

# Deputy President (Welfare) – Council report

Shervin Sabeghi – 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020

## Introduction

Welcome to my first proper Council report of the year! It's been months since I've done one of these, and the format has changed slightly. I hope everyone is well, and the start of term has gone as smoothly as possible. These Council reports are here to update you on what we've been up to, let you know what's coming up, and give a chance to provide feedback/ask question about what I do. Keep in mind, you pay the OTs to do our jobs. Part of why Council exists is to hold us to account. So, please read and if you think there's something I should do that I'm not, let me know. And, god forbid if you think I'm doing a good job, also let me know. Feedback either way is helpful in working out if we're focusing on the right things. Of course, not everything is possible and we have finite time, but I'll never discard a suggestion without explaining why.

## How I've spent my time

In each of these reports, I'll be providing a rough estimate of the proportion of time I've spent doing different types of work. Take these as a rough guide – not 100% precise!

College Meetings and 121s	Union Meetings	Desk work (day-to-day)	Project work	Time with students + comms
30%	25%	20%	5%	20%

## Key latest updates

- The new Liberation and Community Networks (LCNs) have been established
  - The new committee positions were elected in the Autumn Elections. Uptake in roles could have been better, with 17/27 available roles filled and two of the networks with no roles filled – although four were completely filled. However, given these are brand new and general engagement in the elections has been low, this is still a promising start.
  - CWB has been figuring out how LCNs will spend money, with some discretionary funds for each network supplemented by a central pot as the decided way forward.
  - Extra work is needed to establish the networks – for example, they don't exist on the 'system' properly yet so students can't join easily, and we need to set them up properly on the website.
- In Volunteer Training Week in September, I trained a majority of the elected Wellbeing Dep Reps and all of the L&C Officers. The online format did help in some ways with attendance, however we have lessons to learn about how to better use tools available.
- Had the first Community and Welfare Board meeting of the year, with a lot of fruitful conversation about emerging issues and decisions around LCN finances.
- Finished the ICU response to the 2019 Imperial Bursary Survey and represented it to the College's Access and Participation Compliance Group. The key recommendation is to extend the bursary to cover 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year in the MBBS course. I've begun

discussions with FoM, ICSMSU (thanks Munty and Tania) and the Strategic Planning Department of the College to progress with this. I've attached the report for information.

- Developed an 'OT Comms Plan' to ensure that we are effectively directly communicating with students. We are aiming to produce weekly blogs and gear the weekly ICU newsletter more towards our work. I've appended the plan for feedback.
- I have been working on a number of individual student matters with has taken a significant amount of time since the last Council meeting.

## **My 2020/21 objectives**

Using our manifestos as well as considering developments given the current circumstances, the OTs have put together our work objectives/goals. These are mine and I'll be updating against these in my future Council reports.

### **1) Liberation and Community (L&C) Development**

Manifesto point(s) covered: *"See through the Liberation and Community reform, establishing advocacy networks for underrepresented students"*

Objective description: Last year, I conducted a reform of Liberation at ICU which led to the creation of a new Working Class Officer, along with a distinct network attached to each of the (now) nine officers. The aim is to help distribute the workload from the officers, help build communities, raise the profile of L&C at Imperial, and facilitate more student-led campaigns.

This objective is to continue to develop Liberation & Community at Imperial by building up the new L&C networks. The nine networks are new this year so this will be a year of development and building up. The networks are: LGBTQ+, Disabilities, Gender Equality, BME, International, Interfaith, Mental Health, Ethics & Environment, and Working Class. The Disabilities, BME, Interfaith and Working Class networks will require the most development as these have the least currently-existing communities to tap into.

This will require systems development to embed the new networks onto our pre-existing systems (eActivities and the website), marketing support to create material and improve the website presence, and support from the representation team to support the aims of each network and develop campaigns.

### **2) Representation Network Review**

Manifesto point(s) covered: *"Complete actions from the ongoing review of the Wellbeing Representation Network to strengthen its impact on the student experience"*

Objective description: The Wellbeing Representation Network (WBRN) was introduced in 2017/18 (rushed, with no student consultation) and has been running largely the same since, with little proper review conducted. The Academic Representation Network (ARN) has been running for many years, and any review of the WBRN will need to consider its interaction with the ARN, minimising redundancy and maximising impact.

To review the Wellbeing Representation Network, in conjunction with the Academic Representation Network. This review will look at the core purpose of the WB rep network, evaluate impact of both networks, and review support for reps.

### **3) COVID-19 Response**

Manifesto point(s) covered: *"Continue to stand up for students on key issues like halls rent"*

Objective description: COVID-19 will undoubtedly have a profound effect on the student experience for the duration of this academic year. Social distancing measures are likely to cause increased isolation, mental health will be challenged, and remote learning will likely impact students educationally and in their wellbeing.

To respond to needs of students that develop out of the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, responding to the impact on Covid on different groups of students – working with College to ensure an Equality Impact Assessment is made and providing support to different groups as needed. Furthermore, being responsive to the effect on residents in halls.

#### **4) Student Discipline and Harassment**

Manifesto point(s) covered: *“Tackle sexual harassment and misconduct at Imperial”*

*“Work with clubs and societies to promote positive, inclusive cultures”*

Objective description: To improve our student discipline processes and tackle culture around sexual harassment on campus. This involves both our internal procedures, as well as the College’s procedures in a representative capacity. We will improve our support for student campaigns in this area, and improve comms around procedures and expectation setting.

#### **5) Campaigns and Student Voice**

Manifesto point(s) covered: *“Improve mechanisms to raise issues through rep structures so all voices are heard”*

Objective description: Students at Imperial often don’t feel like their voices are listened to – by the Union as well as the College. This is often reflected in the SES, and anecdotally from interactions with students. Furthermore, in February 2018, Union Council voted to introduce a petitions system to help raise student issues – this is yet to be implemented. Our student-led campaigns process is non-existent, and support for pre-existing student-led campaigns has ground to a halt.

This objective is to improve the mechanisms through which students raise their voice at Imperial. It will involve better utilising both representation networks, improving platforms to raise student voice, improving the campaigns process and implementing the mandated petitions system.

#### **Manifesto points not covered above:**

*“Review the Union’s offering at non-South Kensington campuses to ensure all students are considered and build a unified Imperial community”*

*“Improve support structures for postgraduate research students, addressing systemic supervision issues”*

The above two points are still very important, they just don’t feature in my work objectives. As part of our NSS response, we will be working on reviewing student support roles across the College and, while NSS is UG focused, this will likely be looking at PGR support too. In terms of support on non-South Kensington campuses, I think this is one where I need to accept that I won’t be able to work on it like I hoped. However, Sam, as DPFS, is planning on looking at long-term planning for our service at White City.

**Congrats if you’ve read this far! Please feel free to drop me an email whenever at [dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk) if you’ve got any questions or feedback.**