

Imperial College Union
Deputy President (Welfare) Report
A note by Nicolas Massie

- What I've done since last council
 - Periodic review
 - Welfare presentation
 - Gone to visit halls of residence
 - Victimisation, depression and alcohol study
 - Swipe cards and posters
 - Exhibition road
 - Buddies
- Manifesto review

Preamble

This last month has been exceptionally busy. This coming week, I anticipate will also be extremely busy, after which I will begin to handover to my successor, Rebecca Lane, who I'm sure will do an excellent job. The DPW job has a very broad remit and in a way the greatest degree of freedom of any of the sabbaticals and I look forward to seeing what Becky does with it. I chose to spend the year focussing on improving our sense of community, particularly for Not in Halls students and freshers before they arrive, disseminating welfare information (toilet cubicle posters, swipe cards, and trialling the new campaigns system, Helpfinder), improving the effectiveness of the welfare officers (specialised training, listening training, revamped Union training, creating Welfare Officer Forum), and improving life on campus (numerous gains for cyclists, catering forum, working closely with College to get the best possible new halls and improve halls we already have, understanding the new Exhibition Road, negotiating for additional services from the Health Centre, working to provide volunteering opportunities and accreditation, and hosting a personal security event to be run again next year). This list is by no means comprehensive but serves to paint a picture of what I've spent my time doing. In order to better inform Future DPWs and the College I ran and analysed the Student Experience Survey. It has provided us with a wealth of information on how best to serve students, where things are working and where they could be improved. Because of stretched resources a very significant proportion of my time over the past six weeks has been dedicated to analysing and presenting this data.

Report since last council

Periodic review

I spent Friday last week with the Department of Computing doing a periodic review (every six years) of their PGR (mostly PhD) teaching. We met with the Pro-Rector (Education), Director of the Graduate School, Registry, the Head of Department, the course administrator, PG Tutor, Heads of Section, tutors, and students. I sat on a panel with Imperial and external professors with the intention of finding areas of good practice and for improvement in the DoC's provision. We found very little to improve and will be writing a report.

Annual Welfare Seminar

Here the DPW gives a talk, this year around 35 minutes, on the results of the Student Experience Survey. I highlighted differences in awareness and satisfaction across different departments and student populations. I made ten evidence-based proposals:

- Personal safety talks as described
 - Demand was particularly high among international students and women. Talks should use personal alarms and self-defence (both highly desired) as lures.
- Tailored information packs
 - International students and students not in halls had very different awareness profiles to other students.
- Universal support for buddies events
 - Departments that support buddying get better ratings
- Lighter first week
 - Students need time to get to grips with living in London and living away from home. A lighter first week would help students acclimatise.
- Reminder emails
 - Students forget the welfare provisions that are available to them. Reminder emails, though perhaps annoying, wouldn't be a waste of time.
- Medical school tutoring
 - The medical school has gone to great efforts this year to spruce up their tutoring offering. This should be monitored for effectiveness.
- Online tutor logging
 - Senior tutors often find it hard to know whether personal tutors are meeting with their tutees. It would be worthwhile to develop a 'one glance' system enabling senior tutors to check up on all their tutees.
- Women's tutors in every department
 - This system works well in a few departments. The practise should become universal, and their existence should be publicised as a resource for any student with gender equality concerns.
- International tutor remit
 - The Disability Advisory Service has engaged an International Specific Learning Disability Tutor. She should work to improve awareness of the DAS and of counselling)
- Encourage students to fill in the student experience survey next year!
 - More numbers means more valid data!

Visiting New Halls of Residence

I have visited halls of residence in Waterloo and Acton. Neither of them is ideal due to distance and both are more expensive than I would like but they are better than other offerings. It is difficult to find new halls of residence, near Imperial, at reasonable prices. They will provide accommodation for students while Wilson House is being renovated. Hall Senior numbers are being maintained as are Wardens and Subwardens.

Research on sexual victimisation, alcohol use and depression

This is finally all set to go ahead on the 15th of June. 500 randomly selected first years will receive three questionnaires on the Student Viewpoint system. This data will allow us to know whether any of these are issues on our campus. Each issue, if detected, has a very clear response plan.

Swipe cards and posters

These are a little closer to fruition. The posters should be up within the next couple of weeks in the central library. I would have liked to have the posters in more locations, as would the Dean of Students, but for reasons we haven't been able to understand this request has been refused. We have agreed to have the posters in the library on a trial basis with a view to expanding.

I'm in conversations with facilities about what goes on the back of swipe cards as they have taken this job out of Security's hands.

Exhibition Road

Our Freedom of Information request on Exhibition Road has yielded that 'Road users should use Exhibition Road in the same way as they would any other road within the City and act appropriately' and that 'There is no specific law for a "shared space" road.' They then referred us to the Highway Code... They stated that they are not putting in a pedestrian crossing in the foreseeable future and do not intend to advertise that the road is a 'shared space'. This council should bear this in mind when considering the road next year. This satisfies the first point, 1 and 2, from **Resolves** from the paper titled '**Union Stance on Exhibition Road**' passed by this council on the 13th Feb 2012. I will continue to seek information on 1.3 and continue to lobby for 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Buddies

The DPE and I will be inviting this year's students to take part in the scheme this week. We have secured the full support of the Director of Recruitment and Admissions. We are considering renaming the scheme to 'mums and dads'.

Manifesto Review:

- Make prospective freshers and postgrads more comfortable through a dedicated online forum with a Mums and Dads tool
 - This happened reasonably effectively at the beginning of the year and the DPE and I are confident that with the improvements we have carried out and cooperation we have gained from registry and the Director of Recruitment and Admissions (such as including a link to the system in the email sent to students confirming they have a place at Imperial, the coming year will be the best one for buddies/mums and dads yet!
 1. Accomplished.

- Support and further Welfare Officer Information Packs and Training
 - For the first time, Welfare Officer Training Packs have been created, were used this year and will be used next year. I have negotiated with Counselling, Nightline, the Disability Advisory Service and the Equality and Diversity Unit in College to provide tailored training for officers (and sabbs) next year.
 1. Accomplished
- Cut down on but improve campaign weeks
 - Campaigns training was created
 - We have new staff who can help students organise and run their campaigns with more experience than any one DPW will have
 - There is a new Campaigns officer who will coordinate and benefit from that support
 - We had five solid campaigns this year
 - Hard to say whether these were improved. The system is certainly streamlined and now any student can campaign on any (reasonable) issue with Union support. Next year will tell whether the new system is really taken on board.
 1. Half accomplished
- Set up a Union Accommodation Website
 - This did not need to be done as College set one up. I consulted students and met with Accommodation to improve their website. They will report back on their improvements soon.
 1. Accomplished.
- Continue Charlotte-The-Previous-DPW's efforts to set up a GUM clinic at the Health Centre
 - It cannot be done. There was talk of NHS funding for this but it appears certain that this will not happen now. Worked with the Health Living officer to bring testing to campus but we were unable to provide it for this year. We hope the groundwork we have done this year will pave the way for next year.
 - Failed – initial objective impossible. Secondary objective discovered late in the year and impossible within the desired timeline.
- Target postgraduates and ensure that the GSA continues its excellent efforts
 - Have worked with PG students on campaigns. Did not support the GSA.
 1. Quarter achieved.
- Revamp volunteering at Imperial so that you can do what you want to do, despite the closure of the Volunteer Centre.
 - In January, because of a lack of funding and staff, the volunteering situation looked fairly hopeless. Now this is an entirely different story. We have secured funding from College and partnership with Student Hubs to creatively provide a volunteering brokerage service and volunteering accreditation.
 1. Accomplished – with a great deal of teamwork, blood, sweat and tears, for next year.

In summary, five of my seven manifesto points are effectively achieved. One of the objectives was impossible (GUM clinic) one was done for me (website).