

Imperial College Students' Union
Board of Trustees / 29th September 2021

Minutes (14 July 2021 Board of Trustees)

1. Introduction & Attendance

Jill Finney (JF) (Chair)	Phil Power (PP)
Stephen Richardson (SR)	Kate Owen (KO)
Kate Owen (KO)	Kelvin Zhang (KZ)
Abhijay Sood (AS)	Shervin Sabeghi (SS)
Lloyd James (LJ)	Ross Unwin (RU)
Milia Hasbani (MH)	Michaela Flegrova (MF)
Chris Carter (CC)	

In attendance

Tom Flynn (Managing Director) (TF)
Rob Scully (Director of Finance and Membership) (RS)
Tom Newman (Director of Membership Services) (TN)
Ashley Cory (Systems Manager) (AC)
Victoria Agbontaen (Governance Officer) (VA)
Daniel Lo (Incoming DPE) (DL)
Nathalie Podder (Incoming DPW) (NP)
Charlotte Drastich (Incoming Student Trustee) (CD)
Jacques Bazile (Incoming Student Trustee) (JB)
Hilliam Tung (Incoming Student Trustee) (HT)
Daniel Wagner (Incoming lay Trustee) (DW)

2. Apologies

Graham Parker (GP)
Sam Lee (SL)
Dorothy Griffiths (DG)
Gabrielle Mathews (Incoming Student Trustee) (GM)
India Marsden (Incoming DPCS) (IM)

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

4. Matters arising

N/A

5. Conflict of interest declarations

N/A

6. Consideration of confidential business

TF identified item 11 and 12 as confidential business.

7. MD Update

TF thanked the Officers for their work over the year and provided details for the leaving/goodbye drinks that will be held at the end of July.

Board noted the verbal update.

8. Officer Trustee Reflections

MF noted that although the year did not go as originally expected when she was elected in to the role in March 2020 her key achievements included rep engagement and ensuring that reps were appropriately supported and engaged throughout the year with initiatives like rep of the month to help them feel connected to the Union.

MF added that the approach to the College-wide NSS response was also better this year which will give the Union a strong framework for some appropriate lobbying next year. MF noted that other things that went well includes the digital education recording policy, PG Representation (reforming forums), package of no detriment measures and working with the Officer Team.

SS reflected quite positively on his second term as the DPW and expressed that there were multiple wins for representation including halls rent, safety net for remote exams, improving financial support for MBBS students and much more. SS added that he is confident that the groundwork laid in 2020 for the Liberation Reform will yield success results if all that had been recommended is implemented.

SS noted that the work culture is improving, however there is still major concerns around EDI and how diversity within the organisation has drastically changed over the last two years. SS added that there has also been a lack of OT support over the year and being a part of many meetings created a false sense of empowerment within the OT's but there has been little support with Officer objectives.

SS concluded by thanking the Officers and staff team of without whom he would not have been able to get through the last two years.

RU expressed that he came into the role wanting to enable activity and take part in various clubs and societies but being the first DPCS to have to inform students that all activity will be cancelled until further notice was a particularly challenging point of the year. However, since last year there have been some significant changes to student life at Imperial including improving risk assessment processes, storage and being able to address projects with the Student Opportunities and Development team that other teams had previously not been able to do due to the busy day-to-day nature of the job was a huge success this year.

RU added that he had a focus on sport coming into this year as part of his manifesto and he had taken this year to review the problems as delivering student sport at Imperial has been problematic for many years. With the greater roll out of Imperial Athletes, RU has concerns that the current way of operating does not work well, and a reassessment of roles and responsibilities within sport at Imperial would be beneficial.

RU highlighted that he had developed personally and professionally this year and was grateful to all those who supported and mentored him, and to those who have contributed to such a fulfilling year.

AS emphasised that one of his key highlights involve being able to actively challenge the College and in doing so, have gained the respect of prominent individuals in College. AS expressed that it is important to not lose continuity with the College as well as fostering a culture of coordination and collaboration in the College. AS noted that there is a need for a cultural shift in how representation is perceived in the Union as well as improvement in continuity to allow for better qualified Sabbatical Officers.

AS noted that he had developed tremendously both professionally and personally and acknowledged the support that his fellow Officers and staff members had provided him over the last two years and although recent circumstances had not been ideal, it had been extremely rewarding and a time not taken for granted.

Board noted the reflections from the Officer Trustees and thanked them for their hard work, resilience, and all the fantastic work they have achieved over the year.

9. Council Chair Reflections

AA expressed that being on the Board of Trustees was a very different experience to other Senior Volunteer roles he had held with the Union as it allowed him to interact and meet with Union staff which aided his understanding of the Union. AA added that online meetings are challenging but being part of developing and learning about how to form a strategic plan is incredibly rewarding.

AA said he had enjoyed his time on the Board and explained to the incoming Trustees that being a part of the Board gets easier as the year progresses and noted the importance of reading the papers, paying attention, and asking questions.

AA stated that the content that has been brought to Council this year has been meaningful and productive with engagement of Council members being consistent.

Board noted the reflections from the Council Chair and thanked him for maintaining high levels of engagement with Council members throughout the year.

10. Student Trustee Reflections

CC noted that at times it had been difficult to engage in discussions at Board, specifically on items around the budget. CC said that although the learning curve is steep, it has allowed him to develop his understanding on a range of issues that impact the Union and the overall experience has been fantastic.

KZ expressed that it is immensely valuable to simply listen and observe the external and Officer Trustees who are more experienced. KZ emphasised the importance of reading and understanding the papers as well as critically contributing to the meeting by asking questions. KZ stated it had been a pivotal time for the Union but he had felt supported in his role. KZ added that it is important to maintain diverse perspectives on the Board within its membership as well as other considerations of other underrepresented groups including post-graduates and those students at the White City Campus.

LJ explained he had thoroughly enjoyed working on the strategy and being involved with smaller working groups is an effective and useful way of working. LJ recommended to the Board that it would be valuable to review Trustee training to include more information on the background of the organisation.

MH said she is incredibly happy with the progress the Union has made over the last year and is happy to have contributed in the way she has. MH highlighted the shift from being a representative to being a Trustee on the Board but noted that it is an experience different from any other with insight into how charities work and how a board works. MH explained she had found it fascinating to have a look behind the scenes on how decisions are made, while learning the fine lines between oversight and management.

MH suggested to the incoming Student Trustees to try and engage with other members of the Board, both internal and external, and ask any questions where things are unclear as this is an opportunity to learn from external Trustees who have a wealth of experience.

Board noted the Student Trustee reflections and thanked them for actively participating and engaging with the Board during one of the most challenging years yet.

11. 2021/22 Budget

RS gave a brief overview of the paper noting that the College have now formally responded and agreed a grant level of £2,527k, which is an increase of £642k from 2020/21. This will aid putting into the structure a new significant number of staff roles to support the new strategic plan. RS noted that appendix 2 indicates the staffing structure that is reflected in the budget. RS building in the staged approach to budgeting is still going to be important for next year.

RS stated that the main highlights from this year's budget is that as there are a significant number of roles to recruit, there will be a significant level of vacancy saving. Due to the high number of new roles being recruited in the structure, there will be a phased approach to recruitment. This means that posts will be filled between September 2021 and January 2022, resulting in a vacancy saving. Based on expected start dates, this is likely to be a minimum of £125k (for core, grant-funded staff). £60k of these funds have been allocated to one-off costs largely related to developing and embedding the new staff structure, EDI strategy etc.

RS requested formal approval to increase the student staff pay rate to be in line with College pay rates (London Living Wage) to take effect from 1 August 2021.

- i. A question was asked by LJ how the increase of student staff is reflected in the budget. Trustees were informed that it is covered by temporary staff lines in the budget, and it is about providing support where needed.

Trustees approved the Stage 1 Budget and approved the casual staff pay rates.

12. Back to Basics Staff Recruitment Plan

TF highlighted that between July - December there will be a huge recruitment drive in the Union, with over twenty posts becoming available. TF noted that the recruitment has been grouped into rounds which are based on various points of urgency.

TF added that the interim Director of Marketing and Communications will be required to put together a full comms plan around the recruitment and including the back-to-basics strategy as part of a positive message. With a separate pack including the reasoning for growth, the types of candidates the organisation is looking for and the Union's current position.

TF noted that he will be meeting with BAME Recruitment to discuss how they can assist in diversifying the pool of candidates and what type of specific support they offer.

- i. A question was asked by KZ as to whether there are any foundations in place in terms of EDI, for example diverse monitoring. Trustees were informed that a substantial amount of funding has been allocated in the budget to develop the work around EDI. Although the EDI strategy does need to be drafted, certain measures can be put in place now to make some initial progress.
- ii. A question was asked by PP as to whether the restructure in the finance team has been completed. Trustees were informed that it has been completed with the settlement agreement pending a signature. David Ashton has been offered the role of Financial Controller.

- iii. A suggestion was made by KO for AC to review the people policies to ensure they are up-to date.

Trustees noted the allocation of roles within the 'back to basics' staffing structure into different 'recruitment rounds'.

13. Disciplinary Policies

SS gave an overview of the paper, focusing on progress of the work that has been done around the disciplinary framework and procedures. SS added that he will be working with the incoming DPW/Officer Trustee team to develop a code of conduct around policies and procedures.

Regarding the overview of the complaints and disciplinary byelaws, the main changes include them being split into two byelaws. Complaints consists of students having complaints against their experience in the Union, but not against any particular individual. Whereas, disciplinary matters relates to when a member has committed an act that is in breach of the code of conduct. Both procedures have been put into the framework of a 3-stage approach where a matter escalates through the stages based on severity and requests for appeal.

SS stated that all references to complaints against CSPs have been removed in light of the new framework but noted that while the CSP policies are still being developed, there isn't a governance gap since there are pre-existing CSPB policies that cover this and are sufficient in the interim.

- i. A question was asked by NP whether it would be helpful to include a confidentiality statement on what can and cannot be deemed as confidential information during the process of an investigation, especially around safeguarding to ensure students raising complaints are able to bring up concerns in a safe place. Trustees were informed that if an issue is being investigated by the police, it is unlikely that the Union will be investigating it since that would become a College matter and they are better equipped to deal with this.
- ii. A question was asked by MH as to why the Governance Committee is being removed out of the disciplinary structure as it may cause uncertainty as to who the delegated authority might be. Trustees were informed this will be re-amended so that the Governance and Membership committee will have that authority.
- iii. A question was asked by JF as to what the time scales are for these changes to be implemented. Trustees were informed that timescales will be put together and circulated to the Board with an updated paper.

14. Felix Policy Update

AS noted that the review that took place last term precipitated some changes into Felix, those changes require changes to be made to the Board held Felix policy and areas where actual practice has deviated from past policy.

- i. A question was asked by KZ as to whether there is a clear complaints procedure set out in the byelaws. Trustees were informed that complaints against members Felix staff would fall under the membership complaint and complaints about the

conduct of the CSP would fall under the CSP policy as there is no separate Felix complaints policy.

- ii. A question was asked by HT what the reasoning was behind changing the line management responsibility of the Editor to the Managing Director from the Union President. Trustees were informed that having the Union President as a Line Manager causes a potential conflict of interest and it can put an undue burden on the President to support an individual who at arm's length from the Union but also a young person in their first role.

Trustees noted the update on the Felix Policy in line with last term's review and other related changes.

15. External Trustee [Chair] Appointment / Update

Jill noted that SR, KO, AS, LJ and Emma McCoy (College) were part of the interview panel for the forthcoming Chair. Two candidates were interviewed, however the panel decided to decline both individuals as they were not deemed to be a right fit for the Chair role. KZ added how useful he found the student stakeholder panel as part of the interview process.

Jill also thanked Kate Owen and Graham Parker for their dedication and valuable contributions to the Board over the last few years.

Trustees noted the update in the Chair appointment process and interviews.