

Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 13 July 2022

President Reflections

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Purpose: To share reflections on the 2021-22 year.

It has been a unique privilege to hold the role of Imperial College Union President. Much has been achieved this year, and much remains unfinished – but my turn is nearly over, with time for little but handover and reflection. These are my reflections.

Things to keep doing:

- **Engaging Postgraduate students:** they are roughly half our membership, and we haven't done enough to cater for them in the past. They require different modes of engagement from Undergraduates, and it is on us to be proactive in this regard. The PG Review work is an excellent start, and it must be seen through.
- **Building bridges with the College:** we build relationships with stakeholders in the College by being open and trustworthy, competent and credible. We can build bridges at the same time as being a 'critical friend' and taking firm stances where appropriate.
- **Casting a critical eye over our governance:** reviewing Bye Laws and Policies is often not an appealing task for an Officer Trustee – it wins little praise from the student body and can seem a distraction from grander objectives. But effective governance is the rock upon which all else rests, and there is still much work to do to get our body of policy in good shape.
- **Focussing on getting the basics right:** we have not yet got the basics right in all areas. Until we do, we cannot begin to resource "ambition" projects in those areas which are rearing to go beyond that point.
- **Creating employment opportunities for students:** some of the novel areas where casual engagement of students has been tried (e.g. PhD students researching PGR experience) have proven extremely effective. We should continue to develop this model.
- **Advocating for students on College culture:** as co-chair of the Imperial Together Action Group I have been well-positioned to advocate for a student-inclusive approach to dealing with "College culture" issues, particularly in the aftermath of the McNeil report release. This is not work yielding short-term gains but is of high long-term importance and should continue to be prioritised.

Things to stop doing:

- **Overlooking the representational nature of DPCS & DPFS:** these roles have high operational burden but can also be crucial representatives around aspects of student experience. They should be invited to engage with senior College partners and receive support from the Representation Team in doing so.
- **Developing key projects without Officer Trustee engagement:** this year certain important projects have reached late stages of development without involvement of Officer Trustees.

Reasons vary (sensitivity around elections, short timescales) but in no case is this well-justified and OTs should always be engaged from early on in any major project.

- [X]

Things to start doing:

- **Effective professional development support for Officer Trustees:** Officer Trustees take a year out of their broader career path to take up these roles. We should be supporting them to develop and reflect on their development. What is currently in place has not worked and a genuine effort is required to ensure this is effective.
- [X]
- **Strengthening the “pathways” into Officer Trustee roles:** we know that senior volunteers in Constituent Unions and Management Groups are best-positioned and most likely to taken on sabbatical roles. We must encourage this (and therein boost competition for these roles) by more actively bringing these volunteers in and supporting them.
- [X]
- [X]

Personal reflections:

Finally – a personal note. I have enjoyed this role immensely. It has been a privilege to be a member of Board for three years and to be engaged in steering this organisation. I have enjoyed meeting, and built strong relationships with, other Board members. The effectiveness of Board over my tenure owes much to the effective leadership of Jill Finney, and the valuable support of Tom Flynn.

This month brings to an end not only my 1-year tenure as ICU President, but also my 9-year tenure as an Imperial College student. I have a deep and abiding admiration for this institution which has given me much, and I intend to keep in touch with the many brilliant people I have met here.

Thank you all for being part of this journey.