

**RCSU UROP Bursary**

*A Report by RCSU President – Plabon Saha*

The union believes that funding for UROP in Natural Sciences is currently lagging behind other faculties especially Engineering. Early on in my term as RCSU President, I mentioned the issue of UROP funding to Dean of Natural Sciences, Maggie Dallman and was told that this is something administered through the department and there is no money in the budget for further funding. There were further meetings with Adrian Hawksworth, UROP administrator to find more background on UROP.

Our main aim was to increase the UROP funding pool from the faculty as there is generally less UROP funding provisions in Natural Sciences compared to Engineering. The issue was brought up in the FoNs teaching committee regarding increasing placements and funding. It was noted that extra bursaries are being made available for life sciences. Mathematics was able to fund all their UROP students last year due to extra money in the budget but this is unlikely to happen this year. The issue was brought up in the Education and Representation Board meeting by the RCSU Academic Affairs Officer – Mariza de Souza and it was noted that publicity for UROP is severely lagging in Natural Sciences. Steps were taken to address this from departments.

Furthermore, there was an issue of more students doing UROP in some departments than others and the funding structure varies and can be quite skewed. There are several options for funding such as department, supervisor, college/faculty bursary and external bursary. Adrian also informed us that the last increase in IC UROP bursary was 6 – 7 years ago in the region of £23k. In the period Oct 2012 to Sept 2013 UROP saw a 33% increase in participation amongst Imperial Undergraduates since 2010. However, 75% of this increase came from Engineering where funding has dramatically increased. The breakdown of the number of placements is as follows:

**UROP Registrations (as processed by Registry Records) for the period Oct 2012 to Sept 2013 (mainly Summer 2013).**

	Imperial Undergraduates remaining in their own Dept for their UROP	Undergraduates from other Imperial College depts undertaking their UROP in the dept	Undergraduates from other UK HEIs	Bachelor/Masters Level students from non-UK HEIs (eligible for UROP or INEX)	Total including all non-Imperial
<b>Faculty of Engineering</b>					
Aeronautics	22	0	1	2	25
Bioengineering	41	9	2	20	72
Chemical Engineering	23	1	3	7	34

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Civil & Environmental Eng	<b>10</b>		1		1	3		15
Computing	<b>16</b>		1		1	6		24
ESE	<b>16</b>		7		1	1		25
EEE	<b>20</b>		4		0	8		32
Materials	<b>12</b>		4		3	4		23
Mechanical Engineering	<b>16</b>		5		1	9		31
<b>Faculty of Natural Sciences</b>								
Chemistry	<b>38</b>		4		3	13		58
Life Sciences	<b>39</b>		3		13	8		63
Mathematics	<b>16</b>		3		0	1		20
Physics	<b>49</b>		1		7	6		63
CEP						2		2
<b>Non-Faculty</b>								
Business School						2		2
Grantham Institute						1		1
Climate KIC						1		1
<b>School of Medicine</b>								
Faculty of Medicine: Dept of Medicine	<b>18</b>		11		14	11		54
Faculty of Medicine: NHLI	<b>7</b>		2		6	5		20
Faculty of Medicine: SPH	<b>1</b>		0		0	1		2
Faculty of Medicine: Surgery & Cancer	<b>4</b>		0		2	6		12

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Faculty of Medicine: Inst of Clinical Sciences	0	0	0	2	2
TOTALS	348	56	58	119	581
<b>By Faculty</b>					
Faculty of Engineering	176	32	13	60	281
Faculty of Natural Sciences	142	11	23	30	206
Faculty of Medicine	30	13	22	25	90
Non-Faculty				4	4
	348	56	58	119	581
Life Sciences includes iGEM					
Various depts includes placements offered by the Centre for Doctoral Training in Theory and Simulation of Materials					

Upon meeting with the Deputy President of Education – Nat Kempston, a meeting was arranged between the faculty Dean, Director of Education, Education Coordinator and RCSU AAO, ICU DPE and I. Funding provisions and number of placements were discussed in this meeting and the faculty is currently in the process of conducting a review of UROP funding across various departments.

In the meantime, the issue was raised in a meeting within the RCSU Executive Committee and we discussed whether we should look to increase funding from our own budget given that we are likely to have some money left over this year. It was noted that no bursary exists that look to address students from low-income background who are at a greater risk of being unable to take up their placement due to money issues. The Executive moved onto a vote to mandate me to look for a way to provide a bursary for an individual from a low income background. Subsequently, I met with Adrian and the following proposal was drawn up.

Agreed Proposal for 2014

The Royal College of Science Union (RCSU) is offering one bursary valued at £1500 (the award) to support an undergraduate summer research experience lasting between 8-12 weeks in any department within the College during summer 2014. The administration will be provided by Registry,

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who will invoice RCSU for the said amount. On this occasion RCSU will announce the beneficiary rather than promote the award.

The award is open to undergraduate students (of the Faculty of Natural Sciences at Imperial College London) **who have applied by 10 March for an Imperial College UROP award (managed schemes)** but who have been unsuccessful.

The RCSU award will go to the next best ranked 'home' student with an assessed household income below £25K (using data provided to the College by the students via UK Student Finance by 31 March 2014).

If no student is recorded with an assessed household income below £25K, then it will be offered to the best ranked 'home' student with an assessed household income near to £25K (the threshold is £42K).

If no student is recorded with an assessed household income on or below £42K then the award will be rolled over to 2015.

The successful student will be sent an award email by 7 May (in line with the other awards be managed by Registry) which will detail the terms and conditions (which will be very similar to those for the UROP scheme's own Imperial College UROP Award).

Includes:

- The student will be required to upload their bank details on e-Service.
- Payment will be in a single tranche by mid-July.
- Repay the bursary (in part or full) if the placement does not go ahead as planned.
- The student will be required to ensure the placement is registered with UROP and submit a perspective at the end of the placement (which will be forwarded to RCSU and may be used on the UROP website)

Key Contact: Adrian Hawksworth, Registry ([a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk))

A major issue with this proposal is that international students are being left out because there is no "easy" way for us to judge their financial circumstances. The award is being administered by Registry who will pick the best suitable student as we thought this is the fairest way to go about it. Upon the proposal being agreed on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2014, it was circulated to the RCSU Undergraduates on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2014.

During May, 2014, the UROP administrator has informed me that the highest rated UROP application that did not receive any of the other awards came from Daniel Kirkwood in the Department of Chemistry. I was also informed that there were 8 students in the lowest income bracket who have wanted to take on a UROP placement this summer but received no funding from the normal awards available. Daniel was very pleased about receiving the award and he has informed me that the award will be extremely helpful for him this summer.

There is no guarantee that this is something the RCSU will be able to do every year. We also understand that one bursary might not make a huge difference but this is seen as a symbolic gesture

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that we hope will encourage the faculty to look into this issue and increase funding. We also hope that some provision can be set up for students from lower income backgrounds to undertake UROP placements. In the future, it was decided that the RCSU will look towards pitching the idea of an UROP Bursary to our sponsors and hopefully replicate the BP awards that currently exist in Engineering.