

Imperial College Union
President's Report
A note by Ashley Brown

Handover

The month of July consisted almost entirely of introductory meetings with College staff, training and handover events. Our training session was held at Royal Holloway, where ULU training was also taking place. This allowed an opportunity to meet with sabbaticals from other London unions.

Freshers!

We have tried to engage our freshers before they arrived, through the medium of Facebook. Shortly after we started in August, we set up a Facebook group for new students to join and get help on the freshers experience. Despite being up against already-established groups run by club promoters, we quickly hit one thousand members, thanks to promotion on the College and Union websites. It has been a very valuable tool for helping them out before they started, and getting them engaged with ICU. We currently stand at over 1,500 members which we hope to use to promote events throughout the year. We also suggested that freshers in London arranged to meet up in the bars before term started, which they did on the 21st September and after the recruitment day on 1st October.

The recruitment day was a bit of a surprise, as we had been expecting fewer than a hundred students as in previous years. In the end we had around 250, with dB's full to bursting. About 50 were still in the bar at 8pm and the sabbatical team were there to chat with them.

You will probably have seen the sabbatical team walking around in their ~~bright pink~~ raspberry polo shirts. This was an idea to make us highly visible to freshers (and probably satellites), which seems to have done an excellent job given the number of times we've had people pick us out at events to talk.

I have also done around ten induction talks as of 7th October, with another five still to go. The majority of these were faculty inductions where we ran our new introductory video (it is on the College YouTube channel and our website), which was very well received by both staff and students. For the first time we had an induction talk specifically targeted at students not living in halls and also sold them Mingle tickets. The talk was so over-subscribed it had to be split into two groups, with around three hundred students turning up.

External Relations

I attended the handover weekend of the Aldwych Group in Newcastle, which provided an opportunity to meet sabbatical officers from other Russell Group universities. The Deputy President (Welfare) also attended that weekend and the Deputy President (Clubs & Societies) went to the following meeting at the end of August. The feeling among some in the Aldwych Group (including the new chair) is that they should be lobbying the Russell Group universities on behalf of all students, a view I do not share. I believe they should be lobbying everyone in the Higher Education sector on behalf of students at Russell Group universities.

We have also been able to attend a couple of events run by the NUS, but paid for by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). These have been a seminar on the QAA audit process and a "Quality Matters" conference about student involvement in higher education quality. Both of these allowed us to talk to staff and officers from other universities.

I have also met with the presidents of the Royal College of Art and the Royal College of Music.

On the 16th and 17th of October I will be attending a conference for non-NUS members, organised, paid for and hosted by Aston University. As well as students unions from the non-affiliates,

Website

We launched our new website over the summer, which was working fine until the amount of web traffic increased dramatically in the run up to the start of term. The website is, at the time of writing, going up and down on a regular basis and is sometimes unavailable for long periods. The developers are working on it and we will be switching to a temporary server to see if it is a hardware issue.

Building

The major construction work as part of Phase 2 is complete, with the sabbatical officers and staff now on Level 2. As part of this, the Student Activities Centre and main Union reception desks have been merged – please go to Level 2M for any enquiries. The new gym on Level 3 is now being used, and the changing rooms, toilets etc should all be up and running after the building is handed over on the 12th.

Barring any unforeseen problems, we will also have new meeting rooms in the East Basement by the time of the meeting. There are three rooms, one of which can be divided with a partition. All have AV equipment and multi-level lighting, which provide an excellent facility for both clubs and external hirers. We hope to increase our revenue from external hires when the rooms are not being used by clubs to make up for expected reductions in higher education funding. We also took the opportunity to repaint the corridors and put a new floor down while the area was out of action.

The old office space on Level 1 will be turned into an open space for club use, which will be available for use at the start of 2010.

With new facilities on Levels 3, 2M, 2 and the east basement we also carried out some light refurbishment to tidy other areas:

- **Da Vinci's** – The floor area by the bar was wrecked fairly soon after it was laid, several years ago. While we had flooring people in for the other areas of the building, we replaced the damaged section in time for freshers' week.
- **Meeting Room 6 (was Meeting Room 7)** – The room has been painted, the floor sanded and varnished.
- **Union Dining Hall** – Part of the ceiling and lighting was replaced to add riser cupboards, so we extended the work to cover the whole room. It is a subtle change, but the room looks much smarter without the ugly tiles that were there before.
- **Union Concert Hall** – This has been repainted and the floor sanded and varnished.
- **Meeting Room 1** – This room has been painted, had the carpet lifted and the wooden floor underneath restored.

We plan to have the east staircase painted over the Christmas break, as it is looking very shabby at the moment.

With Phase 2 nearly complete, we are preparing for the phase everyone has been waiting for – the ground floor refurbishment. With the economy taking a nose-dive since the original plans were drawn up, it looks as though the work will be cheaper than expected – now is the best time for building things. We intend to re-visit the plans with student input, to see if we can achieve something more exciting than the original proposal from 2005.

Elections

Nominations for a number of positions opened at 00:01 on 3rd October and will close at 23:59 on 18th October. The positions are:

- Council Ordinary Members
- Student Trustee (replacing Mark Mearing-Smith, who stood down over the summer)
- International Officer

The Council Chair, Mark Chamberlain, is the returning officer. The rest of the timetable is as follows:

- Manifestos due 21st October, 12:00
- Voting opens 26th October 00:01
- Voting closes 29th October 23:59

Assuming there are no complaints, results should be announced on 30th October, before the next meeting of Council.

Planning

In the second week of August we spent a week discussing manifestos, issues and ideas for the year. We did this as a sabbatical team and with the staff who will have to deliver it, starting to generate action plans for the year. Change does not happen overnight, but it was a useful exercise which should help us with the process. Freshers' preparation stalled this a little, but I hope to present back to Council at the next meeting, once we have elected ordinary members. Please come and talk to me if you want to know more.

Finances

A budget for 2009-2010 should have been passed by the final Council of last year, before being ratified by the Trustee Board. This did not happen, so the Executive passed the budget (including the capital expenditure budget) on Council's behalf over the summer.

Blogs

All of the sabbatical officers are now blogging, check them out: <http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/blogs/>