

Imperial College Union Council Report

Rob Tomkies, President

Introduction

Welcome to the first of my Council Reports! This year we've adjusted the structure to further make what we're doing - and intend to do - a lot more accessible to everyone without hours of reading. This report will centre on my personal areas of focus, we will also provide a separate report that details progress on our team goals - communication, engagement and spaces.

This year we have also introduced an "items for discussion" section – this is so that we can utilise everyone's experience in council and get your input and views on key decision areas that we see arising in the following months. We hope that involving you in shaping our work will lead to a more rounded student led approach to

Report on Progress

Goals as President

We have chosen to adopt personal goals and team goals – these won't focus on individual deliverables but overriding themes that within them will have projects. If you have feedback, questions or comments on the goals selected, please don't hesitate to get in touch and ask.

Club, Society, Projects (CSPs) and Constituent Union (CU) Support

Clubs, Societies and Constituent Unions are at the heart of our identity and student experience. This year I aim to make sure that they are better supported, better funded and better connected. This will focus on two main areas – alumni relation platforms and providing support for groups to obtain sponsorship packages for external income.

- Imperial College has increasingly been pushing advancement from alumni as its main source of income for new developments such as White City. Currently the Unions life membership scheme offers minimal formal connection between our members and alumni and also minimal income for our clubs, societies, projects and Constituent Unions.
 - **Progress:** Meetings have been held with the College Alumni Relations service to see how we can create platforms for our current members to connect with alumni. We have successfully agreed that our CSP's and CU's will have platforms on Imperial Plexus, the online forum for alumni.
 - **Reasoning:** This will give our current members access to communicate with alumni, organise joint events and also the potential to look at online donations. Research into similar, well established schemes such as at LSE show income of over £1 million a year through this forum. Secondly - Imperial

Colleges alumni network is considerably larger than our own and so through utilising this channel we gain access to considerably higher numbers of alumni than currently available.

- **Looking forward:** I will be completing a scouting exercise to see which of our student groups have strong, pre-existing alumni networks and then working closely with college to set up these preliminary forums before expanding out later in the year.
- The Union successfully recruited a new Sales and Sponsorship Manager – Daz Martin – as part of trying to diversify our income away from college. Daz will be instrumental in working towards centralise support for sponsorship.
 - **Progress:** Very little – focus has been on income and preparation for external companies for Freshers’ Fair – income from stalls has increased by £4300 from last year.
 - **Looking forward:** This project will largely start once welcome week has finished.

Governance – Process Development

Something that has become increasingly apparent is that much of our governance is non-accessible and leads to a lack of parity of experience for members in a range of areas. This year I have highlighted three key target projects – Graduate engagement with the Union, Union Council and Disciplinary Procedures.

- Graduate students currently show the lowest engagement levels with the Union and have the least funding, support and representation in student forums – despite now making up just over half our student membership.
 - **Progress:** The Graduate Student Union (GSU) working group has begun to examine the offering that they provide, the support they need and how to progress forward. So far, we have examined and modelled one new restructure that highlighted we in fact need to address the root of all the problems rather than the surface level issues. Four key pillars have been identified moving forward to examine. Communication (outwards), receiving communication, Funding/resource allocation and Identity. Formalised connections between union staff, OTs and GSU committee have also been established.
 - **Reasoning:** Largely outlined above – these pillars were identified as current areas that the GSU view as its main challenges. Position pairs were allocated to try and increase support for GSU officers, pairs were chosen on role similarity.

- **Looking forward:** The timeline will be set at the next GSU working group in which we plan to tackle these problems and reported back to council.
- Union Council has faced many recent issues ranging from communication inwards, outwards and then its effectiveness as a body. This year we will be looking at tackling this concerns so that the highest elected student body in the Union runs effectively and creates the positive change that it has the potential to do.
 - **Progress:** I have been working closely with Alex (Council Chair) and Harriet (Democracy Coordinator) to develop both online training material and then shape changes to council such as providing training and implementing a seating plan.
 - **Reasoning:** Training has been provided to tackle council representatives not know what the body was for, being unaware of how to present papers and then tackle the overall conduct in the room – something that a seating plan will also make steps towards helping.
 - **Looking forward:** Once the first councils have been conducted there will be a review process of the training and changes made to see how effective they have been in addressing previously identified issues.
- The Union’s disciplinary processes have not been reviewed since 2013 and are currently inaccessible to those that aren’t familiar with them such as the people under investigation but also difficult to follow for those conducting investigations. I will be reviewing these documents to address the above.
 - **Progress:** I have been spending time researching different formats of disciplinary policy including looking at colleges and other external Unions. I have also talked closely with Paul Beaumont (Chair of Governance Committee and the last person to review the disciplinary procedures) on areas that he has seen fail in the past five years.
 - **Looking forward:** Will undertake consultation on people's experiences with the disciplinary and complaints process to identify member dissatisfaction. Following this I will identify the key target areas – bring them to council – before starting to review and construct the new procedures.

Support for the Deputy Presidents and Operational update

A key part of my role – this doesn't require much explanation. Key areas have focused on:

- Worked closely with James on tackling concerns and confusion around ethos ranging from the alteration of fees to securing funding for the renovation and expansion of ethos.
- Worked with Becky to challenge college and secure subsidy for students with disabilities that need to live in South Kensington halls.
- Worked with Claudia to initialise conversations in college around 24 hour food offerings on campus which she will report on.
- Relationships with key college figures established – real push on Liberation, Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (LEDI) from college this year due to OfS report which is really exciting for myself and Becky.
- Union process efficiency and project management has been a key area highlighted to be currently weak – James, Alex and I have started looking at ways that this can be addressed.
- Worked closely with James to look repurpose the student experience survey run by college – this is one of the largest pieces of consultation that happens each year and yet the Union sections has very little clear outcome from it. This is being redesigned so that instead of telling us what we're good at it highlights areas and generates ideas on what we want to improve going forward.

Closing Comments

We are looking to review the format of these reports and formalise the way they are presented for future councils – this has not been completed as the marketing team have been busy with welcome week events.

As always, I am available in person and via email for any questions you may have on my report or the Union's work.

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