

**Report on Last Year's Council**  
Union President- David Goldsmith

This report provides an accessible summary of the highlights of what happened last year in Union Council (Council). All papers can be found online (1). The aim is to inform members, and interested students, of how Council has enacted change in the past in order to better empower them to enact change in the future. It will also highlight ongoing issues as well as any action that still needs to be taken. I have included a section at the end dedicated to the AgainstActon campaign, as I am sure there will be a lot of interest in this.

**1<sup>st</sup> Meeting 08.10.12**

IPPR Response

- The IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research), a UK thinktank, was commissioned to look into 'The Future of Higher Education in England' and made a call for evidence. We wrote a response, which was then approved by Council (2). The report was then published on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 (3).
- Not being a member of the NUS (4) it is important that we as a Union write our own responses (which the NUS would otherwise do for us) to ensure that we have a voice. **One of the advantages of not being a member of this national body is that we have our individual voice, which is listened to on a national level. We are in fact the only Union to have written a response to this-** the others relying on the NUS.
- Some highlights of our response
  - We believe there should be lots of small University groups e.g. rather than Imperial be part of the Russell group it would be better placed in a group of top London Universities
  - We believe market forces are a good way to drive up standards and quality in the higher education sector

Charity registration and changes to the constitution

- Changes to the Union constitution and bye-laws (5) (these are the governing documents of the Union) needed to be made as the Union was to register as a charity
- These changes were passed at the next meeting of Council
- **The union is now a fully registered charity**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting 30.10.12**

Widening participation and international students

- Widening participation refers to the attempt to increase numbers of under-represented groups in higher education such as those in low income families, with disabilities and some ethnic minorities.
- It was resolved that the Union should concentrate its efforts on developing its own outreach programme (e.g. where students help and inspire students at low-performing schools) as well as a scheme to accredit the students who partake in this
- As a result of this push from Council the Union has now developed its relationship with Imperial Hub (6) - a branch of the charity 'Student Hubs' which works from our offices to provide these opportunities to our students. We have also now commenced the pilot of our new volunteer accreditation scheme- 'ImperialPlus' (7) which gives students something they can put on their CV to improve their employability. **This is an example of when a resolve from Council has led to a real change in what the Union does.**

Council  
29 October 2013

### 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting 15.01.13

International fees- a major concern

- This paper was written by the chair of the OSC (9)
- It highlighted that there wasn't enough transparency over how much fees would increase for each year of an international student's course.
- **As a result of this paper the Union president at the time worked with the College to ensure that this will now be well publicised- that it will increase each year with the rate of September inflation**

### 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting 12.02.13

Extending the Writing-Up phase

- A student wrote a paper asking for a union stance and action to be taken to ensure that PhD students in the last year of their course remained registered as students. In this year they were previously no longer able to access College services such as the library which had a big impact on their ability to write up their thesis.
- The Union lobbied the College and convinced the Head of the Graduate School to change this. A paper is soon to be taken to Senate (one of the highest College committees) to approve this change. This means that this is almost certainly going to be rolled out. **This is a big win for Council and the Union and a perfect example of how a student can utilise Council to enact real change with high impact.**

Access to Medicines Policy

- This was written by a student in order to get the Union to lobby Imperial College to sign onto the global access licensing framework- this would ensure that discoveries sold by Imperial College which contribute to the creation of drugs are sold with the proviso that the drug will not be patented in developing countries. This would bring the price down in these countries thereby ensuring access to them.
- **Council passed this however it has proven exceptionally difficult to enact this change due to resistance from the College. I will be looking into this again this year.**

### 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting 30.04.13

Postgrad Health Centre Access

- Out of the blue, the Health Centre at the College decided not to allow postgraduate students to use its services
- **Council resolved to lobby the Health Centre and as a result of intervention from the then Deputy President (Welfare) this decision was reversed and postgraduate students were once again allowed to use the services.**

Postgraduate Taught Fees

- Council passed a paper resolving to lobby our local MPs and the College in order to introduce a new method for postgraduate taught students (e.g. Masters Students) to receive loans to pay for their course fees. This is important, as there is currently no scheme in place unlike for undergraduate degrees in which a student loan may be obtained from the government.
- Our suggested method was different to that proposed by the NUS and we received a letter back from David Willets (Minister of State for Universities and Science) telling us that he prefers it over the one suggested by the NUS. **This is another example of how we, as a single Union, are able to make our voice heard.**

Council  
29 October 2013

- This method was brought up with the senior management in College who have expressed interest. **I will be meeting with them soon to discuss the possibility of implementing this.**

### 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting 30.05.13

Stance on GradPad

- GradPad is a company, with the majority owned by Imperial College, which provides accommodation to Postgraduate Students at the College. It is notoriously expensive and International students using it currently have to pay a year's rent up front. This is in contrast to the College's Undergraduate accommodation where International students do not have to do this.
- **I will be investigating this further this year and will be pushing the college to develop a new postgraduate accommodation strategy as the current one does not appear to be in the best interest of students**

### 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting 11.06.13

Bye-laws Changes- change to the Deputy President (Finance and Services) name and role

- It was noted at this Council that
  - Finance, Community and Development is an accurate reflection of the role.
  - It was suggested to see how the role develops to see what name best fits.
  - It was agreed that if the name changes, it should be 'communities'.
  - It was suggested that the perception of students may be that Council has 'pulled the rug out from underneath' a candidate who stood on the understanding that the role would not be what it has changed to. It was highlighted that the role has not changed dramatically and there is scope to grow the role with the additions of extra remits
- **It is important to familiarise yourself with all of this (the minutes are here (10) as the decision as to what change should happen has been deferred to the meeting of Council in January 2014**

### AgainstActon

- Detailed and easy-to-read information on the AgainstActon campaign and what it was about can be found here (11)
- This was Union Council's Response (12) which was approved last year at the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of Union Council
- The Union launched the AgainstActon campaign after this response, whilst the College management board was writing its reply. This campaign featured heavy posterage of the campuses and halls, numerous articles in Felix and an online petition- gathering both qualitative and quantitative data on student opinion on the matter.
- This was the response back from College's Management board (13)
- What has happened since then:
  - The hall in North Acton (W3) is in the process of being built. However it is not guaranteed as future Imperial accommodation and the College are continuing to search for alternatives as well as negotiating on the lease for Evelyn Gardens. Should they find alternatives they would most likely sell this property.
  - The previous sabbatical officers and I were invited to meetings where we were consulted on the layout of W3. We agreed to come to this meeting as we wanted to ensure that, should the hall be put to use, it would provide the best possible experience for students. An extensive common room, study

Council  
29 October 2013

- rooms, music rooms, prayer room, gym and cafes would most likely be features.
- Reviews and surveys are underway on Evelyn Gardens and Garden Hall
- Garden Hall is currently out-of-use due to the need for extensive refurbishment
- What needs to happen now:
  - I will be meeting with the Chief Operations Officer of the College to discuss the way forward and to enquire about the student consultation which College management board committed to run by the end of 2013.

#### Sources and abbreviations

- (1) [https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/12-13/Union\\_Council](https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/12-13/Union_Council)
- (2) <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/news/our-response-ipprs-future-higher-education-england>
- (3) <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/10847/a-critical-path-securing-the-future-of-higher-education-in-england>
- (4) NUS- the National Union of Students
- (5) <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/constitution-and-regulations>
- (6) <http://www.imperialhub.org/>
- (7) <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/training/imperial-plus-developing-your-skills>
- (8) NSS
- (9) Overseas Student Committee- a management group for all the overseas societies at the Union
- (10) [https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/13-14/Union\\_Council/file/2148](https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/13-14/Union_Council/file/2148)
- (11) <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/campaigns/accommodation>
- (12) <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/campaigns/accommodation/unions-view>
- (13) <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/campaigns/accommodation/colleges-response>