Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 27 May 2026

Managing Director Update

Author(s): Tom Newman (Managing Director)

Purpose: To report on the work of the Managing Director since the last Board meeting and provide an update on upcoming projects.

Decision(s): To note

1. Key Projects / Work Delivered

Alongside the work contained in the Board papers, updates on key work and projects linked to delivering the organisations and my personal objectives are below.

i. Strategy Implementation.

We are awaiting confirmation of our level of block grant funding from the University, this will determine our ability to undertake some of our priorities. Particularly around multi campus planning (2x staff roles (Advice & Engagement) were requested to deliver this in Block Grant request) which will be able to be finalised when we know what resource we have. We are in the process of our 26/27 budgeting and operational planning round. All teams have submitted first draft Objectives & Key Results, Team Operating Plans, and budget requests. These are now at first review stage by senior managers. FAR will review the budget at the June meeting, and the Board will approve budgets in July. Based on our budget principles we are in a positive place on the budget, with some minor savings needed to be found. I will also present the capital plan and strategic investment fund requests/approach in July this will include a mix of must haves as well as opening up to student requests. This will include student consultation at the June Union Council.

ii. Commercial

The main commercial development has been bringing catering back in house. This gives us greater autonomy on the service but also the operational challenge of running a busy service safely and that also needs to balance quality and price. Early signals are positive with catering revenue on target and likely to out perform our target.

Our summer series event is now live for ticket sales which are performing well. As of the time of writing (WC 18 May) current ticket sales/free event allocation is 8,568 out of a max capacity of 10,600 tickets. More analysis of how the event(s) have been received will happen post Summer Series. The early signs are this is well received, and crucially more students are able to engage with this format as opposed to the Summer Ball which is capped at 3,000 tickets due to site safety restrictions.

iii. Digital

An update on digital systems response and priorities is included separately. This requires a 2 pronged approach. Firstly, fixing the current digital systems we use to be able to deliver the minimum viable services, and concurrently developing our longer term digital strategy which needs to take into account where we are now but deliver a roadmap for excellent, best in class digital services that enable students to have an excellent experience with ICU. We should be open and transparent in our current position, and provide opportunities for students to shape

our service. I am now better engaged with our current membership system provider and liaising with the University CTO for support and guidance.

iv. People and Culture.
We will be undertaking Investors in People development work in the Summer which will include workshops and surveying of staff. Atkinson HR have completed the initial pay and reward benchmarking work. This has resulted in all roles benchmarked against other Students' Unions and external organisations who undertake similar work or have similar roles. We are awaiting University data to be able to benchmark Union roles against similar University roles. We will present this report to the Board and all staff. This data (alongside Investors in People) will be used to inform our work to ensure we have a leading pay and reward offer, as well as an excellent working environment for staff and officers to their best work.
Options will be presented to the Board with regards to London Living Wage as part of the 26/27 budget approval in July.

v. Officer Support.
Officers have completed their Executive Education course run in conjunction with the Business School. The Officers presented their learning and reflections to a University panel to conclude their course and achieve their qualification. This was an excellent effort by all the full time officers, thank you to them for their engagement in their learning and the course. We will now move into planning for the 26/27 course, with clear feedback to ensure all Officer training is connected as one overall programme of development that complements rather than repeats content.

vi. Board subcommittees
Full details of subcommittee business is included in the relevant paper. It was helpful to have the Director of Security from Imperial, Brindha Macdonald, join our FAR meeting to outline the University challenges and strategy for security in the immediate, medium and long term. This helps provide context for our challenges, an update on security is provided separately. IUT agreed to move forward with recruiting non exec directors and this will come to the July meeting for approval.

vii. Democracy and Corporate Structure Review.
The evaluation of this work is currently being conducted by Annie. It is likely that there will be further recommendations to evolve and improve our ability to represent students effectively.

viii. Sustainability
Our sustainability committee has met since the last board meeting and this is a useful group to move forward our sustainability ambitions. Sustainability cannot fall down to those who are passionate about it but rather it needs to be the entire organisation's priority. There will be University membership of the committee, and I suspect we will need to alter job descriptions to enshrine appropriate individual responsibility and accountability on sustainability. As part of the business planning round we will be developing our action plan for 26/27 sustainability work.

2. College, Sector and other Updates

- Pay award negotiations for 2026 currently taking place. 2025 pay award is still in dispute but mandate for industrial action has expired. I am hopeful a settlement can be reached for 2026 which will also end all previous disputes without further need for industrial action.
- The University is moving forward with its work to develop an appropriate institutional approach to AI, both teaching and research as well as how as an organisation people can use AI to improve services and ways of working. There are understandably concerns of AI and AI LLM from staff which need to be considered and balanced with the opportunities this new technology brings. Students will be debating AI and their views on Imperial's usage and position on it at Union Council. This will be an interesting and important marker for what ICU does next in an influencing and advocacy context. As part of our needed digital transformation it is my view that we need to fully embrace the benefits of AI in ensuring our services can be the best for students. The Board will therefore have sight of our approach and ensure any relevant risks are considered.
- There has been a significant number of Students' Unions who disaffiliated from NUS in 2026 (LSE, Liverpool, Manchester, UCL, Bath and City St George's). My understanding is this on a number of grounds of dissatisfaction, but the trend is worth noting as this will likely reshape the sector's national representative approach and how it operates. It will likely mean WonkHE SU, Russell Group Students' Unions, London Student Partnership and other alternative collaborations become more focused on.
- Since the Board met there has been much national press coverage of student loan. A freeze on the Plan 2 student loan repayment threshold for Home Fee status students means students will begin repaying sooner and likely over their lifetime repay more. This will add to existing cost of living pressures students face and is the context for current and new students joining in September 2026. This is relevant to ICU advocacy work particularly on working with the University to ease the cost of living pressures for Imperial students.

3. MD Objectives 2025/26

As well as 'overall delivery of the Union's strategy', the following objectives have been identified for particular focus this academic year for myself:

Objective Description	**Actions Required**	**Key Result**
Ensure funding business case for 26/27 & 27/28 enabling multi campus offer and service improvements.	▪ Engage staff/OTs to develop priorities to inform financials to include key priorities eg service developments linked to strategy & growth and multi-campus delivery. ▪ Engage College stakeholders on partnership funding. ▪ Produce formal business case for approval.	Business case approved by College/Board; multi-year funding commitment secured. **Partially Complete (Awaiting Funding Confirmation)**
Develop White City plans: now, 2029, 2035	▪ Map immediate service and space needs. ▪ Co-create long-term vision with College and students. ▪ Produce phased plan with costings.	Endorsed White City student experience plan with milestones to 2035. **Partially Complete (Multi Campus plan developed, funding for roles requested, need to work on space in Academic Building)**

Ensure the next phase of commercial development aligns with organisation's charitable priorities	▪ Monitor commercial performance, ensure full implementation of trading subsidiary, support development of temp agency and catering. ▪ Define criteria for alignment with charitable objects via Strategic Investment Fund & Capital Plan ▪ Develop next phase investment proposals. ▪ Support improved transparency/comms with students of Commercial/Financial performance	Commercial development plan linked explicitly to charitable outcomes. **Catering Launched.** **Temp Agency Summer Term Launch.** **SIF criteria complete.** **Cap Plan sign off July 2026.** **Better comms on FAR through blogs**
Lead the development and implementation of the People and Culture Strategy.	▪ Draft refreshed strategy with staff input. ▪ Oversee Investors in People ▪ Define measures for culture, wellbeing, and inclusion. ▪ Launch 25/26 implementation plan with milestones.	**IIP for Summer Term.**
Lead the Democracy and Corporate Structure Review Implementation.	▪ Deliver staged changes (governance, elections, structures). ▪ Monitor & evaluate compliance and impact. Attend at least 1x UC and one each of its committees this year. ▪ Plan governance effectiveness review	Implementation milestones achieved, Evaluation completed, Governance rated effective by external review effectiveness review.
Complete the Union advocacy and influencing approach defining my role within it i.e. stakeholders I need to influence.	▪ Map key stakeholders (College, sector). ▪ Support implementation of A&I plan/approach ▪ Develop personal role clarity.	Published advocacy and influencing framework; clear stakeholder engagement plan **Plan being implemented.**
Provide excellent officer support	▪ Regular check-ins and coaching. ▪ Ensure strong induction and ongoing training/support. ▪ Evaluate the support after induction and at the end of the year.	Officers feel supported; improved trustee/officer effectiveness scores. Officers achieve objectives **Exec Ed Course complete. Need to do regular check ins.**
Secure funding for transformation of Beit.	▪ Produce capital funding case with phased design options. ▪ Present case to Board and College.	**Designs to RIBA stage 1 complete**