

**Imperial College Union
Union President Report
Union Council 3rd November 2020**

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Summary:

- Representation to the College
- Officer objective setting
- Socially responsible investment

College Meetings & Prep	Student + Union Meetings & Prep	Operational work (day-to-day)	Project work (major goals)	Misc
18%	40%	30%	2%	10%

This is the first set of individual officer reports to Council for the new academic year. It's good to be back, although the circumstances have been extremely challenging. Over the past few months, we've been working to stabilise the Union, in response to last year's challenges and COVID-19, while going through a significant staff restructure. In terms of representation to the College, there's been a lot of 'hurry and wait'; lots of quiet times punctuated by periods of immense stress and pressure. The team has risen to the challenge extremely well, and I'm grateful to all the officers and senior Union staff for seeing us through this tumultuous time.

Updates:

- Education meetings – these have continued throughout the summer, discussing issues from the nature of teaching and examination under COVID to testing and presence on campus. The main meeting here is the Education Strategy and Operations Group (ESOG), although I am also a member of the “Guild” Strategic oversight group (GSOG) overseeing longer-term decisions for online learning, as well as a slew of pre-existing committees.
- NSS – I've been supporting Michaela in the work on NSS; we presented the recommendations together at Provost's Board. For more detail, see the DPE report.
- International Fees – Shervin and I have been supporting the international officer in [representing the views of those students](#) who are dissatisfied with high tuition fees.
- PGT application fees – We have taken [a firm stance against the imposition of these fees](#) and have surveyed students in order to collect views. A summary report of this survey has been produced by the DPE, to aid in further efforts to reduce the fee.
- Graduation – at my behest, a joint committee of staff and students has been set up to oversee graduation. I'm also participating in filming for part of the online celebration.
- Student disciplinary procedure – as well as some involvement in live cases, we have undertaken some work to review our complaints and disciplinary procedure for students and student groups. We hope to bring proposals to Council by December or January.
- Staff recruitment – I've been involved in discussions around what roles are necessary for the Union to recruit in the short term to better support student activities and representation.
- Objective setting - We have been going through a process of setting officer objectives, against which all OTs will report. A summary of these objectives comprises the next section.
- Paragon hall move – [as you may have seen](#), a West London hall we were using this year due to higher-than-expected student numbers is being shut due to concerns

related to cladding. The Imperial students are being given £50 each, a month's travelcard, assistance in moving, and lodgings in an (arguably nicer) hall in Islington, a stone's throw from Caledonian Road station on the Piccadilly line.

Objectives:

Here are the objectives I've set for myself for this year. I've included relevant manifesto points in red next to the appropriate objective. It should be noted that 'MD' stands for Managing Director, the most senior member of permanent staff in the Union, with whom I work closely. I welcome any questions on the below points.

i. Working to ensure all relevant stakeholders are properly involved when the College makes decisions (Keep challenging the College; from our curricula to the cost of food and rent, decisions shouldn't be made without us)

1. Lobbying the College for involvement in decisions beyond just education
2. Pressuring the College to include students on committees currently being formed as a result of current (and upcoming) College governance review(s)
3. Communicating clearly to students about the importance of this issue and any progress made – to make it clear we 'have their backs'
4. Improving our representation function internally to facilitate this.
5. Supporting DPE/DPW to build relationships with student reps
6. Helping reconstruct staff support function with the recruitment of a new manager and a realignment of that team's priorities
7. Ensuring this point is included in the Union's strategy ("front and centre")

ii. Setting a stable trajectory for the Union post-2021 (2021-23)

1. Strategy

We set a clear trajectory for the future, particularly by producing a new strategy for the medium-term (2021-23) and by resetting the staffing model (objective v).

2. Handover process

Through training, preparing policy documents/records of our knowledge (e.g. a proper relationship map), and next year's handover window with new officers, we must ensure knowledge of both process and recent history in this organisation is captured before the end of the year. This will include providing a more formal structure for officers to follow during next year's handover period, both in terms of the written documents they are to provide and in terms of 1:1 contact with successors.

3. Avoiding a vacuum

All the officers and student facing staff members should hold conversations with key student volunteers before the end of January to limit the risk important student volunteer and sabbatical roles go unfilled. We must ensure Trustee recruitment, especially for the new chair, is a priority, so that outgoing trustees have an opportunity to share knowledge and incoming trustees aren't starting from scratch.

iii. Reviewing Union Governance/Democracy

1. Examining the Felix Editor and DPFS roles and clarifying the relationship between OTs and staff more generally.
2. Clarifying our relationship with constituent unions.
3. Reviewing Union Council.
4. Supporting the MD in clarifying the relationship between Board, its subcommittees, and Union Council.

- iv. **Coordinating a review of our offer to postgraduates (Initiate a wholesale review of our offer for postgraduates)**
 1. Bringing together the existing data on postgraduate engagement
 2. Clarifying our desired outcomes
 3. Reviewing the structure of the GSU: are the volunteer roles fit-for-purpose? Should the president be a remunerated role?
 4. Representation within the Union – are postgraduate students adequately involved in our internal decision making
 5. Strategies to drive engagement
 6. The role CUs should play – PG students are now officially members of the old 'undergraduate' CUs (CGCU, RCSU, RSMU, ICSMSU)

- v. **Ensuring the Union's staffing model is fit for the future (Make sure the Union has a support staff structure that works)**
 1. Working with the DPFS and systems manager to make recommendations about our student staffing model, with a view to increasing the number and quality of opportunities for students.
 2. Clarifying the employment terms and the nature of the employment relationship with student staff, including developing an implementation plan for the London Living Wage. **(Guarantee a living wage for student staff in future funding bids).**
 - a. It should be noted that uncertainty around the venues opening, as well as the Union's financial position, made a decision on this impossible before the start of this financial year. Our intention is now for it to be costed into next year's budget (commencing August 1st 2021), although other improvements (to contracts etc.) may be realised sooner. In some cases (e.g. enhancements to on-site benefits) we are in the process of rolling out the improvements right now.
 3. Supporting the MD with considerations regarding the employment terms and the nature of the employment relationship with permanent staff.
 4. Supporting the MD to develop recommendations for the permanent staffing structure for 21-22.

- vi. **Supporting the Officer Trustee Team**
 1. Ensuring the team continues to work well together throughout the year.
 2. Supporting officers with individual pieces of work, including these objectives
 3. Coordinating any collective decisions which must be made
 4. Coordinating or delegating work that must be distributed across the group
 5. Ensuring the team is well aligned, so that effort isn't duplicated, and individual officers aren't 'working against each other'
 6. Mediating the relationship between senior managers and OTs where necessary

Other manifesto points:

The only tangible manifesto point I've failed to explicitly mention above relates to the room booking system, which is included within objectives of some of the other officers (DPCS/DPFS) and forms a major part of the work currently being undertaken by the Activities Team.

Upcoming:

- Work towards the above objectives, in particular strategy development (common to many of them) is likely to comprise a significant part of my efforts over the coming months.
- College Audit & Risk Committee is taking place on November 6th, and College Council is taking place on the 27th. While I can't delve into specifics, I suspect there will be discussion about reviewing major planning decisions that were made when the College was projecting a much lower income for the year.
- Further objective setting will soon be taking place in the Union – this time on a team by team rather than an individual basis, for permanent staff members.
 - o In particular, Shervin, Michaela and I will be helping set objectives for the representation team. We are also involved in the recruitment process for a manager of that team.
- The work on socially responsible investment in the College – pressuring them to properly consider the ethics of their investments – has resumed. This follows a manifesto commitment of mine from last year, and a paper I wrote alongside last year's DPFS and Ethics & Environment Officer. Meetings of a new "SRI engagement group" have commenced – you can find out more [here](#). If you have an interest in this subject, feel free to get in touch.

Thanks for reading this far. We'd like to get your views in the meeting about the format of our reports going forward. Hope to see you all again soon.

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