

## President Report to Union Council – October 2020

Abhijay P. Sood

### Summary:

- Representation to the College continuing across education and SRI
- Work on access to education at Imperial for refugees and asylum seekers
- Updates on key goals/project work commencing

College Meetings & Prep	Student + Union Meetings & Prep	Operational work (day-to-day)	Project work (major goals)	Misc
24%	27%	34%	15%	-

### Regular updates:

- Education meetings are continuing. Shervin and Michaela are likely better placed to give specific updates, but my two main observations I would share are:
  - That we are doing what we can to ensure that students will be able to meet core learning objectives regardless of COVID guidance/whether they have to self-isolate. We don't want students to be disadvantaged in terms of progression if they can't make on-campus study in term 2. This is something the College is thinking about increasingly.
  - That long-term planning, rather than just reactive decision-making, is once again becoming a feature of some conversations in the College (considering e.g. investment in buildings and education technology in the long term).
- I have been supporting Michaela with work on the NSS, in particular on recommendations regarding the management of staff.
- There has been a further meeting about graduation, where student views on next year's ceremonies were taken on board. Online celebrations are set for w/c Dec 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Progress is being made within the socially responsible investment (SRI) policy engagement group, where implementation of the policy which was developed last year is discussed. Consultation will be forthcoming, with the group soliciting submissions on how to engage with firms in order to improve their behaviour, and when such engagement would be abandoned, and disinvestment pursued.
  - Related to this, Divest Imperial launched a [survey](#) to solicit student views last week.
- Following from a [paper brought to this committee in 2017](#), I have been working over the past year to get the College to implement scholarships/bursaries for refugee/asylum seeker students. Progress has been quite slow as focus has been dominated by the crisis over the summer but has picked up again recently with a specific staff member having been assigned to support this piece of work.
- I have been supporting the international students' network with work on international fees.
- I have a **College Council Meeting** on Friday 27<sup>th</sup>, which will include a presentation of the Union's accounts for the 2019-20 academic year.

### Upcoming:

- Beyond regular meetings with the College, and further work on SRI and NSS, the main work I have ahead of me is encapsulated in the following section on my key objectives.

### Key objective updates:

Following from my first report, I would like to share the following updates on my objectives for the year:

- i. **Working to ensure all relevant stakeholders are properly involved when the College makes decisions** – This work will begin with me developing a relationship map, including our current level of representation within College committees, by January. I had intended to complete this work sooner but was diverted by more urgent matters.
- ii. **Setting a stable trajectory for the Union post-2021 (2021-23)**
  1. **Strategy** – a specific subgroup of the Board of Trustees has been tasked with overseeing this process. It has met twice, and outlined a consultation procedure, including consulting with this committee, over the coming months. The crucial point is that although this is a strategy for a short period, we anticipate much of its content being applicable thereafter, leaving enough room such that it can act as a guide for the Union regardless of COVID guidance.
  2. **Handover process** – work on this will take place from March onwards
  3. **Avoiding a vacuum** – we will begin working towards this imminently, holding conversations aiming to ensure key roles are filled in the coming year
- iii. **Reviewing Union Governance/Democracy**
  1. **Examining the Felix Editor and DPFS roles and clarifying the relationship between OTs and staff more generally.** – will have held initial conversations with both of these officers in w/c Nov 23rd
  2. **Clarifying our relationship with constituent unions.** – I'm bringing a discussion paper to the Governance and Identity Board on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> to commence this piece of work, as well as a review of Union Council itself. These will be limited in scope, given our current circumstances, focussed on making clear recommendations for the short-term and preserving information future officers might want to take forward once COVID is behind us.
  3. **Reviewing Union Council** – as above
  4. **Supporting the MD in clarifying the relationship between Board, its subcommittees, and Union Council** – This process will commence as a piece of work led by the MD.
- iv. **Coordinating a review of our offer to postgraduates** – I have held an initial conversation with the GSU President and will now proceed with collating information about PG engagement from prior surveys/work. Since I'm not anticipating any major centrally motivated governance changes, and with some of the key services I had in mind in an uncertain position due to the pandemic (h-bar) this will be more of a focus for term 2, with some actions left to my successor.
- v. **Ensuring the Union's staffing model is fit for the future** – the DPFS may conduct some preliminary work beforehand, but otherwise this will be a focus for term 2.
- vi. **Supporting the Officer Trustee Team** – part of my day-to-day responsibilities.

Thanks for reading this far. If I don't speak to you beforehand, I hope you stay safe and have a wonderful Christmas break. Hope to see you all again in the new year.

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