

Council
14th November 2011

Imperial College Union
President's Report
A note by ICU President – Scott Heath

As there have been only two weeks since the last Council Meeting there are not many items to update you upon.

Following the trend set by the DPCS, I shall also provide an update on Manifesto points and 'Core Objectives.'

Written Updates:

College Working Day

I contacted all Directors of Undergraduate Studies (DUGs) and Heads of Departments (HODs) 3 weeks ago to offer the opportunity to speak with myself and/or Jason about the Union's NSS response.

One of the results of this was an approach by the Humanities Department to discuss the college working day proposals, which they feel will have a limiting (and somewhat damaging) effect on the courses they can, and do, deliver.

The proposal passed by the Strategic Education Committee (SEC), a committee the Union has long fought for representation on, forces Departments to only schedule a 2 hour lunch-break on Monday or Friday, against the recommendation of Monday and Friday.

I am currently discussing this matter with members of the Management Board, who will look at this proposal soon.

IC Radio Shut-down

A few weeks ago IC Radio was shut down for 10 minutes to remove a potentially defamatory recording, as reported in Felix. Please see Appendix 2 for a detailed description of the event.

NSS Response Update

Both myself and Jason were invited to the DUGs Lunch and the Faculty Teaching Committees to discuss the NSS Response. Alongside the 'Top 10' Recommendations we detailed seven short-term changes which can begin to fix some issues.

These are detailed in the appendices.

Post Qualification Admissions (PQA)

UCAS released an outline of the proposed PQA system discussed in July's White Paper.

I will hopefully have blogged about this issue before the meeting of Council.

It is my view that this proposal disguises multiple benefits for students from wealthier backgrounds by suggesting benefits for those from more disadvantaged ones. I do not believe it will solve the issues created by the clearing process and, as a representative of students at Imperial College, I see no benefit to existing or future students by implementing these proposed changes – If anything I suspect it will make things worse.

Student Charter

A Student Charter Working Group has been assembled by the Non-Clinical Dean of the

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Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Nigel Gooderham.

A discussion involving the Council last year indicated its lack of support for a Student Charter and I have to admit that I still echo the concerns it raised: a lack of guarantee from any statements included, a likelihood of vagueness in the statements it makes and a certainty that students will not pay attention to the document.

However I believe it is essential, if the College are going to go ahead with this process, that we are involved. There is potential that a Student Charter can be used to reiterate the expectations of the Student Body to staff, thus guaranteeing compliance with rules such as the '2 week Feedback guideline.'

As this process is only beginning I cannot provide too many details but as the idea grows I will continually keep Council informed.

Finance Calculator

The College are soon to release an online calculator which will help students determine the level of financial support they can get if deciding to study here.

Last year the Union was highly influential in determining the level of support, which is one of the best in the Russell Group. This year we are continuing to help determine these levels with the surveying of bursary holders.

Student Hubs

The Trustee Board shall be presented with a paper in their November Meeting requesting the ratification of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Union and Student Hubs. This MoU will establish a formal partnership with the Charity that will see the Union provided with a member of full-time staff to assist with volunteering opportunities, social enterprise, community action and other facilities lost by the closure of the Volunteer Centre.

Visiting Palestinian Delegation

On Tuesday from 1pm until 3pm a delegation of Palestinian Students will be visiting the College. They wish to speak to students, discuss their experiences and learn about life in the UK.

If anyone is around and would like to participate, please feel free to ask me for more details after the Council meeting.

Appendix 1 – Meetings Attending by ICU President

Date	Location	Title	Discussion
Nov 1 st	Union	Meeting with Humanities	Talked about the potential effects of the Working Day Proposals on the courses offered by Humanities
	Physics	PG Rep Training	
2 nd	College	Meeting with the EDU	Met Martyn Kingsbury of the Education Development Unit, who wanted to talk about the recommendations in the NSS response.
	College	Senate	The 1 st meeting of Senate this academic year.
	Union	Exec Committee Training	Trained the Exec on how to read the Monthly Accounts.
3 rd	Union	Exec	
	College	Helping Students Adapt	Co-hosting of the trial program aimed at helping students understand how you learn at University.
7 th	College	Student Charter Working Group	The first gathering of a group to decide whether it is necessary to have a students charter
	FIE	Conference Talk	Went to FIE to discuss the conference link-up described in the report
	College	Meeting with ChemEng	Met with Omar from Chemical Engineering to discuss NSS, developments in ChemEng etc.
	College	Financial Calculator	Met with Comms to discuss the Press release and student email relating to the new Student Financial Support calculator
	Union	Finance and Audit	1 st meeting of the sub-committee of the Trustee Board which was newly established.
8 th	College	Fees and Financial aid	
	College	Student Recruitment	Discussed the Post-Qualification Admissions proposals from UCAS
9 th	Reading	NUS Debate	Represented the non-affiliates at a debate in Reading
10 th	College	FoNS Teaching Committee	Attended the Faculty of Natural Sciences Teaching Committee to discuss the NSS response
	College	DTA	Deterring Terrorist Activities Committee

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Appendix 2 – Key Objectives and Manifesto points

Strategic Review

To publish the Strategic Review by the start of term and to have completed all demarcated tasks for 2011/12 by the end of June.

Progress: We have yet to publish the Strategic Review as we are trying to make sure we do in a high impact way. Tasks, which were deemed essential, are already underway and I suspect we will complete everything for this year by June.

Guinness World Record Attempt in this Academic Year

Hopefully by the end of the 2nd term have an event which breaks a Guinness World Record.

Progress: I have confirmation that the record I would like us to attempt is achievable. At the moment the biggest barrier is finances. It will cost £5,000 for a Guinness World Record official to see the event in the second term and the record itself will cost a considerable sum.

I am trying to source sponsorship and if I successfully do so I will be able to go ahead with the plan.

Create a more financially stable union

End the financial year in the black through increased footfall and better use of facilities over the Summer. Also ensuring a good plan for the Summer Ball which doesn't lose money.

Progress: We are continually moving in a more positive direction. Budgets are being stuck to very vigorously and figures are showing to be as budgeted or better in most areas.

A new sub-committee of the Trustee Board has been established to ensure no financial mishaps. They will rigorously check any plans for a Summer Ball.

Reform the Representation and Welfare Board

Outline, before the start of term, a new structure for RWB. Trail the reforms over the first term and implement policy change in January

Progress: Very much on target. Both Nicolas and Jason have held meetings of their new subcommittees and, if successful, their presence will be noted in the RWB Policy next term.

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Improved Food Quality

By 2nd term introduce new elements to the menu with time-specific service pledges. Update menu to offer a wide-range of high quality food.

Progress: The resignation of the Commercial Services Manager has disrupted by plan for time-specific pledges, but work is continually happening to increase the standard of food. I hope that when a new CSM is in place I can re-suggest my ideas and see the areas I believe should be improved, improved.

Better communication and Community Impact

See three-times the activity on the Sabbatical Blogs by the end of the first term, have three outward-facing reports by the end of November and establish the basis of an Impact Report by the end of the 2nd term.

Progress: The goal relating to activity of the blogs has been achieved. We have only created two reports, the White Paper and NSS Response. The third was meant to focus on Personal Tutorials, however the dust has yet to settle over the NSS response and it is better to suggest alterations when they will be well received.

Cash Machine back in Beit Quad

By mid-November have a cash machine back in the Union Building.

Progress: We thought we had one; then the offer was retracted!
We are still working very hard to get a machine in place before the end of term. The difficulty has been in persuading banks, who wouldn't charge us or the customer, to install a machine. Companies, who would charge us and/or the customer are willing but we do not feel this is beneficial to anyone.

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Appendix Three – IC Radio shutdown

Several members of IC Radio requested more information into the shutdown, which took place approximately three weeks ago.

In order to ensure transparency and to provide my successor with a clear idea of what happen (this is the second shut-down in as many years), I have provided this summary.

A email was sent to the Communications Department after the airing of the Shake and Bake show.

Two people complained on the grounds of ‘Deformation of Character’ in light of some comments said by the hosts.

The email was forwarded to the College Secretary at 18:00 on the 26th October. I was CCed into the message.

A response from both Rodney Eastwood (at 21:00) and Julia Buckingham (21:40) indicated they would assess the claims in the morning. An email from a member of staff (23:00) who was also CCed informed me of Annex H, the agreement with have with College about this area of complaint, to which they highlighted the requirement of College to make a judgment.

When I got into the office in the morning a meeting had taken place with Rodney and Julia in which they had decided to seek legal advice from the solicitors. I took the time to read Annex H and spoke to the member of staff who email me. I had a busy day and Monya was out of the office all morning, so it was deemed appropriate for the staff member, who was involved with the situation last year, to be the principle liaison.

By 1pm communications from Comms and College made it clear that it was in the best interests of the host(s) to remove the program. I gave the nod to the member of staff who was dealing with the issue to work on getting the recording removed.

The SysAdmin was called in to assist; however they could not get remote access to the IC Radio server due to a password reset. At this point they went to the station to try to see if they could access the server from there.

The presence of the SysAdmin in the IC Radio student meant that a member of LeoSoc contacted the station manager and by 2:30pm they were in my office to discuss the

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situation. I admit it would have been better had they been informed directly by us, instead of a friend.

They spoke to the member of staff and tried to contact their own technical team. However, due to lectures they were unable to help.

Comms highlighted a second communication with the complainant and indicated that they wished for the recording to be removed before the 'end of play' to ensure they could tell the complainant that the recording was removed.

By this point the show had been listened to by around 1,000 people; the typical annual listenership for a popular show on the website.

Our only alternative, after 2 hours of trying, was to involve ICT. Aware of the time, it was decided at around 16:10 to get ICT to do us a favour and quickly remove the recording. This involved them taking down IC Radio for approximately 10 minutes and the station manager was sat with the staff member as this happened.

Lessons Learned:

- All claims of defamation are the personal liability of those who are accused.
- Those accused can always appeal a decision by college, however they must convince the them that no laws have been broken.
- It would have been beneficial to inform IC Radio as soon as we were instructed to remove the content, as they would have been able to find people who could access the server. Password access has now been established and it is mutually accepted that this cannot always be the case, but contact is always expected.