Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 29 July 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.

Our block grant level has been provisionally confirmed and included in the budget 2026/27 paper. Imperial is not immune to the challenges within the sector and budgetary pressures, so unfunded activity will need to be resourced in innovative ways or we need to change our operating method for delivery.

Ultimately the funding means we can recruit an additional advice service role. This role will be focused on providing outreach and casework to non-South Kensington campuses. This is the first step in our multi campus service model, which now needs further development.

All teams have developed their operating plans and Objectives and Key Results for the 2026/27 year. We sought feedback from Union Council on priorities and have further refined plans at our Management Committee meeting in July. Once new officers have had an opportunity to feedback, we will bring the 2026/27 operating plan to the September Board to note.

Capital plan priorities are informed by the prioritisation undertaken during the business planning process. Now we are clear on the strategic investment levels we can now request Board to designate funds for our higher priority strategic investments.

I believe we should now plan for a new strategy development in 2026/27, in time for a 2027 launch. It is clear the external and internal operating environment has changed dramatically since 2023. I don't think ICU should wait for 2028 to start thinking about strategy.

ii. Commercial

The commercial performance over the year has been excellent, and is a testament to the strong leadership we have from Rob. Despite challenges linked to EPOS in our venue we have been able to deliver a level of service that has hugely improved upon our benchmark. We now need to balance growth with service, and value for money with strategic investment to continue to be able to deliver the best venues and services for students. The new EPOS project is on track, with the tender process near to being completed. We have sought external technical support to help ensure we get the right solution. A clear area for prioritisation is catering equipment investment, with a kitchen full of fully depreciated assets its clear we need to invest otherwise we risk a sub optimal working environment for our catering team and this will inhibit our ability to provide a good food service.

iii. Digital

Improvements to our student group shop have been made, and we will be launching the new shop for student groups August 2026. Annie has done an admirable job in difficult circumstances to get our shop product to a good place including utilising student testers to ensure we got user feedback into the solution.
I can verbally update our short-term plans to perform a diagnosis on our systems and continue short term fixes to our legacy systems at the Board meeting. A new approach to Digital and Digital Strategy to be developed and a priority objective for myself in 2026/27.

iv. White City

It's positive we have additional FTE to support non-SK students; this will improve student experience at White City now as well as improve our understanding of students at other campuses to better inform service development. We have also been asked to write an operating plan for our White City delivery model to inform briefing for a defined SU space at White City for September 2030. This is to go the University Operations and Infrastructure Committee in September.

v. People and Culture.

Atkinson HR have benchmarked all roles against comparator organisations. We are communicating the findings to the organisation. In short ICU on average pays in the upper quartile for all roles when benchmarked against other Students' Unions. Crucially though the work has not been able to benchmark against University roles due to an inability to share the required data. This is a shortcoming of the project as we know there are comparable roles in terms of responsibility in the University that need to be benchmarked against to give ICU a full picture of our data in order to make informed decisions. I have taken the lead on this project and have gained University support for us undertaking benchmarking with University roles supported by central Uni HR. This is a longer project but I think can be completed before the end of the calendar year.
Investors in People has been delayed to the Autumn, I can verbally update on plans in the meeting.

vi. AI Policy Approach

Union Council received a discussion paper from the Ethics & Environment Officer (seconded by Deputy President Welfare, Mental Health Officer and student representatives) opening consultation on ICU's future approach to AI/LLM use. The paper noted ICU currently has no AI-related policy, set out existing Imperial College policies (Generative AI Principles/Guidance, Code of Practice 8, dAIsy, the ICT Sustainability Roadmap, and Imperial's AI Vision), and referenced a Year 2 EIE student survey following an AI-related plagiarism case, which found confusion over AI declaration requirements, stress/anxiety among students, and concerns over inconsistent enforcement. Council was asked to discuss wellbeing, environmental, and ethical concerns around AI/LLMs, and what stance ICU should take both internally and in lobbying the University, ahead of a formal policy returning to Council at a later date.

For Board's clarity: this was a consultative discussion, not a decision, and Council's remit here is to help shape a student-facing position on AI/LLM use (e.g. what ICU advocates for regarding student AI use, academic policy, and University lobbying). It does not extend to setting policy on ICU staff use of AI**,** which is a management and Board-owned matter. In parallel, I have run an initial workshop with managers on AI use in the workplace and will carry out further staff consultation over the summer, with the aim of bringing draft staff guidance back for SMT/Board

consideration separately from the student-facing policy Council is developing. The University has published its approach to AI (summarised below) and ICU should think carefully about its adoption whilst utilising and leveraging University expertise. We should be mindful of the negative aspects that have been articulated well by students and some staff, but I also believe that we should be careful not to too early overly legislate for a new technology that may restrict our ability to innovate rendering ICU less competitive, less efficient and out of step with Imperial.

vii. Officer Support.

When the Board meets we will be in week 2 of our Officer handover. Officer Induction has begun with various sessions and support. Thank you to the Rep Team and Clem for organising. Our executive education programme 2026/27 for Officers begins on the 24th July. I am excited for the new team and supporting them in their objectives.

I would like to thank the 2025/26 Officer Team, Felix Editor and ICSMSU President for their dedication and commitment to their roles, they have been an excellent team to work with. I wish them the best of luck for the future.

viii. Security

University Management Board (UMB) approved the ICU/ICL partnership agreement including our Estates SLA (although not the IT or HR ones, I can update verbally). This gives assurance that the University accepts responsibility for physical security infrastructure in its role as 'landlord' of our buildings. This combined with verbal confirmation that the University will fund access control and CCTV improvements has led us to now be at a stage where we can implement the new measures we have been wanting to put in place. We can give more accurate timeframes in the meeting.

Related to this, we have agreed with the Director of Security the need for a more detailed SLA between ICU and University Security, and a regular meeting that helps govern this agreement. This SLA should be reviewed by FAR in August. We are likely to need more physical security infrastructure as the University wide security plan gets implemented.

ix. Board subcommittees

Full details of subcommittee business are included in the relevant paper. IUT non exec recruitment is on track. Initial shortlisting took place on 15 July with interviews planned in early August.

x. NSS

Imperial College London achieved a strong NSS performance with an Overall Satisfaction Score of 86.9% ranking 19th out of 152 institutions nationally (up 62 places from 2025) and 2nd among Russell Group universities, driven by strong gains across most themes though *Assessment and Feedback* remains a weak spot at 125th despite improving 22 places.

Within this, ICU's Q25 result, measuring how well the Union represents students' academic interests, rose to 81.3% (32nd nationally, up 30 places and +4.7pp on 2025), the largest single-year NSS gain of any theme at Imperial, with Medicine ranking 1st nationally (96.0%) and Chemical Engineering, Materials and Life Sciences–Biology all in the top 10; the main areas requiring attention are Electrical & Electronic Engineering (66.7%, down 7.6pp), Physics (66.8%) and Civil Engineering (75.4%), which remain in the lower half of their sector peer groups. This is a great achievement, placing ICU in the upper quartile for Q25. Whilst there are faults in the question design which are legitimate and comparing to other Students' Unions is

not exactly helpful, I do believe the result reflects a combination of factors including staff, officer and student rep efforts to centre students in what they do for a sustained period of time. We should congratulate all involved for the result.

2. College, Sector and other Updates

- **Pay negotiations update:** Imperial's University Negotiating Team and recognised Trade Unions (UCU, Unison, Unite) have concluded four rounds of pay negotiations since April, resulting in an increased overall funding envelope (agreed with UMB) and a full and final Total Reward offer: 3.5% pay increase (min. £1,500 pro rata), 2 additional annual leave days (25 to 27), 26 weeks full pay for maternity/adoption/shared parental leave (up from 18), and paid carers' leave increased to 10 days (5 paid, up from 5 unpaid). The offer goes to a Joint Trade Union member vote, closing 27 July 2026. Outcome to follow once confirmed.
- **Imperial AI Strategy update:** Imperial is launching a university-wide AI strategy, training and education programme, backed by three new initiatives: (1) a new AI Strategy sub-committee of UMB, chaired by Professor Peter Todd, to oversee AI adoption across education, research and operations, supported by an advisory academic panel; (2) new stackable "AI for the Workplace" training via Imperial Lifelong Learning (rolling out autumn term, staff/academic/student-tailored), building on the existing Introduction to Generative AI course and dAIsy platform; and (3) delivery of Imperial's "education-first, not tool-first" Vision for Education in the Age of AI, supported by a new Centre for AI in Learning and Teaching launching later this year. These sit alongside existing AI investments (School of Convergence Science, Centre for AI-Driven Innovation with WEF, White City Deep Tech Campus, and the AMD compute partnership), aimed at cementing Imperial's position as a global leader in AI.

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 e.g. 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. **Complete**
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 (additional role secured, new ICU operating model for WC going to University September 2026)**

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 delayed.**
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. **Completed Board Effectiveness Review** **Democracy Review Effectiveness Reviewed with further recommendations needing action 26/27 e.g. 5th Officer**
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 **Complete. Plan being implemented.**
Provide excellent officer support	▪ Regular check-ins and coaching. ▪ Ensure strong induction and ongoing training/support.	Officers feel supported; improved trustee/officer effectiveness scores.

	▪ Evaluate the support after induction and at the end of the year.	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. Funding for security partially achieved. Longer term ambition funding not secured.**