

RCSU General Committee

Royal College of Science Union

Start of Term Report to Council

Tuesday 23rd October 2018

Michael McGill
President

Rohan Kamath
Vice President (Activities)

Michaela Flegrová
Vice President (Education)

Yizhou Yu
Vice President (Operations)

Shervin Sabeghi
Vice President (Welfare &
Wellbeing)

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Sully Mughal
Honorary Junior Treasurer

Kush Desai
Events Officer

Christopher Smith
Sports Officer

Sheng Yu Chia
Publicity Officer

Ivan Tang
Web Communication Officer

Ruihua Zhang
Sponsorship & Alumni Officer

Isabel Esain Garcia & Catalina
Costenco
Biochemistry Departmental
Representatives

Albert Muljono
Biology Departmental
Representative (Academic)

Lorenz Hoffmann & Felix
Thompson
Chemistry Departmental
Representatives

Ankush Rajput
Mathematics Departmental
Representative (Academic)

Tim Marley & Immanuel
Adewumi
Physics Departmental
Representatives



Prepared by Michael McGill on behalf of the
RCSU General Committee

President's Report - Michael McGill

Despite the first two weeks of term being the most hectic for the RCSU, we seem to have gotten off to a fairly good start. The committee and I have put together events and activities throughout the fortnight to make ourselves known to the students.

Following on from last year's tactical plan, the RCSU has adopted a new 'mission statement' to ensure that the committees for the next few years leave the RCSU in a better position than it was handed over in. We intend to fully "engage, represent and excite" all of our members and improve their student experience in as many ways as possible.

The committee's approach to the RCSU portfolio is outlined in this report alongside an update on how each strand of our activities is going. My focus for the remainder of term will be on the following:

- Ensuring that students are supported, consulted and made aware of the action that is proposed by each of the departments in their response to the NSS survey.
- Creating a better sense of community between RCSU members. This will involve planning and coordinating RCSU activities for the future - working towards building on the newly introduced RCSU Christmas pub crawl.
- Ensuring that training of the newly elected representatives is completed and that representatives are fully aware of what is expected of them in their roles. This also includes ensuring all members of the committee know their responsibilities and have set themselves goals for the year.

I am open to any questions on any aspect of this report, but please be advised that I may be unable to immediately provide an answer to technical aspects that are the realm of individual officers.

At the time of writing I am unaware of the new volunteers that have been elected into positions, mainly those vacant on the RCSU committee, such as Science Challenge Chair, Broadsheet Editor, RAG Champion, Biology Wellbeing Departmental Representative and Mathematics Wellbeing Departmental Representative. However, there are members of the RCSU that are running for said positions, and hopefully this will result in a full committee at the time of writing the next report.

A plain text version of this report is available on request.

Financial and Administrative Report

Sully Mughal and Kaifeng Wei

RCSU's current financial situation

The RCSU has been fortunate enough to renew all of its standing financial support from the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the Royal College of Science Association, and corporate partners who have retained links with the RCSU through sectorial interest and alumni engagement. As a result we retain our strong financial position with full ability to carry out our core activities and operations. An overview of our current finances is contained below, and a copy of the RCSU Budget for 2018-2019 is available on demand from the RCSU Honorary Secretary and Junior Treasurer.

We renegotiated and secured our block grant from the Faculty that increased by 33.3% from last year, largely due to a strong budget proposal and transparency in how the funding was spent in the previous academic year. This was a donation of £20,000 comprised of a £13,500 donation for our core operations, activities and welfare events. The remaining £6,500 is earmarked for our annual Science Challenge.

At the end of the 2017-2018 academic year, all outstanding debts (including debts from the 2016-2017 academic year) have been paid. This meant that the RCSU started the year with a balance of £7303.44, roughly £5,000 more than the RCSU began the year with last year.

Unfortunately the RCSU was unable to secure any continued sponsorship with corporate partners this year, though we do have some agreements with companies to run events with some remuneration. We feel that with the introduction of the RCSU Sponsorship and Alumni Officer, we can start our sponsorship season early enough to secure sponsors for the next academic year.

Activities

Rohan Kamath, Kush Desai, Sheng Yu Chia and Christopher Smith

Freshers' Fortnight Events

Our Welcome Events as part of RCSU Freshers' Fortnight were generally successful. A report of each event is contained below. Thanks are due to all the committee members who turned out to support each event.

Thursday 4th October – RCSU Mums and Dads Pub Crawl

This year's event was significantly oversubscribed – we ran out of the pre-ordered 200 t-shirts within 30 minutes and turnout was estimated to be over 300 people. The route went briefly through South Kensington, but then moved to the centre of London, with the final stop being the Roxy. A number of people stayed at Zoo Bar rather than continuing to the end of the crawl.

Friday 5th October – RCSU Book Sale

Again the RCSU had a book sale in the SAF foyer, where around £500 worth of books were sold onto students. There was some confusion in where the books were kept over the summer, which meant there were books taken in that were not sold. A number of the books were retained, so more publicity and a clearer explanation of the event is necessary.

Monday 9th October – RCSU Trampolining

Rather than continue with the RCSU Tea party, we decided this year to use a more active event for people that was more unique. This resulted in us having an event at Acton's Oxygen Trampolining Park. Unfortunately, we only sold a total of 15 tickets, rather than the initial plan to host 100. More thought is necessary to be put into an event like this.

Thursday 11th October – RCSU Autumn Ball @ The Loop Bar, Mayfair

Compared to last year, this event did not perform as well. However, we still were able to sell around 200 of the 300 tickets - including 13 tickets sold on the door. The event seemed to be enjoyable for all, though it has raised some issues that the committee will address for the future, namely that turnout was lower than expected due to poor publicity of the event. It is also worth noting that the Loop Bar were highly unresponsive to communication, and eventually requested a minimum spend to be paid prior to the event, with just 3 days notice. Thanks are due to Claudia, Kristie Thacker and Priscilla Machado, all of whom were incredibly helpful in getting everything sorted with the tight timelines we were given

Upcoming and planned events

- A "Meet your Reps" event that will allow reps to be introduced to students, let them know of the work they do and introduce themselves to the members they represent.
- A Christmas event separate from the Departmental Society Christmas Dinners – potentially a second edition of the RCSU Christmas pub crawl.
- The REVEL – a large-scale event collaboration between the RCSU and the Department of Computing Society. A meeting to discuss this is to be arranged.

Further events since the last report

Since the End of Year Report to the 2016-2017 Union Council, the revival of the Constituent Union rugby tournament, the Sparkes Cup, is the only major event that has not been mentioned. Funded largely by the Royal College of Science Association, the event was held at Rosslyn Park RFC on Saturday 23rd June between the RSMU, CGCU and RCSU. Upon discussion with members of the RCSA, there is scope for the RCSU to try and bring back some of the other traditional inter-union sports events, which will hopefully mirror the success of Sparkes Cup.

Operations

Yizhou Yu, Ruihua Zhang, Ivan Tang, Sheng Yu Chia

Broadsheet

At present, the RCSU has no elected Broadsheet Editor, though there have been discussions between last years (and currently appointed) editor about plans for the year. We aim to have the first issue released soon, but are focusing more on segments that can become regular occurrences in the issue. There has also been the suggestion of making the magazine more accessible for readers.

Science Challenge

At the time of writing, the Science Challenge still requires significant amounts of coordination and work. Due to the lack of a Science Challenge Chair, this work has currently fallen onto our Vice President (Operations).

Alumni Affairs

We are continuing to actively engage the Royal College of Science Association in our activities, such as the Science Challenge. With the introduction of the RCSU Sponsorship & Alumni officer, we hope to work closely with the RCSA.

BAHFest

BAHFest (the Festival of Bad Ad-hoc Hypotheses) is an RCSU-organised science comedy competition, the UK arm of an international event which is now going into its 4th year of being hosted at Imperial College London.

Following discussion we have also taken on the IG Nobel show that is held annually at Imperial, due to the GSU being unable to host. We plan to model the event (cost-wise) in a very similar way to BAHFest, which should lead to around the same amount of profit. The only change will be the addition of a joint ticket to both events at a cheaper price. We also feel that rather than using these events as sure-fire ways of generating money, we would subsidise ticket prices further, making the event even more accessible for students.

Sponsorship

Relations with external companies have largely remained the same since last year. Unfortunately the RCSU has lost our major sponsor, Applied Predictive Technologies, but has close ties to FTI Consulting through alumni links.

It must be noted that some of our Departmental Societies have secured extremely large amounts of Sponsorship. MathSoc have secured just short of £7,000, and PhysSoc just short of £2,000.

Academic Affairs

Michaela Flegrova, Isabel Esain Garcia, Albert Muljono, Ankush Rajput, Lorenz Hoffmann, Tim Marley

The Academic Board has been focusing on publicity in the first month of term. A Meet Your Reps Week will take place at the end of October, introducing the academic and wellbeing reps to the students. The academic dep reps have also been publicising the elections aiming for full set of year reps in all departments. The success of this not known yet at the time of writing.

The focus of the Academic Board for this academic year will be in the following areas:

- Cooperating on the creation and enforcement of departmental action plans reflecting Union's NSS Response. These should be tackling the main problems as highlighted in the Union document and where relevant to each departments.
- Finalisation of the Curriculum Review in all departments, ensuring student involvement and consultation throughout.
- Strongly advocating for the provision of student spaces in relevant departments, especially Life Sciences.

Following the success of last year's event, an induction talk introducing all newly elected year reps to their roles will take place at the end of October, followed by a social event attended by volunteers from the RCSU as well as departmental societies. The aim is to ensure that academic and wellbeing reps feel supported in their role, and to strengthen the sense of community both in the representation

networks and among other volunteers.

Welfare and Wellbeing

Shervin Sabeghi, Felix Thompson, Immanuel Adewumi, Catalina Costenco

It has been a great pleasure working with the Wellbeing Departmental Representatives over the summer holiday and beginning of term. Key activities so far have been:

- Handover from previous Representatives
- Setting up early relationships with staff, setting up wellbeing SSCs where appropriate
- Advertising Autumn Elections to fill year representatives (and unelected departmental representative) roles – 17/20 wellbeing roles have candidates this year, a significant improvement on last year

The focus for our future work as a team will be:

- Establishing a clear identity for Wellbeing Representatives in the Faculty, and distinguishing it from Academic Representatives such that general students know who does what
- Co-leading a faculty wide comprehensive review of personal tutoring with Faculty Senior Tutor, Richard Thompson and ensuring student views are at the forefront
- Holding regular Departmental Wellbeing focussed events such as teas and Representative drop-ins.

Planned representation work joint with the academic board:

- Lobby for the provision of a Life Sciences common space
- "Meet Your Reps" events to introduce Representative teams to each department after election results
- RCSU Representative Induction for all new Representatives to have a clear introduction to the RCSU and give some advice about Representative roles