

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

Time since the last council has been frustrating. There are no great leaps forward, but progress is being made on all fronts. At this time of year, with so little time left, the easy objectives and targets we sabbaticals set ourselves have already been achieved, and all that is left is difficult enough not to have been achieved, but important enough still to be on the agenda. Anything that isn't important, at this stage, must be abandoned.

### **The question of Gender Equality at Imperial**

As many of you are aware, the questions of sexism and gender equality were raised in several issues of Felix last term. It became clear that action on this front was required. I commented in a blog post and Felix article and then hosted a gender equality forum with support from the Equality and Diversity unit at College who kindly sponsored lunch and gave presentations at the beginning of the forum. The forum was very successful with over 45 participants (four male) and fourteen discrete action points. The action areas could be broadly divided into two, the image of women, and facilities for women, the first being a long-term culture shift and the latter being a medium-term logistical issue. The full set of objectives is available to all interested parties and is published on Facebook in the group 'Feminist and Gender Equality at Imperial'. These objectives will be taken forward by the new Gender Equality Officer, a potential new Feminist/Gender Equality Society and the Deputy President (Welfare).

### **Student experience survey**

The analysis of the Student Experience Survey is now well and truly under way. With a 49% response rate and 8000 pages of free-text comments, we struggled initially but with the help of an Imperial graduate with a special interest in statistics, and over 1000 lines of code he has written, the analysis next year will be automated. We are currently removing questions that have not yielded useful information in order to streamline the process next year. We anticipate removing at least 20% of questions. The information will be presented at several College committees including the Annual Welfare Seminar where the Deputy President (Welfare) will give a twenty minute presentation on findings. This analysis has proved to be an enormous time-burden but should take up less time next year.

### **New staff in Disabilities**

I have represented students on three interview panels this year for new staff in the Disability Advisory Service. Each interview process takes the better part of a day. The positions engaged were a new part-time **disability advisor**, to help with the general work done by the service, a **mentor**, to support students with ongoing difficulties, and an **International/Dyslexia tutor**, who will work with international students. Home students receive government funding for support with disabilities. International students do not; therefore College saw fit to create a post to provide for international students who would otherwise have to pay for their own support. These three new positions should

allow College to cater to our population of students with disabilities in line with national policy and institutional best practice.

### **Meeting hall wardens**

My predecessors have devoted time to 'halls surgeries' which were meetings, usually appended to meetings of the halls committee, attended by the same students who attended the halls committee meetings. I felt that the information gained from this would be the same as that gained from 'halls committee' (a meeting chaired by the DPW with a representative from each hall) so I have opted to meet with wardens individually as they are best placed to know about pastoral issues affecting first year students. I will take advantage of their knowledge to set aspects of the welfare agenda for the next few years.

### **Individual cases**

Though the DPW job is not predominantly case-oriented, there have been some individual cases that have taken up significant amounts of time. I cannot elaborate a great deal but one was a mental health case and the other, discipline. The former has highlighted some areas for improvement in our mental health provision.

### **Signs in toilets**

We are in a similar position to last council here. These are still approved in principle but the actual putting up of the posters is proving troublesome. This will hopefully be resolved for next council!

### **Welfare information on the back of swipe cards**

College Security has agreed to absorb the cost for these! All that remains is to choose the content. Security have agreed to have input on this.

### **UCL Disciplinary**

As sabbatical officers part of our job is to maintain good relationships with other Unions. To this end, I assisted UCL as an external member on a disciplinary panel. It was very interesting to see the differences in the way they handle their disciplinaries and the way we handle ours. Theirs is rather more litigious, with a 'case for the defence' and a 'case for the defendant'. They also have an external staff and external student on each of their panels, which **may be something of interest in our panels.**

### **Exhibition Road**

Westminster council have begun a 'monitoring exercise' of Exhibition Road, looking at the number of 'near-misses' and accidents. They are doing this, in part due to continued applied pressure by us, and by several other pressure groups including Guide Dogs for the Blind, a local disability advocacy group, and a group of concerned citizens, among others. There is also a freedom of information request ongoing for the number of accidents now and before the road was built, such that we can compare and use this, if need be, for an evidenced argument next year. This sort of thing takes time but the Union is acting.

Imperial College Union Council  
1 May 2012

### **Fairtrade**

Imperial College is now a Fairtrade University! The Fairtrade Foundation approved our application and provided us with opportunities for improvement – they have also changed their process which means that our next renewal is not due for another two years.

### **Blood'n'bones**

Unfortunately, having spoken finally with the person in charge of NHSBT (blood and transplant) for the area, it has been made clear that they are not looking for any new venues for the next two years. I have, however, put our name down for that slot so hopefully, within two years, we will have an on-site blood drive!

### **BUDDIES**

Jason (DPE) and I spent a day working out a strategy for buddies. We have a preliminary agreement from Registry to include a link to the new Buddy allocation system (with bugs worked out) in their confirmation of offer email; this will help ensure all students know about buddy offerings in departments where the profile is lower.

### **International Students**

A new distribution list has been created for students with fee-status 'International'. This will facilitate the work of the International Officer next year greatly.