

# President Report to Union Council – December 2019

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## Highlights:

- Departure of the Managing Director
- Halls Rent Work
- Ethical Investment Push

| College Meetings & Prep | Student + Union Meetings & Prep | Operational work (day-to-day) | Project work (major goals) | Misc |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| 15%                     | 32%                             | 40%                           | 12%                        | 1%   |

## Updates:

- **MD Departure** – Jarlath, the senior-most member of Union staff, will be leaving at the end of this term. Navigating this situation – determining how it changes responsibilities within the office in the short-term and preparing for what will come next – has taken the bulk of my time and energy since my last report.
  - On 1-12, we will be meeting with Jon Tucker, Faculty Operating Officer in the Business School, who will be providing the Union with interim support until we have a new Managing Director.
- Due to health and safety concerns, the **kitchens in 568 and the Union Dining Hall have been closed until further notice**. For further detail, see the DPFS report and Friday's issue of *Felix*.
  - I recently signed the contract for a **new Health & Safety consultant** to start working with us part-time from January. He has already conducted some initial work. We are receiving support from relevant College staff and hope to have issues resolved as quickly as possible, but comprehensively enough to avoid a repeat performance.
- Shervin and I were presented with figures from the College on 18-11 regarding changes to the portfolio and pricing model for **rent in halls**, which we will discuss alongside our paper.
- I tabled a **paper at College Council** on 22-11 on taking first steps to make the College **investment** portfolio more **ethical**. The proposal was accepted with only minor amendments – a significant step forward. We will now have a “Socially Responsible Investment Group”, comprising senior management, a staff representative, and myself, which will make a recommendation on the portfolio at the February meeting of College Council. Thanks to Fifi, Francesca, and everyone else who contributed and helped us get this far.
- We have taken steps to make the **Leadership team** within the Union (senior staff + officer trustees) **more effective** – with formal terms of reference, an action tracker, and so on.
- Universities' Superannuation Scheme (USS) **pensions dispute** update:
  - Almost all UK academics, and many other university staff, have a USS pension.
  - The valuation for this pension affects the College's balance sheet\*.
  - Proposed changes to the pension portfolio have led to industrial action across many UK universities, which commenced on 25-11.
  - While Imperial's Staff Union (the UCU) failed to reach the requisite turnout to strike (50%), they came very close (48%), and reballoting is likely making strikes a possibility in the new year.
- We have made posts on social media, sent emails, and run stalls encouraging people to **register to vote**. Thanks to Onur, Ansh, and the rest of the team for driving this forward.

### Upcoming:

- I will be meeting Michael Murphy, the Vice-President (Advancement), to discuss how we might fund **bursaries for refugee students** philanthropically.
- Alongside the DPCS, I have been and will continue to meet with Neil Alford, the Associate Provost (Academic Planning) to discuss student priorities for new projects regarding space on campus. We will be tabling major changes in Council papers and seeking consultation from the wider student body and should anything concrete be proposed.
- As part of our commitment to more direct communications, we (the OTs) will be holding **pop-up stands** across our campuses over the coming months.
- The **General Election** is taking place on 12-12. Students at Imperial could swing several constituencies across London; please vote if you can, and encourage others to do the same.

### Key goals:

#### College Goal: Change the way decisions are made – **Stalled**

- To make sure College is making decisions in the best interests of students and staff, I want to make sure **people affected by decisions are involved in the decision-making process**.
- This process will be conducted alongside work on the Union Strategy
- This is a big project, but I believe it's likely the easiest way to bring significant change to Imperial.
- Due to recent firefighting, I've been unable to make significant progress on this. My aim is to have something concrete to start taking to committees and key contacts in College in advance of the new year.

#### Union Goal 1: Transparency – **In progress**

- We've written a plan for OT communications, committing ourselves to:
  - More frequent posts on social media
  - An interview series in *Felix*
  - "OT Tours" across our campuses
  - Our blogs/written articles for more detailed stuff
- If students can't easily find out what we're up to, we aren't doing our jobs properly – whenever something big happens, we're going to communicate about it directly

#### Union Goal 2: Protecting/Improving our Services – **In progress**

- Setbacks here – health and safety
- DPFS & I are meeting the Head of Catering Operations to discuss h-bar

#### Union Goal 3: London Living Wage – **Not yet started**

- As we (DPFS & I) renegotiate the terms of the Union's block grant from College this year, I'm committed to including a real (London) living wage for student staff as part of our costings
- I'll have updates on this later in the year once the negotiation commences

Merry Christmas to everyone who read this far 😊

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