

## **Imperial College Union PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

*A note by Stephen Brown*

### **NUS Extraordinary Conference**

At the last meeting Council voted to join other Unions across the country in calling for an NUS Extraordinary Conference. Constitutionally 25 Unions were required to do this but it turns out that around 40 have submitted similar requests. The conference will take place on Tuesday 4 December in Leicester and Imperial College Union is entitled to send 9 delegates.

It is vital that we send along a full delegation as this year we are paying the NUS £44k at the behest of the student body for the privileges of membership and we need a full team out in order to maximise our impact. If any member of Council would like to serve as a delegate or knows someone who might be interested please come and talk to be about it after this meeting. It will cost you nothing but your time and you will be back in London by early evening.

The new NUS constitution has also been published and a few copies are in circulation for your perusal. I have read through it and commented in excruciating detail and I am very pleased that the NUS is finally embracing corporate governance in order to make it more relevant, less wasteful and less subject to farce and ridicule. The proposed governance structure is in some ways very similar to ours and provided that no silly wrecking amendments are added our delegation should support it.

There is one minor amendment that I am proposing we make to it regarding the procedure for selecting Student Trustees which I will cover in a separate paper.

### **Beit Redevelopment**

I will provide a full verbal update but I have had meetings with Estates, Finance and the Rector to discuss getting Phase 2 of the Union Building redevelopment started at the earliest possible opportunity.

### **Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)**

At my monthly meeting with the College Secretary the impact of this new government scheme to more closely monitor overseas research students as part of the UK Government's counter terrorism strategy. College are unhappy with the proposals as they would require departments to keep an attendance register which is completely unenforceable. The College have been lobbying the government with other institutions to no avail and I have raised this issue with the NUS President who has indicated that they are pushing to get this issue higher up the agenda.

### **PhD Issues**

I have received emails from over 10 PhD students who are in (or about to start) their writing up phase who are not happy that they do not qualify for a Council Tax exemption certificate during this time. I have asked other Unions how their institutions treat their writing up students and the DPEW and I have been pressuring College to reconsider their stance on this issue.

### **Trustee Board Meeting**

A meeting of the Trustee Board was held the week before last. The reports and agenda items are available on the meetings section of the website and I encourage you to have a read of them. Most of the discussion was concerned with financial and risk management issues arising from the Annual Report and draft 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter accounts. I am happy to take any questions that anyone has about the proceedings or matters arising of this meeting.

### **QARC Meeting**

I stood in for the DPEW at the last QARC meeting. The item which sparked the most discussion was whether or not the College should require all departments to offer borderline students a viva when determining whether or not they should be awarded a higher class of degree. Some departments are strongly supportive of vivas as an effective tool for this purpose although others (particularly Maths) are of the opinion that they are inappropriate given the nature of the subjects. It was agreed that whether or not vivas are used in a given department there must be a transparent, robust procedure in place for dealing with borderline cases and it is an issue that Kirsty and I are going to work with College on over the coming months.

### **Graduate Students' Association**

Following the resignation of the GSA Chair at the last meeting I have been working with interested postgraduates to determine the best way forward to get the GSA up and running again. An event is being planned for a few weeks time where the Union will take this opportunity to re-establish the GSA brand so that we can then proceed to elect a committee.