desperately needs a new office. A central student venue isn't necessary and there is simply no need for us to attempt to compete with college bars. However, the current offices just aren't fit for purpose.

OUSU at least needs a location that is welcoming and easily accessible. OUSU needs a base out of which they can provide services and to which students are comfortable going to in order to access those services. By making OUSU more attractive and accessible we will increase the likelihood of students wanting to become involved in what we try to do and this in turn will heighten OUSU's responsiveness to students needs and wants and allow us to provide more and better services.

In order to support more services and to allow for us to not have to rely on university grants to the extent that will be necessary in the near future we simply need more office space. To expand upon our commercial enterprises we will need room to house more personnel and support more services. It is essential that the next and future sabbatical teams make a concerted effort to move to a new office.

Reform sabbatical job descriptions

OUSU grew organically over the past thirty years creating new job titles as and when new problems were isolated. Unfortunately, these problems have also evolved over the past thirty years and whilst the job descriptions have been changed as and when sabbatical officers have had time to do so it has reached a point when this is no longer sufficient. An unprecedented degree of reform has taken place this year, but this is not enough. Next year, it has already been determined; an unprecedented referendum on the structure of three sabbatical positions is to be held. However, it would be timely for a more extensive review of the distribution of work load within OUSU and the ongoing projects that we undertake to be held. If OUSU is currently attempting to undertake too many projects and this is detrimental to the core services that we provide then it may prove necessary to attempt to reduce the number of services that we provide in order to ensure that our most important services are provided to the highest standards. The work that is done in OUSU is essential, therefore it is also essential that the methods by which that work is

undertaken are efficient and the workload and working conditions of the people working within OUSU is conducive to high standards of work.

Reform structures

There are many gaps in OUSU's current work that desperately need filling. Examples abound, so I shall only mention a few of them.

OUSU has a website that, whilst far from perfect, could and should be used to engage with students and to inform them of what we do and can do for them. However, to use a website for this purpose requires systematic and continual attention and no one in OUSU currently undertakes this work or has the time to do so.

Whilst welfare officers have a specific dedicated committee to cater to their needs and to act as a forum for discussion there is no such provision for equal opportunities officers. Instead there are six separate campaigning committees that are soon to become autonomous of OUSU and that have no specific requirement to support, train or provide a forum for these officers.

Distribution of publicity material and publications is a task that requires huge lengths of time and a great deal of effort. Currently, however, the responsibility for this is held by whoever's remit the material falls within. This simply means that every time we need to distribute something we need to reinvent the wheel. OUSU could be so much more efficient if a single person took responsibility for implementing standardized procedures.

Better disseminate information

This year we have done a colossal amount of work for students most of which you won't have heard about because we haven't told you. We need more publicity and we need new ways of communicating what we do. Every avenue needs to be explored from events to paper media, video and the internet. We cannot be surprised if students do not consider us value for money if we don't tell them what we do for them.

Give students every opportunity to interact with us

It seems to me that it is almost impossible for most students to communicate with OUSU. It is simply lazy for us to say that students can communicate with OUSU through their common room representatives and OUSU council. Most of my friends weren't in contact with their common room committee or OUSU and this leaves swathes of students uninformed and of the opinion that OUSU is unresponsive, unrepresentative and does nothing for them. If OUSU could provide less politically orientated events and capitalise upon our entz service in Zoo we have a chance of re-engaging these students.

This year I held an open forum to discuss welfare and equal opportunities outside of the debating chamber of OUSU council. I found this an enormously productive means to bring new ideas and issues to OUSU from common room officers who only very infrequently attended OUSU council if they ever did. I would strongly advise that OUSU continue and extend this practice.

Section Four: Utinam barbari spatium proprium tuum invadant (Thanks...)

There are so many thanks to give. So very many thanks. I'm going to try to remember everyone, but if I forget I apologise. You've all been great, but it's been a very long year and I'm writing this very late at night on the night before council.

Maria: First of thank you for putting up with me writing all of my council reports very late at night on the night before council. More importantly thank-you for being the rock around which OUSU is built and without whom we would have faltered and crumbled years ago. We all owe you so much.

Gill: I dread to think what my life would have been like this year if I had had to handle distribution of condoms as well as everything else. I'm so sorry to both you and Maria for the difficulties I caused with the free condom distribution and thank-you for putting up with my endless emails prefixed with 'I'm really sorry but I got another one'.

Sue and Barbara: I know we haven't worked together much, but it's wonderful to know that our money is in safe hands and to have smiling faces to come to when I want money. Thank-you for making the office a much more hospitable place.

The Part-Time Executive Officers: I am forever grateful for the work and effort that you've all put in this year. OUSU simply cannot operate without the dedication and support of student volunteers working alongside the sabbatical team there is simply too much work to do and you have all been invaluable. There are, however, some of you that I have to single out for special thanks.

Liv: Not only did you ensure the result of the referendum, but also you reformed the way equal opportunities is done in OUSU so that we have a credible framework for the first time. Your work will be remembered.

Dave: Our discussions were always lively and productive and I am grateful for all of the support and assistance that you gave me throughout the year. In politics you're a terrifying adversary and I am truly grateful that I never found myself in trench opposing yours.

Emma: It was finally at the barricades that we got to meet each other properly and we won through. I'm just sorry that it was under such unfortunate circumstances.

Olly: You missed the football to help me carry boxes in a sweltering hot van – what more do I need to say. I have no idea how you manage to stay so up beat all the time, but it made exec meetings so much more fun

Niel: For Keble based banter on a very lonely day and for relentless efforts to make the world a better place no matter the impact on my holiday choice, I thank you. God knows how you do so much.

The OxStu: I've been really impressed this year with how we've worked together and I cannot thank you enough for engaging with us and me to give us a platform for really important information. I think the respect and trust that we developed in each other is an exceptional point at which to end the year and I'm grateful for it. It's also so nice to have smiling faces to keep me company on those many late nights, thank-you. I apologise for my lack of ability to remember names many names, but you were an important part of my year and I'm grateful to have met you.

The Welfare and Equal Opportunities Officers: Welfare and Equal Opps just doesn't work without you as there's just too much work to be done. Your efforts will be held dear forever by the people you helped and by me in gratitude for keeping the students I try to serve a bit safer every day. I don't have the space to thank all of you but some of you shone out as sterling examples of dedication to the cause, inspiration and support for me; Lucy (Mansfield), Frankie and Dan (Jesus), Josh (Univ), Sam and Jenny (Keble), Kat and Rosie (Balliol), Kristen and Raeli (SEH), Becky (ChCh), Ben (Catz), Becky and Conor (LMH) and Rob (New).

AB: My god, the times we've had. Late nights planning, scheming and having revelations. Between us we've discussed everything from discrimination (easy) to funding for gender realignment (not so easy). You've taught me so much and been a friend I have been honoured to have. Promise you'll never fall out of touch.

Caroline: Dedication isn't the word. The working party and campaign wouldn't have been the same without you. We will educate the world together if I can ever get my act together.

Gina: Health and Welfare has been your safe hands all year. You've seen it safely through so many changes and I eagerly await its bright future. The coffees, drinks and meals we shared over the year have kept me going and given me hope that we can do work for the good. Thank-you for your constant efforts and your unnerving ability to have already gone beyond the call of duty before I even consider doing so.

Everyone at LMH: You made me so welcome, gave me free drinks and held open debates that kept your students informed. We need more colleges like you.

Everyone at Catz: You also made me feel welcome and held open debates that kept your student informed, but you gave me pizza. That said the pizza was equally appreciated, so we need more common rooms like you too.

The JCR Presidents who defended us: Defending OUSU isn't popular, but when it happens it is both big and clever. Students so rarely get to see the good side of OUSU, so having you rally around us to defend us was amazing. Thank-you so much.

Diversity and Equal Opportunities Office: Peter, Deborah, Ann, Sara, Jenny and Ketan have saved more students than I ever could have done. You have been an invaluable source of support and information and the university would be lost without you. I owe you such a huge debt I could hardly begin to describe it.

Accommodation Office: I owe Sue and Sarah a huge debt both personally and professionally (though not literally, I am glad to say). It's been such a shame that we have not been able to work together more closely, but I am very grateful for what we did do together.

Ginny: What has Oxford lost in your departure? More than they seem to have realized. You helped so many people including myself.

Nightline Co-ordinators: Obviously, I can't name the five of you in public, but you and your volunteers are the great shadowy figures that ensure one of the most essential provisions in Oxford: an anonymous, confidential space to talk. I am forever amazed at what you cope with and how much you help people.

The Ghosts of Ex-WEOs Past: Rosie, you gave me my baptism of fire in OUSU welfare and trusted me with a lot. Without this positive first experience I might have given up rather than going on to achieve all I feel I have done. Nicky, you taught me so much about how OUSU must work. I was often uncomfortable with

applying politics of necessity to welfare, but it was an essential lesson that I had to learn and I have, in many ways, attempted to emulate your example over the past year. Aidan, not just a predecessor, but a friend. You handed onto me a union that was ready for me to take over, provided constant support and advice through the year and archived documents that I never believed would be useful, but proved invaluable and I owe you a huge debt for all this.

The Sabbs for next year: At times your belief and optimism for next year is all that's kept me going because I want you to have a chance of completing half the things you have planned. Be careful, don't take on too much and you'll be fantastic, I have no doubt.

Tom: You're getting the first thanks out of all of the full-time sabbs because you gave up so much this year for our benefit and for students across the university. You contributed more than just money to the work of each and every one of us. You were a stabilizing influence even when your things were at their worst. You listened to me when I needed someone to understand. You deserve more than this year has given you and I cannot thank you enough.

Alan: What a year, eh? If it weren't all documented I'd never have believed it would have happened. You've taken us through a lot and OUSU made it out the other side and hopefully the stronger for it. More importantly you've put up with my endless frustration with OUSU's structures and processes and that must have taken the patience of a saint. Thank-you.

Ed: As far as I can work out it's my job to spend the money and your job to stop me going overboard. Given the above I think we did bloody well together. Welfare and Finance doesn't tend to overlap very often, but I think we grew to understand each other over the year and if we can do that we can achieve anything.

Andrea: The first of the Student Advisors to get their thanks. Over the year the veil of confidentiality means that we shared so much that I can't talk about in this report, but there are things that I shall remember for the rest of my life. I can however talk about Mr. Wigg...

Imran: We've been through a lot this year, you and I. From the darker times for both of us to the more frivolous coffee with fringe benefits. Having someone next door who would always understand, who never let politics get in the way, who shared far too many late nights made this year something that I will actually remember fondly. I will also remember the pies – all of them. All the crap that we went through will be washed away soon enough and our world will do the timewarp again!!!

Jenny: What can I say? At times this was far too hard for both of us, but we made it. Between us we've shared more indignance and anger than any two people should share in a life time. Some of the times that we've shared have lifted me out of my blackest days and that is something that I have valued so much. You have the world at your feet for the future, your year here has been vindicated and it has been an honour to work with you.

Hels: My original team-mate in the Anti-Senior Tutor League, co-coffee with fringe benefits enthusiast, bitching partner extraordinaire, friend, confidante, rememberer of blue paper, protector of my status of 'he who cannot do minute-ing' and so much more. I've seen you be so hard on yourself at times this year and I've never understood why. You taught me more than anyone about how this place worked and made all this possible both through assistance and example. You understood when things were at their worst and when I most needed help. You deserve to be proud of your year and I am truly grateful for all you have done.

Debbie: Without you I would never have finished this year and would not feel as proud of my achievements as I am right now. It has hit me both very hard over the past twelve months – the long hours, the stress and the exceptional number of documents that are currently littered across our living room, but we made it. Forgive me for all my failings this year and thank-you for indulging my efforts to complete what often seemed like futile labours. Thank-you for your help, your support and your love over this year and the past two and a half years. I love you more than I could ever say.

Jenny Hoogewerf-McComb

V-P (Women)

Working for an organisation which you care about intensely and know to be vitally important is both a curse and a wonderful blessing; it's both difficult to become bored, and far too easy to devote more of your life than is healthy to your work. Before I became VP (Women), I hadn't been as involved in OUSU as some people in the past had, although I had really appreciated the contact I had with their campaigns and activism. I think I really underestimated how hard this year was going to be- how scary it is, at 22, to be responsible for an organisation and other people, to become a Director of a Limited Company with fiduciary duties, to keep everything going on a miniscule budget and with generous helpings of stress on the

side! It has been a challenge, but ultimately a worthwhile one. I'm immensely proud of what we've all achieved this year. OUSU- a centralised campaigning and representative body for students- is simply the best way to win on issues that matter for students. From forcing the University to actually teach students how to learn for the first time ever with the appointment of a Student Learning Advisor, to extending library opening hours to suit student lifestyles, to providing academic dress at the cheapest possible price (Sub Fusc now costs around £20 less than it did when I matriculated- how many things actually drop in price these days!), to pushing towards a University which invests its money in an ethical and socially responsible manner- we fight the hard battles, and we succeed where at all possible.

The Student Advice Service also plays an enormously important role. While not criticising the system of peer-provided welfare available in colleges- welfare reps do amazing jobs, and certainly make things much better for students on a day to day level- it is inevitable that incredibly complex, difficult cases come up which are better handled by someone more able to devote time to them more intensively. As advocates, we learn the structures of the University system (and beyond) and intervene for students where helpful. We can ensure that the University or College is following proper procedures, and know where to take appeals and complaints if this does not appear to be happening. Our advice, referral and advocacy role fits in well with the support and listening services available elsewhere in the colleges, and the counselling provided by the University Counselling Service. The other great thing about the SAS system is that being in close contact with the welfare issues that come up allows us to recognise patterns of problems within the university and colleges, so that we know where best to campaign for change. Although the things we deal with can be frustrating and upsetting, I honestly believe that OUSU is well placed to achieve the best for students in the most difficult cases- the most sensitive issues, the appeals which can go up to and including the Office of the Independent Adjudicator of Higher Education, the most complex histories. I hope that I have done as well as I possibly could for the students I have helped this year- I have certainly tried as hard as I can for you all.

In terms of my own portfolio this year, I hope I've succeeded in ensuring there are events and campaigns this year for women which have been both innovative and inclusive. Events I have helped organise or supported range from Thabitha Khumalo talking about the Dignity. Period! campaign in Zimbabwe, and her inspirational attitude towards the violent opposition she's faced to her politics, to a Wear it Pink fundraiser for Breast Cancer research and care, a Reclaim the Night march on violence and safety, a White Ribbon campaign lobby of Congregation to encourage men to stand up against domestic violence, Finals Forums guaranteeing female students at least one opportunity for contact with someone of their gender, a Finals Gap discussion session with tutors and students giving their opinions, research and input, a Women and the Left discussion session, the Women's Open Day for prospective students coming up to Oxford (with Kitty Ussher MP as opening speaker!), Viva La Vulva evening of body positive history, discussion, art, food and drama inspired by the Vagina Monologues, delegation to the march for Abortion Rights in London, Women's History Trip to London, talk on Equal Opportunities in the Workplace by a top solicitor, Faith & Feminism discussion evening, and the one I'm most looking forward to- the Love Your Body garden party this Saturday at St Hilda's! I've also set up an online termcard which aims to showcase all events going on for women in the University, bringing them all together in one place. Our eating disorder support group Enough! has now had eight sessions, which is an amazing success. I hope it can continue doing its important work next term, perhaps diversifying into speaker meetings and events, and working more closely with the counselling service.

I've revamped all of the traditional publications associated with my role, including the Women's Handbook (with an all new and, in my opinion, very important women's health and welfare section at the back). I've also created a new handbook on Domestic Violence, which is a problem not talked about often in relation to University, but which can have appalling effects on students, especially those living with their abuser. I tried to get a Women's Campaign website properly up and running, but this tended to get forgotten in the wake of other, more urgent projects! I hope to be able to hand over the almost finished website to Hannah, where it will then be integrated into the new OUSU website for next year. I have, however, made quite a lot of use of Facebook, Livejournal and Indymedia this year for campaigning and publicity work- I hope that this will continue next year, as it seems an ideal way to get people to network and become involved in the student union.

Of course, it would be nigh impossible to get anywhere at all without the assistance of Women,s Campaign. It,s so refreshing to be able to become involved in a society where caring about causes outweighs a desperate hunt for CV points. We debate and organise in a genuinely supportive atmosphere. We,ve suffered somewhat this year simply because there are a number of amazing initiatives going on in the University directed at women- OxWiP and Women In Red to name but a few. Next year I,m hoping that Hannah will be able to build stronger links with other societies, and work on more collaborations. Another amazing thing for WomCam will be the new autonomous structure, under Liv Bailey,s liberation campaign restructuring. One thing I have noticed about the Women,s Campaign in Cambridge in comparison to here is a better involvement of Women,s Officers across all of the different colleges, due to their Women,s Council structure. I,m going to suggest in my handover to Hannah that we consider adopting this structure at Oxford (as a policy making body, similar to OUSU council) on top of the traditional WomCam group, to make sure that we access colleges without a history of being heavily involved. However, I,m confident that the main purpose of WomCam- to ensure we can take action on the things which really matter to us as female students at Oxford- will continue.

It is when comparing ourselves with other Student Unions that I am often most proud. I have been absolutely appalled by hearing reports of other SUs which have hired disgusting, exploitative events such as FHM High Street Honeys and Nuts, and run Playboy themed entertainments. I don,t know how women are supposed to feel they can become involved in their student unions, or achieve their potential at University, if the other message being given out is that their true place is on stage stripped and legs akimbo. I think that magazines with competitions to „win your girlfriend a boob% and „take this woman,s virginity% have no place in the SU. I,m glad that our entz are designed to be safe spaces where as many of our students as possible feel welcome. Other bars and promoters in Oxford have run High Street Honeys and the very memorable „Ladies Nights% where six free drinks were on offer for women (and men paid to get in, presumably to access the inebriated women). I hope that OUSU will continue to run nights we can be proud of, and that the other SUs get their act together and wise up!

Representation is also an important part of my job- from the University to the UK and beyond! Within the University, work on JCC and Health and Welfare committee, and with the Proctors and Assessor has been really vital in making sure the interests of both women and students in general are properly taken into account. It was a real mistake, in my opinion, for the University to not represent the VP (Women) to the Gender Equality Duty committee, set up to examine measures to correct sex discrimination after the 2007 Act came into force in April. The Act represents a real chance for us to change things for women within the University, and I have done lots of research this year, building on the very useful NUS materials . 75% of the proposals the committee are investigating relate directly and specifically to righting inequality for women in the University, and at other analogous institutions (e.g. Cambridge), women,s representatives are heavily involved. Hopefully next year,s sabbatical team will be able to fight for this one and force the University to make the right decision in the end!

On a national level, I have been so grateful for the work of the NUS, and Kat Stark, National Women,s Officer in particular. From lad,s mags on college campuses, to sex trafficking, to maternity rights for students in the same way as workers are protected, it has been great to get involved in issues which have a chance of making a national impact. Women,s Conference was fantastic and inspirational, and I hope that Oxford will become much more actively involved in NUS now we,re centrally affiliated. I hope to make lots of suggestions to Hannah about how to make the most of its various structures. I,ve also represented OUSU and OUSU policy by speaking in debates and going to local and national events. Feminist Fightback in Michaelmas was an awesome opportunity for I and other members of WomCam to get involved in training, activism and debate on issues from trans liberation to sex education. The ideas on campaigning and actions were to prove very useful in organising events later in the year. I,ve spoken on and debated issues of abortion in the House of Commons at an Abortion Rights lobbying event, on tv, for Amnesty International and (coming up next Monday) at the Chabad society. I also was invited to speak on young women,s political activism at an All Souls conference.

It has been enormously disappointing to not be able to run a Safety Bus service for the students of Oxford this year. The scheme has been running on and off for over a decade, but has been regularly hampered by severe shortages of funding. By far the cheapest and most efficient way to run the service is to buy into the Brookes, night bus scheme, but even this costs £10,000 per year- an enormous amount, almost 10% of the

total money we receive from common rooms. In the past, corporate funding has plugged this hole in the finances from time to time, but student sponsorship is a hotly contested and volatile market and thus cannot be relied upon in the long term. This year we decided to take a different approach and make a bid for the University to support the scheme as a student service. Seemingly endless papers to various committees followed, but I'm delighted to report that the JCC has voted to support our Safety Bus proposal as part of the block grant negotiations and that the matter should be taken before University council as early as 9th week this term. Fingers crossed and all going well, that should leave Hannah (and her successors to come) with a stable Safety Bus service which will transport years of students home safely and cheaply in the future.

I also hope I've left some strong ideas and structures in place for my successor next year- including the Freshers Forums I am working on with the Student Learning Advisor for female students to get advice on the finals gap from their first week in Oxford, and a Getting Ahead in Politics event to introduce women to assertiveness and debating techniques, and to explain the structures of JCR, OUSU, Union, OxWiP and society politics. Hannah will be fantastic- she's enthusiastic, scarily efficient, and has a real talent for coming up with new ideas. I look forward so much to hearing what she's done with the position- what initiatives are being pursued to end the inequalities in the University. You're all going to be fab next year, which is good, because OUSU is very important. We may do „things and stuff%“, but we do „things and stuff%“ which make a real difference for students. If they're not working for you, come and tell us so.

Thank yous: I have oh so many!

To my sab colleagues: Alan, Andrea, Ed, Hels, Imran, Jamie, and Tom. What a year! We've disagreed passionately at times, but I think we're all on the same wavelength underneath- united against all the crappy, unfair bits we see in the University, and determined to make things better for students. I really care about you all, and I hope things go well once we all spread our wings.

The exec- for all your patience, and hard work. Especially Emma- your input, your determination, and your beliefs are an inspiration. Liv- you are going to go so far, and I know you'll do the most awesome job when you get there. Dave- I know I'm far too silly, elitist and religious for your liking, but I hope I'm at least towards the nicer end of those spectra :p and Olly, for having the best trainers in town.

Maria, Gill, Sue and Barbara, for always being there and often making me smile.

Caroline- what would I do without you. I can't believe you're only a first year! I wish I'd gone to Wadham. Lucy- you're so wise, and you have the best accessories. I hope to have many more English Lit and feminism chats with you in future. Kit- you're fantastic. Keep on in your own fabulous gender-fucking patriarchy-baiting bra-burning way. Sian- you have kept me sane, and I couldn't have done Enough! without you. I really hope we can stay in touch. Margaret and Amy in America- you gave me so many ideas. I want to come visit you and defeat the religious right on your turf- maybe next election? ;) Liv, I am sooo looking forward to City next year- with you, Ellie and I, London may be 100% feminist by the end of 2008...

To the ghosts of sabs past, especially Ellie, Bex and Antonia- thank you, VP (Grandmas) :) Ollie and Iain, for knowing how it all works, and taking the time to teach me too when I needed it.

For all the JCR presidents who defended OUSU- I am so grateful for your help.

For everyone who was there for me when it became really difficult; I appreciate that more than I can say. It made the difference.

As we chanted in Michaelmas: „Women, united, can never be defeated%“.

This year has taught me that even more strongly. It's been great.

Andrea Miller

V-P (Graduates)

Overall, I think that this has been a productive year. It has certainly been a valuable learning experience for me. As a team, we have secured crucial structural reforms (legal status, financial improvement, and staff structure), formed and developed strong working relationships with University officials and committees, kept abreast of and aided action on important common room issues, and most importantly, sought to keep our constituents informed regarding developments in the University (the Governance Debate, the JRAM, etc.) and to represent their views and interests both in committees and through campaigning on essential issues (welfare, funding, etc.). The Student Advice Service has faithfully pursued its mission to aid individual students facing welfare and/or academic difficulties.

An updated job description for the Vice President (Graduates) was passed at the Trinity meeting of the Post Graduate Assembly and ratified in 3rd week OUSU Council. Hopefully it will be ratified again in this week's Termly Council and become official. The revised job description reflects what I believe the VP Graduates main priorities ought to be and what I have sought to work towards throughout the course of the year. The main components of the job all revolve around representing the views and interests of graduate students, and can be roughly divided into a few main categories: University Committees, Common Room Support, the Student Advice Service, Post Graduate Assembly, and Support for Divisional/Departmental Representatives.

Committee Work

To go through the work of every committee I have attended this year would be tedious, so I think it's appropriate to focus on the highlights. Overall, I think that University Committees have finally taken it on board that whenever they consult divisions, departments, faculties, and colleges, that they also need to consult STUDENTS. This is a major step.

Led by the ProVice-Chancellor Education and the Academic Register, the University central administration is working hard to ensure that the quality of life and education for graduates at Oxford improves, and to seek consistency across colleges and departments insofar as possible. The 'Embedding Graduate Studies' agenda is pushing for clarification from departments and colleges regarding what services a graduate student should and can expect from these bodies. The divisions and Conference of Colleges are slowly but surely responding. The paper 'The Roles of Colleges,' spearheaded by the Warden of Merton College is a particularly good example of this. The Curators of the University Libraries are invested in ensuring that there is dedicated graduate workspace in the new Radcliffe Infirmary site and are keen to consult with students about what they want from this facility. The Learning Institute, along with the Careers Centre and the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, have invested considerable energy into schemes for providing the development of transferable skills for graduate students. There have also been massive improvements in widening opportunities for graduates who want to gain teaching experience. At least three new funding sources have been secured for graduate scholarships, and the Access and Funding Office is working hard to improve the availability of funding and information about funding to students. The new online application process for graduate student ties application for and information about available funding to the application for study.

Common Room Support

I think that work with the MCRs this year has really improved. I've done my best to keep updated contact lists for accurate mail-listing and to use email as much as possible to keep the MCR Presidents informed of issues I have come across at University level that I feel they should be aware of and pass onto their common rooms for comment. The best example of wide consultation on an important issue this year is perhaps the email sent out asking all graduates to comment on the Educational Policy and Standards Committee 'Embedding Graduate Studies' agenda. MCR Presidents and Social Secretaries passed the request along to their common rooms and I was able to compile a student perspective paper on the issue to present in committee. The mail list is also increasingly being used for discussion of important issues, like the impending smoking ban and how that will take effect in student accommodation.

Turnout at meetings of MCR Presidents' Committee was consistently high and discussions productive. For example, in MT 2006, MCR PresCom passed a motion requesting central University funding for the Safety Bus. That motion then went on to be passed in OUSU Council, and will very likely be realized as a part of the block grant negotiated in the JCC, which will go to University Council for approval in 9th week. A survey was jointly designed and undertaken to cover all aspects of graduate common room concerns, and over twenty colleges returned it. Its results, due out in MT 2007 (good luck Ingrid!) will hopefully reveal common issues that need attention across the colleges. Also as of next term, a member of MCR PresCom

will join the VP Graduates as a representative on the Conference of Colleges Graduate Committee, increasing student representation.

Student Advice Service

Serving as a member of the SAS took up a good portion of my time this year. It was both difficult and frustrating to see the problems that graduate students are forced to deal with, especially those that seemed to crop up time and again. The single most dominant theme this year has been the difficulties arising from the need for a student to switch supervisor or department (for whatever reason, ranging from not getting on well to experiencing serious harassment).

Since the academic work of a graduate student is often the foundation upon which their life is balanced, when that foundation is shaken, the balance is upset, and all sorts of welfare difficulties can arise (from practical issues stemming from funding to health matters like serious depression). Students often complain that when they face an academic problem they are met with administrators who may sympathize but then claim not to have the power to fix the problem and pass it onto another person who does the same exact thing. Students are sent in circles, resulting in feelings of helplessness and frustration.

While I have obviously tried to help every individual who has come to me with a problem, I have also tried to use knowledge of general trends like this to seek solutions. I am hopeful that the EPSC initiative to require clear supervisory codes of the divisions will improve the particular problem discussed above. A better process for changing supervisor when necessary, however, still needs to be found.

I would like to thank the Counselling service for all of the support they provided to me in my capacity as a member of the SAS this year.

Other Activities

Postgraduate Assembly was well attended and reasonably productive this year. Important motions were passed to create the Part-Time Executive position of Graduate Women's Officer, to insist that the university seek a review of transfer of status mechanisms, to revise the job description of the VP Graduates, and to secure an exemption of non-fee-paying graduates from counting toward accountability for their Common Room OUSU affiliation fee. The last PGA provided a forum for the Student Funding office to make a presentation about graduate funding initiatives and to consult with students on how to improve. I hope that PGA will continue to provide this sort of valuable forum for discussing important issues with top administrators.

Over the summer I revised the Graduate Guide and saw to its distribution to all graduate freshers in affiliated common rooms. Next year the Graduate Guide will merge with the Freshers' Guide, providing more information about extracurricular activities and opportunities in Oxford to graduates, alongside the already-present basic information about the college system and formal requirements of graduate study.

I spent a good deal of time working with Alan Strickland, Alasdair Wrench, and Sarah Hutchinson researching the new Charities Act and its implications for OUSU's legal status. Our research into the options for OUSU's future status (since it can no longer be an exempt charity under the new law) led to the drafting of a consultation paper sent to council and finally to the recommendation that OUSU register as a charity, as put to referendum last week and resoundingly approved. Most recently, we have put together a paper looking at the practical implications of registering, how other students unions have faced this challenge, and what our options are for structuring our trustee board and governance structure to meet the requirements of a registered charity.

I have recently made progress in trying to collect information about mechanisms of academic representation for students. This focuses mainly on how departments, faculties, and specific programs organize their Joint Consultative Committees with Student Members. This information has not been compiled anywhere before, and I think that it is important to try to understand how students are being represented and what methods seem to work the best. From there it will be possible to think about designing standards to ensure quality in this area and to provide information and support to those students serving as representatives. This is one of the projects I am most excited about, but unfortunately, just as I am beginning to make real progress it is time to leave! I have no doubt that my successor will see the project through brilliantly (along with many of her own).

The past few weeks I have been spending lots of time preparing a handover document and guidance for my successor, Ingrid Frater. During sixth week we spent the days together and I think very successfully covered the ins and outs of the job and areas which could use more attention and improvement. Being very conscious of entering the job without much practical knowledge of what I was supposed to do, I have done

my best to provide that information for Ingrid. I am really excited for her and also for the Oxford graduate student community, who could not possibly have a better candidate in office. I wish her the best of luck and am confident she will be a splendid VP (Graduates).

Thanks finally to all the other members of the sabbatical team and also to Maria, Sue, Barbara, and Gill, the invaluable members of our permanent office staff.

Helen Bagshaw

V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

Introduction

After being involved one way or another with OUSU since the beginning of Hilary of my first year, it feels very strange to be coming to the end of my term of office and to be writing my last ever Council report. This will be the 32nd meeting of Council I have attended in my time in Oxford, and I would not like to calculate how much of my life that alone has claimed, never mind the rest of my input into this organisation!

Before writing this, I read the final reports of each of my six predecessors and it's funny how many sentiments are repeated across the years, and how many times the same issues crop up. Comments about criticism being levelled at OUSU, about a lack of communication with ordinary members, about how people feel that the Student Union should be structured in order to return to its true Union roots/become a better entz provider/become a better campaigning machine. Final reports are a cathartic experience for those who produce a document which concentrates on the negative aspects of a particular year working in OUSU towers; I was torn when deciding on my approach, because I have seen the benefits of these reports. Reform in all aspects of Oxford tends to come about when problems are recurrent across a number of years, so suggestions from previous sabbaticals have been used to lobby and campaign for change. As such, all of my recommendations will be highlighted in my handover pack to James.

However, I decided against concentrating too much on what I would like to happen in the future, or what I wish had happened in the past. I am no better qualified than anyone else to be making judgements about the future of OUSU because, ultimately, it is not my opinion that matters. What matters is what the students of Oxford want, and I hope Martin's planned Michaelmas consultation goes some way to finding out what that truly is. Sabbatical teams have so often been against certain questions being put to the student body for fear of the 'wrong' answer. However, the educated electorate can give no wrong answer; their unbiased education is key to reforming the Student Union still further as an electorate who do not realise the current situation will not be best placed to judge what we should provide and what our limitations are in doing so.

Instead, this will be what the title suggests – a report, detailing what I have done during my term of office and concentrating on the positives. It seems easiest to split up my portfolio in three areas; access, academic affairs and general OUSU work (the VP bit). In a move away from the usual conventions of Vice-President (Access and Academic Affairs) reports, I'm going to start with academic affairs.

Academic Affairs

▪ *University and Conference of College Committees*

The job of VP (Access and Academic Affairs) involves a myriad of University and Conference of College Committees at which to represent the views of students. This is one part of the job that I expected would be frustrating at times, but which I was looking forward to meeting the challenge of. Going to meetings of these committees has taken up a large amount of my time, but is one of the most worthwhile parts of the job. Though the respect we have as student members varies across committees, in each we have been able to comfortably make points that have been listened to and considered. Many of the members of these committees are not anti-student, but seem to genuinely not have thought about the repercussions of their decisions on the students of the University. As such, our viewpoints have been increasingly well accepted and much appreciated. I hope the increased number of groups we are now asked to sit on is a good reflection on the changing attitudes of the University administration.

University Council

Currently we are only allowed to have three student observers present for the discussion of unreserved business and this had traditionally taken very little time. We have gained an increasing amount of supporters on Council who believe, like us, that the distinction between reserved and unreserved business is currently not appropriate, and that we should be trusted to see all the business of Council. We have been feeding into a working group looking at the remit and terms of reference of Council, so hopefully we

can start to get somewhere with our arguments about this. It has been increasingly frustrating to have to watch decisions be rubber-stamped and not have an input on them all lower down – currently, EPSC is the only Committee of Council we have representation on, and we should seek to increase our representation on other committees if our 3 observer seats are to be of any real use to us.

The format of Council has changed this year, and this has definitely been to our benefit. Pre-lunches and presentations have been added, which has given us the opportunity to network with and garner the support of Heads of Division, members elected by Congregation and external members. The presentations have been informative and interesting, particularly for predicting what issues will arise for sabbatical teams in the near future, and I would encourage Martin, James and Ingrid to make full use of networking time next year.

Educational Policy and Standards Committee

EPSC has been one of my favourite committees to sit on. We are respected for our opinions, and are not made to feel like junior members. We have had very useful and productive meetings with the chair, Prof. Elizabeth Fallaize, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) the day before every meeting and this has been a great way of making sure the student voice is heard. She has also been keen to help us out with other things behind the scenes, such as casework, where she can and this has generally made a big difference.

Issues that have arisen this year that we have had input on include student number planning and the size and shape of the University, the Oxford Student Course Experience Questionnaire, the National Student Survey, the Bologna Process and the Burgess Report, Exams and Assessment, plagiarism, electronic screening of assessed work, the use of teaching, learning and laboratory space within Oxford, the Gender Gap in finals results, historical trends in undergraduate admissions (including statistics and commentaries), embedding graduate studies, departmental reviews, bursary provisions, plans for reviewing bespoke and overseas fees, online applications, English Language requirements, proposals for new degree programmes in conjunction with other institutions, the JRAM, the Common Framework for Admissions, agreements with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), Notes of Guidance for Undergraduates, collections policy, divisional 5yr plans, teaching awards and a proposed teaching-research nexus.

Curators of University Libraries

CUL is another meeting which has a reserved business section that it uses, though we have had confidential documents shared with us this year and the distinction between reserved and unreserved business seems much less arbitrary. Although there haven't been huge amounts to contribute in terms of student opinion, it is good to have an idea of some of the behind the scenes work in the Library Services, to better understand what its practical and financial limitations are when requesting changes.

Issues that have arisen this year include opening hours of the libraries, the proposed renovation of the New Bodleian building, the new RI site Humanities Library plans, an overview of fines and tariffs (now capped at the same level in all OULS libraries and applied equally to tutors and students), the OULS five year plan, the financial recovery plan for the libraries, the Osney Mead Depository and the flood risks surrounding it (!), library development campaigns, online cataloguing, funds and bequests to the Bodleian, the Bodleian shop redesign, storage costs and issues, the integration of existing libraries into OULS and management systems.

Committee for the Language Centre

A committee which meets once a term to manage the business of the Language Centre. It is currently chronically underfunded, as with so many areas within the Higher Education sector, and needs more income from somewhere to continue providing the number and variety of courses it does. A review has recently been carried out and the results of this, due out soon, will hopefully reflect the good work that the Language Centre currently does and seek to further improve the services on offer.

Issues that have arisen this year include the review, the new Language Laboratory and updating of equipment and servers, the introduction of foreign language modules in a number of science and humanities degrees, academic writing courses, weekend courses, charging for courses and the introduction of new courses.

Information and Communication Technology Committee

As the name might indicate, not one of the most interesting committees that I have sat on this year but probably one of the shortest and most efficient.

Issues that have arisen this year include ICT Strategic Plan, ICT Forum, security penetration testing, Web Strategy Group, exam encryption, telecommunications, software licences, tutorial reporting system, second life, OUCS management changes, the budget and the Services Funding Working Group.

Senior Tutors' Committee

One of the best bit meetings of the STC was the food provided; I am not quite sure what this says about STC and its usefulness! Technically whoever occupies my position is there 'by invitation', so it is not necessarily a committee that respects the student view as much as others that I have sat on. Some of the Senior Tutors have funny views about the best ways to treat their students; I won't name names but some of the JCR Presidents will be able to guess if their college's Senior Tutor fits into that category!

Issues that have arisen this year include suspension of status and access to facilities, colleges policies on resitting First Public Examinations, online reporting of tuition, subject working parties, the Research Assessment Exercise, the JRAM, transcripts, exam entries, timing of assessment papers, incarceration during exams, Freshers' week arrangements, conversions of academic positions, Units of Assessment, scholarships and exhibitions, Learnsmart and future meeting schedules and business of the Committee.

Congregation

I attended both of the Congregation discussions of the White Paper on University Governance. It was a very interesting experience, especially being in Divinity Schools for much of the debate and watching goings on via a live link-up! Traditional Oxford meets modern technology... People were much more free about expressing their opinions of speeches in Divinity Schools, from which we were able to predict which way the vote was going to go, though the margin of victory. Despite advocating voting down the White Paper, many members of Congregation were willing to admit that some changes needed to be made (particularly relating to University Council) and I will watch the progression of further discussion with interest.

▪ *Steering/Management/Working/Consultative Groups*

Steering Groups are one of the most effective ways to influence University policy precisely because they concentrate on one area or issue, making it much easier to find out student opinion and reflect it in meetings. I have been invited to a number of Steering/Working Groups this year (the Oxford administration is somewhat fond of them!) and this seems to point towards a change in the thinking of many of the central departments; often due to a change in personnel. Students are being recognised as major stakeholders in policy decisions, and this has led to myself and Andrea being heavily involved in a number of new initiatives; we've been trusted to contribute to the design and process elements of projects, rather than just being invited to attend one meeting to have a say on what students will think. This is somewhat gratifying after the work we have put into them this year.

Student Administration Management Group

Created this year by Michael Sibly, the Academic Registrar, SAM Group is intended to gather together representatives from colleges, departments and the central administration, alongside student representatives, to discuss how the management of the Student Career can be improved. It was extremely useful to meet people involved in all stages of student administration, and I have met with several of them outside the group. One major issue that arose from the group's discussions is that communication in Oxford is poor, and initially very few in the room knew what others were responsible for and hence where to recommend their students go for help and advice.

SAM Group is currently on hold whilst it decides what its role and remit should be; many of us were loathe for it to become yet another talking shop, although information sharing has proven useful. Hopefully in the coming academic year James will be able to attend a group that can review aspects of the Student Career and make a visible improvement to the way procedures are carried out.

Online Registration Steering Management Committee

My involvement in this started off with a meeting with Tara Jewell and Anne Jacobs, the Communications Officers for BSP Student Systems (formerly Project ISIDORE) and Student Administration respectively. We had a good discussion about ways to communicate the new self-service initiatives to students, and following this I was invited to sit on the Online Registration Steering Management Committee. Since then I have attended a number of committee meetings and process workshops; I now know far more about large Student Record databases than I ever thought I could! I have been heavily involved in the design of the

website, posters, emails to students, text to go in the help guide and website text so hopefully when this is rolled out on the 1st September this year it will be easy for students to understand and fill in.

I have been very appreciative of how welcome student input was into this project, and some of my favourite University people have been working together on this so the meetings and workshops have been good fun. One of the projects I'll miss.

Units of Study Steering Management Committee

Following on from attending the Online Registration meetings and meeting Anne Grocock, the Co-ordinator for the Overview of the Collegiate University's Support of Exams and Assessment, I was invited to sit on the Units of Study Steering Management Committee. This is looking at online exam entries, another aspect of the proposed self-service portal, and seems to be progressing quite far along the road of getting rid of paper exam entry forms. Another project I have enjoyed being involved with, as many of the same people sit on this committee as Online Registration, and it is achieving it's goals at a faster rate than most others within the collegiate University!

Gender Equality Steering Group

Due to the introduction of the Gender Equality Duty, Higher Education Institutions have had to form policy on how they provide equal opportunities for both men and women within admissions, and deal with discrepancies in areas such as finals results and drop-out rates. I was invited to be a member of the Steering Group, which had one meeting and some email correspondence before publishing the resulting Gender Equality Scheme. It's likely that some things OUSU has been lobbying for over the past few years, such as equal opportunities and interview training for all current and new staff, will finally be put into place. I also managed to contribute a few ideas about how the University could encourage female academics to apply to posts here, and contribute to committees once appointed. For a copy of the Gender Equality Scheme, see <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/gender/ges.shtml>

Permanent Private Hall Review

In Hilary Term, Alan and I attended a meeting with a small group reviewing the position of Permanent Private Halls within the University. This Review, chaired by Sir Colin Lucas, was an excellent opportunity to pass on some of the non-confidential details of casework we've had from PPHs, and to report the problems and perceptions associated with admission to PPHs. The Review has met with groups of students from each PPH, a move OUSU applauds; more consultation with specific groups of interested students is always a good thing!

Gender Gap Working Group

This is a group in the pipeline, commissioned by EPSC and hopefully I have secured James a seat on it; he will be a much-needed male presence to ensure gender balance! It will be meeting from the start of the next academic year, bringing together interested parties to discuss new ideas for how the gender gap could be dealt with, especially in light of the Gender Equality Duty. The Working Group is intending to look at departments where there is no gender gap to see if anything can be learnt from them, rather than concentrating on departments which suffer from the gender gap problem.

▪ *Student Representatives*

JCR Academic Affairs Officers

I've held a couple of meetings of the Common Room Academic Affairs Officers this year, and these have usually resulted in productive discussions. We've covered libraries, rustication and suspension of status, exams and assessment, the Learning Development Advisor, collections, reintroducing the Academic Affairs Officer handbook, introducing an Academic Affairs Officer training session, College Regulations and Handbooks, Online Registration and graduation. At the last meeting we had a presentation from Anne Grocock on online exam entries and units of assessment. This seemed to work quite well and those in attendance said that it was useful and interesting to hear from someone working in the University so I shall be recommending that James tries to get a couple more external speakers next year.

The composition of Academic Affairs Committee is currently not quite right – although it is good to have something all the Academic Affairs Officers can come to, not all of them have the time or inclination, and it might be better to have an Education Committee with some representative Academic Affairs Officers, Joint Consultative Committee Reps and the Divisional Board Reps alongside anyone else who is interested. This committee could help produce the resources for student representatives alongside discussing OUSU's

policy on different educational matters in order to take motions to Council. This is something I will suggest to James, as I feel it would work much better than the current structure.

Joint Consultative Committee Representatives and Divisional Board Representatives

This is an area in which we really need to have improved communications with the reps themselves as well as with faculties and divisions, and I wish I'd had the time to work on this more. At the moment, we don't even know who all the JCC Reps are because it is so difficult to find out their names from Faculty websites/Administrators and this makes the job of the Divisional Board Rep harder because we can't tell them who all the people they need to communicate with are. Hopefully by the time I leave office, we should have built up all of our contacts and made sure we are told by faculties when their reps change over.

I have created four mailing lists, one for each Division, and I am intending that they can be populated with all the correct JCC Reps, and that eventually DB Reps can be elected by the JCC Reps from their Division rather than by Council, since these are the people they need to work closest with. Hopefully creating an Education Committee alongside this would mean that they had a greater role in OUSU and our policy creation, perhaps eventually having a vote in Council rather than the Council Delegates! Possibly a pipedream...

▪ *Study Skills and the Learning Development Advisor*

The Learning Development Advisor should be a great step forward in terms of campaigning for study skills provision within the University, and our discussions in many other meetings keep centring squarely on this as a major issue. Ben Yudkin was appointed at the end of Michaelmas Term, and is now working on developing mentoring projects such as Learnsmart within colleges. It is gratifying to see a position that OUSU fought so hard for in place and ultimately well accepted within the University, and I hope OUSU continues to work with Ben and the Learning Institute on further initiatives. Andrea and I have had several meetings with him over the course of this year, after being so involved with his appointment (each candidate had to be grilled by us for 1/2hr on how they would work with OUSU before a further 45-50mins interview with a panel), and are ensuring students are consulted and our ideas sought when developing policy and initiatives pertaining to Study Skills.

▪ *Student Feedback Mechanisms*

OUSU was one of three Student Unions leading a national coalition to change the National Student Survey, and this year the coalition has secured a more useful survey, a new bank of questions which allows institutions to choose two further areas they wish to ask their finalists about, a decrease in the amount of phone calls received by students encouraging them to fill in the survey and a new and improved website for prospective students with the results of the NSS provided so they can easily compare institutions. This was confirmed following a meeting with HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council for England who commissioned the survey), Ipsos-MORI (the company HEFCE awarded the contract for creating the survey to) and Prof. Michael Arthur, Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University and Chair of the National Student Survey-Teaching Quality Information Steering Group.

Although there are still issues with the usefulness of the survey, the improvements made this year are very much welcome. The Oxford Student Course Experience Questionnaire (OSCEQ) is, as its name suggests, specific to Oxford and much more relevant, so I would encourage students to fill in both, though the OSCEQ in preference, to give us plenty of feedback to campaign and lobby the University with. The 2006 OSCEQ included new questions asking about percentage of female tutors and lecturers at the request of last year's Vice-President (Access and Academic Affairs) and Vice-President (Women), and the results of these should be out very soon. According to the Director of the Learning Institute, who is analysing the survey, there are some trends indicated in the answers that the Gender Gap Working Group should be able to look at and assess in their consideration of the problem.

▪ *Libraries*

Libraries are a large area of work in terms of the Academic Affairs portfolio, but one which seems to have gone relatively successfully this year. Following the first Curators meeting in Michaelmas Term, a meeting with the Deputy Director of the Library Services and the Deputy Head of Reader Services resulted in me being put on the Consultative Groups for the New Bodleian redevelopment and the RI Humanities Library. With the RI Humanities Library at such an early stage of planning, it has been essential that we communicate what students want from their libraries. We attended a meeting of the group putting

together the business case for the site, its earliest planning stage, and some of our ideas such as graduate workspace, a 24hr workspace and others have already been incorporated into the plans.

I organised a very productive meeting with Judy Reading from OULS User Education, who co-ordinates introductory sessions in the libraries for Freshers alongside more in-depth and specific sessions throughout the year. This is the first time we have been in contact with User Education, and I am hoping that together we can ensure even more useful and worthwhile introductory tours and sessions, and a better advertisement of them to students through OUSU's maillists.

▪ *Oxbridge Essays*

As many people may be aware, the presence of the online essay service Oxbridge Essays has been increasing over the course of this term, with students being emailed and pided information on how to start writing commissioned essays for the company. The motion passed in 5th week Council means that the company are now banned from advertising in OUSU's media. If students are caught buying or selling essays the Proctors will not take the issue lightly; under University Statue XI this offence is considered a subsection of plagiarism, which the University takes very seriously. I have been working with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the Proctors to ensure that the company has as little access to Oxford students as possible, and that all students are aware of the repercussions of getting involved with essay writing services.

▪ *Casework*

Going from being a student myself to being the person who deals with the problems that arise from being a student has been hard at times, but has been rewarding in at least some of the cases I have dealt with. The Student Advice Service has gone from strength to strength this year in terms of its professionalism, and we are now all using the new policies and procedures that Jamie worked hard to write and put into action. Working with the Counselling Service during handover will hopefully lead to further professionalisation of the SAS, which should mean a better service for all of the students that need our help. We have dealt with some large cases this year, and this experience will be useful to pass on to the new members of the SAS. Although this takes up a lot of time, gaining results can be immensely satisfying and the SAS is something OUSU can be proud of this year. It may only help a minority of students, but to those individual students it can mean an awful lot to have some help and support.

▪ *External Relations*

Cambridge University Student Union

Over the summer, we hosted the entire CUSU sabbatical team in Oxford, and the relationships built up have been incredibly beneficial for both sides. They are the only other Student Union which functions in the same way we do, and finding out that there is another team of people who appreciate the issues of a collegiate University makes it all the easier to deal with. We have worked together on many fronts, making the most of this previously all too neglected relationship. This should be continued in the future; it has huge value because of both the support network it provides, and the time saved in research by sharing information, documents and policy motions.

Aldwych Group

Alan and I are Oxford's representatives at meetings of the Aldwych Group, the Presidents and Education Officers from the Student Unions of Russell Group Institutions (the 20 most research-intensive Universities in the UK). The Russell Group are the most vociferous supporters of raising the cap on top-up fees, and indeed pushed hard for their introduction in the first place. The Aldwych Group exists to monitor the activities of the Russell Group and fight against them on policy decisions that are not in the best interest of students. Unfortunately, Aldwych has not been as useful to us this year as it could have been. Cambridge and Oxford are similar only to each other, so even sharing best practice is difficult when the two are within a larger group. However, there are many policy areas in which having contacts within other unions to share information with have made a big difference. The meetings themselves took far longer than they should do, and very few decisions were reached. I have been working with other members to lay out the future and aims of the group so that Oxford can benefit from its inclusion.

This year we have organised a Valentine's lobby of Parliament, which allowed us to talk to a number of MPs and get some media presence. Further campaigning and lobbying events such as this will improve the Aldwych Group's reputation and value, and ensure that it makes a difference to the students it collectively represents.

National Union of Students

Alan and I have spent some time dealing with the NUS since our central affiliation went through this summer; we attended the campaigns launch at the NEC in Birmingham, which was again a great way to meet other sabbaticals and see how Oxford can get involved in campaigning for the rights of students at national level. The priority campaign for this year was Admission: Impossible and a number of us headed to the national demo in London. As we move closer to the review on the top-up fees cap, continued involvement in the NUS will allow us to raise a collective voice against introducing the marketisation of Higher Education in the UK.

Access

- *Admissions Executive*

Admissions Executive meetings have been extremely long and slightly inefficient this year. The creation of the Undergraduate Admissions and Student Funding and Access Offices in place of the old Oxford Colleges Admissions Office has been relatively successful but is still taking time to bed in, and a number of replacement groups such as an Admissions User Group and a corresponding group for access have not been put in place this academic year. The secretariat of the committee has transferred from the Conference of Colleges to the UAO, and there were teething problems with this but they have now been ironed out. Mike Nicholson, the new Director of Undergraduate Admissions, took up his post during this academic year and this has been a relatively big change.

Issues that have arisen this year include admissions procedures for disabled students, reallocation methods, admissions websites, integration of undergraduate admissions, English language requirements, pre-interview testing, international recruitment, qualification equivalences (Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers, IB etc), Common Framework implementation, press reports, access initiatives and Sutton Trust work, contextual data, UCAS policy and the Oxford Application Form (which is now much more useful and worthwhile, asking for contextual data about schools in the same way the Access Scheme form did, but available to all students).

- *Target Schools*

Target Schools was what originally got me involved in OUSU and what I technically had the most experience in, but despite this it has not been the high point of my year by any means. Having to sit on so many committees and working groups relating to academic affairs, combined with casework, means that access always ends up being almost a part-time job on the side. Funding was an ongoing issue when I first took office, and this issue was not resolved until the beginning of Michaelmas Term, meaning that the September Open Days did not happen.

Target Schools is not funded by OUSU, but rather from a pot of money stemming from the Admissions Office budget. When I first got involved, the budget was £15,000 and last year this was cut to £9,000. During discussions in Trinity Term, we became aware that the Admissions Office was attempting to further cut this to £5,000. To give you an idea of the problems this would cause, the mailing of the Alternative Prospectus, one of the main things we do, costs £2,500 before any events are organised.

The University began to try to intervene in the situation and demand that the Admissions Office gave us more money. As I took over, a meeting was planned to discuss this but I heard nothing further. I spent all summer trying to get information from every source I could think of, but to no avail. I had no reply to my requests for a budget figure until an email -1st week, but from the University's Academic Registrar rather than the Admissions Office, leading to me spending an hour or two in the University Offices meeting with him and the new Head of Student Funding and Access, fighting for us to be allowed more money to continue our work. I secured £10,000 for Target Schools and the Women's Open Day this year, which meant the other events could go ahead as planned. As I leave, an agreement should have been made to firm up a similar amount of funding per year for the next three to five years, which would make the future of Target Schools much more secure; this would allow much more strategic thinking and forward planning.

Target Schools went on its annual tour over the Easter vacation, with Regional Conferences in Belfast, Derry, Omagh and Dundee. Attendance was down on previous years but this is the first year that anyone from the University itself has visited Northern Ireland (Paul Teulon, from Schools and Colleges Liaison did a tour of schools in February). The mailing went out to schools and I have had a number of requests from schools that want visits from students, so I have been finding them volunteers. I have also been booking prospective applicants into the 9th week Open Day at Oriel. I'm currently trying to sort out a team of co-chairs for next year, to ably assist James in his work with Target Schools.

Alternative Prospectus

Trinity Term has involved preparing for the Alternative Prospectus to be redone over the course of the summer vacation. Ed has advertised for an Editor, and new copy is currently being written by volunteers from across Oxford for James to have fun editing when he takes office.

General OUSU

This year I have attended OUSU Executive meetings, OUSU Council, Appointments Boards and Standing Committee meetings. I have been an OSSL Board Director and the Chair of Junior Tribunal, moved boxes, worked at Zoo nights once or twice, tidied sections of the General Office, attended numerous reform meetings and diary organising meetings, and been to the Joint Committee of Council with Student Members. All this takes up far more time than could ever be imagined when first taking up the job, but it is important that everyone functions as a team to ensure the day-to-day running of the office is covered; it could be, and at points has been, all too easy to sit in our offices all day, every day concentrating on portfolio work. The general OUSU work is just as important, if not quite as interesting sometimes.

Thanks

And now onto the hardest bit of my report. This isn't exclusively a thanks for this year – it's for the entirety of both my involvement in OUSU and my time in Oxford, the two of which are ridiculously entwined. A number of the people thanked will never read this but I will record my thanks here all the same.

People working in the University or colleges who have kept me sane, helped me through job applications, been a cheery face, helped with campaigning or casework - *Sue, Anne, Nicola, Victoria, Elizabeth, Victoria, Michael, Richard, Paula, Tara, Paul, Emma* and *Jane*.

To the Sabbaticals from around the country I have met this year, mostly through Aldwych or from the Other Place - we've had some fun nights out and the support and information sharing has been so useful.

To our permanent staff - I can't thank you enough for this year. I promised you it would be better this year than it has been in the past couple, and I hope you feel that's been fulfilled. You do so much for OUSU and for its sabbaticals that I have no idea what we'd have done without you. *Barbara, Gill* and *Sue*, but especially *Maria*; you have been a source of support beyond the call of duty for both professional and personal issues for the last 3yrs near enough and its been so much appreciated.

To my co-chairs - thank you for a fun tour of Northern Ireland and Scotland for the Regional Conferences, and for making the experience less stressful; *Ben, Eleanor, Heather* and *Katie*.

To the JCR Presidents, especially those who survived the night after 3rd week Council – thank you for banterous prelists emails that are always entertaining to read, and for reminding me that sabs are allowed to have fun!

To the Executive - continue to remind people what you think and what you are there for, part-timers are never appreciated half as much as they should be. Thank you for all the work you have put in over your first two terms, and may you have an enjoyable third term. *Dave* – I'm not sure if you'll hate the idea of thanks or be appreciative of the ego boost (!) but thank you for so much, you've helped keep me sane over the Easter vac and this term and have put up with so much of my ranting!

To my fellow full-timers, in the order of job creation – thank you to you all for being there to share this year with me, through the good times and the bad. *Alan*, I will miss answering my phone to impersonations of Darth Fi and your ability to make absolutely anything filthy. *Ed*, well done for getting rid of your job. One day some of things we thought of back in plotting booth might come true, and we can gloat that we were right! Remember the good times; the condom box wall outside Jenny's office springs to mind! *Jamie*, there are really not enough words to thank you for being there for us all this year – my ranting partner in crime more often than not, I've got so much respect for the way you've handled this year and its events. Roll on free evenings and weekends for socialising! *Jenny*, right from the start of handover (“Nice tits” “Nice Job!”) you have been a source of fun and filth in the office and have been there through my tough times. I hope you find this coming year much easier, and that all goes well on the road to law-dom. *Andrea*, you've been there for much of what I've been through this year on committees, leading to ranting about and mick-taking of silly committee members and giggling in the corner about Mr. Wigg! Remember the fun of 4th week PresCom – I certainly don't! Shame we didn't get to do it again. *Imran*, haven't we come a long way since the days of George 'Ratty' Ratcliffe and squid dissections! Can't believe you're mad enough to stay in this place for the rest of summer, but good move with the air-conditioned room. Thank you for cocktails, Monty Python, chilli nachos and ridiculous banter. *Tom*, what a year it's been. You have given more than

anyone should ever expect, and I hope it hasn't taken too much from you. You've done such an admirable job of a difficult task, and I hope it leads you to something you enjoy. You were there so much for me over summer, thank you.

To the old timers; those who have been involved in OUSU in my time in Oxford and left at least a year ago but still don't mind talking me through things that are going on. You all remind me that there is life after OUSU, and have been there for welcome drinks and evenings out on my visits to London! *Nicky*, yes you told me so and I should have listened but I hope it's made me a better person. Thanks for sticking with me despite not taking your advice! *Dan*, it's finally coming to an end, and I expect that catch-up session now I'm not going to be involved any more. *Steve*, one of most enjoyable times we had was in OUSU; drinking in the office should never be that much fun! It'll be so great to have you in London and not miles away (in Oxford terms, obviously) in Birmingham. *Rob* and *Chris*, for the drinks and fun and gossiping this year, and for the support when I've needed it. *Lins*, you remind me there is both life after OUSU and other bonkers things in the world that I could get involved with should I miss OUSU too much! Thank you for all the getaway weekends, they were much appreciated, as was/is all your support. If you hadn't have convinced me I could do this job I wouldn't be here now. *Kennedy*, well I'm not sure what I'm supposed to say that sums up how much you've been there for me in the past couple of years. We've had so much fun that there are too many memories to pick from. Couldn't have got through this year without you, being able to come down and stay with you and *Lins*, ranting via text, email, facebook etc about things and being reminded that there is more to life than my job. Thank you so much, long may the fun continue! *John*, I've thanked you so many times before; I genuinely could not have got through this year without the enormous amount of support you've given me. From phone calls and gmail chats, to meeting up in London for drinks and Avenue Q, to letting me have a holiday in Edinburgh, you've kept me sane since about the Easter before my finals and have been there for so much longer than that. It can't always have been easy to listen to me talk about an organisation that you left 2 years ago and that didn't give you the most fun year of your life, which is why I am even more grateful and appreciative than ever before.

To my housemates not already mentioned – *Alison*, you know far more about student politics than I'm sure you ever thought you would want to know, and I am surprised you didn't run screaming from our house the first year we lived together. Instead, you signed up for another year of madness, fun, musicals, impromptu sing-a-longs, house dinner parties etc. I'm so glad you are ok, and that things are getting sorted. It's been a privilege to live with you for two years. *Lorn*, you've been there for nearly 3yrs now, since the fun of Orierton (although technically right back to the days of drawing practicals) through part-time exec in our second year, finals in our third year and now our fourth, still in Oxford and still involved with the University. The best sab that never was, listening to boy rants, job rants, rants at the world in general... Thank you for cocktails, for nights out, for nights in, for calm and measured advice, for laughter and fun, House and kittens. Lobster! *Alice*, you aren't one of my actual housemates but you may as well be! Ever since that first Target Schools meeting, you've been there for gossip and fun, drinking (possibly too much of it!), Northern Ireland and Liverpool tours, discussions about love and life and things that no-one else knows about! I'll always look back on finals revision fondly, as I know you will too despite everyone else thinking we are mad. Thank you for being my campaign manager (and what a campaign!) and getting me through the frustration of the elections process and this year in general. Now we can both leave OUSU behind (how likely is that?!) and get on with living life. Oxford would have been a whole lot less fun without you, and I hope it works out well for you next year.

To the Bio crew – you were all so much fun during second year and third year, and I have missed our group a lot this year. We need a reunion! Thank you for Orierton and the badger, for bio chat and jokes no-one else would get, for the memories (getting chucked out of Somerville!), for the pangos, and everything else. *Em*, thank you especially for girly gossips, tea and biscuits, an awesome 21st party, sticking by me even though I am rubbish at keeping in contact and a fun weekend when I needed it the most. *Colin*, for constant gmail chat and keeping up a little of my interest in Biology, for all your support and listening to me talk about an organisation that you were never involved in, for helping me with job applications and for general confidence-boosting.

To the newbies – *Martin*, *Rich*, *Louise*, *Hannah*, *Ingrid*, *James*, *Claire* and *Dave*. Have fun next year. Don't spend all your time in the office and take time out for yourselves. It can be too easy for OUSU to become your life, which isn't a healthy way for anyone to be. Look after each other as well as the organisation – be there for each other and support each other, because it can feel like the most thankless task in Oxford and everyone needs the occasional bit of praise. I'm sure you'll do a great job, and I'm at the other end of the phone line if you ever need to let off steam or ask for advice.

Finally, the end of my report. If anyone has read this all the way through and not just skipped to the thanks I'll be impressed. As one last indulgence, I want to dedicate my report, my time in OUSU and my time in Oxford to two people.

To my dad - without you I would never have got where I am today. The constant belief in me has meant so much, as has the emotional and financial support whilst at university. I have never wanted for anything, and though I have always appreciated you I never quite realised until my time here just how lucky I am to have you; the best daddy a girl could wish for.

And above all, to my mum - I wish you could have been here to see me get into Oxford, be awarded my degree and survive my first job. I've needed you more than ever this year, and not having you here is so hard. I miss you so much. I hope you're proud of me.

Imran Khan

V-P (Charities and Community)

Week 52 in the OUSU House; the sabbs all appear to be miraculously about to make it out alive...

Dear Council,

Hello again for one last report – not that many of you actually read these things, except to perhaps fill the boredom of waiting for recorded votes to be recorded and secret votes to be secreted. Or something.

It doesn't seem that long ago since I was finishing finals and taking up office, completely oblivious to the rollercoaster year that was to come. While speaking at an affiliation debate earlier this term at my *alma mater*, Christ Church, I let out a bit of a secret; back at the beginning of my second year, I voted for our JCR to disaffiliate. Mostly out of pure apathy; I didn't really know what OUSU did, how it affected me, or even what the OUSU President did (besides be ginger). OUSU was boring.

This year? It's been good...

... making a difference to students' lives every day and coming into contact with people in Oxford who really value the part we can play in their community, or talking to people about what we do and seeing them decide that it's actually a good thing...

It's been bad...

... working from 10am-12am four days in a row to finish the Alternative Careers Guide, seeing the RAG Scavenger Hunt put back five weekends in a row because it never stops bloody raining, working in an office that reaches +35 degrees in the summer and -5 in the winter...

And quite often, just ugly...

... having an office with a ledge outside its window which seems to only have purpose as being a pigeon breeding site, staying up all night to count votes in the annual election and seeing the sun rise through a grimy window with coffee that tastes like it's been through an animal somehow keeping you awake and counting, or coming into work to find that a motley crew of tramps and hacks have been using the entrance to Thomas Hull House as a communal urinal *again*...

It's been fun, depressing, uplifting, soul-destroying... I'm glad I've done it, I'd never do it again. But *not* boring. There's not a single person who's been part of OUSU who thinks it works properly, especially not the people who've been through the mill for it, but it's not through lack of trying. I'm sure it'll get there one day, with its own bar and gig hall, offices that don't reek of piss, decent website, sabbs that aren't mad and endless resources to help you. But in the meantime, at least it's human.

I'm guessing that a significant proportion of the people actually reading this are either the incoming sabbs, or people thinking of running for a sabbatical position one day. I'm not going to give any advice, just a reminder; it *never* goes how you think it will.

Anyway. The important stuff; a whistle-stop tour of what I've done this year.

First off; RAG!

- Brand new website which is actually pretty easy to update, looks great, has lots of information on it, and is an absolutely brilliant resource for the RAG reps.
- Completely rewrote the Reps' Handbook, so we've had the first one for about three years.
- Published the RAG Mag, bizarre as ever.
- Had dozens of events... Eclectic club nights at Love Bar, Battle of the Bands at the Cellar, hooking up with the Oxford Stunt Factory to bring you the Bungee Jump, or if that's not enough thrills for

you, you could have joined us for the RAG Skydive. Rhythms of Dance at Po Na Na and Poetry Slams at the Vaults were something different, while the Wasted in Wonderland and RAG Xmas Bar Crawls were more of the same.

Sitting in the OUSU meetings room for an entire day de-thorning and celophaning 600 roses for Valentine's day was one of the more surreal moments, as was picking up two dozen sausages from the Big Bang to cycle down to the East Oxford Community Centre with for the sell-out Food Fair. We had street collections for the Poppy Appeal and KEEN, had a random night in the Old Refectory for Wear it Pink, and persuaded lots of foolhardy people to get RAG Haircuts in Wadham JCR. The number of Speed-Dating events we've had alone must number a dozen, each of them giving a similar number of romantic matches – not to mention the Big RAG Blind Date. We've just finished with selling Vodka Jellies at Summer Eights – all that's left is the Scavenger Hunt and Paris Hitch.

- The RAG Everest Trek is still on course, with fourteen students heading out to Nepal this summer to take part in community work there and head up to Base Camp.

Community

As well as advertising dozens and dozens of volunteering opportunities this year, I've been working with local groups to bring the opportunities to students, including...

- E-mentoring scheme; Oxford students mentoring underprivileged children from different cities online.
- Local befriending scheme; students befriending underprivileged children in the local area, who fall outside the remit for being able to receive official help from the city and county councils.
- Helen & Douglas House; recruited volunteers for helping with a range of things, from event-organisation to working with the kids in the hospice itself.
- OxDox Film Festival; annual film festival in Oxford, students reviewing the documentaries and helping with the organisation.
- Science Oxford; science communication outfit run by the Oxford Trust and based on St. Clements, working towards creating a long-term partnership and getting a steady stream of volunteers helping their wide range of activities, from teaching in schools to creating exhibitions.
- Climate Xchange; came and gave a talk to Environment & Ethics Committee with a view to getting people involved in cross-discipline collaboration on Climate Change in Oxfordshire.
- Finding volunteers for the Cowley Carnival, participants for the Oxford Muse, Oxford Philomusica workshops, and putting in place plans to organise coaching of local kids football teams, holding local schools mock trial competitions, and working with corporate partners to add value to events and schemes.
- I've been attending meetings of the Oxford Inspires University Liaising Group, to keep abreast of all the really exciting cultural stuff they're doing, like Luminox, and trying to bring that to students

And of course, I've been updating and stewarding the oxfordgetinvolved.org website, which is still a fantastic resource for anyone interested in volunteering in Oxford.

Alternative Careers Fair

The bane of my life over Christmas; turned out to be a really great event. Had dozens of speakers, absolutely loads of stalls, and came out with a really impressive handbook too. We had nearly 1500 visitors, and some really positive feedback. The number of man-hours that went into it doesn't bear thinking about, and I'll spare you the details; but suffice to say I'm never, ever, organising a careers fair again. The Careers Service helped enormously to stop me going completely insane, as did the Exec – thanks guys!

Environment & Ethics

The committee and co-chairs have been brilliant this year in terms of working fairly autonomously, and it's been great to see so many people getting involved. There have been campaigns on everything from compact fluorescent light bulbs, the Contraction & Convergence campaign, recycling, low-carbon travel, and loads more. We've been arranging screenings of An Inconvenient Truth, distributing leaflets and handbooks on simple measures to cut your energy usage.

The merger of Environment committee and Ethics committee went ahead really smoothly back in Michaelmas, and I've since worked to formalise the entire committee for the first time in OUSU's Standing Orders, which should provide some stability and structure for the future.

Thanks to Maria for being the driving force behind getting the paper recycling system up and running in OUSU, and we've also now got an envelope recycling system.

Charities

They're what inspired me to run for the position originally (having been the President of a student-run charity myself) but I haven't been able to do nearly as much for them as I'd have liked to, this year. Still, I've been working with people like KEEN, Jacari, OXAB and OxFizz to work on things as disparate as setting up entirely new organisations, rewriting constitutions, fundraising, and fixing websites!

OUSU & Other Stuff

Last, but certainly not least... An enormous part of the time that OUSU eats up is actually meetings. There's council every other week, exec every Friday, office meetings every Monday... it all adds up. And that's just the bare minimum.

- Appointments Board; can take up to a day at a time, we pick the Editors and Deputy Editors of the Oxford Student, the Freshers Fair organisers, the Assistant Business Managers, the Oxide Radio Station Managers, summer publications staff, and god knows what else.
- Oxford Student Services Limited (OSSL) Board; the directors oversee the work of the OUSU Business Team (Tom & Ed) and make sure they're behaving themselves. The board makes some really important and tricky decisions every so often, as well as being the ultimate authority on everything commercial OUSU does.
- I've also been a member of the Oxide Radio and VP Finance Reform working parties, which have both led to fairly sensible and uncontroversial reforms, which should really benefit OUSU in the long run.
- Joint Consultative Committee; the University body which oversees OUSU and helps us troubleshoot.
- Proctors; we all meet them once a term just to smooth over issues, and inevitably end up talking about exam trashings...
- I'm OUSU's representative to both Environment Panel and Clubs Committee, which set the University's policy on Environmental matters and deals with any issues arising with University societies, respectively.

There's so many random little things that come up, and are impossible to keep track of. I don't think many of the sabbs got much sleep during Freshers' Week, mainly frantically making sure that Freshers' Fair didn't fall apart at the seams. When several tonnes of Oxford and Cambridge Careers Handbook or Survival Guide arrive in the office, the sabbaticals are the ones in the office that end up carting it up and down the place all day and night.

But it's (almost) over now, and in a few months everything that happened this year will probably be forgotten. I wish I had some pearl of wisdom or even trite remark to finish on, but all I can say is THANK **** FOR THAT.

Speaking of thanks, there's lots of people who I just couldn't have got through this year without – I probably don't deserve half the help I got, but it's all enormously appreciated.

Thanks

The RAG Exec; Danielle Zandi, Pippa Henson, Juliette Fisher, Alex Marchant, Vicky Hammond, Catriona Balfour, Rosie Fox, Chris Heaton, and most of all Una Brogan – you've all been amazing, and much better than I was when I was on Exec!

The RAG reps, too. There's too many to mention here, but check out the list at oxfordrag.co.uk if you want to start. Special mentions to Becky Fry and Caighli Taylor from New, Hannah Watson from Queens, Sophie Brown from Hugh's, Alice Puritz from Wadham, Rebecca Coleman from Balliol, Roisin Wooler and Natasha Jackson from Hilda's, Fliss Johnston from Brasenose and Vicki Jennings from Keble – sorry if I missed you off the list!

Environment & Ethics Reps; you've all been incredibly dedicated. Your Common Rooms are all really lucky to have you working for them, whether they know it or not...

Hannah Stoddart and Ian King, my two immediate predecessors. It's been invaluable being able to call you guys up and complain every so often, and also seeing that it's actually possible to come out on the other side and still be happy about it all.

The office staff; Maria, Barbara, Sue and Gill. Thank you so much for all enormous help you've given us all this year, and thanks even more for all the little things. OUSU actually would collapse in a big pile of rubble if it weren't for you.

Anna Parker, Rich Hardiman and Jamie Frew; for getting me through some tough times.

Anne Dutton, Dick Lidwell, Angus McKendrick, Taiwo Ogidi and Tracey Wells at the Careers Service; the Fair just wouldn't have happened without you. A special thanks to Anne and Tracey for helping me get my place at Imperial next year!

The OUSU Exec and Co-Chairs, but specifically Olly Carr, Niel Bowerman, Sam Baars, Hector Guinness, Rich Ollerhead and Vrinda Manglik – you've all worked really hard this year, it's been great to have you there.

The OxStu – Rob Cookson, Jen Rigterink, Ed Hancox, Cat Armitage, Sam Wetherell, Sam Shackle, Liz Bowling, Kate McMullen and Naomi Scherbel-Ball (and many others), you've all given the lie to idea that journals are all hacks. It's been incredibly refreshing to have people around the office who aren't OUSU types!

All the people out in Oxford who've made it worthwhile. Everyone at the Muse (especially Anna Parker), Jo Hodges from Science Oxford, Hilary Burr from Helen & Douglas House, Ding Boston from the Stunt Factory, Marie Wright from OxDox and MaD, Martin Knight from Merton's, Will Pouget from the Vaults, Nadia von Benzon from KEEN, and a hundred other people whose names escape me at the moment.

Christo Albor, Alice Ramsay, Rosie Boone, Lorna Stevenson, Jess Gibson, Viv Fathimani, Jo Lee Morrison – and many others – but most of all Christine Quigley, for reminding me that there is a world outside OUSU! Next year's sabbs, and especially Rich, Martin, Claire (and Dave), for reminding us that people do still want to get involved in OUSU.

The JCR Presidents I've met; for the alcohol and the good times. Oh, and for the support... Tora Hutton, Garth Smith, James McDaid, Simon Heawood, Tom Lowe, Paul Dwyer, Dave Tan, Laura Davies, Lewis Iwu, Dougal Meston, Dawn Rennie, Vish Mashru, Kui Sze, Dave Mitchell, Liv Bailey, Alistair Wrench, Cat Park, Chris Sellers, Pete Surr, Ben Jasper, and of course Minty. Special mentions to Suze McClelland and Frank Hardee. We have all really appreciated it, and it'd be impossible to tell you how important it's been to have people who see what you're trying to achieve day to day.

Which of course brings me to the sabbs. Alan, Ed, Helen, Jamie, Jenny, Andrea and Tom. We've probably all had our differences over the year, but I've been really amazed that we're all still on pretty good terms despite the whole pressure-cooker thing. You've all been pushed right to the limit in different ways and, generally, all still come out fighting. I think it says a lot.

I've probably missed out hundreds of people, so here's a lame generic one to try and make up for it; thanks to everyone who helped out with absolutely anything at all this year. It's been tough, and I'm eternally grateful to anyone who has made it a tiny bit easier!

Tom Wrathmell

Business Manager

The Business Team

Since the abolition of the position of Entz Manager last year, my position has consisted of sales and marketing duties, as well as the provision of entz through Zoo, and organising events such as the commercial area of Freshers Fair. I have also discharged my duties as Managing Director of Oxford Student Services Limited (OSSL).

The general business performance of OSSL and OUSU has been strong this year.

Publications:

Improvements have been made across the majority of publications, both in terms of the quality of the publication, and its sales performance. I fully expect this to continue for the coming year, though I would advise that we experiment with new formats, such as e-printing using enhanced PDF formats.

In general terms, income from publications has been strong this year. Exceptions include The Oxford Student, where revenue has dipped slightly this year. The time constraints of managing such a diverse Business operation this year, have meant that I have not been able to be as proactive in approaching clients as I would have wanted.

This will be improved by the appointment of a second Business Manager, and the performance of bookings for Trinity Term and Michaelmas Term 2007. The fact that the paper is now full colour should also make it a more attractive product to advertisers.

OSSL has recently incorporated The Oxford Forum into its portfolio of publications. I have been particularly impressed with the hard work they have put in over a short period of time, and have confidence that we can fund its production comfortably through advertising over the next year. We will be selling The Forum alongside The Oxford Handbook in some local retailers, and have plans to offer it outside Oxford on a subscription service.

A Comment on Diversity Guides

A particular concern of mine this year is the treatment of so-called Diversity Guides- such as The Survival Guide, Women's Handbook, LGBTQ Guide and even The Living Out Guide.

These have underperformed financially, and operationally this year. This is not a criticism of the Sabbatical Officers involved, but a comment of how these guides have been traditionally been treated by the Student Union.

Such publications are important in the wider work of OUSU, but are currently too dependent on Sabbatical Officers for their production. If the same logic were applied to the Freshers Guide, Oxford Handbook, or even the Oxford and Cambridge Careers Handbook, these guides would underperform too.

Our 'Diversity' Guides should all be produced in the Summer Vacation, with a full staff and Business Team working on them. By guaranteeing distribution of these guides during the start of Michaelmas Term, we give ourselves the best chance of funding the guides appropriately using recruitment advertising.

Furthermore, with a professional team behind the production of these guides, we can produce more visually attractive, and readable guides, boosting their popularity with readers and advertisers alike.

I also have concerns of the current financial impact of Diversity guides on the Student Union finances.

A critical balance always needs to be maintained between the commercial imperatives of OSSL, and its eventual effect on OUSU finances, and OUSU's role in providing representation and services to important minorities and stakeholders within the University.

I would like to see some of our Diversity guides streamlined. I believe there is far too much duplication of identical content across publications such as The Survival Guide, and the LGBTQ Handbook. Content also needs to be focused, making these guides more readable for students.

If OUSU were to publish a large Diversity Guide, incorporating The Survival Guide, LGBTQ Handbook and The Anti Racism Guide etc, we could distribute this to students on an annual basis, achieving scale in its pre-production, printing and distribution, and increasing the attractiveness of our diversity publications to advertisers.

This is not a case of cutting funding in Welfare. Savings and profits from such changes should be ring-fenced, and put towards Welfare projects, whether it is events, publicity or campaigns.

We have decided to streamline the production of our Freshers Guide and Graduate Guide. The 2007 Freshers Guide will incorporate the two former guides, with an increased circulation. It will be interesting to see how it performs. I have every confidence in its success!

I am extremely happy with the Publications and Business Team we will have at our disposal this summer. I wish them every success, and look forward to seeing what they produce for the new year.

Oxide Radio

Oxide Radio has gone from strength to strength this year.

The new studio space next to the Publications Room has improved creativity at the station, as well as broadcast quality, and the new website has been a great improvement.

The station also achieved national recognition again for the second year in a row, winning a Radio 1 Student Radio Award for specialist broadcasting.

There is also a growing partnership between the station and the local community, with work experience schemes with local schools, and for Oxford students with BBC Oxford.

I have been disappointed with some of the negative publicity concerning the station this year. It is simply not the case that OUSU does little to help the station. The combination of a new studio space, free advertising in The Oxford Student, a promotion platform with Zoo, a new website, and now improved computers actually adds up to a lot of support from OUSU.

It is true OUSU can do more to help financially, but the station and its members must realise that negative comments regarding funding does the station, and OUSU little credit.

The station has been well run this year, and still has great potential.

I would like to see staff employed over the summer vacation to work on the station, in a similar way to the staff employed on publications.

A more formal Community outlook could also unlock substantial government funding for the station, which outweighs other commercial alternatives at present.

Web

This has been the Achilles heel of OUSU this year.

Although online revenue has grown strongly this year, our web offering hasn't improved as expected.

In September, we launched a new ousu.org site, a Content Managed website with an external provider.

There have been numerous difficulties with this service, and as a result, we will be terminating our contract with the company.

We have agreed to adopt a new system for the coming year. This will see a radical overhaul of the main OUSU site and other OSSL websites such as oxfordhandbook.com, zoozoo.org and oxfordstudent.com.

The OSSL pages will continue as stand alone domains, and also will be fully integrated in the main OUSU homepage. These websites will be fully updated for the first time in nearly 3 years.

This is an exciting development, and has the potential to transform many aspects of OUSU's work through its wide ranging functionality

This year we have also developed a new Oxide Radio website, and are about to go live with a new careers website, developed in partnership with CUSU. This has huge commercial potential, and will be a valuable service for students next year.

Freshers Fair

Freshers Fair was a great success this year, and we continue to enjoy a great relationship with commercial exhibitors.

The potential of Freshers Fair will continue to grow this year, and planning for the event is already at an advanced stage.

An area of improvement for the coming year will be the budget given to promoting the opportunities for involvement in OUSU's work, and the services it offers, particularly the branding of Zoo.

Zoo

Zoo has experienced contrasting fortunes this year. It remains an incredibly important project for the Student Union, yet requires more resources to reach its full potential.

The decision was taken to downsize our offering of nights at Christmas due to resources, and due to the difficulties of balancing Entz and other projects as part of my job.

In many respects this has worked. Park End and Zoo Na Na have performed above expectations, and experienced record numbers this year.

However, a reduced schedule of entz has affected the overall profile of Zoo amongst students this year, and this will have to be looked at for next year.

I would recommend that Zoo increases its budgets considerably next year, to improve its publicity at Freshers and beyond, and to consider more aggressive promotions at its events for the coming year.

Other Commercial Activities

This has primarily consisted of the sale of caps and gowns. Sales of these improved this year, particularly due to online sales for the first time this year

Concluding Comments

This year has been a great, and at times, gruelling experience! I have enjoyed myself immensely, and am still incredibly enthusiastic about the potential we have here at OUSU. We've had a strong year on the majority of fronts, yet cannot expect this to continue without continued hard work.

Much remains to be achieved, both commercially and in terms of services for students. At present, this potential is constrained inevitably by resources. OUSU is much maligned as a result of this, but there is still considerable enthusiasm for our work amongst students.

The way forward is dependent on an improvement in the financial resources of the Student Union. This can be achieved internally, through savings in publication costs, and externally by improved backing by the University, its students, and commercial clients.

A shared vision of the future status of the Student Union at Oxford, between OUSU, and the University will yield the greatest improvement in our finances. I know that is the aim of the incoming sab team, and I wish them all the very best of luck for the coming year.

Completed Projects

Freshers Guide 2007
Sales of Caps and Gowns
Oxford Handbook 2007
The Discount Guide
The Oxford and Cambridge Careers Handbook 2006/7
Freshers Fair 2006
The Living Out Guide
The Oxford Student
www.oxideradio.co.uk
Zoo

Ongoing Projects

New OUSU web portfolio
www.oxbridgecareers.com

Thanks

There are many people to thank, without whose help, this would not been possible.
Firstly, the Sabs have been invaluable this year- a great source of advice, support and enthusiasm-I'll miss you all!
Thanks to Jenny and Helen who have often run errands for me at zero notice!
Ed-we made it! Thanks for all your help-the long hours, advice, humour and sheer effort to help all of this happen. I am going to miss your poor taste in music!
To all members of The Oxford Student- it's a paper to be proud of! This year has been a massive improvement, and I'm proud of your efforts! I hope you stay involved as long as possible!
Oxide-again, a really great improvement! Some of you will go on into broadcasting-I'm sure of it. Thanks to all the hard work of the committee. Particular thanks to Paul, Rachael and Joe-you're a genius and will be well missed.
The Zoo Team-Its been great fun! Particular thanks to Ryan, Fergus, Asni, Aimee, Sam, Alexia, Nick, Adam, Emma, Farhan, Laura and Nicky-I'll miss you all!
All the Entz Reps that have been great this year-Fi, Danny, Simon, Robbie, Marie, Blae, Chuba, Will, Sam and Rui-I'll miss you all!
The JCR Presidents for their support-Minty, Lewis, Garth and Pete-you have been great-all the best for next year!
All the Office Staff at OUSU, and to the accounts staff for helping everything add up, and for the part time business team throughout the year-it was a lot of fun!
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