

# Union President – Council report

Abhijay Sood – 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## Summary:

- Annual Leave – I managed to get some time off over Easter; I hope you all did too!
- Socially responsible investment
- Petition system and other similar project work

College Meetings & Prep	Student + Union Meetings & Prep	Operational work (day-to-day)	Project work (major goals)	Misc (inc. interview panels)
16%	32%	27%	6%	19%

## Regular updates:

- **Financial bid to the College** – we are in the midst of financial planning/negotiation. We have asked the College for a ~30% increase (~£750k) in our grant in order to ensure we have the funding and staff roles we need to offer basic services to students, and to eliminate our dependency on a volatile commercial surplus. Our internal budgeting process will follow.
- **COVID-19 Response**
  - o **College return to campus** – as well as education/timetabling planning meetings, we are attending the College's general meeting on how return to campus will be managed for increasing numbers of staff and students.
  - o **Reopening the Union offices** – the OTs are on campus most days; other staff are returning too. We have introduced fresh protocols to manage this safely.
- **College staff departures** – Two further prominent members of staff, the College Secretary and the Head of Communications, have announced their departure.
- **Alice's successor** – the Council Chair has begun consulting with key staff members on the selection criteria for Alice's successor as College President, since her term of office will conclude at the end of the next academic year. A search committee has been convened, although this process is moving forward slowly. I will share more as I learn it.
- We have been involved in delivering **webinars** about the Union to incoming students.
- **Socially Responsible Investment** – This is the piece of work looking at how the College considers the ethics of its investments, and tries to improve the behaviour of firms in which it is invested (now branching out into research relationships), following the paper I brought to College Council in November 2019. I have been involved in consultation interviews on this, including with Divest Imperial and a student group from Business school. I am holding meetings to take views on this from interested students – let me know if you'd like to be involved.
- I am joining a meeting on the future of **White City** this week.
- I sat on an interview panel to appoint **new auditors** for the Union, alongside Sam.

## Upcoming:

- **Petition System** – Having met with interested students, I have been working with the Union's Head of Systems on a concrete proposal for completing this. Our aim is to do so by October.
- We will be piloting **Volunteer Town Halls** this month, to give you a chance to learn more about what the Union does beyond these reports, and to give you a chance to ask questions.
- I am aiming to update the Bye-Laws, Constitution, and Policies on the website this term.

- The motion on Refugee Access to study, which I have been actively working on over the course of my two years, will be taken to Presidents' and Provosts' boards this term.
- We have begun planning handover and induction for the incoming officers.
- **Felix review** – largely concluded, but some work to amend board policy and prepare handover/induction will not be completed until the end of term

#### Key objective updates:

Following from my first report, I would like to share the below updates on my objectives.

- i. **Working to ensure all relevant stakeholders are properly involved when the College makes decisions** – I am writing to the College about specific instances in medicine where this has not been upheld, and working with the Chair of Board to ensure this point is preserved after my tenure. Governance changes in the College, precipitated by both COVID and the scandal, may help here.
- ii. **Setting a stable trajectory for the Union post-2021 (2021-23)**
  1. **Strategy** – our consultation has largely concluded, and we are approaching a finished document setting out our plan to “get back to basics” over the next couple of years.
  2. **Handover process** – we have begun planning this, as above.
  3. **Avoiding a vacuum** – Most elections have concluded. Our chief goal now is to ensure there are good candidates for any vacant roles or roles we chose not to run in this round. **Please feel free to contact me if you're interested in running for anything, full-time or otherwise.**
- iii. **Reviewing Union Governance/Democracy**
  1. **Examining the Felix Editor and DPFS roles and clarifying the relationship between OTs and staff more generally.** – Largely concluded.
  2. **Clarifying our relationship with constituent unions.** – We have progressed this at GIB, although formal recommendations have yet to be solidified.
  3. **Reviewing Union Council** – We have taken a conscious decision to postpone any deep review until post-COVID; at this stage I think it would be best to preserve recommendations for Council as part of the work on handover.
  4. **Supporting the MD in clarifying the relationship between Board, its subcommittees, and Union Council** – This process is underway, and will report back in June.
- iv. **Coordinating a review of our offer to postgraduates** – I will be having some discussions with the GSU committee over the course of this month.
- v. **Ensuring the Union's staffing model is fit for the future** – This trifurcates:
  1. **Permanent staff structure/employment relationship** – We have decided to preserve our current staffing “model”, albeit under a new structure, for the foreseeable future.
  2. **Student staff** – we have secured internal agreement to implement the London Living Wage going into Autumn 2021. We will formalise the employment relationship at that point.
  3. **Staff who support student activities** – We are still aiming introducing clear and fair written agreements, short of full employment relations. This is to be picked up between Ross and me.
- vi. **Supporting the Officer Trustee Team** – part of my day-to-day responsibilities.

Thank you for reading. Best of luck to all those with exams and project deadlines in the coming weeks.

Abs

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