

Council
10 December 2013

Council Report
David Goldsmith- ICU President

Anti-Immigration Bill Campaign

Since passing the motion at Union Council to oppose the bill, and agreeing to spearhead the campaign, we met with Daniel Stevens (International Officer for the NUS (1)) to discuss how we could join in with the national campaign as well as make our own voice heard. Our campaign page can be found here <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/news/oppose-immigration-bill>. The page directs people to e-mail their MP and sign the NUS petition. I have worked with Charmain (OSC (2) Chair) to send out an e-mail to all OSC society presidents asking them to e-mail all their society members to encourage them to use the page and to organise visits to local embassies to put pressure on them to stand up against the bill.

I am in the process of drafting an open letter to members of the House of Lords associated with the College to be published on our website, in Felix and possibly elsewhere. Marissa (Deputy President Welfare) presented our Council paper on the matter to the Vice-provosts Advisory Group for Education (3) with approval from the members on our stance- it is also to be discussed at Provost's board (4). I also alerted the Provost of the matter at our monthly meeting. I am hoping to get the College to co-sign the open letter however, as the College does not usually take a stance on political issues, there is a chance that this won't happen.

I contacted the lords to notify them that we will be publishing this letter and received a response from Lady Manningham-Buller and Lord Winston with whom I discussed the matter at the Science Challenge (5) Launch drinks last week. I will be meeting Lord Winston for lunch to discuss the matter further once it reaches the House of Lords. Both appear keen to oppose the Bill.

Our campaign featured on the front page of Felix in an article written by Marissa and as the headline of the Weekly Union newsletter from me.

Meeting with the Royal College of Art Students' Union (RCASU) and Royal College of Music Student Association (RCMSA)

Yas (Deputy President Clubs and Societies) and I met with the presidents of these two Unions to discuss how we could make the most out of being so close to each other. We have decided to set up a meeting between us, to happen at the start of each term, rotating in its location, and to continue into the future. A few copies of Felix will be distributed to the Colleges and their students will be able to write articles for the publication. They have agreed to encourage their students to buy associate membership of our Union and to join our clubs and societies. We all agreed to keep each other updated on events that we hold. These will be excellent opportunities for students at Imperial to mingle with artists and musicians.

Consultation mechanism

A few updates on this (see first Council report for an explanation of what this is (6)): it will likely function as a matrix with 'Student Group Size' on the X axis

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and 'Impact Factor' on the Y axis and you thereby find the relevant box which links to a checklist of consultation methods that need to be employed. In order to legitimise this I will be constructing it in such a way that we can and will use it on ourselves as a Union to inform how we should consult with students on things that we do. I'm in the process of forming a long-term plan for developing and implementing the mechanism. It will likely be launched as a paper version and then, if successful, as an online, interactive webpage. Before launch it will require extensive consultation with the College and with students. I'm looking to make this a priority for my term in office and it will likely take this long to put it into action due to the nature of the project.

Constituent Unions

I will be meeting with Constituent Union Presidents at the end of this term to get feedback on how the term has gone and to discuss the relationship Constituent Unions have with the Central Union: whether it works well, whether there could be more support given, etc.

GSU Newsletter

I met with the GSU and the communications team at the Union and we discussed how a lot of material is duplicated in the GSU newsletter and the Union newsletter. To resolve this we have decided to send out the GSU newsletter less frequently and to send out a joint newsletter every 3 weeks. The GSU commented that the postgraduate newsletter doesn't make apparent that this is what it is and can be interpreted as 'for undergrads'. To resolve this the newsletters now say 'What's on Undergraduates' or "What's on Postgraduates".

Personal Tutor Feedback System

As a result of feedback from the Union the College have made the purchase order for 'Starfish', a personal tutor feedback system, which will be piloted in a few departments. The pilot will likely finish in June. If all goes well this system should be rolled out to all students in the next academic year. I am on the newly formed 'Tutor Systems Project Board', which will meet regularly to review the progress of the pilot.

Meeting of College Council

Most discussion centred on Imperial West. I reminded the Council that they will need to ensure a Union presence at Imperial West and will need to work with us to develop this. The development is however so far ahead in the future that it is not within the timeframe of my term as President to influence this. This will need to remain on the Union's agenda.

Teachback

I invited Thomas Lim and Dario Magliochetti (two students at the College) to the Student Centric Board, a board in the College, chaired by me, which handles student-facing IT projects. They presented their program 'Teachback' which enables students to give feedback on teaching assistants. This program has uptake from a few departments already

Postgraduate Accommodation

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Concerned with the fact that International students without a UK guarantor need to pay 12 months rent upfront in order to use GradPad (8) accommodation I approached Simon Harding-Roots, the Chief Operations Officers and Paul Noke, the Head of Residential Operations and GradPad to discuss this. They explained that it was 12 months as opposed to 6 months (which is the case for a lot of private accommodation) as they get an intake of students only once a year and not throughout the year i.e. if a student without a guarantor were to leave and stop paying rent they would have great difficulty finding someone else to take the room and retrieving the rent from the student.

In response to the difficulty this can impose on many international students they are in the process of introducing a new Guarantor Service called 'Housing Hand', hopefully for the start of the next academic year. The Head of Residential Operations and GradPad explained: 'With regard to the guarantor service; arrangements with 'Housing Hand' are still being finalised but it is likely that students would be asked to pay the equivalent of one months rent upfront (rather than for the full 12 month contract period), of which they would receive a significant proportion back at the end of their tenancy provided they maintain their rental payments throughout the year. I think this service will be well received and will see a significant increase in the number of international students paying by installments from next year'

Postgraduate Open day

I gave a speech on 'Life as a student' and Imperial College Union to prospective students.

- (1) NUS: the National Union of Students
- (2) OSC: Overseas Societies Committee: The management group for all Overseas Societies (E.g. Romanian Society)
- (3) Vice-Provost's Advisory Group for Education: The committee, chaired by the Vice Provost (Education), Debra Humphris, which advises on the overall direction of the College's Education and Student strategy
- (4) Provost's Board: The Board, chaired by the Provost, James Stirling, which is responsible for the delivery of the College's core academic mission.
- (5) <http://rcsu.org.uk/sciencechallenge/>
- (6) https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/13-14/Union_Council/file/2151
- (7) College Council is the governing body of the College of which the ICU President is a member
- (8) GradPad is the name of the subsidiary company, partly owned by the College, which provides postgraduate accommodation