

Imperial College Union
Deputy President (Finance & Services) Report
A Note by Ravi Pall

Handover

During July I received my handover training from my predecessor Daniel Hill. We reviewed the daily operations, and potential projects relating to my position. I appreciate, and would like to thank him for his help and guidance.

Various handover meetings with college staff, training and handover events were well attended by myself and the other incoming sabbatical. Of particular interest are the objectives for the year, which were thought of by the Executive Committee.

Budget

The yearlong budget, to which all management accounts are compared to, was completed. This is the most extensive budget the Union has completed to date, and was scrutinised extensively by many members of the Union, and passed by the Executive Committee unhindered. The budget was passed a week later than expected by the new Executive Committee. This was to allow time for everyone to effectively analysis the budget before approving it.

Phase 3

The building works for phase 3 of the Beit Master plan began earlier this year. As we came to the final stages, we encountered a few problems, which have hindered our ability to launch the new venues during welcome week to the standard we believe students deserve. The revised opening dates are Monday 18th October of FiveSixEight, and Friday 29th October for Metric. In the interests of proving as much transparency as possible to the students, I have publicly kept the student body informed via my sabbatical blog, and also the phase 3 blog. As a consequence, we expect trading to suffer slightly, but hope to make up and loss compared to the budget during the opening weeks. I am very happy with the build, and it is sure to be a fantastic venue for all students in London.

Of other consequence, the club and society nights originally scheduled for the first term had to be shuffled to reflect these new opening date. Ultimately, only 2 nights had to be rescheduled. While a third is still to take place in the Union bar.

Commercial Services

The Union shop has begun a rebranding process, to bring it inline with the central Union's current brand. This area has done particularly well over the summer, and is seeing a general increase of sales of about 20% week on week.

This year we will still be keeping our "standard" price for a pint of larger at £2 for Becks Vier, with other premium drinks available. We still claim that the prices are amongst the cheapest of the London Student Union's. We also plan to have drink offers every Wednesday and Friday nights in Metric, to which this will be the only place students are charged to enter. The only exception would be when entertainments is to be help throughout the whole quad. In this instance drink promotions would be available in all bars.

Catering will change this year, to provide cook to order food that will be served to tables in FiveSixEight. On Wednesday lunchtimes, where cook to order food will not be suitable for the high volumes of sports teams, we will be providing a "Pasta King" service which will provide a cheap and healthy meal before students go off to enjoy their activities.

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Farmers Market

To become more diverse with the commercial services we provide at the Union, we had started to host a farmers market. The first was on the Wednesday of welcome week, which was a huge success. Following this, we will be holding the farmers market in Beit Quad every Monday, and will be providing a bigger selection for students to choose from.

Union Shop Vouchers

Following from discussion between Alex Dahinten (DPE) and college, we have now introduced gift vouchers in the Unions shop. The intention is to use these vouchers as prizes, and an alternative for Incentives College currently use.

Term Planner

After discussions with halls, we have received feedback that the traditional term planner was not very effective, or not even looked at. However, Halls are happy to work with us by distributing certain promotional material, and we will provide an A2 sized term planner to go in the common rooms of each hall. In addition to this, we will also have a campus presence in the form of a promotions team, who will go around handing out flyers, and talking to students about our entertainments program. I hope with in addition to a monthly services forum will provide invaluable feedback.

Limits Campaign

We have started, and in fact almost finished a brand new campaign called limits. It is a website, that will tie in heavily with our bar and entertainment promotions, with the goal to provide information and advice about drinking and the use of drugs. The idea is not to restrict what students do, but to provide helpful advice on what to do in uncomfortable situations.

Welcome Week

I have worked directly with the entertainments manager and operations manager, to plan Welcome Week, and provide the best experience possible with the resources at hand. Obviously with the delays in the Phase 3 building works, we have had to adjust our schedule many times. However, feedbacks from halls, and students have been extremely positive. Everyone had enjoyed them selves and, particularly loved the live acts we showcased. We see this as a good start to the year. A full report will go the Executive Committee this month.

Social Media

The official fresher's' facebook group was well received, with over 1000 people joining. From this, the sabbatical team actively participated, and Alex Dahinten (DPE) and Alex Kendall (President) organised get togethers for fresher's in London to meet up. These were hugely successful, and it is recommended this repeated next year.

Halls relationship

We have begun, and hope to continue a good relationship with the halls of residence. We had a meeting with Wardens, and sub wardens at the beginning of the summer, which provided insightful feedback to the Union. As a consequence, the central services manager has volunteered to be the Union's hall liaison, to provide consistency to the information we provide halls, and a single point of contact for halls, which would not change yearly as new sabbaticals come in.

Recruitment Week

This year we held a recruitment week, where casual staff members trained not only in their respective division, but also in customer service theory. We had approximately 100 people participate in this week, which consisted of retuning students, and new students. To cope

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with such a demanding week, we initially screen candidates online, via an online application form. It is intended that for future recruitment during the year, that this online application will be used. In the 2 weeks application were open before term start, we had over 300 applications. This is a definite increase over last years 250, which suggests that the Union is becoming a more desirable place to work. Especially when the new venues open. This process worked extremely well, and eliminated various problems form last year, where the shear volume of people made things operationally difficult to run.

Customer Service Promise

The standard of our new venues is expected to be high, and as a consequence so does the level of service. To show what we are doing as a Union in this respect, we are currently working on a service promise form each department. This is essentially an outline of the standard students can expect from the Union, and conversely the standard we expect of them. This will be available online, and I believe another great way to make the Union more transparent.

SAP Project

The first phase of the SAP project, the creation of an online portal for Purchase Order Processing, is almost complete. We are now at a stage were a select few trial clubs are using it, and if everything goes smoothly we will roll this out to everyone over the winter. The Sap project is designed to bring the Union into the 21st century, and will make club financial administration significantly easier. We aim in the second phase of the project to provide sales order processing, and in the future payment by BACS. The ultimate idea is to eliminate paper work by making everything electronic.

Clubs & Societies

Tours budgets this year are envisioned to be an online application process via e-activities. We are also currently working on making event budget an online application process. This will allow both the Union and Clubs to track budgets year on year, and provide a solid approval process. This much like the SAP project, is a step in making the administration of Clubs & Societies more streamlined and efficient. I would think the next logical step is to move contracts online for the same reasons.

Clubs & Societies Officer Training

I have begun training with various groups, to help them understand what they should already know, and new things that have come in this year. We had training for Management groups, which was very successful. I have also held a few workshops for sponsorship and event budgeting were well received.

We are also going to train the mostly new Trustee Board, to which I will review how to read our management accounts.

I have also worked closely with the Clubs & Societies Finance Officer to highlight certain clubs which are in financial trouble, and help them rectify their current financial state.

Year-end Audit

In September external auditors conducted an audit on the Unions' financial accounts. The auditors presented the accounts to the ICU President, Operations Manager and I. and we are preliminarily happy with its results. This report will be presented to the next Executive Committee meeting with the year-end report by the ICU president. After this is done, the report will be reviewed by the Audit Sub-Committee which is made up of members from the Trustee Board.