

CHUN-YIN SAN

# CLOSING REPORT

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (EDUCATION)

Students, President, Chair of the Trustee Board, and Council Chair,

This year has been filled with challenges for my work in education, representation and student development at Imperial College Union. Internally, my work has been buffeted by significant changes to our staff teams in the Student Voice & Communications directorate and in the Student Development division. The volatility in the Education & Welfare team has undermined the levels of professional support in-place for myself and the Academic Representation Network, whereas the changes to the Student Development team has opened new and exciting opportunities for growth, change and renewal. The challenges that I faced were compounded by the Union entering its 2017-2020 strategic cycle, placing additional demands on me to lead the 'Diversity' stream alongside contributing to discussions across areas such as Postgraduate engagement, of which my work was uniquely placed to inform.

Externally, my colleagues from across the road has made the year no less eventful. The departure of the Vice-Provost (Education) and the Academic Registrar at the start of my term in office has demanded the building and maintaining of new relationships on behalf of the Union. Meanwhile, the starting of numerous new initiatives that sought to critically examine the fundamentals of an Imperial education – from the Future Student Services review, to the drafting of a new set of standardized regulations for Taught students, and a comprehensive review into every aspect of the PhD experience – has placed great demands and expectations on me and my teams to deliver for the benefit of all our members.

I am proud to say, however, that with the support of our Academic Representatives, our staff, and our friends and partners from the University, I can put forward a strong case that we were able to live up to these expectations. And, I am pleased to present the case that we were able to seize opportunities fully to deliver landmark changes, that I trust will make lasting improvements to all our members' experience, protect those most vulnerable and in-need, and inspire our people to help others and change the world around them.

This marks my final report to the Board of Trustees, Union Council, and the Education & Representation Board. It is separated into two main sections – the first details key outcomes across my fields of work, while the second outlines key challenges that I have identified which I hope future Boards can consider. The appendix outlines my manifesto promises, and the degree to which they have been completed or not completed. I hope this report facilitates frank analyses of my strengths, weaknesses, successes, and failures.

Yours sincerely,

**Chun-Yin San**

Deputy President (Education)  
Imperial College Union

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## WITH THANKS TO

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and Nick & Fran & Elanor & Gemma for being super-inspirational people (you're the best)

and Andrew & Sky, who I'll miss working with the most :)

# WHAT I HAVE DONE

## Executive Summary

### *Educational Affairs*

1. I have been delivering on the vision and recommendations outlined in the National Students Survey (NSS) Response 2015, which was published in Autumn 2015 and has been well-received by the College. My work has seen the College endorse five landmark changes to assessment regulations, the formation of a new forum between ICU and senior College leaders that is making genuine progress towards refreshing Taught degree curriculums, and which is facilitating a strong student-staff partnership in addressing concerns voiced by Taught students.
2. I have been delivering on the recommendations outlined in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) Response 2015, which was presented to College Senate for the first time in January 2016 and has been well-received by the Graduate School. My work has involved a partnership with the Graduate School to launch 6 Task & Finish Groups to review the PhD experience, a response to the Higher Education Academy's PRES Consultation, and a strong student-staff partnership in addressing concerns voiced by Research students.
3. Following my experience as a student based at Hammersmith Hospital campus, I have been working to improve the experience of our Taught and Research students based at Hammersmith Hospital and Silwood Park campuses, alongside our future members based at White City campus. My work has seen the re-development of the Wolfson common space at Hammersmith Hospital campus following threat of closure, the securing of commitments to improve course provisions at Silwood Park campus, and the development of a student services vision at the White City campus.

### *Academic Representation Affairs*

1. I have been operating our Academic Representation Network of over 540 student volunteers. The focus of this work has been empowerment of our volunteers to become more effective leaders, capable of making effective change on behalf of their constituents. In this, I have developed new opportunities for our volunteers to take leadership and develop new skills, built and maintained new relationships to boost the Network's reputation, and examined its operational processes to ensure volunteers have the best support and that the Deputy President (Education)'s agenda is robustly shaped by elected representatives across the College.

### *Student Development Affairs*

1. Following the end of our partnership with Student Hubs, I have been supporting the Student Development team to develop new opportunities that will allow students to make a social impact through the Union. Highlights include the development of a new Enterprise Boot Camp, the refinement of the Imperial Award scheme, and attempts to develop new opportunities such as at Imperial Festival.

## Educational Affairs

### *Taught Education Affairs*

The heart of my agenda for Taught students has been based around one message: that an Imperial education isn't about cooking up the 'perfect student', with perfect scores and a perfect understanding of how to study and do exams. It is about nurturing young people – helping them become creative, critical thinkers with the skills, opportunities and space to identify - and then pursue - their intellectual passion, whether it's in science, engineering, medicine, business, or beyond.

This message was encapsulated in our **National Students Survey (NSS) Response 2015**, which shifted our NSS Responses from being focused on single issues to having a holistic vision:

“This idea - of realigning and rethinking courses and resources to support our students' wider development and their deeper engagement with science and society - generates a wide range of possible actions... From industry placements, to assessment methods, to pre-sessional experiences and the role of extra-curricular activities, the whole range of the Imperial experience can be viewed through this lens.

One of my priorities as Deputy President (Education) is to work with College to build an academic experience that stretches students and establishes their mastery over their subject of interest, but also provides the space, structure and incentive to explore more widely. To develop our students' potential as creative and intelligent thinkers - able to engage critically with their subject and relate it to global challenges - will set Imperial graduates apart from and beyond those of other world-class institutions” (Imperial College Union, 2015)

### Key Achievements

1. In the Autumn, I presented the NSS Response to College Senate and the Vice-Provost's Advisory Group for Education (VPAGE), where our vision was warmly received. Myself and Lucinda were later invited to present the NSS Response to Provost's Board, marking the first time that there has been student representation on the forum.
  - The presentation to Provost's Board proved hugely significant, as it led to the formation of the **NSS Performance Group**, a forum between ICU, the Vice-Provost (Education), and Faculty Vice-Deans (Education) that was able to make recommendations directly to Provost's Board and Senate. Through this Group, I have been able to:
    - Commit the College to support Departments and program conveners to reduce assessment load and promote innovative teaching through redesigning curriculums, and work with College to design what this support will look like.
    - Work with College to draft a new timeline for action following the release of NSS results each year, which ensures that future NSS Responses will be disseminated widely to influence Faculty and Departmental action plans, that ensures students in Departments will be involved and consulted in the creation of action plans, and that support services (e.g. Library Services) will be fully involved in the NSS process.
    - Commit the College to examine Undergraduate research supervision, sharing best practice on areas such as the project allocation process, the student-supervisor relationship, and marking & moderation practices.

- Help set the agenda and priorities for the personal tutor review.
2. The assessment-related recommendations in the NSS Response 2015 formed the backbone to the ASF Response 2016, a Response document that set out our expectations for the Academic Standards Framework initiative – a cryptic name for the College’s work on creating a single set of regulations for all Taught degree programs – and which was to give a clear signal to the College that the Union was to robustly engage with the initiative.
- The ASF Response 2016 was ratified by Education & Representation Board in January 2016. It then formed the basis to my negotiations with the five Faculties of College over February and March regarding assessment & feedback regulations – negotiations which were successful, resulting in the endorsement of five of six of our assessment-related NSS Response recommendations due to be in effect from 2017/18, including:
    - Specifying in the regulations for the first time that coursework feedback should be returned in 14 days, unless for major pieces of coursework of which the revised deadline should be clearly communicated to students in abundance of time.
    - Permitting students – particularly those in the first year – to review and learn from their examination papers under the supervision of course directors and personal tutors.
    - Permitting the release of marks clearly noted as provisional in good time, i.e. that students can see that they have achieved ‘X%’ on their coursework without having to wait until the end of the year.
  - In addition to assessment regulations, I have also supported the Deputy President (Welfare) in helping College to draft and revise its regulations and procedures surrounding mitigating circumstances and academic appeals. This include:
    - Helping the Deputy President (Welfare) identify the principles that we wanted to see from the new regulations and procedures.
    - Helping the Deputy President (Welfare) meet with the Faculties of the College and protest against a lack of authentic engagement with students.
  - I am also working with the College to draft and revise its regulations on academic progression:
    - Extending the time in which a student can apply for an aegrotat award (the conferral of a degree in exceptional circumstances where a student cannot complete their studies) from 6 weeks to 1 year.
    - Lobbying Faculties of the College to harmonizing the pass marks between MEng/MSci students with their MSc counterparts.
    - Lobbying Faculties of the College to prioritize mitigating circumstances procedures above any measures of compensation or condonement of modules.
3. The NSS Response vision formed the basis to my work with the Educational Development Unit on its Education Day conference, which drew together academic staff from across the College to share practice in teaching and learning.

- The theme to this year’s conference was **transformative learning**. I was invited by the EDU to organize **student focus groups** to investigate how students felt their education had (or hadn’t) transformed them intellectually over their time at Imperial, and then present the findings as a keynote presentation at the conference.
    - The focus groups, which were mainly attended by Taught Masters students, coincidentally **highlighted a high workload, jam-packed scheduling, and lack of space to reflect on what was learnt as barriers to positive transformation for the students** – suggesting that our NSS Response vision was equally relevant for Masters Taught students as for Undergraduate Taught students.
  - Taking on board student comments at the focus groups, I presented the issues identified to the **Vice-Provost (Education)’s Student Forum**. This led to a lively conversation, that resulted in ‘creating space for reflection and downtime’ being agreed for the first time as a priority for Taught Masters students’ experience.
    - This later resulted in an invitation for me to join the **Masters Success Guide** project, where I am now working with my Academic Officer for the Business School to author the ‘Beyond academic life’ section of the Guide, in hopes of helping future Taught Masters students to make the most of their downtime.
4. I am now working with the Vice-Provost (Education) to consider other ways to embed the NSS Response vision in the College. This include collaborating on an additional step in the programme approval process, so to ensure **sufficient student consultation** during the modularization process, and to ensure issues such as assessment load, teaching methods, and effective student support are considered.

### ***Research Education Affairs***

When I first assumed this position, I had a very basic understanding of the issues that Research students faced. With 25% of our membership being made up of doctoral researchers, however, I felt deeply obliged to address this weakness. The subsequent journey was not one that I could have ever imagined. In meeting and working with PhD students at various stages of their careers, both in and outside of my official capacity, I have come across members of our community who are smarter, more driven, and more passionate than I could ever imagine being.

Conversely, I have also met with and listened to Research students who told me the most tragic of stories – stories of them being led down by their supervisors, failed to be supported and protected by the College, and ultimately having their dreams and career aspirations shattered. It made me realize just how much there is for us to do, and the weight of the responsibility that we have as a Students’ Union to stand up for those members of our community who we poorly represent and who otherwise would not be heard.

If there are any regrets for me this year, it will be that we weren’t able to do more here – in part due to concerns of overloading a heavily under-resourced Education & Welfare team. I do hope, however, that my work this year will have committed the Union to much greater engagement in this area in the future.

### **Key Achievements**

1. In the Autumn term, I presented the **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) Response 2015 Preview** to College Senate and VPAGE, becoming the first Deputy

President (Education) to do so. Though the final PRES Response would not be published until January 2016, presenting the near-final version alongside our NSS Response 2015 symbolized my commitment to represent doctoral students equally to their Taught counterparts.

- The choice to place doctoral affairs on the same level as Undergraduate affairs was warmly received by the Graduate School, and on reflection, has been instrumental to revitalizing our working relationship with the School over the year.
  - Subsequent to College Senate, I was invited to present the PRES Response to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee, a gathering of Postgraduate Departmental staff, which received our recommendations positively.
  - As our PRES Response recommendations complemented the World-Class Research Supervision Project, which was being started and presented at the same time as our Response, I agreed to work in partnership with the Graduate School to reduce a duplication of effort (but also to reduce the workload of our under-resourced Education & Welfare staff team). As the World-Class Research Supervision project transformed into a review into the PhD experience, our recommendations would serve as student perspectives to facilitate discussions in the groups that make up the review.
    - As part of our working relationship with the Graduate School, I was consulted on how the review project should take place. Out of concerns that the project would spiral into a long and bureaucratic initiative, I advised the School to move to a model of 'Task & Finish' groups where decisions would be made on-the-go, thus accelerating the change-making process. This was adopted by the School.
    - The first Task & Finish groups began towards the end of last month, and I am pleased to say that we will have ICU representation on all streams. Representatives have been equipped with copies of the PRES Response, and have met to discuss a common approach to engaging with the project.
2. While the positive responses to our PRES Response was encouraging, significant issues to do with Postgraduate engagement from the College remain. It was striking that I was not invited to present the PRES Response alongside the NSS Response at Provost's Board, nor has interest and buy-in from Faculties of the College in our recommendations been nearly as forthcoming as for the NSS Response.
- Tackling this apathy became a key motivator for me to submit a Response to the Higher Education Academy's consultation on the future of the PRES. In consultation with our PhD Academic Representatives, I recommended that the PRES should become a mandatory survey for all institutions, with results publicly published.
  - Future Deputy Presidents (Education) can learn from my experiences, and consider taking a more hardline approach to push for PhD issues to be discussed at key College forums – something that I had not done this year.
3. In addition to publishing the PRES Response in tandem with the NSS Response, I have also tried to increase our engagement on Research affairs via other means. This included

trying to regularly attend Research-specific committees, such as the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee (PPDC) and the External Advisory Board to the PPDC.

- As part of my engagement with the PPDC, I gave strong support to the re-development of the PhD residential program which reduced the duration of courses but increased their frequency – making the program more accessible to students, and helping to avoid welfare issues (e.g. students becoming overly stressed by their time away from the lab).

### ***Campus Affairs***

As a Biomedical Science graduate, I never had the privilege of calling South Kensington my 'home campus' for much of my time as a student. After being casted off to Hammersmith Hospital campus in the second term of my first year, I was to slowly drift eastward towards St Mary's Hospital campus over the next two years, only to return to South Kensington in the very last term of my very last year. The student experience at these 'non-South Kensington' campuses therefore holds a very special place at my heart, which why this section is the only one to carry forward promises that I made as an Academic Representative for my constituents in Biomedical Science.

### **Key Achievements**

1. Towards the end of Summer last year, I was horrified to learn from our Academic Reps of plans by Campus Services to close the **Wolfson Restaurant**, the main food vendor at the Hammersmith Hospital campus which also acted as the main common space for Research and Taught students.
  - With the support of Alex Mckee, we were able to stage an intervention, ensuring that the restaurant remained open for 2016/17 albeit with a lower quality provision.
  - In the new year, I was invited by Campus Services to take part in a workshop that sought to review student services at Hammersmith Hospital, Charing Cross Hospital, and St Mary's Hospital campuses.
    - In the workshop, myself and our Academic Representatives at Hammersmith Hospital, raised the need for quality food provision at non-South Kensington campuses, the need for better quality common spaces, the need for services to be open out of term time for Postgraduate students, and the need for student support services such as Student Hub to have a permanent presence on as many campuses as possible.
    - In mid-May, Campus Services announced that the Hammersmith Hospital campus will retain the Wolfson Restaurant common space, and that the space would be re-developed with new provisions that will be available throughout the calendar year.
2. In April, I was made aware of serious issues affecting courses taught from **Silwood Park campus**. In collaboration with Alex Raposo, Appointed Student Trustee, we immediately called a meeting with the Faculty of Natural Sciences where a joint action plan to have a formal meeting at Silwood Park was agreed.
  - The first meeting took place at the end of May at Silwood Park campus, of which our Academic Representatives at Silwood Park, and the Vice-Dean (Education) for

the Faculty of Natural Sciences, were in attendance. In the session, we took comprehensive stock of the issues faced by the students.

- Though the issues identified were too serious to be resolved in short order, I received reassurance from the Faculty that they will do their best to tackle the issues, and to continue engaging with us. Our presence at Silwood Park was warmly received by our Academic Representatives, with one remarking that they were grateful they hadn't been "forgotten".

## Academic Representation Affairs

There's no question that the greatest privilege (but also greatest frustration) of the Deputy President (Education) role comes from being able to work with, and support, the 540+ students who volunteer with the Academic Representation Network. At times I still find myself incredulous at the idea that I can reach a student in every Department, at every level of study, and at every campus, allowing my team and I to respond to major issues throughout the College, and have confidence that we are doing the right thing.

It has been particularly rewarding to see many of our Academic Representatives taking advantage of the opportunities available to them to develop as leaders - I will gladly and unashamedly declare this to be a massive exercise in investing in volunteers. If I were to have only one hope this year, it will be that our volunteers will have found their roles to be useful and rewarding, and that they will think about running again or using their newfound skills towards some other great cause.

### Key Achievements

3. Following the October Rep elections and on the recommendation of Education & Representation Board, I worked with the Education & Welfare team to completely re-develop the Rep Training program from the ground-up. The new training took on a small-group, scenario-based model and was highly successful – not only were we able to engage more Academic Representatives than the old lecture-based model, the sessions were also very well-received by attendees for their quality and usefulness.
  - As part of the induction process, I also introduced Welcome Packs and NSS results briefing packs for Undergraduate Reps. Both initiatives failed to gain much traction – the Welcome Packs were particularly difficult to produce and distribute.
  - For Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research Representatives, I worked with the Graduate School to design two additional training sessions: chairing meetings and formal negotiation skills. Both sessions failed to get much uptake, and other training sessions that we experimented with the Graduate School on during the year also failed to get uptake. This may be due to issues of usefulness, time commitment, or communication.
4. A number of initiatives were developed to allow interested Academic Representatives to develop new skills and get greater insight into College operations. This included being on the student panel for the selection of the new Vice-Provost (Education), chairing of the ICT Student Forum, focus groups for Education Day, participation in the PhD review Task & Finish groups, and helping to review the Masters Success Guide. The initiatives all had very satisfactory uptake and were well-received for their usefulness.
5. I collaborated closely with the Constituent Union Academic (Affairs/Liaison/& Welfare) Officers as part of a new 'Central Rep Team'. The mechanism not only allowed the officers to exchange best practice from their different constituencies, but also allowed them to consul and give active scrutiny to my work throughout the year.
6. I have launched a Research Reps Review that aims to comprehensively examine our representation structures for PhD students, in order to ensure we attract the best volunteers to the Network who are invested in making the most of the roles.

- As part of the review, I have conducted consultation in the form of focus groups, archival research and conversations have been performed to ascertain why PhD students might choose to become Academic Representatives. The results from this consultation has led to recommendations to alter the role descriptions of PhD Academic Representatives.
  - There is a clear steer from the Review Working Group for stronger coordination of fair selection processes, clearer communications to both students and Departmental partners, and a representation hierarchy that is consistent to the Faculty level.
7. In a bid to deliver on the NSS Response vision and PRES Response objectives, I sought to develop and maintain strong relationships with all Faculties of the College. I am particularly proud of this achievement; the Union now has regular dialogue with all Faculties including the School of Professional Development, instead of just the Faculty of Engineering as was at the start of my term. This has also meant that I was able to secure audiences and have frank dialogue whenever issues arose, for example when it came to negotiating assessment regulations, protesting against issues surrounding appeals & complaints regulations, and raising alarm on Silwood Park issues.
- This year marked the launch of a number of Faculty-level Staff-Student Committees (F-SSCs), of which I have helped to chair or co-chair a few and which has led to increased awareness of student issues, particularly on the Postgraduate Taught & Postgraduate Research sides. I am now working with the Graduate School to develop a timetable for F-SSCs in the year ahead, which should see the introduction of the first PhD-level F-SSCs.
  - This year also marked the launch of three Vice-Provost (Education)'s Student Forums, one for each level of study, of which I helped to organize and then co-chair. While the Undergraduate session was well-attended, the PGT and PGR sessions were very poorly attended and became points of criticism from the College. This is likely due to a communications clash with the Leadership Elections, alongside a lack of understanding as to what the forums' purposes were.
  - Recent conversations that I have had with the Business School suggests a closer collaboration with the Union is in order, including the Union having more influence over the academic representation structures in the Business School (which had grown organically and is very roughly 'inserted' into the Rep Network).
  - In April, I presented to the Heads of Departments lunch on behalf of the Union, the first time that such a presentation has been made. The presentation, which outlined student achievements in volunteering (including academic representation), leadership and innovation & enterprise, was apparently well-received and I hope has helped dispel myths about the Union and elevate our status with this hard-to-reach group of important stakeholders.

## Student Development Affairs

Following from the end of our partnership with Student Hubs, I have been drawing on my experience as former Deputy President for Imperial Hub to support the Student Development team in developing new opportunities for student-led social action.

### Key Achievements

1. Over the Autumn term I formed a new partnership with the Executive Education division of the Business School to develop, and then pilot, a **Leadership Development Workshop**. The workshop covered topics such as being an authentic leader, the different styles of leadership, and being a leader in a team setting.
  - Piloted in March, the session was well-attended and well-received by both Taught and Research Academic Representatives. The Student Development team was invited to attend and I expect materials from the session will be taken away to develop in-house training in the future.
2. Over the Autumn term I formed a new partnership with the Executive Education division of the Business School to develop, and then pilot, a **Leadership Development Workshop**. The workshop covered topics such as being an authentic leader, the different styles of leadership, and being a leader in a team setting.
3. I have been supporting the Student Development team in its work with the Education Officer to develop and pilot the **Imperial Award**, a reflective exercise that encourages students to reflect on their extracurricular experiences and work towards a formal award on their transcripts. As a member of the Steering Group, I have been helping to determine the Award's framework and assessing applications.
  - Outside of the Steering Group, I have been supporting the Student Development team to determine the scope and nature of our engagement with the Phase 2 pilot.
4. I have been supporting the Student Development team in developing its new **Social Enterprise 'Hack It, Crack It'** series of boot camp programs, in particular helping our new Coordinator to brainstorm the nature and content of the programs. It is my hope that the programs will help students with only a vague interest in social enterprise to discover and build the foundations to their ideas, before being connected with more formal programs such as the Venture Catalyst Challenge in the College.
  - In tandem with my work with Imperial Award, I have also been supporting the Imperial Centre for Enterprise in the development of its idea of a new enterprise space to be built in the basement of the Central Library.

# WHAT I PROMISED TO DO

Completed	Impact to be assessed	In progress	Queued	Dropped	Migrated
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Manifesto objectives					
Goal		Description			Action
To conduct a 'census' before and at my term's start, so to base my agenda on the issues that you care about, and to work with College on identifying/sharing 'gold standard' practices		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased student participation in agenda-setting, including extensive consultation in NSS Response and PRES Response drafting, constant partnership and communication with Academic Officers and Dep Reps, projects led by 'local' leadership</li> <li>Helped establish a new executive body in the College known as the 'NSS Performance Group', which is actively sharing best practice in areas such as curriculum design, assessment &amp; feedback, project supervision</li> </ul>			/
To introduce – as minimum– pastoral groups of ~6 students and 2 staff members, ensuring regular tutor meetings and promoting face-to-face time between students and staff		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting the agenda for the College's Personal Tutor Review via the NSS Performance Group, of which allocation and student-tutor relationships is a key focus</li> </ul>			Continuing to push for a firm terms of reference reflecting my objectives
To introduce – as minimum– a '3 good/3 bad things' framework in assessment feedback		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully shaped regulations to include a requirement for comments that reflect good outcomes and areas for improvements</li> <li>Engaging with the NSS Performance Group to share best practice in giving quality feedback</li> </ul>			/
To make it clear that you can contact anyone in the Rep hierarchy if you have learning concerns - you shouldn't have to be strategic in order to be heard		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There has been several instances where queries have been shuttled up or down by myself, the Academic Officers and the Dep Reps</li> <li>I have been actively supporting Reps across the Rep Network to resolve major learning concerns</li> </ul>			/

# WHAT I LEARNED

## Looking Back

In this section, I want to take a step back to look at what I have done over the past 12 months, and distill the three key lessons that I want to pass onto my successor and successors to come.

### Lesson 1: Address the roots of problems, not the symptoms.

- One of the most valuable actions that I took this year was to try and think big picture. As a Union, we could have approached the College and demanded changes based on specific areas, such as e-Learning or project supervision.
- Instead, we took a few steps back, and took time to consult with our Reps and to analyze the data coming out of the National Students Survey, in order to identify the roots from which problems such as poor feedback, limited career prospects, and mental health & well-being issues at Imperial stem from.
- The result was that my team and I were challenged to think about what a higher education should be about. We determined it to be more than just vocational training, but about personal transformation, intellectual fulfilment, and students being stretched in ways that feeds their appreciation for their subjects - and which enable a deep engagement with science and society.
- We bought that vision forward to the College, and outlined steps that they can achieve that vision in partnership with us and in-line with their 2020 Strategy. A year later, the College is on the verge of reviewing and redesigning the curriculums of all their Taught programmes, and our vision is both in words and in action at the heart of that effort.

### Lesson 2: Build effective relationships first – if you step into a meeting and don't have a clue who will support you and how, you are doing it wrong.

- If there was one thing that I have learnt this year, it's how important effective relationship-building plays in this Education Officer role.
- Looking back, I am glad that I didn't launch into my agenda from the get-go. Instead, I spent much of my first term laying down foundations to my work by meeting with as many staff across the College as possible.
- This included hour-long, open conversations with the Vice-Provost (Education) and each of the Faculty Vice-Deans & Associate Deans for Education. The conversations, which were off-the-record and had no agenda, allowed us to get to know each other, build trust, and share what we cared about.
- These relationships proved again and again to be crucial to practically everything that I have done. Whenever a major topic of discussion came up, I can be confident in securing an audience with the Vice-Deans on very short notice, during which I can test arguments and win backing in a low-stakes environment.

In committees, I can comfortably predict where I will or won't get support, and why. And, when the relationships came under strain, they never broke and we were always given the benefit of the doubt, allowing us to keep working towards the issues that mattered.

### Lesson 3: Volunteers – take a deep breath.

- I struggle to find the words to describe what it is like to support and look after the hundreds of volunteers who volunteer as our Academic Reps. It's almost like being a shepherd to hundreds of cats.
- Your volunteers will sign up to do certain things or say they will attend meetings, then cancel at the last moment because plans have changed and they are needed elsewhere. You can schedule a student-staff forum and send out reminders after reminder, and find yourself a nervous wreck when nobody signs up, then everyone signs up at the last minute. You can send out notices and opportunities, and get nothing in return and feel like you have wasted a lot of time and effort - then weeks and months afterwards, someone will come up to you to say "Hey, thanks for sending that to me, it was really interesting! Sorry I couldn't do it back then, but can I do it now instead?"
- But while looking after volunteers can be the worst and most stressful part of the job, I wouldn't trade it for anything else, because the moments when it goes right were easily the best parts of the job. There's nothing quite like being able to see volunteers grow confident enough to move away from the backseat and take lead, or helping someone achieve a goal and supporting them to realize the impact that they can make. It really makes you feel like you are doing something worthwhile every day.

### Looking Ahead (This section will be presented orally at the Trustee Board on June 23<sup>rd</sup>)

Here, I want to look ahead at the horizon. These are the three things that I believe the Union should do or keep doing in the years ahead, with some ideas on how to get there.

1<sup>st</sup> Thing: Postgraduate engagement – we cannot be a minority's Students' Union.

2<sup>nd</sup> Thing: There is one Imperial community, and we are fundamentally part of it

3<sup>rd</sup> Thing: How can we empower our people to change the world next year, and in the years ahead?



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