

Council
29th October 2007

Imperial College Union

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A note by Stephen Brown

Visa refund scheme

The DPEW and I attended a meeting with Prof. Ritter and two staff from the International Office during which they unveiled plans to cancel the scheme whereby international students receive a refund on their visa charges. Take up of this scheme has not been great with only slightly more than half of those eligible claiming their full allowance and the cost of administering this scheme has been estimated at £4000. The total budget available for this scheme is £102,000 but with not all students claiming it there was an under spend of £33,000. The College intends to put this £102,000 in to the student opportunities fund to assist overseas students where these funds could be better targeted to support those in genuine need. A proposal has been circulated to the overseas clubs to gather their opinions on this scheme for us to feed back to the International Office and Pro-Rector.

NUS Strategic Conversation

Last Monday and Tuesday I attended the above event in Coventry at which the final proposals for the NUS governance review were unveiled. During our referendum last year both campaign teams acknowledged that the NUS required a lot of changes in order to make it more effective and relevant so it is positive to learn that this has finally been noted. The proposals will be discussed in a separate paper but I do believe that if enacted they would be a positive step and I am asking this Council to request an Extraordinary Conference so that these changes can be ratified this academic year.

PhD funding

The DPEW received a rather comical email that accused last years sabbaticals of not being correct in reporting the decision of the Management Board to pay full London weighting to all PhD students. I took great pleasure in resolving this matter personally last Thursday.

Education funding debate

Following the suspension of our current policy last Council RWB discussed how best to take this forward. It was suggested that we use a combination of the student media, informal forums and an online survey in order that we can spread the consultation net considerably wider than Union Council. You might have noticed that Felix ran a 2 page spread on this topic in the issue before last and I am very pleased that some people have already begun to engage on this important topic.

Matters arising from the annual report

The accounts for the last financial year were signed off at the last meeting of the Executive Committee. The DPFS and I have been spending time investigating management issues that have been highlighted by our auditors.

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The National Student Survey

I have been in touch with Ipsos-MORI to discuss whether or not they will continue the pilot scheme that was introduced last year whereby institutions and select 3 additional banks of questions to be included at the end of the survey. If so, the DPEW and I will work with College so that we feed in student opinions on what question banks would be most desirable.

Residences Committee

I attended a meeting of this committee where we learned that the annexe at the back of Pembroke Hall is going to be converted in to private housing at the end of this academic year. I stressed that as this building contained some of the more affordable single rooms (around 30) it was important that the students who would have been living there next year are not displaced to somewhere else that is significantly more expensive.

ULU Boathouse

ICSMBC currently use this facility but it is unclear as to whether or not it will be run by ULU in the long term. I contacted ULU sabbaticals after this topic was raised by the medic rep at the Sports Partnership meeting. The fate of ULU boathouse will be determined once UL release the Heads of Colleges Review which is due out any time soon and I have requested a copy.

Elections

Voting is now open for the Council and Trustee Board elections. Results will be announced this Thursday in daVincis (touch wood).

Imperial College recycling strategy

The DPEW, Welfare Campaigns Officer, Adele Peel, Victor Zhang and I held a meeting with Graham Watson from the Estates Division to discuss College's waste strategy.

Discipline

Unfortunately I have spent a lot of time chasing up disciplinary issue since term started. Since investigations are ongoing it is currently inappropriate for me to provide any more details.

Commemoration Day

The Faculty Union Presidents, SCC Chair and I took part in the ceremonies last Wednesday.

New Pro-Rector announced

Professor Nagy A. Habib has been appointed as the new Pro-Rector for Commercial Affairs and will take up his new role on 1 November.