



Council 10 June 2014

Royal College of Science Union Report

A note by RCSU President – Plabon Saha

Since the last RCSU report, almost three terms have passed. The following is a brief report of the activities of the constituent union.

RCSU Industry Leaders Networking Event

This was one of our first careers event that was held in October. The RCSU Industry Leaders Networking Event brought together five leading companies from different industries, whose representatives were there to answer any questions students had and tell them more about their company and the industry they work in. This was a careers event showcasing both science related and non-science related companies – all of whom were eager to recruit scientists. Free food and drinks were provided and the event was very well attended.

The companies in attendance were Unilever, Newton Europe, Allen & Overy, BAE Detica and BlackRock.

Alumni Dinner

The Royal College of Science Association, our alumni association held an alumni dinner in the Royal Over-seas League on Saturday, 9th November, 2013. Student ticket sales for this event was particularly poor compared to last year and the event was on the verge of being cancelled. This is an important event for our current students to interact with our alumni. While RCSU is well established across campus, it seems that RCSA lags behind for our alumni. More co-operations are required in order to help our alumni association become a vibrant community.

RCSU Science Challenge 2014

The Science Challenge is our flagship event of the year and after an average showing last year, it received new impetus this time around. The launch was brought forward to December and judges included Pallab Ghosh, BBC Science Correspondent, Fay Dowker, Physicist, Jad Marrouche, CERN Scientist and Jon Kudlick from the Society of Biology. The event also had a guest speaker in the form of Baroness Manningham-Buller. Lord Robert Winston was the Science Challenge ambassador in charge of deciding the overall winners. The launch took place in SAF and was well attended and a video of the launch was uploaded onto the Science Challenge website.

The event this year was very successful as we doubled the number of entries from last year. The winners were announced at the Science Challenge Finals held in Churchill War Rooms. Alongside cash prizes, overall winners will be making their way to CERN this summer for a tour. Science Challenge was especially successful in reaching out to schools this year which has pleased the faculty staff. Efforts are taking place to ensure that Science Challenge continues to run successfully by



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organizing earlier handovers for the Science Challenge Chair and the current chair working with the chair elect to attract big name judges.

Winter Ball

Winter Ball was our next seasonal ball of the year. The Ball was held at Opal Bar on 9th December and boasted an ice sculpture of the RCSU logo alongside drink tokens and snow cones. The event was completely sold out and feedback has been positive.

Bar Night

We held an end of term Bar Night on 12th Dec with a deal of three drinks for £5. The event was not as successful as we hoped but it operated within budget and minimum spend was met on the night.

Broadsheet

Fiona Hartley was appointed Broadsheet Editor this year after the elected editor quit during summer. We put out two issues so far this year alongside a website version.

RCSU UROP Bursary

The RCSU this year has pushed for more funding for the UROP scheme this year from FoNS. There is a review of UROP funding taking place and on top of that we have provided a bursary for an UROP student from a low-income background. More information on this can be found on the additional paper submitted for this meeting.

Spring Ball

The Spring Ball this year took place in Loop Bar on 25th March. This event fell behind the budget but the attendees were in good spirits on the night.

Office Hours

I held officer hours during Friday lunch times for most of the year as an opportunity for students to get in touch with the union. This has not been as popular as I had hoped. More needs to be done to encourage students to get in touch perhaps through free tea, coffee or biscuits.

RCSU Welfare Week

This year's welfare week was held on week beginning 24th March. The events taking place were as follows:

Monday: Healthy Eating – Students were provided with free fruits and smoothies during lunch time alongside a leaflet about how to eat healthily.

Tuesday: Self-defence Class – A hired instructor came into college to deliver a class on self-defence techniques so students can feel safer on the streets.



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Wednesday: De-stress – Free massages were provided for students in Ethos where the masseuse informed them about techniques to relieve stress during term time.

Thursday: Bike-Safety – Dr Bike was hired for two hours to take a look at students' bikes and ensure that they are up to scratch.

Friday: Healthy Body, Healthy Mind – In order to encourage students to exercise, we brought back primary school games on Queens Lawn.

Although the event ran quite well, there has been a major issue regarding the budget for it. The event was submitted as part of a campaign in order to access money from the CWB campaigns budget. It was sent out for an e-mail vote which failed to reach quorum. I met with the DPW multiple times in order to iron out any issues with the campaign and budget as a similar campaign proposed by CGCU failed to receive funding earlier in the year. I then went to the CWB meeting in order to get it approved but the meeting did not reach quorum and no issues were raised about the campaign proposal from those attending. At this point the campaign was a few days away and it was suggested that there is a possibility for retrospective funding which can be approved by Union Exec. So, without the part funding we applied for being guaranteed, I took the decision to go ahead with the event. The Exec e-mail vote failed to reach quorum the first time before it was extended and the decision subsequently fell. I sought find a reason out for it but no reason was given by any of the members via e-mail. I brought the issue up in an exec meeting couple of weeks back and no reason was given citing the fact that I should have informed members that I sought to get the reasoning for the decision clarified beforehand. In my personal opinion, this represents a serious governance failure that needs to be reviewed.

What remains particularly concerning is the fact that Welfare funding from the union has dramatically decreased over the past couple of years. The CWB budget pot was cut last year which used to fund the Welfare Week and we were told to apply to the campaigns budget for funding. The CWB pot has been further cut this year to a mere £1000. Arguments will be provided that it was CSPB's decision to do this but the matter of the fact remains that it is the sabbaticals that decide the value of the pots and the decision for approval at CSPB is nothing more than a formality and a box-ticking exercise. The way this is continuing there is a good chance that Welfare Week from the RCSU will cease to run in the future. This makes the position of RCSU Welfare Officer a very light one with very little to do apart from union meetings and there may be an argument where the position need not exist.

I would also take this opportunity to point out that Exec has yet to assign the money for CWB for next year and this was something that was overlooked at the meeting last time we met. I suspect this will again be an e-mail decision with little scope for discussion and will result in accepting the recommendation from the sabbaticals.



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By-Election

The role of Publicity Officer, Broadsheet Editor and Science Challenge Chair was empty after Big Elections 2014. We ran a By-Election alongside the Postgraduate Elections with a turnout exceeding 10%. These roles have now been fulfilled for next year.

Major Constitutional Re-vamp

This year the RCSU constitution has received a major revamp as we changed the structure of the way we are run. The new constitution was out of date and according to it the RCSU was running along using emergency powers. The Executive Committee has been made smaller to emulate the Union Executive while the General Committee looks to emulate Union Council. The Executive now only includes the President, the Vice-President (Activities), Vice-President (Operations), Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer. The Honorary Junior Treasurer and Vice-President (Operations) role were re-structured. The responsibility of DepSocs now lie with the Treasurer and President while the VPO now focuses on managing operations of General Committee members and assist with Science Challenge.

The changes were voted through in the RCSU Executive Committee this term. The re-structuring of the constitution was a long process started earlier this year and although the changes were not finished by the time for Big Elections 2014, the elected officers whose roles would be changing under the new constitution were consulted throughout the process. This is the most major constitutional change the RCSU has seen in the last few years and it should help to make things run more smoothly and democratically with added responsibility.

RCSU Football Tournament

Mathsoc, Physoc and BiochemSoc ran an inter-departmental football tournament this year which was very successful. The teams in the tournament were chosen after a departmental tournament organized by each DepSoc. We hope to see this rolled out throughout all our departments and revive sports within RCSU.

RCSU Summer Ball 2014 w/ EEsoc

The RCSU Summer Ball this year is being held in association of EEsoc. This much sought after event will take place on 24th June, 2014 in Sway. Early Bird tickets have currently sold out and ticket sales are progressing well.

I would like to thank the RCSU committee for all their hard work and helping to shape up a brilliant year for our members.