



termly reports to council

trinity 2008

Martin McCluskey

President

And so – after nearly four years - the OUSU journey comes to an end.

This year has been absolutely amazing and more exciting and rewarding than I ever thought it could be. Regardless of the grief and angst that occasionally comes your way (and the odd badly researched, malicious article from the student press), I still believe this is the best job anyone could have at this stage in their life.

I apologise if this Council report turns into a bit of a stream of consciousness – after this amount of time there's a lot to get down. In order to keep you amused throughout Council, there are three Post-War Labour Party election slogans (or slightly amended versions of them) hidden in the text of this report. Prize to the person who gets them all first!

Introduction

This year has – on the whole – been a good one for the Student Union. We've been more active than at any time in recent years, we've had some real campaigning successes and we've succeeded in increasing knowledge and awareness of OUSU amongst students.

Within OUSU, we've just appointed two new members of staff, we're continuing to push ahead with our governance reforms, and we've reformed the way OUSU elections work to make them more exciting for candidates and voters.

The new Sab team inherit an organisation that is stronger and more active than a year ago and we hope they continue to build a strong Student Union.

The Student Union

OUSU Communications

This year we placed a special emphasis on making sure OUSU communicated more effectively with individual students, and I think we've come along way to making sure that happened. The new OUSU website is a great resource, only suffering from a lack of time to make regular news updates; the OUSU Weekly emails have been a great way of ensuring that people hear what we've been doing and what we've got planned and our presence in the student press has, on the whole, been positive.

What's also been stark this year has been the break from "OUSU Stories" in the press being just about the internal machinations of the Student Union and, instead, focussing on the issues that we're working on each day. It's far more effective when an OUSU Sab or Exec member is giving an informed quote at the end

I really think we've been punching above our weight this year and using the platform that comes from being associated with Oxford to its best potential. In 2006-07 OUSU featured in 11 international and national news articles. In 2007-08 that figure has leapt to 152. OUSU Sabs also made nearly 50 media appearances on TV and radio including James Lamming on the Politics Show talking about student debt and Louise Randall discussing student drug use on ITV and BBC News items.

In the future, OUSU should appoint an Information Officer. Something I planned to do, but never got round to. With the focus on Oxford in the national media it's important that OUSU is seen and heard to be representing the views of students in news articles and in TV reports.

OUSU Exec

So much of our success this year is down to our Part Time Exec team who have supported us from the start of Hilary Term. We entered Hilary Term with a full exec for the first time since I've been in Oxford. They have been incredible and without them OUSU would not be in the strong position it is in today.

The Exec members have been eager to get involved in all areas of OUSU's work and take on tasks way beyond their portfolio duties. Our exec meetings have been informative and FUN and have avoided the bitter debates that characterised them throughout my time in Oxford.

For future Sab teams it's essential that you never forget the Part Time Exec and remember that they are as much a member of the OUSU Team as you are. Consult with them, take decisions with them and don't ignore them.

New Members of Staff

This week, OUSU added two new members of staff – our new Student Advisor and the Strategy and Financial Admin Manager – who will be providing support to the Student Union over the coming years. The addition of these members of staff will make a huge difference to the work of OUSU and will go far to make sure our offices and services are professionalized.

For OUSU to succeed in the future, it will be important that attention is given to our permanent staff base. Since the 1990s it has been allowed to shrink and this has only been detrimental to our work. OUSU needs a large professional staff base and needs to focus on being student-led, not student-run.

Change in Legal Status

The issues emerging from the Charity Act 2006 have obviously taken up a good part of my time this year. At the start of my term, I inherited a decision to become an incorporated charity and have been working towards that throughout this year. As part of that, we set about improving OUSU's governance arrangements (including policy making and elections) and also engaging a new firm of Lawyers – Stone King – to lead us through the process.

All going well, the Working Group report will pass today (Friday) and Lewis and co. can move forward on the next stage with the lawyers over the summer. The time for decision will be a referendum on a new constitution at the same time as the main elections in November.

OUSU Elections

I'm ecstatic that Council chose to pass the new election regulations last week and I hope they make it through the next reading today, and again in Michalemas. For years, OUSU elections have been stifled by restrictive regulations that made life difficult for candidates and voters alike. Next year, OUSU will have a set of election regulations and a new online voting system that will allow candidates to run proper campaigns and engage many more students. I hope it all goes well (don't blame me if it doesn't!) and everyone who is running uses the regulations to run some of the most active election campaigns Oxford has ever seen.

Common Room Interaction

Common Rooms are the backbone of OUSU, but also a factor that makes our work more challenging than that of other Student Unions. This year we've been making efforts to bridge the gap between OUSU and Common Rooms.

In Hilary alone, OUSU Executive members visited 56 Common Rooms, giving presentations and taking questions from students. This has been a long held aspiration for the Student Union and one we have been pleased to implement this year.

We have also increased the number of support meetings taking place in OUSU: whether bringing together domestic reps to exchange best practice or gathering Common Room officers to discuss issues around a particular topic. The feedback we've had so far has been positive and I hope the team next year carry on these meetings.

Providing detailed policy briefings and facilitating meetings between JCR and MCR Reps is probably the most important role OUSU can play – and one that spans across the work of every Exec member. In the majority of cases, JCR and MCR Presidents and other officers don't want OUSU to be coming up with grand plans and schemes for OUSU's own promotion. They want OUSU to be doing the work that they don't have time to be doing and keeping them up to date with the major issues across the University.

However, the OUSU – Common Room relationship has to be two way. This year I've been incredibly lucky to have had a group of JCR Presidents who are (on the whole) serious, committed people who have their Common Room's interests at heart. If OUSU is to succeed we need positive advocates of OUSU on Common Room committees and in Common Room meetings. Let us work together to make OUSU a strong Student Union.

Our affiliation/disaffiliation tally seems to speak in our favour this year. We've had two new affiliates (Magdalen JCR and Mansfield MCR) and no disaffiliations.

OUSU Reps

Before I was JCR President at St. Hugh's, I was OUSU Rep. The position is too often overlooked or used as an easy way on to CR committees. This year, however, has seen a small but committed band of OUSU Reps really push OUSU in their colleges and be the positive advocates we need. It's essential that OUSU reps are not pushed to the margins of the Student Union. While JCR and MCR Presidents will invariably be the first port of call on issues of policy, OUSU Reps have to be engaged just as much. This year's experience has shown that strong OUSU Rep in college can really determine the tone of a Common Room towards OUSU.

The Issues

This won't be a comprehensive list of everything I've worked on this year. For that, look through Council Reports from previous weeks. Here, I want to draw attention to some key issues that have taken up time this year.

Student Representation

The Student Representation issue has taken up a large part of my time over the past two terms. There have been two parts to this issue: attempting to increase representation on University committees and trying to make the case for increased representation on college Governing Bodies.

On both, little tangible progress has been made, but there are still many lines of enquiry that are yet to be exhausted. Following representations to the Vice Chancellor, OUSU made a formal submission to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's consultation on University governance making the case for student representation on PRAC and GPC. The consultation is now over and the committee will report in October of this year. It will be for the next sab team, therefore, to carry on this work.

With regards to representation in colleges, the Conference of Colleges will be receiving an OUSU briefing paper on committee representation in colleges next week and I hope to persuade them to discuss it at their 9th Week meeting. The paper will make a strong case for Governing Body Representation and will hopefully generate discussion amongst colleges.

The issue will also be included in the final audit document and we hope the QAA auditors will investigate the issue further, particularly in light of their comments in the 2004 report.

So much of the change that has to occur, however, is cultural. While senior members of University staff seem to be favourable to greater representation in private, this does not seem to translate into results. Words have to be matched with action. I hope that the incoming team will continue to push on this important issue and build on the work that has been done this year.

Rent

Rent campaigns in Oxford this year have been far more active than at any time while I've been in Oxford. The increase in activity throughout colleges points towards a student body that is fed up with being at the receiving end of unfair rises in accommodation costs.

This year has also demonstrated how CRs and OUSU can constructively work together on rent. OUSU's place in the rent issue is not to be on the front line leading protests, but to provide good information and support to officers. Let us win through together. Action has to be taken at the local level in JCRs and MCRs, with OUSU support. The structures that have been set up this year for rent support have worked well, and I hope they will continue to be built on in the future. The recent success of Freedom of Information requests for College accounts shows how we can use the Act to get access to information that Colleges don't want us to have and highlight areas where they can improve, without passing all the costs on to students.

Socially Responsible Investment

This year saw the end of a three-year OUSU campaign to urge the University to adopt an SRI Policy for investments. This has been a major OUSU success for a number of reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the benefit of sustained pressure and the need to maintain commitment to issues over a period of years. Too often, Exec teams have been willing to drop projects in order to pursue their own agendas. However important they are, it's also essential that there is some sort of continuity and long-term ambition for OUSU's campaigns. Secondly, the resulting University committee gives OUSU the power to refer issues to the SRI Review Committee. This is a massive step and one which, at the outset of the campaign, we would have never thought possible.

PPHs

This year has been a strange one for the PPHs, with the closure of Greyfriars and several uniformed articles in the student press. The University has constantly reiterated its commitment to the PPHs and the implementation of the Review, under the direction of Ralph Walker, continues apace. It's important that over the coming years OUSU continues to keep good contact with the PPHs and be aware of the specific issues that affect them. With regards to the implementation of the Review,

OUSU should continue to facilitate meetings between the PPH Presidents and the Review Group and make sure the student voice is put front and centre of any discussions on the future of the halls.

Reach Oxford

This year has seen reforms to the Oxford Student Scholarship scheme, most notably the change of name to 'Reach Oxford'. The scheme is a joint scheme run by OUSU and the International Office, which funds students from the developing world through their time at Oxford. Emma Sabzalieva in the International Office needs to be given the credit for the reforms to the Scheme this year. Her work on it has been amazing.

If anyone wants more information about it (particularly anyone wishing to take a scholar next year), get in touch with Lewis over the Vacation.

Local Community

I've done a lot this year to try to engage more with the local community and the relationships that have been built up have been incredibly helpful. OUSU has been frequently featured in the local press giving opinions on just about everything. We've also been invited on to local radio numerous times. Having more of a student voice in the local media is important in combating the myth that Oxford students are only interested in what goes on in the 'bubble'.

I've also tried to strengthen our links with the local council and have attended numerous local council meetings and made sure the student voice is heard there. As more and more students decide live out, OUSU's role in engaging with local partners will become more and more important. It's essential that these relationships are maintained and that OUSU representatives continue to have informal meetings with councillors, attend area committees and keep a good line of communication going with Thames Valley Police.

Griffin and Irving / No Platform

It would be impossible to write an end of year report without mentioning the events of Michaelmas Term and the Union's decision to invite Nick Griffin and David Irving. It still baffles me how stupid the decision to invite them was and, regardless of what you thought of the subsequent "free speech" debate, I think the vast majority of Oxford students thought that the issuing of the invite in the first place was a disgrace.

26th November was a sad day for Oxford and it was a terrible message to be sending out to the world that Oxford students would stand by and watch as two evil men were given a prominent platform for self-aggrandisement. I'm still yet to hear how either of them were "crushed in debate", as we were promised time after time by Union officials.

Nothing constructive came out of the "Free Speech Forum", but the days and weeks leading up to it exposed unsettling attitudes and complete naivety from many students who didn't seem to understand the extent of the damage caused by the far right and racism in our country. A strong OUSU anti-racism campaign is essential to combat these attitudes.

The invite should never have been issued and I hope that the Union has learnt its lesson and won't make the same mistake again.

Thoughts on Two Persistent Issues

"Politics" in Student Unions

The age old debate of “Students as Students” versus “Politics in Student Unions” has been one that has underlined my experience of OUSU over the past few years. Consistently, those who advocate Student Unions that remain outward looking and engaged in wider society have won. However, the issue just doesn’t seem to go away.

Student Unions are democratic organisations and, as such, the membership should be able to debate whatever it wants. Restricting debate, as many have proposed in the past, would only drive people away some of the most engaged people from the Student Union. At a time when the success stories in Oxford life are those clubs and societies that engage students in wider social issues, any moves to take “politics” out of OUSU would only lead to a hollowed out student union with little credibility.

Women’s Campaigning

Since I’ve been in Oxford many people have tried to take a shot at Women’s campaigning and the position of Vice President (Women). Often, this is borne out of ignorance of the issues or a skewed understanding of minority representation and how best to achieve equality.

OUSU’s work on women’s campaigning over the years has been above and beyond what most other Student Unions achieve. Through the combination of WomCam, the VP (Women) and the network of JCR/MCR Women’s Officers, OUSU has continued to keep gender equality at the top of the agenda. Women continue to face inequality at Oxford and we need someone to be constantly driving ahead the agenda for women and making sure those issues aren’t allowed to be left behind. That’s not to say that there aren’t any other inequalities, there are. However, I’ve become more and more convinced that the way to deal with them isn’t to role back in the one area where we can do a lot of good, but to extend our provision from the high base we already have.

All too frequently recently, I’ve heard people try to make arguments that are based in the false assumption that inequality does not exist between men and women. It’s important to remember that even after 30 years of equal pay legislation, women still stand to earn 18.4% less than men, they face an environment where 96% of the directors of the top 100 UK firms are male and where only six out of every hundred cases of sexual assault cases reported result in a conviction. Even in Oxford, women in prominent roles continue to be in the minority (just look at JCR Presidents and the Oxford Union). A lot may have improved, but we’re still by no means in a position where we can stop campaigning.

Conclusion

The Student Union has been in a process of change over the past few years. During my time in Oxford, I’ve seen OUSU go from strength to strength, but the pace of change is often too slow and cohorts of students can leave feeling like little has changed or without really knowing what OUSU is or what it has done for them.

The Student Union that the new Sab team inherits is stronger than a year ago, and I hope they continue to build on the successes. Most of all, I hope they all have FUN and that their experience is as good as my experience this year. They’re in an incredibly privileged position and I hope they never forget that. Good luck!

Martin xx

Thanks

This is going to be a long list, but I want to record my thanks to as many people as possible. This year, and everything leading up to it, has been a team effort.

The Sabs – you’ve been incredible. I couldn’t have done it without you. You’ve made this year more enjoyable, happier and funnier than I thought it could be (even in the difficult moments. Ingrid – life will certainly be quieter without you next door, but I’m not sure what I’m going to do without you telling me what to do, where to go, what to wear. **James – Thanks for everything this year. If Teach First all goes wrong, you can probably find a job writing jokes for Christmas crackers. ;-)** Hannah – Good luck with everything next year! **Claire – You’re too nice to be a Tory. You’ll see the light soon enough. You know where I am.** Louise – I’ve loved getting to know you this year and you’re not the pashmina rah I thought you were going to be! Haha. Most of all, I’ll miss having my hand in your sweet drawers :-P. **Rich – Oxford’s loss is Dublin’s gain. The VP(F) job is probably the most difficult of all, but you’ve done an amazing job (and you managed to put up with Dave!)**

The Exec – the best OUSU Exec there’s been during my time in Oxford. Thank you for all your enthusiasm, support and encouragement. **Adam – the OUSU Reps are lucky to have you.** Daniel – I will forever leave my packaging in the supermarket and piss them off in honour of you. **Dom – OUSU’s Yes man - you really need to stop volunteering for stuff.** Hannah S – you deserve some kind of award for sitting through the SAS review meetings. **Sarah – I’m glad I talked you in to running for OUSU last year ;-)** Let’s hope it doesn’t stop now. Becci – Germany doesn’t know what it’s got itself in for. Do you think they’ve got enough beer there for you? I hope you keep getting yourself into compromising situations :-P **Kat – you’re incredible. I’m not quite sure how you do it all; you’ve not ceased to amaze me all year. If you ever want to defect from the Lib Dems, you know where I am. We’d be happy to have you. Good luck for next term!** Jaimie – good luck leading the International Student Campaign – you’ll be amazing. **Laith – thanks for all your work, not just on exec, but also on Oxide. The station has been great this year.** Joy – thanks for all you work! **Herman – thanks for helping us push forward on our grad work.**

JCR Presidents – As I’ve already said, probably the best bunch since I’ve been in Oxford. I’ve been lucky to have you. **Leonora – keep the red flag flying and one day we’ll line them all up against the wall...** Morcos – my liver is worse for having known you. **Stefan – I’m genuinely glad I got to know you this year. Thanks for all your support – particularly for chasing me round on 26/11 and making sure I didn’t screw up.** Meg – you brought me Swing, and for that I am forever grateful. **Jonny – you’ve been amazing...I reckon it’s your flair and drive that carry you through.** Joel – forever the details man, you have made me more paranoid about everything I write. **John – if the Policy Report doesn’t go through today, you and I are having a long drink.** And to everyone else who has made Prescom a joy – Ben, Adam, Amaru, Barry, Chris, Dani, Ed, Femi, James, James, Jon, Jon, Konstantin, El, Maanas, Marlene, Liv, Richard, Sam, Sarah, Sean and Tom.

MCR Presidents – You’re all far more civilised (well, almost). Thanks for all your support and engagement this year.

The Campaign Team, without whom I wouldn’t be writing this today. At least this document didn’t take 5 hours and numerous arguments around a kitchen table. **Dave – you’re a star. You may have initially freaked me out with strange tactics when I started this OUSU Presidential journey, but it all worked out right in the end. I’m sure your**

obsessiveness will bear you out well in Hammersmith. Georgia – one of these days, you'll learn to reply to texts and pick up phone calls :-P. I'm hoping we can spend a bit more time together next year in London when we've both got more time on our hands! **Thom – without your scariness, the team wouldn't have been half of what it was. At least during the campaign I got to have breakfast with you every morning ;-)**

The Oxford Student – for your support over the years, especially everyone this year who I've enjoyed getting to know and sharing cups of tea and microwave meals with. You are the best paper in Oxford. **Anna – Sorry I didn't sort out the official pardon. Mea Culpa etc.** Hannah and Matthew – I'll miss being stalked by you in the early hours of the morning.

Hugh's – The best college (and JCR) in Oxford! Keep punching above your weight and showing that the Norrington Table isn't the only measure of success. ;-)

OULC: The biggest and best political campaigning force in Oxford and one of the key groups that has defined my time here. You don't deserve the reputation that some people chose to give you. Without a doubt, OUSU is stronger with your involvement. **To the old guard: Steve, Lynne, Hannah, Jack, Raoul – bring on Budapest '08.** Liv - you were a great exec member and I'm really sorry it didn't work out. **To the (not so) newbies – the club is in good hands. Forward to Socialism!**

On a more personal note. Zoe, Rachel, Lucy, Kate – for coping with three years of hacking, elections and no-shows followed by a year of unanswered calls, texts and emails and so few visits to see you that I could count them on one hand. I promise I'm going to be better from now on. **Steph – For this, I'll break out of West Coast Male mode to say that you're incredible and I couldn't imagine what Oxford would have been like without you. Thanks for putting up with me and not giving up on getting things out of me when necessary ;-)** Finally to my Mum – it's all down to you. Sorry for never being at home anymore. x

Rich Hardiman

V-P (Finance)

ZOO

Performance not at much variance with precedent. Risa's still getting bigger each week, although the growth is slowing down as we get closer and closer to just packing it out totally each week. ZOO Na Na is not performing as well as I'd like, to be honest, although it's showing definite signs of recovery after the Hilary slump. Ha! 'Hillary slump!' I didn't even mean that one, I'm clearly just a comedy genius.

Publications

I've confirmed our printer for the next year. We'll be dealing with a single company for everything we print, which will be much simpler than this year. Furthermore, we'll be getting a great deal – a saving over the board of about £4000 on previous years.

Editors for the Oxford Handbook and Freshers' Guide are now in place. We'll be appointing editors for the Oxford Student, a station manager for Oxide (which is emphatically NOT dead) and a Freshers' Fair organiser early next week.

Budget

I've finally got this and everything associated with it finished. Late I know – I can only recommend a motion of censure or no confidence.

The appendix to the budget suggests three models for campaign funding (in line with my manifesto promise – as yet unfulfilled: another reason for censuring me...) During the budget debate I'm going to be proposing an amendment to the central motion so that we can make a collective decision on how you want your campaigns and committees funded in the future. This might make the motion take a little longer, a circumstance for which I offer my wholehearted apologies.

Other stuff

I've basically spent the last week tying up loose ends and getting things ready for the incoming team. The office, which was left immaculate when Dave went off to Hammersmith, is a tip again – but I promise I'll sort it out before I leave!

And the obligatory self-indulgence...

Wow. It's over. Almost. Having been working for OUSU in one form or another for three years I can tell you that this is an extremely weird feeling. I always said that I wouldn't do the massive list of thanks and general sentimentality in my last report, but do you know what? Fuck past Rich. What does he know?

This job – or, rather, my handling of this job – has ruined friendships, very nearly scuppered relationships with pretty much everyone I care about (not, I'll admit, many people...), and robbed me of much needed sleep. Throughout the year I've felt like all I could do was mess up as infrequently as possible and hope to duck most of the criticism I've so richly deserved. It's been pretty stressful.

Would I do it again? In a heartbeat. I've met some awesome people, had some amazing times, caused more trouble for people than I ever thought myself capable of and got more done than I ever intended to. So, without further ado: the thanks list..

Lorna: There's nothing to say here but thanks. For everything.

My fellow sabs: Martin – despite the banter and the drama I have nothing but respect for you. You've been a joy to work with and the best possible President we could have asked for. Louise – you're the best, kindest, most wonderful person I've ever met; and I mean that from the bottom of whatever I've been using for a heart. Hannah – I've never met a person so tireless in campaigning for their chosen cause. I don't always see eye to eye with you, but I've got a tonne of respect for you. Ingrid – so impossibly reliable, always ready to slap me down when I got too rowdy. Thanks for your support and advice throughout, but not for Shakira. James – almost certainly the most formidable mind I've ever met. Ever. A gentleman almost to a fault, and a Dr Who fan to boot. Claire – you're just such fun, with a wicked sense of humour that leaves me, supposedly the office joker, in the dust. You're also amazing at your job, which means you're all right by me!

Dave: You might not be here any more, but I'll say it again anyway, you've been a great support to me this year. May Team OSSL live long in everyone's memories (for the good bits.)

The part time exec have been indefatigable, engaged and committed to the cause. I'm massively pleased to see that there's a really significant role for the PT exec again – I've always said that 21 heads are better than 7... I'm going to specially mention Becci, mostly because it'll embarrass her, but also because she's really been there for me this term, just when I thought I was about to crack. Thanks. Oh, and sorry Dom, but not only has she been to more ZOO nights, but she's also fitter (just). You're beaten on every metric that matters to me...

The OxStu: my experience of the paper is akin to a recurring nightmare. You know, the type where you read a piece of copy that you passed the night before in the printed paper and realise that you're about to get sued. No? Just me? Fair enough. Notwithstanding the late nights, the fights and the hours

on the phone to the press office I've really enjoyed working with you all. Special mentions to the editors, Sam, Andy, Matt, Cal and Hannah – all of whom have been great to work with, if.. frustrating... at times.

Oxide: I'm sorry guys, I really didn't enjoy playing at Rupert Murdoch for students. Laith, Katie and their whole committee have worked really hard this year, and I wish them and their successors all the luck in the world for the future.

Bang!: David, Marcus and Ben – if you guys don't win at least one Guardian Student Media Award next year I'll hunt down and kill the judges for you. A stellar product, and a thoroughly nice bunch of guys.

Oh God. I am going on aren't I? I'm just waiting for 'I'd like to thank all the little people...' Gonna be a long time coming though.

Maria, Gill, Sue & Barbara: never shocked, never judgemental. How would the place function without you?

Reaching back into the recesses of my mind I feel that I should probably thank the people involved in Freshers' Fair now. So I will, but not with specifics as most of them are going to come up later.

Angela: I literally don't know what I'd have done if you'd not been willing to go above and beyond the call of duty in your support of me, both with professional and personal advice. Thanks, and never, ever, let another sab officer rope you in like I did – it's just not worth it... HIGH FIVE.

Ed and Tom: two men with whom, I will admit, I did not always see eye to eye (especially, let's be honest, Ed). Despite that I've always liked you both, and as I've gone through my year I've grown to like and respect you all the more. I can only hope you're both proud of me.

Some JCR presidents: Ben, Dani, Marlene, Stefan, Jon, Tom, Meg. Bloody good people all, without you I'd never have had the success I've had with Risa, and I've only have had about half the hangovers. And a special mention to my perennial drinking partner, smoking buddy, and US politics debate opponent: Mr John Maher. A straight up legend, always on the end of the phone, ready to help with a hare-brained scheme, get some ZOO tickets out for me, or just make me feel better about life in general. I'm gonna miss you man.

The ghosts of OUSU past: Hels, you warned me, I didn't listen. Turns out we were both right in our own ways. Imran – just Imran, you might be obscenely good at getting internships, and you might support a team that actually won something this year, but I'm still not going to let myself get jealous. You git. Chris and Rob – my greatest regret of the year is not having stayed in touch enough. We're going to fix that. Thanks for everything guys.

And everyone else:

Sam, Nick, Tom, Biscuit, Rose, Griff, Mark, Cat, TJ, Annie and Teenie. Well, there've been some ups and downs, but thanks for all you did for me. Thanks especially to Justine for sticking by me when it felt like nobody else would.

Louise Randall Opportunities)	V-P	(Welfare	and	Equal
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As we come to the end of our years as sabbatical officers, I thought I'd try and write a (fairly) brief final report of the main focuses of my work this year. I was advised by my predecessors when taking office that the role of the VP (Welfare & Equal Ops) in OUSU is less about revolution and more about keeping things revolving. This has certainly seemed to be the case!

Particularly in my work heading up the **Student Advice Service**, the bulk of the work has been keeping the service running smoothly, and ensuring that the many students who rely on the service are supported as well as they possibly can be. The work is unpredictable: weeks can pass in a blur when I do nothing but casework of one form or another, and other weeks I can wonder where all the students have gone! It can be time consuming, complex and emotionally draining, but receiving feedback from students telling us that we are the reason why they are able to continue doing the things that they're doing, makes it all worthwhile. I have had the great privilege of line managing SAS officers who have been nothing short of incredible, and who have shown consistent professionalism and commitment to the students they support. Line managing your peers is always an interesting challenge, and I thank them for how gracious they've been to me on the rare occasions that I've had to nag!

Much of this year's efforts have been spent in securing the future of the SAS for future generations of students. The **SAS Review Group** spent 4 months reviewing the service, consulting with many different individuals, campaigns and services in the University and beyond, and has established Management Board for the SAS, as well as a 5 year plan for ensuring the stability of the service, and the introduction of 4 new equal opportunities officers.

This year saw University funding finally secured for the reinstatement of a professional **Student Advisor**, after 4 years without one. It's a tremendous achievement that the whole sabbatical team should be really proud of. We were extremely pleased with the calibre of the applicants for the job. We interviewed this week and are delighted to introduce Lisa Stokes-King, who will be in place for next academic year. The position will ensure continuity and professionalism in the advice work that OUSU does, and we believe that the Student Advisor will become a highly valued service for students.

Aside from the workings of the SAS, the largest part of my job is **supporting Common Room Officers**. This year I have been running very well attended fortnightly meetings for welfare officers, and have introduced a separate **MCR welfare officers** meeting to best serve the specific concerns of graduate officers. I have established an active community of **LGBTQ Officers**, and have undertaken regular meetings and training sessions with external speakers, which have proved very popular. I've also run termly **training sessions** for welfare officers, which are designed to complement the Peer Support training many of them already have. Much of my time is spent sending mailings and individual emails to Common Room Officers, the majority of whom I am in contact with on weekly or even daily basis (forgive me, Harry!). Answering questions, providing resources, giving support when things are difficult, and being a purveyor of all round encouragement has been the order of the day, and I've loved it! I have worked with an incredible bunch of dedicated officers this year, all of whom have been so much fun to work with, and a credit to their common rooms. If you can, take a moment next time you see your reps to let them know that their work is appreciated; you'll make their day.

As your student representative for welfare this year, I've sat on a number of **University Committees** (Committee for Student Health & Welfare, Committee for Health & Safety, Committee for Student Hardship and the Joint Consultative Committee with Student Members), and have worked closely with central University welfare services such as the Disability Office, the Student Funding Office, the Accommodation Office, the Counselling Service and the Proctors' office. These are fantastic services, run by fantastic people who really care about students – do use them!

Over last summer I got to grips with Indesign (with an awful lot of tech support from our wonderful VP Finance!), and produced a glossy **Guide for Students with Disabilities**, which has been very well received. We are currently in the process of putting the Survival Guide, Living Out Guide, and LGBTQ Handbook up online. A huge thanks to Becci (part time Health & Welfare Office) for her help with this!

The **University Audit** document involved a university wide consultation with students. The weeks spent collecting and analysing data on what students think of University welfare provision has been incredibly fruitful, and we hope that our student union written submission to the auditors will help bring about positive change and development for further generations of students. It's also an incredibly useful set of data for Rosanna to get her teeth into next year and work out in the long term what are the changes that OUSU can bring about because of it.

This year has been a good year for progress for students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs). OUSU has held a **Dyslexia Forum**, undertaken a survey of every student in the University with an SpLD, and as a result of a paper taken to the Education Policy and Standards Committee, a high level University working group has been set up to improve the way that such students are supported.

As far as **General OUSU** work has gone, I hope I've thrown myself into every aspect of the Student Union's work! As a relative newbie to OUSU at the beginning of the year, I have been so impressed to see what can be achieved by a Student Union working together to achieve the best for its students. And that's by no means just the sabbatical officers, or even the part time executive, but every student who comes to Council, fills in a questionnaire, casts a vote, turns up to a club night, participates in our campaigns, reads our publications, or, dare I say it, uses our (new Durex!) condoms. I've sat on OSSL Board, Appointment's Board and along with the other sabbatical officers got involved in all of those things that make your Student Union tick day by day.

That just leaves the most important reason for writing this report; thanking those people who have made a challenging and sometimes overwhelming job, not only rewarding but daresay enjoyable. First of all, thank you, for reading this (perhaps!), for turning up to Council, for making your voices heard. Without you we wouldn't be here. Thank you to all of my lovely welfare officers, LGBTQ reps, Equal Ops reps, Campaign Co-Chairs, and all of those students who I've been lucky enough to work with. You do a truly amazing job, and on those grey days in OUSU towers your energy and enthusiasm inspires me. Thank you to the permanent staff at OUSU, and in particular Maria without whom the institutional wheel would stop turning. Maria, I hope you always know how appreciated you are. To my wonderful predecessor, Jamie, I owe my sanity. You've been such an incredible support, and the measure of what every VP (WEO) should try to achieve. Rosanna, I'm so pleased to be handing over to someone I trust so much. You're going to be wonderful. A huge thank you to the exec: you have been amazing. Thank you for being so dedicated and for consistently going above and beyond the call of duty. Particular thanks to Becci and Hannah, you have been such a massive help and support this year, I think you're fantastic. Finally, an enormous thank you to my much loved sabs, who have not only been great colleagues, but amazing friends. It's been a privilege working with such a talented, committed and passionate group of people. Thank you all for making me laugh; picking me up when my skin's just not been quite thick enough for this job; eating my lollies; having endless patience with my POTS, and heck, putting up with my silliness and appalling puns. I could write pages about how much I appreciate and admire each one of you, and one day I will, but until then know that I love you all very much: you have made an otherwise good year a fantastic one.

Hannah Roe

V-P (Women)

The past few weeks:

Very briefly, I have again spent a vast deal of time on the Student Written Submission for the University Audit, including holding focus groups for BME, LGBTQ and female students, writing them

up and turning them into reports and meeting with relevant University Staff. With the other co-ordinators of Enough! I gave a one hour presentation on Enough! to the Oxford Student Mental Health Network's Shared Practices Day -it was really well received, with attendees asking for posters to put on their welfare boards (including College Nurses). We also had lots of people telling us that they had wanted to come our session but had been allocated to a different session. There was an information session for College women's and welfare officers on support for Student Parents, with presentations given by the Student Funding Office and the University Childcare Officer. I also co-ordinated Enough! on Tuesday, have been working with OUSU LGBTQ Council on the LGBTQ Survey for the Audit, had a women's officer meeting and am making the final arrangements for the OUSU Women's Open Day. My understanding is that there has been long running trend of downturn in applications and admissions of female students to Oxford, which is highly concerning and as far as I am aware, yet to be addressed by the University.

Before writing my end of term (and year report), I looked through the Trinity Term Termly Council reports of a number of my predecessors. This has had a significant impact on what I will put in my end of year report - continuity of approach and understanding being something that has a very high value in assessing the current situation and clarifying why we have the priorities that we have. I have not done a summary of all the work I have done. Instead I have highlighted issues that that in my experience this year have been of particular importance in terms of continuity over the years and to how OUSU works with the University.

Eating Disorders -

Enough! has been one of the solid successes of the year - without the professionalism and dedication of Sian Renwick and Benjamin Britton, it could not have reached the stable stage it is at now - oversight by the Counselling Service, a presentation to OSMHN, a paper written for the University Committee for Student Health and Welfare, the OUSU Eating Disorders Handbook updated and online, laminated posters in a the majority of College Lodges.

Research shows that one in ten female students in Oxford has a current eating disorder, and clearly male students are affected too, though in much lower percentages. This research was done in 1998 and eating disorders are a serious mental health issue with the highest fatality rate of any mental health illness. And Oxbridge students are disproportionately affected. For the last eight years VP Women have worked incredibly hard on this issue - supporting the setting up of an EDA phone line for Oxford town (which subsequently collapsed), publishing the Eating Disorders handbook, running No Diet Day and positive body image events. It's not going to go away and will require considerable work in the future - not least getting the University to provide training for welfare tutors to have a basic understanding of the illness, having clear policy on kitchen provision in Colleges etc. OUSU needs to continue to lobby the University on this - what appears to be the University's own lack of leadership in addressing this area cannot reasonably continue.

I would like to see a student culture which actively promoted a more positive body image, rather than falling constantly into the tired old stereotypes which are quite frankly toxic. Students in Oxford are under enough pressure without additional pressure to look a certain way. Student publications which discuss student's weight and appearance can't possibly have an inkling of the distress they cause. Finally there's the age old double standard. If men are also coming under increasing pressure to look a certain way this is not a good thing and must be stopped, and is not an excuse for the way that women are treated. Some women said in the Women in Student Politics event that I ran in Michaelmas that they are nervous to run for political positions, because of the way that they see the women already in them treated in the general student media. There are a number of concerning explanations for the low level of women's participation in student politics (8 of the total JCR Presidents this year - again less than 25%, just like the past three years) and this is rather obviously a factor.

Supporting Student Parents -

This has been another solid success of the year. I created a student parents maillist which allowed the start up of the Student Parent Committee and a extensive ten page survey of Student Parents. OUSU now has a lot of data and quotes with which to lobby the University, and actual student parents to continue to consult extensively. This structure did not exist at the beginning of the year. Highly frustratingly, the University appear to have agreed a while ago to compile a central list of student parents (there still isn't one) and gave funding for a student parents meeting (this funding no longer exists as the Committee which gave it haven't met in three years). With a staff changeover in the relevant University offices, it is to some extent understandable why this has happened, but it means that OUSU has had to chase up every University commitment. We now have OUSU policy that the University Childcare Committee should start meeting again - this would enable more continuity even if there's staff changeover. It has taken a lot of work to get to the stage where OUSU even has the data to address the student parents issues properly and this is very much the beginning. We still don't have a forum to address the issues. Given the significant repercussions this lack University support has on women who have children during their degrees, this needs to be a major priority for next year.

Women in Sports -

This is an area I have put a lot of work into, as yet with no significant results. A funding disparity and lack of recognition and facilities remains as big a problem as it did in the beginning of the year. As with any situation where there are vested interests in the resource allocation of the status quo and there is a massive increase in money required to achieve any kind of parity, change will not come easily. This is all the more reason to keep working for improvements, as I can't think of a single sportswoman (or indeed that many sportsmen) I've met this year who has been impressed by the situation in Oxford. More and more women are playing sports and Oxford really needs to adjust to that. I'm almost ready to submit my paper to the University Review of Sports.

Womens' Campaign -

This year has been a lot about capacity building, and trying to keep things moving along. I put a lot of energy into getting Women's Campaign into a stronger form in Michaelmas Term and I can happily say that this is the stongest and most active that I've seen Women's Campaign in my time at Oxford. This is thanks to the serious dedication of all of the women involved. You can read the report of the achievements of the year in the Women's Campaign Co-Chairs reports - Reclaim the Night, V-Day, Ladyfest, Love Your Body, talks, films, workshops.. Next year looks set to be even bigger and better. It's also been so valuable to work with women graduate students on the Feminist Seminar Series.

Women's Officers -

The trainings have been almost as useful for me as for the women's and women's welfare officers! I'm very glad that the network is fostering intercollegiate events - St Anthony's Women's Committee have been fantastic and 'best practice' sharing is getting so much positive feedback.

Finals Gender Gap -

Plus ca change... Well, the gap is closing a little in some subjects and widening in other subjects. I've attended all the EPSC Gender Panel meetings and relayed all the issues women students have told me about as well as highlighting the importance of certain research, through a paper I wrote. If the University doesn't work out how to employ more female academics, provide study skills support for dealing with the tutorial system and make sure all their staff have gender sensitivity training on a regular basis then I can't see the situation changing. Research shows that lack of female academic role models is an important factor in addressing the Finals Gap, as is the confrontational nature of the Tutorial system. Oxford in first and foremost an educational establishment and its deeply worrying that women are still systematically performing less well within it. As ever, resources need to be allocated to this area.

Admissions -

This is an area I wish I could have worked more on. Statistics and trends show this is a worrying area in terms of women's access. Anthony Heath's 2005 'Oxford Admissions Study' apparently shows that Oxford is twice as likely to choose male students as female students with the same qualifications. Nonetheless, with two Women's Open Days this year, the University is aware of the fantastic access work that OUSU is doing and will hopefully choose to work with us more on this. The Women in Science initiative for secondary school children which a group of graduates is developing looks excellent and I'm sure OUSU will continue to support this.

The Safety Bus-

It's great that this is up and running again, thanks to University funding - safety is such a major issue for so many students

Generally, my impression this year is that the University has to some extent dropped the ball on enabling student representation on the areas which I have responsibility for working on - not all areas obviously, and the Gender Equality Scheme and the EPSC Gender Panel are fantastic. Hence motions to Council on ensuring proper forums with the University have been a key part of my Council motion proposals, highly frustrating but necessary. Hopefully, these representation issues will soon be sorted out so that Rachel can just get on with her job, rather than trying to re-establish the conditions which used to exist to enable her to fulfill the job description which is highly reliant on these conditions.

I would like to add that there are certain matters on which OUSU can't do a great deal of representation to the University because it doesn't have the resources. The SAS review proposal of creating an additional sabbatical post to focus on equal opportunities issues and work with the Universities on these is highly sensible and I very much hope that OUSU works to take this forward next year.

Things I didn't manage to do-

A-gendered Magazine - It's understandable that OSSL couldn't commit the resources to an entirely new magazine venture, and I truly appreciate the serious consideration the Board gave the matter. Quite frankly a magazine to make sure that issues of gender inequality in Oxford are addressed shouldn't have to exist - the student publications should be looking at these issues as a matter of course. As it is, it is clear that a media forum for these matters still doesn't exist and it would be great if it could be created. OxWip's Tone and Bluestocking are fantastic examples of what can be done. The VP(Women)'s job description is already overloaded so can't take on the groundwork required to get this off the ground.

Unplanned Pregnancy Pack - Jenny rewrote this in her Trinity term, so we have had an up to date guide all year.

Finally, there are too many people to list to thank for all their fantastic work and dedication to working towards gender equality in Oxford. You know who you are! Very quickly, special thanks to Ramin Lolachi, Kate Halls, Kat Wall, Leanne Price and Mandisa Mbali. It's also been a pleasure to work with such a dedicated sabbatical team and part-time executive - the clear focus on supporting students has been brilliant and the Audit is fantastic. As ever, the OUSU staff are the mainstays of the entire operation - without them, OUSU couldn't function.

Ingrid Frater

V-P (Graduates)

I'll try in the report below to outline some of the main work I've done throughout the course of this year. It really has been a lot of fun (I'm so glad I ran for this job!), and I hope 2007-8 will be seen as a successful year for OUSU. Everyone I've worked with deserves a huge thank you and a lot of gratitude - not least the other sabs, the part time Exec, the many JCR and MCR officers, the staff at

OUSU (both permanent and those including the ROs and publications staff), the autonomous campaign committees, and many of the University staff. All their work, good humour and effort are very much appreciated! Putting up with me being incessantly teachery, bossy, tired and (sometimes!) pretty bad-tempered, as well as endlessly insisting on “*and MCRs*”, I’m sure has not always been fun, so thank you!

Making OUSU relevant for graduates

I came into this job having been an undergraduate and graduate student at Oxford. The transition was clear – I went from feeling involved in college, knowing what OUSU was, feeling pretty well represented etc. to feeling left out of what was going on and as though most of what was happening in Oxford, my college and OUSU was fairly irrelevant.

Graduates are, on the whole, less likely to be as involved as undergraduates. They’re working more, have stricter timetables, they’ve been there, done that before ... you name it. But that doesn’t mean that OUSU can continue being completely dominated by undergraduate work with vocabulary revolving around JCRs, policies downright unfair towards graduates, miniscule graduate turnout in elections and several more disaffiliated MCRs.

I hope that much of the work we have done has put graduates at the heart of what we do, right up there alongside undergraduates and not a mere after thought. I came in insisting that that would be the case, and I’m delighted that the rest of the Exec were so keen to agree. Some examples:

Talking about JCRs and MCRs – you’ve all heard me shouting it, but finally we seem to be reaching a point of actually mentioning MCRs. Not that hard, eh?!

Making OUSU’s structures and policies relevant for graduates – the policy working group and elections working group have, I’m delighted to say, held graduates at their core. And we now have far more relevant policies for graduates, most notably on fees.

Reaching graduates in Common Rooms more – throughout this year, I have been to 31 Common Room inductions and meetings; we’ve had six MCR Presidents’ Committees in different colleges, all with turnout of over 25; Louise has been trialling MCR welfare officers’ meetings; Martin and I produced and sent out a new Presidents’ Guide to all CR Presidents; we’ve helped MCRs with rent and as part of that I’m compiling a graduate alternative prospectus; Mansfield MCR has reaffiliated and no one (touch wood, not yet anyway...) has disaffiliated.

Reaching graduates (and indeed all students) in other ways – part of the main problem with OUSU and graduates is that, as an institution, we’re so geared to working with CRs, when in fact graduates often have little to do with their MCR. So the new website, the university-wide email lists and better poster publicity have been highly important. For the first time ever, the Freshers’ Guide went to all undergraduates and graduates; I’ve met with Junior Deans throughout the year; and the event I held at Green College in Hilary Term (Have Your Say: Developing Your Graduate Experience) attracted 40 students from all over the University, and provided a forum where graduate students could speak directly to such people as the PVC Education, the Principal of Green College and many senior staff members from each of the four divisions.

Making OUSU relevant to the University

For the first time ever, we’ve given presentations to University Council and to the Heads of Colleges about what OUSU is and what work we do. The success of these presentations has been clear – a greater respect from many staff, the opportunity to speak to the Vice Chancellor Nominating

Committee, and the securing of funding for the Student Advisor. We've still got a long way to go before OUSU is seen as an equal partner on all committees, but we've definitely made progress and I wish future teams well in this regard.

University committees and related work

On a recent Sunday I was on a train coming back on my own (the others I was with got bank holiday Monday off ...) from a weekend in Cornwall. I was incredibly bored – my drunken state post-Risa on Friday had meant that I had failed to pack a book and my phone charger; two things it would have been helpful to have to keep me occupied for five hours on a train. So I ended up listing on the back of a train ticket as many regular university committees as I could think of which I have been on this year. (I lead such an exciting life!). I think VP Committees would be an apt name for my role – I came to 25, and here goes again (you get a prize if you can work out why some are starred!):

University Council*, Educational Policy and Standards Committee*, EPSC Graduate Panel*, EPSC Graduate Skills Advisory Group*, Graduate Committee of the Conference of Colleges, Graduate Committee of the Conference of Colleges Standing Committee, Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, EPSC Graduate Admissions Committee, EPSC GAC College Working Group, EPSC, GAC Fees and Funding Working Group, EPSC GAC UAB Working Group, Planning and Resource Allocation Committee Teaching and Learning Space Review Group*, Curators of the University Libraries*, Joint Consultative Committee with Student Members*, Rules Committee, Clubs Committee, PRAC Fees Policy Group, Committee for the Language Centre, MPLS Graduate JCC*, Institutional Audit Management Board*, Gender Equality Steering Group, PRAC ICT Sub Committee, OUCS Management Committee, Groupware and the Student Web gateway group.

Sitting on these committees has shown me that the work of the University is often painfully slow and endlessly consultative, but also that there are many staff dedicated to improving the student experience and making sure that the education, support and services we receive here are the best in the world. We're not there at the moment, but the work being done is definitely almost always moving in the right direction. I guess some main things to highlight from our end are:

Student academic representation – James and I took a paper to EPSC to strengthen departmental, faculty and divisional student academic representation.

Language learning support – James and I consulted with all JCRs and MCRs to put together a policy on language learning, which helped form the basis on the University's policy, now out for consultation.

Graduate and international fees – we won representation on the fees policy group and are now, for the first time, in the room to deliver students' views on these fees.

Admissions procedures and information – I've been lobbying endlessly for better information for graduates on applying and a more coherent admissions process. The new proposals are being decided on now and should be a significant improvement.

www.ox.ac.uk/students - this now exists!

Student written submission for the audit – this has taken ridiculous numbers of hours, but is now almost done and coming to Council; it's potentially a huge leverage document in terms of winning changes from the University.

Provision for students with specific learning difficulties – working with other students

on this, we've helped secure the setting up of a group to investigate what and how provision is made for students with SpLDs.

The role of the college advisor – I campaigned for greater clarification of the college advisor's role and more guidelines have been drawn up.

Teaching and learning space – putting teaching and learning space and facilities at the heart of a student's educational experience was very important to me. The survey and report I wrote about space for teaching and learning impacted directly on the report which has now been passed by EPSC to ensure that space is seen as an educational issue and reviewed and improved accordingly.

International Students

We've now got up and running a really strong International Students' Campaign, with a full and dedicated committee. In Hilary term, the campaign held the first ever OUSU International Students' Festival, which culminated in a fair at Keble College with over 500 people coming along to see everything from Scottish ceilidh dancing to gamelan playing to Japanese theatre. They're producing a handbook for new international students, they've worked with the Careers Service to run careers events for international students, they produce a weekly newsletter of all the relevant events going on around Oxford, and they've been campaigning for better representation in CRs. The campaign is now frequently mentioned by University staff (most particularly spear-headed by Dr Heather Bell, the Director of International Strategy) and are seen as a key representative group for all international students, which is a real achievement in one year.

Mature Students

An area where I've struggled for a while to get things off the ground, but finally things happened last week. We held an informal discussion evening at Harris Manchester for mature students, and 27 students came, from across many colleges and departments. They've given us lots to think about and work to do, and one key thing will be to ensure we have a proper Mature Students' Campaign set up and a University-wide orientation at the start of next year.

Student Advice Service

Casework has dropped off a little recently, but throughout the year I've seen/been in touch with many individual students with a range of difficulties and problems to discuss – as many as eight in one week. This has at times taken its toll, but Nightline training, counselling and generally awesome people around me have helped no end!

OSSL

There isn't masses from me to say about OSSL, other than that I think we've been a pretty productive board. Rich will say more on this, I'm sure.

Finally, I do wish everyone who'll be involved next year all the best and hope it goes well and that we've left OUSU in the best shape we could. And, as a finishing comment, I don't want to single out people to mention, but I do think that Martin does deserve a thanks for everything he's done and for driving us forward. Little did I think four years ago that we'd be working in OUSU together. But for all his frustrating habits, he's done well. Change delivered, I hope!

James Lamming

V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)

James Lamming
Vice President (Access and Academic Affairs)

And now, the end is near;
And so I face the final council.
Common room representatives, I'll say it clear,
I'll state my report, of which I'm certain.

I've worked an academic year that's full.
I've attended each and every committee meeting;
And more, much more than this,
I did it my way.

Regrets, I've had a few;
But then again, the Ox Stu has told you about them yesterday for me.
I did what you told me to do
And saw it through without exemption.

I planned each policy paper;
Each careful clause in every lengthy motion,
But more, much more than this,
I did it my way.

Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew
When I spent too many hours on facebook.
But through it all, when there was delay,
I suggested we move to vote.
I faced it all and I stood tall;
And did it my way.

I've given speeches, I've emailed and argued.
I've had my fill; my share of meetings.
And now, as accountability subsides,
I find it all so relieving.

To think I did all that*;
And may I say - not in a shy way,
No, oh no not me,
I did it my way.

For what is a sabbatical, what has he got?
If not his legacy, then he is forgotten.
To say the things he truly feels;
And not the words required by council mandates.
The record shows I took the blows -
And did it my way!

--

*To qualify the 'that', in my slightly edited version of the classic song, "My Way", a report on my year's activities and efforts follows. As most people won't get much further though (if at all this far), I want to start with some thank yous.

Firstly, to all the sabs who at times, and sometimes all at once, have been fun, challenging, inspiring, frustrating, side-splittingly funny and made turning up to the office so rewarding.

Secondly, to the exec whose hard work, enthusiasm and dedication have frequently encouraged/shamed me into working harder. To do everything you do without remuneration is incredible and I hope that I will be honoured by working with you again in the future.

Thirdly to the office staff: Maria, Gill, Barbara and Sue who have never once commented on my punctuality (or occasional lack thereof), instead always there with a smile and offers of help. Good luck with next year's team!

Fourthly, a huge thanks and praise should be heaped onto the Target Schools committee. Everyone in the university has been saying that getting the campaign going again is one of my greatest achievements, and I keep having to tell them it's nothing to do with me and it is all because of the stunning efforts everyone has delivered since we first met back in Hilary (and a lot of fun it has been since then).

Fifthly, to members of the university and college academics and staff whose company I have the pleasure of in a busier meeting schedule than I hope to ever have to suffer again. They have been kind in not mocking my too outlandish suggestions, sympathetic and helpful when I occasionally have something interesting to say and whatever the event, welcoming and supportive.

And finally, to the common representatives and students too many to mention who have sent out emails, come to meetings, filled in surveys, edited documents, helped out on open days or finals forums, forgiven me provoking mammoth debates on access and admissions and have made this year so worthwhile.

To all and everyone, thank you for making this year such a memorable one. I hope you have enjoyed it as much as I have.

Now to the more serious and weighty matter of my legacy, or, less pompously, a summary of what I have been working on this year. Some might consider this legacy a weighty matter in so much as a feather has weight, and I am under no misconceptions that the university or student union has been radically changed by my efforts. However, I leave office with a number of activities about which I am particularly proud (or am mentioning to fill up some space / cover what I've done over the past two weeks), and I list them here for posterity.

Access

- The university has a strategy for addressing access, a tactical plan for achieving it and a determination to move forward. The implementation includes many ideas I have been suggesting all year: giving colleges regional responsibilities to ensure the university achieves a national coverage of schools; providing interview training; moving towards a university open day that simplifies the registration procedure and provides a greater focus on subjects rather colleges; training PGCE students on university admissions; and maintaining targeted support for talented students in difficult schools so that they are not forgotten. It is likely that such similarities of my ideas and future policy are more 'great minds thinking alike' rather than testament to my success as a lobbyist, but I feel I have played a part in encouraging these ideas, and ensuring the university does not just focus all its efforts at the best schools, as the original strategy proposed. The student union's access work is part of this coordination, and I have led by example to ensuring that everything Target Schools or OUSU does on access and admissions adds value to the university's own efforts, rather than duplicating resources.
- Target Schools is alive and kicking. They have trained over 100 students to visit schools this summer (termly target met) and have working groups beginning to plan a new shadowing scheme

(termly target met) and interview training schemes. Before the committee, when I was Target Schools, the AP was published and has been sent to every school in the country alongside the official prospectus, we ran two BME and a women's open day attended by 150 students, held a 25th birthday bash in parliament and advertised the interview help website to every student attending interviews explaining why it received over 7500 hits in two weeks. Target Schools also merged with the Oxford Access Scheme so that we have one student led society coordinating its activities, rather than competing over volunteers.

- OUSU has a consulted on and passed its most comprehensive admissions policy motion ever. Though not a model in terms of length, I recommend the process of sending it out well in advance to common rooms and having full discussions before OUSU passes anything as a good one. The student union must seek to represent the views of all students, and not just those who show up.
- Over interviews I set up a mailing list and wrote the handbook for running a student helps team. I hope this continues to be useful next year.

Academic Affairs

- All students now have opportunity to retake First Public Examinations (unless they are so bone-idle they manage to get through every single stage of academic discipline without thinking it might be a good idea to work a tiny bit harder before the beginning of Trinity term).
- Academic discipline arrangements for undergraduate students are being reviewed in every college, and common room representatives now have an affirmed, student friendly model of academic discipline that the Senior Tutors Committee have approved and individual colleges need to justify why they are not adopting, rather than students justifying why changes might have to be made.
- There is a first draft of the student written submission (termly target achieved). Though there is still scope for improvement, it wouldn't be an embarrassment if we were forced to hand it in now, six months ahead of schedule.
- Finals forums were held for the first, second and third time in Exam Schools.
- The university is reviewing how it uses student representatives in academic departments, which should increase their effectiveness at a ground roots level.
- The university has committed itself to ensuring that the majority of a student's tutorials are delivered by a senior academic researcher. This was a suggestion I got adopted in University Council.
- The university considered my paper on returning exam scripts, and there is sympathy for the principle of doing so after prelims, but not the resources to manage to do so at the moment. The matter is being kept under review.
- Academic Affairs, JCC and Divisional Board Rep guides were all produced and distributed.
- There has been lots of casework, sometimes successful, often, sadly not. To quote a thank you card I received at the beginning of the year from one student: *"I don't know if my appeal will get anywhere, but I just wanted to say thanks for all your help with it"*.

In summary, access and academic affairs are in a better state than I found them, though I've made sure there's still plenty for Paul to do when he takes over. Speaking of things in better shape than originally found, OUSU as an institution has one of the best years I remember in my Oxford career, and I'm not just saying this to blow our own trumpet. Governance, elections and our structures are all reviewed and sensible proposals have been suggested that if implemented will considerably improve the operation of the student union. We have done a better job of explaining why students need OUSU, and why students should get involved, which I think explains why colleges are starting to re-affiliate. More than ever before we have tried to consult with as many people as possible and then listen to what they are saying, though this hasn't always been successful. The student union has attempted to support and add value to the work of common rooms, rather than jealously copying or competing with the fabulous services they already offer. This is a good thing, and I hope that this trend strengthens and continues.

New projects were also set up, like the finals forums or open days, that won't by themselves solve issues like revision stress or access, but help people. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is to continue in this direction. There are a number of issues that are considered minority issues, which are nothing of the sort. If any group of students, for whatever reason, suffers a lesser experience than the norm because of a common characteristic they the group possess, it should and is an issue for everybody. However, less time must be wasted on talking about possible solutions or the causes of such problems. Instead, if there are ideas, and they are workable ideas, and you have the resources to implement these ideas (and often the only resources you need are motivated volunteers, for which we are not short) then get on with it. For example, there are many possible ways of addressing the finals gap. Next year I recommend that time is spent trying them all of the solutions, be they peer mentoring, finals forums, tutorial workshops, etc., because every little helps, and if you help someone get a better degree, or feel more confident about themselves than it is something worth doing. Access is the same. Open days by themselves won't have a big impact on access, but they help the people who come and continue to be worth organising for this reason. However, sabbaticals and students working on these issues must always remember that they are working to make themselves redundant. My greatest frustrations this year have been caused when individuals working on such issues have seemingly forgotten this fact. No one benefits from these problems continuing into perpetuity, and things do not always have to continue as they are. In the strongest possible terms, and as my last piece of advice before I disappear into the sunset is to stop talking and start doing. You will be amazed about what you can achieve.

So here endeth the rant, the advice and the last minute pitch to establish a legacy. Next year I will be teaching maths in an inner city school as part of the Teach First scheme: access by a very focused other name. I have made no secret about my keenness to move on and leave OUSU this term, but this is not because I am pleased to be out of Bonn Square (ok, maybe a little bit). The student body at Oxford faces significant challenges. Never underestimate how difficult it is to find ways to improve upon the best university in the world's performance, or how shocked you will be that it manages to be so brilliant with everything that is so frustratingly wrong about the place. However, I will be leaving without worrying about any of these problems. This is because of the students I have met this year and the potential you can see radiating from them. I am confident that things will get better just as long as these wonderful people stay involved. Good luck to you all in meeting the challenges.

Claire Addison Community)	V-P	(Charities	&
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It's become something of an OUSU tradition to write a long blow by blow account of your year in office. As this report will probably only be read by my successor and those of you who are truly bored by Council I will try to keep this of medium length to save on paper and precious sab time!

This has been a truly unique year. I've loved it, but I wouldn't do it again! I've seen more of Oxford and met more of the people who live and study here in my one year at OUSU than I did in my entire undergraduate degree, and that has been by far the best thing about my job. I have loved meeting JCR and MCR presidents (for next year's Sab team: pay attention to MCR presidents – some of them have been gorgeous!), students involved in the committees I oversee and in the general running of OUSU, and members of the local community who have been almost universally kind and welcoming to me.

Working in OUSU Towers has proved to be something of a mixed experience. Making the pit a functional space and the Great SAFAM Tidy of 2008 brought me more pride than I should admit to. Moving literally tonnes of boxes when the lift was broken and near concussing myself on the removal trolley were not quite so great. Similarly working in a building which is hot enough to melt condoms in the summer and cold enough to develop ice on the inside of the windows in the winter will not be missed. I wasn't sure I would make it alive through the January week when the heating in both my

house and my office were broken! Despite that, I've become quite fond of the Tower, with its graveyard view. As Louise said, it will be odd working in a building with more cutlery!

OK, here goes a whistle-stop, bullet-point filled rundown of my year.

RAG

- Wrote a new RAG reps' handbook and sent it out to all new reps
- Organised a mammoth collection for the Royal British Legion in the run up to Poppy Day which raised £1400. We also ran collections for Engineers Without Borders and there's one coming up for OxPat.
- Ran dozens of events including Eclectic club nights at Love Bar, In The Pink for Breast Cancer Research, the first RAG Jailbreak in years and years, two RAG comedy shows, Mr & Miss Oxford in the Union Chamber, RAG Pub Golf, The Summer Twist Cocktail event and many more.
- Advertised and recruited dozens of Oxford students for the bungee jumps – both of which were cancelled at the last minute by the company running the event. Grrrr.
- Oversaw the never-ending saga that is RAG pants – it all worked out in the end though and there are over 600 Oxford students happily walking about in college branded pants that made loads of money for charity.
- Printed the first ever batch of RAG Christmas cards featuring the Rad Cam and a unintentionally high owl! Other notable products that we sold for charity included the notorious condom roses for Valentine's Day and 400 vodka jellies at Summer Eights.

ENVIRONMENT AND ETHICS

The E&E committee have been amazing this year and it's been a pleasure to work alongside them. Their infectious enthusiasm makes my Tuesdays!

- Ran an anti-packaging campaign with stalls outside Sainsbury's, free bags for life to hand out and an anti-plastic bag petition signed by 500 local residents and students
- College Bags for Life scheme started to make college branded 'This is not a plastic bag, this is a ----- bag' fairtrade cotton or hemp bags
- Ran three conservation days at Aston Rowant Nature Reserve, one of which included sheep herding! The E&E reps left with a new respect for sheepdogs.
- Attended lots of University Environment Panel meetings. Brought a paper on cycling provision for students, worked with domestic bursars committee on college recycling schemes and pushed on with green electricity and energy reduction
- Got Fairtrade status for the OUSU building
- Was a thorn in Rich and Dave's side by pushing forward with advertising bans on UBS and Nestle
- Nagged constantly about energy use in the OUSU office with new posters, stickers and reminders about turning off lights and computers (the message is slowly getting through, I think), installing hippos in the loos, creating a really cool envelope recycling area, pushing paper recycling and sometimes remembering to put it out to be collected.

ALTERNATIVE CAREERS FAIR

This turned out so well and I was really pleased with turnout (1000 students) and the positive feedback. It's such an important event that shows Oxford students that they don't have to be investment bankers and lawyers and I think the last three years have really cemented its future in the Oxford calendar. Saying that, it was a bloody nightmare to organise, took the entire Christmas vacation to put together and there were a series of nightmares along the way including the guide cover designer being taken to hospital with the vomiting bug that was around in January and Philip Pullman cancelling his talk. Special thanks go to Rich who helped turn my word document into a

beautiful Alternative Careers Guide – one day I will learn to InDesign for myself – showing me many rank websites and making me laugh along the way. I am so glad none of the ‘alterations’ were overlooked in the final draft – Ingrid would not have been happy.

COMMUNITY

I've really tried to move this part of the job forward this year. I spent the summer visiting dozens and dozens of local voluntary groups, charities and community centres. I have been amazed by the time and energy that people give up to try to make Oxford better, and I hope I've helped to get students involved with that. It's been lovely to email, call and sometimes even meet the hundreds of students who reply to my emails asking for help/advertising local voluntary and charity projects. I know that a lot of this work stays under the radar in Oxford and it can feel like you're the only one mentoring a 17 year old asylum seeker, working in a soup kitchen, fundraising for the local hospital or teaching disabled young adults to row, but there's a huge, and growing, number of students who do pitch in.

I have sky-high hopes for the new volunteering committee Oxford Hub: Student Volunteers, set up by myself, OxHub and Will Horwitz with his experience of how it works in The Other Place. We're trying to raise the profile of volunteering in Oxford, create new opportunities which will appeal to students and work around their timetables, and fill gaps that the local community are telling us they want us to help out with. Next year is going to be amazing and I wish I could be there to see the Volunteering Fair and (hopefully) the work of a full time student volunteering co-ordinator.

OUSU & VP STUFF

The VP part of the job takes up a surprisingly large amount of time, although I like that. Anyone thinking of running for this job who thinks they'll be the RAG president and little else, should know that the VP (C&C) is very much a part of the OUSU team. I've been to visit common rooms; sat on committees, appointment boards and OSSSL board; gone to OUSU council, exec meetings, local council meetings, meetings with the proctors and senior members of the university; planned how we'll be 'supporting students' and had 'Graduates!' shouted at me so many times that I've started to wish I was one. And I have carried boxes. Hundreds and thousands of boxes.

THANKS

- The RAG committee for pitching in so consistently and with such enthusiasm. Special thanks to Riya, Fiona, Sarah-Jane, Andy, Alex (the greatest MCR RAG rep the world has ever know), Rachel, Katy, Dani & Charlotte, Miriam, Nitika, Anna and Eorann.
- The E&E committee and in particular Daniel and Ian for being so dedicated and fun
- The OH:SV team – you have made such a difference and the group is one of the things I'm most proud of. To Claire and Will, I cannot thank you enough for giving so much time, thought and dedication to the group and the future of volunteering in Oxford. The inevitable emails between us and the Adams have been a constant source of belief that there are lovely, unselfish people in the world. I was a bit hesitant about OxHub at first but the Adams' evangelical belief in the project and support for our committee has very much won me over!
- Leyla at the Access Office for grumbling along with me about what's rubbish and being committed to sorting it out!
- The office staff: Maria, Barbara, Sue and Gill – the place would fall apart without you. Thank you for all the little things, advice and looking after.
- Imran – for being there for panicky/frustrated/confused texts, emails and phonecalls. Best of luck with the masters – good to see there's life after OUSU.
- The OUSU exec – you have been amazing and really good fun the whole way through. Particular thanks go to Neil and Olly from the 06-07 team and Daniel and Joe from the 07-08 team. It has been a pleasure to have such lovely boys to do my C&C bidding! Also warm thanks to Sarah, Kat, Becci and our resident 'yes man' Dom – it's been lovely getting to know you.

- Anne Dutton, Dick Lidwell, Angus McKendrick, Tracey Wells, Tom Parnell, Juliet Tomlinson and Stacey Finch from the Careers Service. It was lovely to work with you all and the Fair just wouldn't have happened without all your hard work.
- All the Oxford residents who work for charities and groups that I've been lucky enough to get to know especially Nick and Mick from the Ace Centre, Hilary from Helen & Douglas House, Jenny from Aston Rowant Nature Reserve, Andrew from The Gatehouse, Mrs Smith from the Cowley Soup Kitchen and Marie from Make a Difference.
- Oxford people who offered sometimes very much needed respite from OUSU: my lovely flatmates Alex and Rosie, Cicely, Matt and Joe, Ali and, last but not least, David for being lovely and working much longer hours than even us.
- Finally, the sab team. It has been super. I feel like I have made friends for life.

PART TIME OFFICERS

Becci Burton
Officer

Health and Welfare

Hi all,

Hope you've all had a great trinity term! Sadly I will be in Germany next year so this is my last council (sobs!) but I've had a great time, and want to congratulate all the sabs, but especially Louise (go welfare...!) for all the hard work they've done - they have all been amazing!!!

This term I have branched out into helping out at Risa a few times, and would encourage everyone to go to risa and ponana - both great nights out! I have also started putting some of the welfare publications online - look out for the rest...had our last welfare meeting today, which was sad, but they have been very useful for all participating I feel, so again thanks to Louise for that!

Have a wonderful vacation, and hope to see you all at a zoo night before the end of term!

Becci xxx

Herman Tam

Graduate Academic Affairs Officer

Over the last term, most of my work dealt with the Graduate Admissions Committee and its Fees and Funding Working Group. The aim is to transition the current complex and ambiguous admissions process to a more coherent one attracting the best students to Oxford. Some of the long-term proposals to achieve this include: introduction of a banding system to assess academic quality, devolution of funding to the appropriate level, greater flexibility of college choice, a competitive timetable (in relation to other universities), and reducing the number of application deadlines (plus substituting the 'gathered field' terminology). A consultation paper addressing these issues has been circulated to divisions, faculties and departments, and colleges. There will likely be progressive changes in the 2008-2009 admissions cycle for facilitating the long-term proposals, e.g., the successful digitisation of application materials reducing the logistics of paper applications and increasing accessibility electronically. The work of this group is of high importance and significance. Progress looks promising so far and we are looking forward to the implementation phase.

MCR PresCom meetings were well-attended. It was a very good platform for useful discussions and exchange of information between colleges.

I should also be assisting Ingrid in revising the Graduate (section 5) of the Institutional Audit.

In summary, I would like to thank the exec team for their support, especially to Ingrid for her persistence in raising the graduates' presence in OUSU and in the university.

Sarah Hutchinson
Officer

Graduate Welfare

One of the most interesting parts of this term has been the introduction of MCR welfare meetings - we had a number of welfare officers turn up to the first event and a number of concerns and different ideas were discussed. I certainly picked up some good ideas, and the problems inherent in working to protect graduate welfare - the fact that they tend to be older and more independent, and less connected to their colleges were highlighted. While attendance dropped off at the second meeting, I think this is a really useful resource for graduate welfare officers and having separate meetings may highlight that the service OUSU provides is for us, as well as undergraduates.

I also undertook a survey on alcohol and graduate social events - there has been some concern that the emphasis on alcohol at social events may make some graduates feel less comfortable - unfortunately I haven't had a chance to collate the findings but will do this over the summer and let welfare officers and entz officers know the results. I also attended the Graduate Skills Advisory Group, which amongst other things agreed to work with departments to improve the information about skills training available in inductions.

Katherine Wall

Women's Officer

With the term drawing to a close, sights have been set on organising for Michaelmas. In 3rd week we are due to be having a week of events dedicated to the theme 'Gender Equality by 2020'. We are trying to get a range of groups in Oxford interested in organising events to do with gender inequality and focus on how we as students and members of the wider community can truly make gender equality for women in Oxford, the UK and beyond.

Womcam have had a very successful term with a range of events from Rae Langton, Ladyfest, the Rape Crisis Panel, with the wonderful Love Your Body event this Saturday, to be held at St Hilda's. The positive consent campaign has also run a range of poster series across the university, and we have passed anti-Harassment OUSU policy in Council. Next term we want to do a strong focus on women in politics, to tie in with the OUSU-elections, offering support, training and aspiration events to encourage more women to run for positions.

Finally, something of note - we have undertaken a separation in terms of administration of the Women's Campaign and the Pro-choice groups, to prevent over-lap where it is unnecessary, or a prohibitive feature. The pro-choice campaign will have a series of events lined up for next term to encourage more people to get involved, however we are glad of the parliamentary vote in favour of retaining a women's right to choose, and for those members of the pro-choice campaign who this term campaigned against the amendments to restrict it.

Dominic Weinberg
Officer

Rent and Accommodation

It is somewhat fortunate that for the second summer in a row the weather has been mostly shoddy and therefore I have been discouraged from spending all my time improving my tan and punting and encouraged to engage with OUSU related business. Unfortunately, this has somewhat been

channelled into work on accommodation and libraries for the Student Written Submission for the upcoming Audit. I have therefore not spent as much time studying the wonderful college accounts that Martin gleefully received after his FOI request. Hopefully, though, those who've been to the rent meetings have found them useful.

I've also set up an accommodation officers' mailing list, but unfortunately these officers have yet to contact me with any issues. I am therefore led to believe that there are no problems with accommodation anywhere across the university. The alternative is that my wealth of expertise on housing issues is being overlooked. I jest not. Have a good summer and drift away to a world where OUSU is an anise-flavoured liqueur widely consumed in Greece. I know how it's spelt.

**Daniel Lowe
Officer**

Environment and Ethics

Hey Council,

This past week nominations for the business award scheme have been flooding in, dominating my spare time with research on Lush (my inner leftist is telling me that a multi-national corporation *can't* be that good) but so far zip on that front.

I've really enjoyed these past two terms as a part time exec, the environment and ethics side just as much as being an officer of OUSU, and all the new people I've met. A big and special thank you must go to Claire, my overlord. I think she must be ready to kill me with all the pestering I do, and also to Rich for being nice with the budget and Zoo Na Na. The rest of the sabs all deserve thanks as well, it's been a pleasure working with you, and I'll miss you all.

I encourage you all to go on holidays somewhere that doesn't require flying, but if you *have* to fly offset! Enjoy the summer; any sunny days are down to my good hard environmental work. Rainy, drizzly rubbish days are climate change's fault so blame bush!

Daniel xxx

CAMPAIGNS AND COMMITTEES

WomCam

Beginning in Hilary term and continuing into Trinity, Women's Campaign has undergone a structural rearrangement to allow a more efficient division of labour, resulting in a more capable and organised campaign. The committee –all positions on which are now filled except one – consists of two co-chairs, a treasurer, a fundraiser, two events co-ordinators, two campaigns co-ordinators, a freshers' co-ordinator and a press and publicity co-ordinator, meets once a week in addition to WomCam's ordinary meetings. The efficiency of this new structure has already made itself felt in that we have been able to do much more this term than in Hilary or Michaelmas: we have continued our campaign of raising awareness of gender issues in the student press; we have run a poster campaign on the theme of consent and the 2003 Sexual Offences Act; we have held numerous events and we have begun to work on a longer-term financial plan for WomCam by opening a bank account and selling t-shirts to raise money. We have attempted to start finding sponsorship for projects but have had little support from OUSU's business team; we hope we can make more headway with this in Michaelmas.

WomCam have put on numerous events over the past two terms, from the cultural, academic to political. The past two term-cards have been deliberately varied to encourage different audiences to boost WomCam's relevance and appeal.

Cultural events have included Ladyfest, which was held in fifth week of Trinity, a festival which

attracted many new people who were not previously WomCam members. It raised £270 for OSARCC. The term-card also included 'Chicks with decks', a series of women-only DJ workshops, while last term saw the production of 'a memory a monologue a rant a prayer' play, which raised over £400 for OSARCC. We also held a talk from the actor Elizabeth Gray, a former Balliol student who won accolades from critics at the Edinburgh Fringe for her role in 'I Wish I Had a Sylvia Plath', on her experiences as a woman in theatre. A fortnightly series of screenings featuring women in film, with discussion afterwards, also proved popular, while a re-fresher event in early Hilary also screened a film, '8 Women', to boost participation.

Political and academic events have been as frequent. Throughout the two terms, WomCam have organised contingents to both the Fem 08 conference in Sheffield and some pro-choice protests in London. Several feminist academics came to speak to packed audiences: Deborah Cameron on whether linguistics are gendered; Rae Langton on whether pornography subordinated women; and Judith Okely on cultural relativism's impact on women's rights in a joint event with OU-UNA. Representatives from Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre and the Fawcett Society participated in a panel discussion on how Britain should improve its rape conviction rates, and WomCam also participated in the joint debate at Oxford Radical Forum 'Socialist or Radical Feminism?' Smaller scale events included a panel discussion with Oxford's women academics to foster a better-connected feminist community within the university, which has been built on this term by our weekly feminist seminar series in which numerous postgraduates shared their researches.

Our last large event of term is the upcoming Love Your Body garden party, to be held Saturday of 7th week at St Hildas, which will provide free goodies, and raise money through donations and a raffle for OSARCC and b-eat (formerly the eating disorders association).