

Deputy President (Welfare) Union Council Report, October 2016

By Emily-Jane Cramphorn

General overview:

My first couple of months have been focused on planning, making connections with appropriate persons and gaining a deeper understanding of issues that face students and the roadblocks preventing change.

Actions so far:

- 1. Training analysis for Wardens** – I carried out a training analysis for wardens, which identified gaps in their training. Using this analysis I have secured a commitment from college to improve training provision for wardens on mental health and crisis management. I have agreed that Yasmin Vines, who is trained to deliver full mental health first aid, will be able to deliver this training to all wardens and sub-wardens over this year free of charge. Moreover, I have influenced College to encourage wardens to attend current and up to date training courses that are suggested in the warden protocol document.
- 2. Sexual assault** – I have met with Lime Culture, which is an independent company that advises on sexual violence policy. I have used their advice to shape the guidance for students who have experienced sexual violence, which College has put on the student space. Additionally, building on my predecessor's work, I have received a commitment from the Vice Provost (Education) to developing an institutional strategy for tackling sexual violence on campus. I have also secured the purchase of Consent Matters, an online educational tool about consent, sex and relationships. This will be integrated into black board and will be trialled over this year; I am working with Emma Casely, from the Education Office, to identify key groups to involve in the trial. I have worked with Daniel Green to put up posters in the union bars, outlining the Union's safe space policy. Additionally, I have guided the wardens with the follow up they provide to the showing of 'simple as tea' video in their induction talks and have blogged about rape culture, which received a positive response.
- 3. Mental health** – I have met with the mental health adviser, Helen Joseph, and have laid the ground work for working towards common goals, namely providing a support network for students with severe and enduring mental health problems. Additionally, I have met with the Imperial College Health Centre (IHC) who are keen to implement my proposal of sending reminder texts to those being seen for mental health reasons, similar to those sent out to those with asthma. They are also renaming the exam stress workshops based on my suggestion, to attempt to increase uptake. Moreover, I have influenced College to integrate mental health into their review of support services/the tutoring structure and to have the restructuring overseen by an external mental health professional. The Vice Provost (Education) is keen to act upon this recommendation and has requested I write a paper on the matter, this is

currently a work in progress. Moreover, I have secured a place on the panel for hiring the new Director of Student Services. I have requested that the list of mental health first aiders is available to all students on the student space and have made connections between the Union and Occupational Health to expand the network of mental health first aid trainers. I have spoken at numerous intro talks about the importance of mental health and provided some 'top tips' on caring for your mental health at university. I have started work on introducing a mental health roadmap and creating a crisis card style item to be placed in all rooms in halls. I have also ensured that the Central Northwest London single point of access number (This is an NHS crisis line) is included in the mental health protocol that is being developed by college and I am currently reviewing the document in order to make suggestions for its improvement. I have made links with external organisations such as mind, B-eat, Men Get Eating Disorders Too, The Priory and CALM, who are willing to support campaigns throughout the year. I have ensured that the union's fresher's handbooks have links to appropriate support organisations. I have influenced the reshaping of postgraduate support, suggesting that postgraduates are given a mentor in addition to a supervisor, in order for them to have an outlet for personal concerns. I have also suggested that the personal tutor system is restructured so that each person is given a pastoral and academic tutor. These suggestions were received well by College, notably by the Vice Provost (Education), and are currently under development and discussion. Furthermore, I have actively promoted the student space, which has a wealth of information on mental health and managing stress. I have written about mental health in The Felix and have made links with Mentality. I am in the process of rebranding and rescheduling Stress Less to place the emphasis on stress management and deliver the campaigns prior to exam periods. Alongside James Cox, I have met with Stephen Brickley about the production of a Healthy Brain campaign and am currently working with the science communication unit about moving this forward. Finally, I have created plans for the running of 4 mental health based campaigns throughout the year.

4. **Interruption of studies** - I have secured data from Registry on the number of interruption of studies (IOS) taken and have carried out analysis on this. I have used the data to influence College to improve the IOS protocol and increase the support available to those during and returning from IOS - this is now high on the College's agenda. I have also discussed the possibility of the ICHC running an IOS support group, who are provisionally on board with the notion. However, the provider my have to change due to resourcing issues. I have also suggested the introduction of an IOS 'buddy' system, which was received well by the Director of Student Support and ICHC. This work will remain high on my agenda throughout the year to ensure and guide its realisation.
5. **Finance** - I have attained a free trial of Blackbullion (an online financial education tool) for 50 students and I am working with the Student

Financial Support Service to identify key students to ask to trial the tool. I have also met with Student Financial Support who have agreed to support/conduct research into the gap in student finance available to students from middle/high income households. We have also discussed the potential for developing workshops on budgeting, debt and student finance. Moreover, I have agreed to work with Student Financial Support to advertise the student support fund throughout the year and refer people to the advice centre on guidance on documentation required. Alongside Nas Andriopoulos, I have produced a response to the Rent Guarantor Scheme to ensure it is implemented both smoothly and fairly. Finally, I have supported the advice centre to develop a money guide, which I aim to build on over the year.

6. **Drugs and alcohol** – I have blogged about how to survive freshers', which included advice on alcohol and drugs. I have also written an article for The Felix about the risks of drug use and our duty to educate students to make wise decisions; it includes signposting to Drugwise, Talk to Frank and other relevant organisations. I am currently working on this article with the editor. I have reiterated to College in a number of meetings the importance of educating and supporting students as opposed to chastising them and simply telling them not to do drugs - I will continue to push this point throughout the year. Following on with the Healthy Brain Campaign, I am in discussion with the Science Communication Unit around educating students about the effects of drinking alcohol. Finally, I have worked with Rachel Blythe and Daniel Green to develop ideas for introducing more alcohol-free drinks into the Union bars, creating a more inclusive environment for non-drinkers and providing incentives for students to drink less alcohol.

7. **Sexism, Racism, Homophobia etc.** – Alongside Sky Yarlett, I have met with most of the Liberation officers and provided them with handbooks. I plan to meet with the remaining officers as soon as possible. Notably, I have supported the BME officer with his Black Scientists campaign and his input into the BME issue of Felix. I have also raised the profile of Liberation Officers in introduction talks. Likewise, I am working with Sky Yarlett to create a framework for Liberation Officers to work within. Additionally, I have spoken at 'Imperial Expectations' talks in the Life Science department. The talks covered harassment, bullying and unacceptable behaviour alongside where to turn for support. I have also set up a meeting with the Chaplain in order to create a work plan for breaking down stigma around religion and helping to support the Interfaith Officer.

8. **Case work and referrals** – Whilst my role does not directly incorporate casework, I have guided a handful of individuals to access correct advice and support on finance, interruption of studies, safeguarding and mitigating circumstances in addition to offering them an opportunity to have a chat and being an empathic ear.

- 9. GP choice** – I have begun work on understanding the requirements for GP registration at the ICHC and have ensured that new students who do not live on campus are aware that they do not have to register with the ICHC and may experience shorter waiting times elsewhere. My work in this area is still on going and will link closely to my IOS work.
- 10. Connections with other Higher Education Institutions** - I am aware that my manifesto includes a referendum regarding NUS, however, due to the current instability within the NUS and my limited time in office, I will be dedicating my time to forging meaningful connections with other higher education institutions. Notwithstanding this, I do aim to investigate the student feeling toward NUS over this year to enable future sabbatical officers to act accordingly.

Closing remarks:

The work that I have carried out so far has been largely preparatory and College facing. Nevertheless, I intend to increase engagement with students, and run a number of student facing campaigns, now that the academic year has begun. What is more, I will be continuing to work on and develop the areas outlined above throughout the year.