

DPW report to Union Council

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Updates:

- Attended ICUsToo's Night In on November 3. It was incredibly wholesome, with fairy string lights, Lofi music and board games. Students who attended told me that they felt in was an incredibly safe space.
- Trained welfare reps and AWOs who were elected during the Autumn elections and by-elections. Training concluded with an incredibly wholesome social in the Union Bar.
- Facilitated a Union Town Hall to address ongoing concerns around spiking in the Union venues. This is by far the hardest thing I've done as a DPW, but I'm incredibly glad for it. We received some valuable, honest feedback on how we can continue to improve.
- Interviewed and aided in the selection of a new advice manager.
- Helped with writing the report and briefing of the sexual misconduct survey.
- Presented the Union's anti-spiking measures, as well as the Union's Response to the College's Disciplinary Procedures, to the Student Experience Committee. Both received support from College staff.
- Met with three senior members of College staff to discuss the terms of reference and upcoming membership for the College's working group to review its student disciplinary procedures.
- Shortlisted two EDI consultants for the development of the Union's EDI strategy.
- The College is officially rolling out Phase 1 of free period products! By December 6th, one female and one disabled toilet in each building in every campus will have a vending machine with free products. Many thanks to Grace and the WCN for all of your efforts.

Upcoming:

- Will implement the suggested improvements to anti-spiking measures from Town Hall. One of these will be forming a working group on changing student culture and views towards consent. **Please contact the DPW if you would like to take part!**
- Will take part in a security review of the bars and venues, led by senior management. Sam and I will take the lead on acquiring student consultation.
- In December, Senate will meet to approve the membership and terms of reference of the College's working group to review student disciplinary procedures.
- The Union's working group will continue to meet to write a set of operational guidelines to complement the Union's Board-approved Disciplinary Procedures for its members.
- Will interview two potential consultants, one of which will take the lead on the Union's EDI Strategy development.
- Will share the results of the student sexual misconduct survey with the Student Experience Committee as well as other key stakeholders.
- Will aid in the selection of grant recipients for the College's EDI Seed Fund.
- Will facilitate a discussion between the Gender Equality Officer and the Director of Estates on how to improve street lighting on South Kensington, White City and Silwood campuses.
- Will touch base with the ICSMSU president to write an open letter to venues on spiking.
- Will follow up on implementing the recommendations from the Town Hall on spiking.

Community & Welfare Board Update:

- On 26/10/2021, the CWB approved a paper outlining the budgets for all nine of the Liberation and Community Networks. Liberation Community Officers were encouraged to apply for the EDI Seed Fund if they had any projects in mind that could benefit from additional funding.
- On 18/11/2021, the CWB discussed a paper by Divest Imperial that will be coming to Union Council. Divest was able to gain some good feedback as well as plenty of seconds for the paper.
- During AOB, it was discussed that the reps would benefit from having a collective database of surveys to browse from when writing their own. This will be a project for staff in the rep team.

Objectives:

Objective 1: Post-Pandemic Reintegration of the Imperial Community - [In progress]

After meeting with department reps as well as faculty well being staff, one very consistent and concerning pattern is becoming apparent: students are continuing to struggle with their mental health after the pandemic. Demand for counselling has increased by 90% this academic year, which may indicate that students are actually struggling more now, than they were during the throes of isolation. This actually makes sense from a psychological perspective. My own theory is that this is the result of a post-traumatic effect, where students learned to cope by numbing out and carrying on during the period of isolation, and it wasn't until they started to come out of it that the mental impact has started to hit them.

This leads to the question of how to proceed. There are some things I can do which would certainly help students who are struggling right now, such as lobbying for more counselling to reduce waiting times. However, this would not address the root cause of the mental health epidemic at Imperial, which is connected to the culture of overworking and maladaptive perfectionism at Imperial. This would require a much longer piece of work, which I hope to initiate with Hugh Brady during his handover period.

Objective 2: CSP Culture Review - [Not yet started]

I sadly have not had time to start working on this objective this month, as I was so busy attending to spiking concerns and report writing for the sexual misconduct survey. I plan to take this up with the Policy & Research Officer once we are both a bit more free.

Objective 3: Improving Safeguarding and Disciplinary Procedures - [In progress]

Like last month, this was the objective that I was able to make the most progress on. Presenting the Union's Response paper on College's Disciplinary procedures to the Student Experience Committee and during early discussion around the working group was a promising start, as I was able to gauge the amount of support I can expect to get from senior members of College staff. The point on communicating the outcomes to complainants was contentious, but Lloyd and I will not be backing down easily.

The general issue around safeguarding as well as preventative measures has also seen some progress in the form of the Union's anti-spiking campaign. This is an ongoing piece of work that I plan to revisit and continue to make improvements on throughout the year.

Objective 4: Welfare Representation Network Review - [Not yet started]

Given everything else that I am doing which involves security, welfare, and inclusion in the Union, this happens to be one of my lower-priority objectives at the moment. I am looking to start work on this no earlier than term 2.

Objective 5: Developing the Union's EDI Strategy - [In progress]

I shortlisted two candidate consultants for the development of the Union's EDI strategy. We will be interviewing them in the upcoming month.