

Imperial College Union  
**Council Chair Report**  
*A note by the Council Chair – Michael Foster*

### **Higher Education Achievement Reports**

Professor Debra Humphris, the new Pro Rector (Education), was invited to the meeting of Council on 13 November to contribute to the discussion on Higher Education Achievement Reports (HEAR), as well as Imperial Horizons. The HEAR's purpose is to show the 'total genius' of students on graduating, including their individual module marks and extra-curricular activities, rather than a single final grade. Professor Humphris fielded questions on the content of the HEAR, such as what exactly would be recorded on the document and how extra-curricular activities would be accredited. After a fruitful discussion, the President agreed to write a response paper, taking into account the views expressed by members of Council. The paper was presented at the next meeting (following an online survey), with Council agreeing on its support of the initiative, as well as identifying some specifics important to Imperial College Union.

### **Imperial Horizons**

Professor Humphris also contributed to the discussion on the future of Imperial Horizons, an initiative in cross-curricular teaching. Discussion focused on whether the course should be compulsory and if it should be for credit, as well as concerns about the effect it would have on how much focus students placed on the main body of their degree. Council members were keen to provide suggestions of different courses; Professor Humphris responded that those decisions would form part of a wider curriculum review.

The eventual consensus was that, while Horizons might be an interesting initiative, it was not necessarily the answer to the concerns many students had with academic provision at Imperial; further, it was felt that wider consultation was necessary to determine whether the programme should be for credit or not. To this end, the President brought a summary paper of the discussion to the next meeting of Council, which was accepted.

### **Access to Medicines**

The ICSMSU President presented a paper on behalf of a constituent at the meeting of 4 December, arguing that Imperial College Union should endorse the Global Access Licensing Framework (GALF). The framework seeks to encourage research institutions to provide licenses of novel drugs where the product can be developed cheaply in low- and middle-income countries, while still maintaining profit margins for pharmaceutical companies in high-income countries. The paper also argued for a greater recognition of neglected tropical diseases on the curricula of some courses at Imperial.

The response to the paper was mixed, with some members of Council supporting the idea, and others concerned about the impact it would have on Imperial's relationship with the pharmaceutical industry. In general, Council felt that they agreed with enabling the developing world to access medicines, but that GALF was not the appropriate vehicle. The paper was rejected, and the ICSMSU was encouraged to submit a new paper, taking a more Union-specific stance.

## **Years Abroad**

The President presented a paper on the status of years abroad (i.e. a year taken abroad as part of normal undergraduate study). It explained that the Government was keen to encourage students to take years abroad by introducing a cap to fees in the year taken abroad. In effect, a year abroad will be cheaper than a year of regular study, making it attractive to students concerned about university costs. However, the costs calculated by the Government were taken from a national average, whereas the cost to Imperial College of a year abroad might be considerably higher, leading to concerns College might reduce the number of places available. The paper therefore resolved to lobby College not to lower the number of places available for years abroad, as this would be a disadvantage to students.

## **Pedicabs**

The Deputy President (Welfare) presented a paper on the Union's stance on 'pedicabs', or rickshaws, as they are often known. This was in response to a request from TfL and the Mayor of London, who are looking regulate the pedicab trade. The paper was in support of new legislation to regulate their trade, which Council was in support of.

## **International Fees**

The Overseas Societies Committee Chair submitted a paper on the fees paid by international students. The paper focused on the difficulty for students and their families to adequately budget for university when there was no certainty about how their fees would change in their years of study. It also argued that fee increases, while expected an inevitable, were unpredictable, with no transparency into the calculations performed to settle on an increase. The paper was supported by members of Council, and resolved to lobby College for more information on fee increases.

Michael Foster  
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