

Imperial College Union
Deputy President (Welfare) Report
A note by Nicolas Massie

What an exciting month. Here in Welfare-land we've had success after success. I've finally sourced funding for freshers not in halls, we have very senior approval for the toilet posters, we should get emergency numbers on the back of swipe cards, we'll soon have Fairtrade status, the alcohol, depression and sexual victimisation research achieved ethics approval, we're taking great steps in volunteering, and five students/groups have applied through the new campaigns system. On a less positive front, Clayponds considerations have posed particular challenges and I will update verbally.

Not in halls

This is shaping up to be the perfect welfare success story. At the beginning of the year an issue was identified: Freshers not in halls lacked a key tool for social integration and support network development: they didn't live with their peers and sometimes didn't live with their families either. I set up some events for them, got to know them, worked out what they and I felt was best for them, and got to work. They now have a society that works a little like a DepSoc, i.e. automatic membership, a mailing list that is automatically populated with said membership and now, finally, three thousand pounds from College Welfare to subsidise events (as in halls of residence) and a Welfare Liaison staff member, a little like a warden. They will run some events this year but will really come into their own for next year's freshers.

Toilet posters and swipe cards

These have been authorised and approved by very senior College members. All that remains is for them to go up. This is proving to be a little more logistically challenging than anticipated but should happen before the next council.

If welfare providers think it's a good idea for students to have the CabSafe (etc) number on them at all times, it makes sense to have them on the only item most students at Imperial always have on them – their College swipe card. I'm in negotiations with security to post the most important welfare contact details on the back of swipe cards. There is a cost issue but I'm sure this can be overcome.

Student Experience Survey

We are working on the analysis of the data at the moment. We have discovered several limitations in the College's survey system (i.e. it cannot output non-aggregated data, it seems) and are working to make the best of a rather tricky situation. Once we have finished with this set of data, we will write a proposal for the college to invest in a system that allows raw data output such that real analysis can be performed. Regression analysis for correlations not directly asked, i.e. 'Is the experience overseas students have of the tutorial system different to that of home students?' is currently impossible, which severely hampers efforts based on the data. For SOLE, this isn't a very significant problem as the concerns are fairly elementary, i.e. 'is this lecturer satisfying students in the following ways', though it would certainly be interesting to be able to unpick the data a little more than is currently done. For welfare questions where stratification by respondent group is key, it creates a very significant obstacle.

The offshoot research project into alcohol use, sexual victimisation and depression has gained ethics approval. I have been in conversation with psychiatrists, the health centre, and counselling to ensure the study runs in the best possible way. The target population will be 500 first year students.

External speaker on body image issues

I have been in conversation with the Succeed Foundation, an organisation that specialises in providing support for those around individuals suffering from body image issues including but not limited to eating disorders. They are expanding their presence at a tremendous rate and to great acclaim. One of their doctors will host a talk at the South Kensington campus and perhaps at the Hammersmith campus in March. We are exploring the possibility of their collaboration with a potential new officer, the 'mental health officer'. Their foundation has funded ventures in the past.

Volunteering

Last council I said that we had engaged a new member of staff who was to start 'next week'. Our new 'Hubs Manager' has now started and has already hosted a packed first event. Students were invited to attend an introductory session on what Student Hubs was about at Imperial. The room booked was bursting to the seams and enthusiasm overflowed. A window had to be opened. A 'Hubs Committee' will soon be elected and they will determine the direction of Hubs at Imperial.

The Hubs slogan is 'connecting students with causes'. This means in essence, that they facilitate students doing what they want to do. If a student wants to create a new project, or wants to volunteer in a new and unusual way, the Hubs manager, and ultimately committee, will support the students in their endeavours. This is still very much in its infancy but is promising.

I attended an event at UCL celebrating ten years of their volunteer centre. There the centre offers a brokerage service, support for students looking to create their own opportunities, and an accreditation system. We would like to emulate and even improve upon this model at Imperial and are working out exactly how to do this. I have been aiming for this since my manifesto but seeing it at UCL has reinforced my conviction that it is possible and that we will achieve it. Anything UCL can do...

Committees

After a calendar swap with Monya, DPCS, I sat on the Health and Safety Consultative Committee (HSCC) on her behalf while she attended the Knightsbridge Association Law & Order committee for me. I, for better or for worse, am now a permanent member of the HSCC. This inspired me to commit to paper all my committees:

- Accommodation Services Committee
- Carbon Management Board
- Disability Action Committee
- Early Years Education Centre
- EDC (Equality and Diversity Committee)
- Fairtrade Steering Committee (Chair)
- Halls Committee (Chair)
- Health and Safety Consultative Committee
- Kensington & Chelsea Ward Panel
- Knightsbridge Association Law and Order committee
- Medical and Dentistry Committee
- PPG (Health Centre Patient Practice Group)
- Representation and Welfare Board (Chair/2)
- Union Council
- Union Executive Committee
- Union Trustee Board (Observer)
- Wardens' Committee

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Blood'n'bones (Donation campaign) – Frustratingly the NHS Blood and Transplant people still haven't agreed to a date. Ours has been a 'priority call' since early January. We first contacted them in late November.

Fairtrade – Had the third Fairtrade steering committee meeting. Prepped for Fairtrade Fortnight. Now just need to wait to hear back from Fairtrade – College should be a 'Fairtrade University' before long now.

Student complaints – I've been fielding complaints by fifth and final year medics who have received 'threatening' 'aggressive' messages from student finance. Have already spoke with Student Finance who assured me that the issue is

Issues on Registry website – The Registry website has questionable figures on rental prices in London. I am in discussions with them to change this so that students do not come to Imperial under potentially false pretenses.

Cycle Workshop – Still working towards this with the Bike User Rep.

Welfare Officer Training – I'm taking advantage of a service apparently included in our Nightline subscription – free 'listening training' for anyone who wants it! This will be on the 7th of March at 13:00.

Campaigns – Applications have been accepted for LGBT History Month, Fairtrade Fortnight, Rep Week, Blood'n'bones, and One World Day.