Imperial College Union Board of Trustees

12 December 2018

AGENDA ITEM NO.	Item 12
TITLE	Barriers to Inclusivity
AUTHOR	Managing Director and Deputy President (Welfare)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This paper details the barriers to inclusivity that have been identified and sets out how the Union fits into different strands of Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity at Imperial.
PURPOSE	To note the comments and to agree on appropriate next steps.
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	Proposal to form a group to lead on the development of a response by way of a specific plan, including funding options.

Introduction

The Liberation review that the Union undertook produced a number of recommendations including the below:

- *Trustee Board and SMG to go back to the value of "inclusivity" to be clear on what they mean and boldly tackle any cultures that undermine this value*

Board held this discussion and trustees were invited to share any thoughts they had about existing barriers to inclusivity.

The following comments were shared:

- *We don't represent the society we serve at board and at management or at trustee level*
- *We don't have a clear transparent policy for genuine inclusivity*
- *So we reward examples of inclusivity celebrate it and show it off when we are doing it to be role models*
- *We don't speak up*
- *And Imperial is a high achieving place so if you're any good you'll make it here. In fact you need to show that you are. This sort of permeates all of us a bit.*
- *Being inclusive is very time consuming and all this conscious effort could appear condescending.*
- *We can show that we're not doing too badly compared with others. Just look at the make-up of our Board. But look who speaks.*
- *Stereotyping people through languages knowingly or unknowingly*
- *People afraid or feel uncomfortable disclosing discriminating/harassment happens to them*
- *Gender: Imperial student culture is still male dominated and there is too little challenge to the underlying and what I suspect to be deeply sexist culture. I worry about social media*
- *Ethnicity: I would like to see the data on ethnicity and SU participation outside of specialist ethnicity-based clubs and societies. I could be wrong about this and would be happy to be*
- *Alcohol: we have a lot of students who don't drink. A lot of the union culture is based around alcohol-based events*
- *A lack of awareness that all our CSPs and activities are open to anyone. I.e. "perceived requirements" to join some of our activities (e.g. I won't join football because I'll be judged for not knowing how to play despite wanting to learn how to play).*
- *Campuses, Campuses, Campuses.*
- *I'd just like to add that I think it might be a useful exercise to look at what barriers might currently exist that prevent students, specifically women and those for BAME backgrounds, from interacting with and engaging in our services. It may be financially prudent to cater for the vast majority, but I think we have a duty to ensure that we're offering enough bespoke activity to elicit engagement from the aforementioned groups. It's worth noting that, as far as am aware, none of the Black History Month related activities took place at the union but rather at other sites in college but we spend most of the back end of the summer putting on various BBC Prom related activity?*
- *Language: Simple language rather than complicated words would be more inclusive, not everyone has complex vocabulary, finds English easy to understand, or has English as a first language. Union also has connotations in other cultures too to what we actually mean and can be a deterrent, as do some signs around campus – for example the fire alarms that look similar to help buttons in another country.*

- *Elections: Focus on your ability to do social media and public speak and student perceptions of the job/you, rather than focus on points that are actually doable and plausible.*
- *Reporting: Very hard to work out how to report things from minor issues such a food mix up, to harassment. No easy contact emails, or anonymous form to report things they don't want to be linked to but need saying, or advice online. Bad experiences can also discourage others to participate/interact with the Union again, especially if they feel helpless/have no one to listen.*
- *Rooms: MR5 not accessible and MR4/Snooker room not accessible if MR3 is used. Bars not accessible for wheelchair users in terms of bar heights (can't order/pay), so have to ask someone else to do so for them. 568 can be inaccessible on a busy night too for anyone with crutches/wheelchairs as the tables/chairs combined with people make it hard to move about.*
- *Transparency: Most documents on the Union website are hard to find unless you know what you are looking for – policies, constitutions, annual reports, strategies, etc. And even harder to tell which are current, lapsed but still used, or old.*

College Partnership on multiple fronts

Our Business plan has committed to:

- *Work in Partnership with College to ensure their publishing and implementation of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Strategy with clarity established over the Union's future specific delivery function.*

As the year progresses, it is emerging that there are several interdependent strands which all require attention.

There are several points during a student's time at Imperial, where EDI is particularly important. The Union plays various roles in each stage. *(Student Lifespan diagram included as Appendix A)*

The Union is working in partnership with College Strategic Planning on Widening Participation, Access and Bursaries which is effectively a pre-step aimed at tackling the inflow of students to ensure that there is a more diverse student population coming to Imperial.

College has written and published their EDI strategy and, on that front, the Union's role becomes one of holding College accountable for its implementation and delivery. This will include advocating for ensuring the strategy and delivery are resourced to an appropriate level to enable meaningful progress for students whilst they are at Imperial.

Internal Union focus

The Union's role is not explicitly detailed within the EDI Strategy other than through the following references:

- *Collaborate with Imperial College Union to articulate a common vision on how promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion will enhance the student experience.*
    - *Publication of a shared vision on EDI.*
    - *Publication of commitment to EDI by all union-associated clubs and societies.*

This year the Union's internal focus is on increasing the awareness of Liberation and Community officers and giving them better access to the students they represent. This has also enabled us to gather data about these students so that improvements of our offering can be developed.

Pulling it all together

When we combine the Union's Liberation review (summer 2017), our subsequent Business plan objective and the comments above, we need a plan to tackle this.

Board are asked to support the development of a strategic response to the College EDI strategy which sets out the Union's own plan for creating a more inclusive environment.

We propose that a group is formed to lead this response and the development of a plan for the Union's work around the liberation zone offering of EDI. This should include investigating the resource requirements and funding options for delivery of the plan.

The group should include Deputy President (Welfare), staff members and further Trustees.

Appendix A – Student Lifespan Diagram

Student Lifespan – Where are the EDI focus points?

Applying to Imperial

Time at Imperial

Life as a Graduate

College
We do not control who is let into the College. We do need to have eyes on, particularly as we represent students to College for this and can influence policy changes:
-Widening Participation
-Admissions
-Bursaries

Union
We do have a part to play in what students see when they look at the College and we should be encouraging a wide range of students to apply, by showing we are there for all students and all students can participate in our activities:
-Open Days
-Outreach Activities

College EDI Activities
The College delivers various EDI activities and has more structure to this following the launch of the EDI strategy.
Often the College prioritises staff instead of students so we play a key role in ensuring they are fully represented.

Some of the activities that College supports, which are particularly beneficial to students are:
- Various Staff networks – which PhD students are often allowed to join.
- Staff contacts for particular characteristics in departments e.g. Women's and LGBT+ tutors.
- Events during celebration months
- Giving students a list of expectations for their behaviour.
- Active bystander training – this is being rolled out to some students but we also offer the training.

Union EDI Activities
The Union has a responsibility to deliver EDI activities as well as represent EDI student issues to College.

Currently our offering in this area is very poor but we have good intentions:
- Liberation & Community Officers – These volunteer officers are given the role to represent at the Union and College, as well as run EDI activities e.g. events, campaigns, raise awareness. This is not a suitable expectation and as such not much work is done in this area.
- CSPs for EDI groups – CSPs for particular groups, as that is the only model we have. It's not the most effective model as it means people pay for their activities and "who they are" but it does give many people a social base, e.g. IQ, Cultural societies, Faith societies.
- Celebration Months – often given a small amount of social media time but nowhere near the space it gets at other institutions in the sector.
- Inclusivity Value – We have a value of inclusivity so it factors into a lot of our decisions, but it is not always recognised by the students.

College
College determine the graduate outcomes of individuals. They support them with this, but this is also the overall product that they provide to the student:
- Careers advice
- References
- Award degrees
- Alumni networks

Union
We do also play a part in this. We most probably feature on many Imperial graduate CVs and play a part in developing students. We need to make sure all students have equal access to these parts of the union.
- Volunteer Roles
- Development Opportunities
- Membership for Alumni
- CSPs for Alumni