

DPW Council Report

Jennie Watson

- Apologies for my absence at the last meeting of Council. I had already agreed to speak at the Private Housing Evening before Council was rescheduled. The Private Housing Evening was a resounding success. Not only was the talk completely oversubscribed, but the Advice Centre also handed out well over 500 advice handbooks at the exhibition.
- I had a day of annual leave at the start of the Easter break.

Committees and Boards

- Attended Disability Action Committee where I presented research from Disabilities Officer Nazim Andani on student declarations of disability and support at Imperial compared to support in schools.
- Attended Equality & Diversity Committee. The Gender & Institutional Culture research was discussed however the concept of challenging discrimination received a surprisingly mixed response.
- Attended the Mental Health Steering Group where we discussed the upcoming national mental health awareness week and how to coordinate events for both staff and students. I also used this meeting to continue to push for increased mental health & wellbeing service provision at the Hammersmith campus and counselling service provision at Charing Cross.
- Attended Complaints & Appeals Task and Finish Group with Advice Services Manager Angela Urasala to discuss new College wide regulations for mitigating circumstances, academic appeals and complaints. This is generally a frustrating and slow moving group. It seems that the committee is currently overly focussed on making applying for mitigating circumstances more difficult in order to prevent false applications. However we feel that this is entirely the wrong way to go about designing academic processes and that the mitigating circumstances process should be as straight forward and non-intimidating for students as possible.
- Attended the Access Agreement & Financial Support Working Group to present the Union response to the Imperial Bursary Survey. There were very few surprises in the findings of the Imperial Bursary Survey, however there are some suggestions that lack of financial support is a major barrier to pursuing further study. Put in context with the recent study of graduate earnings released by the IFS, it is pretty clear that more needs to be done to support students from low and middle income backgrounds.

Projects

- I have secured a commitment from the Provost to support provision of counselling services at Charing Cross campus. The details and logistics of this are still to be established between the Faculty of Medicine and the Counselling service.
- I have secured a commitment to improve financial support for medical students. The College is working with RBS to establish the details of a loan of final years with a 12 year draw down and they have agreed to give students the option to spread their

Imperial Bursary entitlement over 6 years rather than only receive support in the first 4 years. Although this is a massive step forward in one area, it is still not the ideal solution and I plan to continue to work for improvements to financial support packages across the College until my last day in office.

- I am currently working with a Management Trainee from the College to put together robust policies and procedures around sexual violence cases, including clear and supportive guidance for student facing staff who may be a student's first point of call for disclosure of such an event. Although the College already produced a draft policy, it fell extraordinarily short of the mark. We are working with them with guidance from the Sussex Centre for Gender Studies, Rape Crisis South London, the End Violence Against Women Coalition, and the UCLU Women's Officer.
- I've also been working in consultation with the Centre for Gender Studies and Women's Officers from UCLU and NUS to develop programs to educate students on consent. Currently we are working to implement a peer-to-peer program similar to those delivered by various JCRs at Oxford.
- Also on the subject of gender and harassment, I've been working with the Vice Provost (Education) and Head of Strategic Projects in the College to secure funding for the training mentioned above as well as for a part time Independent Sexual Violence Advisor who's role will be to support victims/survivors and to help the College with much needed drastic improvements to its management of sexual violence among students. The Head of Strategic Projects has applied for all of the above in the College's financial planning round which is ongoing. I'm now waiting for the outcome of the planning round.
- Regarding the Guarantor Scheme proposal, I am currently working with the Director of Finance to put together a joint paper to submit to Provost Board this term. There have been a few contentions over details of the scheme and there have been a few small compromises, however I am determined that the scheme will be implemented with at least annual review dates. As Nas has expressed a clear interest in carrying on my work on guarantor schemes after I leave, I will be giving him a detailed handover of the project to ensure that we can progressively improve the scheme year on year.

EU Referendum

- Campaigns & Representation Coordinator Sky Yarlett and I are currently supporting a group of students planning to hold a non-partisan debate on the EU referendum with speakers from both the Remain and Leave camps. (The provisional date is currently June 2nd for those interested in attending)
- We are opening up campaigns funding to have one group for either side to run Remain or Leave campaigns. Each side will be funded up to £300 and given equal support. If you know anyone interested in running campaigns in the run up to the referendum, I'd very much appreciate you sending them in my direction!

Other

- I've spent two days with the Student Counselling and Mental Health Service interviewing candidates for two new Mental Health Study Mentor posts. We have agreed to hold second interviews for the five strongest candidates as no decision was made on the day.

- I've been working with Ben to feed into the Sports Strategy and helping to ensure that the strategy is supportive of students and inclusive of all groups of students.
- I've been working with Andrew Keenan (Interim Head of Student Voice & Communications) to lead the Advice, Advocacy and Action stream of ICU's next three year strategy and we fostered some useful conversations among trustees and senior management staff at our residential strategy session last week.
- I'm gradually starting to put together a handover document for Emily-Jane to ensure that she gets off to a flying start in August and doesn't fall into all the same traps I did.
- This week I'll be attending the CitizensUK Mayoral Assembly with the Medical School to see what Sadiq and Zac have to say in the run up to the election.
- I've been going through and shortlisting nominations for the Student Academic Choice Awards and the President's Awards for Excellence.