

Royal College of Science Union Spring Term Report

A Note by *David Charles*, RCSU President

Introduction

Our second term has been extremely successful. The executive has worked hard to ensure that our activities this term have been delivered in a timely and efficient manner. Our drivers this term have been to promote the RCS, to engage with our student body and deploy large scale projects that the Union in its entirety can be proud of. In conjunction with the Faculty of Natural Science we have been able to provide opportunities not only for increase employability but also increase awareness of opportunities in further education. Our activities have been an instrumental tactic in our continuing mission: to invoke a sense of community within the RCS. Critically, these activities promote RCS services allowing us to meet the needs of our students. This year we have gone from strength-to-strength and helped to further the goals of the Union invoking a culture of excellence through representation and providing facilities to enhance their time at Imperial.

RCS Events

Our events this term have been spectacular. The first week of term saw the **Science Challenge Launch**, attended by over 25 students and staff. Our guest lecturer Professor, Lord Robert Winston gave an impassioned speech about the real challenge: helping the public to understand the science community and science. This was followed by a relaxed mingle in the Main Dining Hall (MDH) with wine, soft drinks and RCS cake! Opportunities to speak to Lord Winston, Ed Gibson and Senior Shell staff meant that event lasted long into the night. This was followed by **the RAG Ball**. As ever the RAG Ball was a huge success tickets sold out in three days! This year it was held at Maya, voted the best new club in 2008. The night was graced by the finest union Djs and Dj Nasher of Kiss 100. With free drinks at the bar and a great atmosphere our guests were in for a treat. Overall it was a very successful evening. Our **Varsity Bar night** was also extremely successful. We were able to run an "Early Doors" event on varsity night in the union bar. All tickets for entry were sold and we ran an extremely successful raffle. This term's **Spring Ball** held across the Union was another hit. Approximately 400 individuals attended. The night involved a potent mix of music (with a Bloc Party Dj set) and alcohol (with pound-a-pint at the bar) ensuring everyone could not help but enjoy the evening. The term was rounded off with the **Science Challenge Finale**. This year we host our finale at the Royal Society, one of the world's most prestigious scientific institutions. We started the evening of with a wonderful reception with canapés and wine. This was followed a three course meal in the marble banquet hall.

Skill Sessions

Transferable skills important to business have never been so important. As such there has been continued focus on providing skills sessions. These skill sessions will be open to all scientists but everyone else is welcome too. It is hoped that these sessions will enhance the C.V.'s of our students and will be a perfect medium to further our goal enhancing our student's education. Our ultimate goal is to be in the main provider of extracurricular learning. We have just finished an interview skills session which should help our students in upcoming job interviews.

Science Challenge

One word: Sensational.

This year's science challenge has been phenomenal. Our judges this year were Professor Tejiinder Virdee from CERN, Dr Martyn Sene from the National Physics laboratory, Professor Armand Leroi of Imperial College and Duncan Macleod from Shell with Professor Robert Winston being our esteemed lead spokesman. The competition has attracted twice the number of entries as compared to last year. This is mostly because of the fantastic prizes: A grand prize of £5000 in the Imperial category and £5000 bursary for the schools winner! The runners up prize were also amazing, three £1000 cash prizes in the Imperial category and 3 £1000 bursaries in the schools category. Thanks to all those involved.

Science Challenge Lecture Series

One critical objective is to raise awareness of science and to provide suitable forums in which individuals can further their passion. The science challenge lecture series has proved extremely popular with students. Our first lecture was from Prof David Spiegelhalter, the Winton Professor of Risk. We looked at the lottery and chance, death rates and lifestyle and had a brief discussion about the nature of scientific error and modelling. On top of the many students in attendance we also broadcast online. I would like to thank Mr Ashley Brown and Miss Kirsty Patterson for their technical expertise in this endeavour. Our second guest lecture was delivered by Ed Gibson, Ex-FBI Agent and Microsoft's Chief of Security in the UK. Clearly, students were fascinated both by his wealth of Industrial knowledge and by his experiences as an FBI agent. Many conspiracy theories were debunked including whether Facebook could be data-mined for facial recognition information. After the events a short wine-based mingle session was held. Both events had a large turnout it; we conclude that these events are extremely popular and as a result may require expansion.

Green Week Competition

This year for green week we have been piloting an ambitious new green initiative: the green week competition, 100 words for £1000. We have some of the brightest people in the country studying at Imperial we want them to think of ways that Imperial can become a greener place. The aim is to engage those who are interested in the environment but have no forum in which to explore their interests. This year we have worked with the Union and particularly Hannah Theodoru in order to pilot this new project. Now we know the costs involved and the backing of college it looks set to be a project that RCSU will continue long into the future.

Regalia

The RCSU hoodies have finally arrived and been put up on the ICU website. Approximately 10% of stock brought in has been bought. However, from now on we are going to push everyone to buy them online as the majority have been bought in person. Many of the few remaining RCSU polo shirts have also been bought. We intend to push forward and order more regalia. Of particular interest are ties and scarves. The old designs for colours ties have been found and our new awards are currently being designed. Hopefully, by the start of next year we will have a full regalia range.

Media

Broadsheet has gone from strength-to-strength we now have a small team of writers who have published some amazing content this year. Interviews with Lord Winston, witty banter and articles about science, society and students seem to be catching our reader's attention. In a move to synergise with the website we have put broadsheet online. The PDF is accessible through a link on the front page. As for our website we have been intently monitoring activity in order to improve service. We still consistently get approximately 10% more visitors than last year but it does seem to dip dramatically (and understandably) over the holidays suggesting that more frequent updates of content are needed during this period. Key pages include the committee page, the welfare page and event pages. In future there will be some website development linking the news services provided by broadsheet to our RCSU website.

Our email newsletter has been supplemented with text based update. This allows us to keep them up-to-date but without using the large files associated with the email newsletter. Hopefully, this keeps everyone happy. More importantly there is a clear and obvious correlation between website hits and emails.

Thanks

I would also like to thank my executive once again for their dedication.