

**Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 13 July 2022**

Student Trustee Reflections

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Purpose: To provide Board with a reflection on the year as a Trustee of Imperial College Union.

What have you learnt during your time as a Trustee and what went well?

The past year has been a fascinating time of learning more about Imperial College, Imperial College Union, and English non-profits. As an overseas Master's student who attended undergraduate in the United States, almost everything about Imperial College Union was novel. The fundamental concept of giving students such robust powers and voices to govern their student experiences is not common in the USA, where student involvement is more superficial, and often adversarial with the college administration, which has much more direct and indirect control of every aspect of student life than the College administration at Imperial.

It has been to my benefit that all the other student and officer trustees have had such storied relationships with the Union throughout their academic careers, and their insights and experiences through multiple eras of the Union have really shown what a profound impact this organization can have on students' academic experiences. Additionally, the lay trustees have brought inordinate insights from their varied experiences, both academic and otherwise, that have really helped frame discussions and consider potential unintended consequences.

Holistically there was a great synergy between the student, officer, and lay trustees that I believe only improved throughout the year. While at times discussions may have been side-tracked or focus of this issue at hand may have wavered, I believe this group has been increasingly fantastic at focussing on how to best improve the student experience while also supporting all the staff and individuals who work so hard and serve as the life-blood of the Union.

What did you particularly value being part of the Board as a Trustee and why?

Engaging with the board members through the period of executing the strategic plan devised the previous year has been truly rewarding. It has been extremely interfacing with fellow board member through these steps, and talking to older students about the changes they've perceived in the union throughout their times at Imperial.

The most valuable part of this experience has been my involvement with FARC and the Union's EDI initiatives, which have both provided profound insight into the operational activities of the Union and how those activities are perceived and engaged with by constituent members and staff. Having been a part of multiple organizations at different levels, this was my first time undergoing these experiences as a Trustee, which requires a higher-level more strategic approach to culture and operations improvement.

Did you experience any challenges as part of your role? If so, what were they?

The toughest challenges involved adjusting to the role and scope of the Union. In the USA the closest analogue is student government, which is both far smaller and less central to student life than the Union. Additionally, while the Away Day was a stimulating and fun introduction to serving as a trustee, I do believe more training and early interaction with the rest of the board could have helped with the learning curve of serving on the board of such a multifaceted organization. Resultant of this, it is far more likely for student trustees to feel less in touch with activities, as we're not directly running initiatives like the officer or operational trustees or selected for specific expertise as the external trustees are. I therefore strongly believe earlier training and education opportunities could be strongly beneficial.

What recommendations would you make for areas of improvement for Student Trustees in the future?

More general training and resources would be greatly beneficial to enhancing student trustee effectiveness. I also believe it would be great to encourage more interactions between board members outside meetings to help build stronger rapport and closeness, that may yet further increase board effectiveness at large.

This year has been an amazing learning experience and I'm eternally grateful for the opportunity to both learn and help drive these amazing changes we've seen over the past year. I have had a great time working with and getting to know all of you at our in person meetings, and was almost tempted to stay for a PHD so I could continue to serve!