

Union President – Council report

Abhijay Sood – 15th June 2021

Summary:

- Socially responsible investment
- Volunteer Town Hall pilot
- GSU Review

College Meetings & Prep	Student + Union Meetings & Prep	Operational work (day-to-day)	Project work (major goals)	Misc (inc. interview panels)
21%	32%	27%	13%	8%

Regular updates:

- **Socially Responsible Investment** – This has taken up a fair amount of time for me since the start of term. Many meetings have been held, including with student stakeholders, to consult on final recommendations from the group I've been a part of. These recommendations will be presented to a senior College committee (President's Board) in July, and have already been presented to the Provost, CFO, and Business School Dean. I have been actively contributing to editing these and helping produce a summary.
- **Financial bid to the College** – we have had encouraging signs, but no formal response, to our request for increased funding to remove the dependency of core services on volatile income.
- **Education Delivery in 21-22** – involved in discussions with the College aiming to get more in person next year, which Michaela can share more on.
- **Petition System** – work is currently underway! Thanks to those who shared ideas which have informed the proposal.
- **Volunteer Town Hall** – we held a pilot volunteer town hall on May 26th. We've had positive feedback and some constructive criticism. Based on this, we intend to schedule further meetings going forward – likely on a regular schedule in the new academic year.
- **President's Community Fund** – I have been involved in some discussions on this, which Ross and Sam may have more to say on.
- **GSU review** – I have met with the GSU to discuss mutual expectations and a review of our offering to/representation of PGs to be conducted over the summer, in light of concerns with the performance of some officers, low engagement, and my manifesto commitment.
- **Huawei and Lockheed Martin** -- I have had some discussions with students in response to recent events in Palestine, and the paper which passed through Council last term on Huawei.

Upcoming:

- I am aiming to update the Bye-Laws, Constitution, and Policies on the website this term.
- Some conversations about graduation planning for 21-22 are ongoing.
- The Union is appointing new student trustees, and a new chair of the Board. The appointment process for the latter will include various student reps.
- Discussions have begun on bringing **more student services to White City**. We are supporting this, on the condition that Chemistry students retain some dedicated social space.

- We have begun planning **handover and induction** for the incoming officers. Producing and delivering some of this will be key pieces of work going forward.
- In addition to the SCA's, I shall verbally present President's Awards at Council.
- I will be attending College Court at the end of the month, and a College Council meeting in July.

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 are finishing now.
- 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** – See above.
- 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 finishing exams and project deadlines.

Abs

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