

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES AWAY DAY SUMMARY
31 March 2015, Hotel Russell**

Attendees (See Appendix)

'Our Plan' – 18 months in – Joe Cooper

Student Engagement

It is recognised that Postgraduate are a mixed and varied group with needs and wants that reflect that variation. There is a challenge in understanding the nuances of them and how they can be 'tribed'. There is a question around what success feels and looks like with Postgraduate engagement which may not be tangible in its measure. Taught Postgraduate students have a short life at Imperial and need to capture and shape our exception on how we engage with them.

Student Voice

It is striking the balance of working with College and influencing the right areas. Building and continuing the relationship with College whilst recognising the political capital the Union has will College. Union Council is sometimes bought in too late and there is a question around how that body can be utilised more as a consultative body when the Officer Trustees are bound by confidentiality on issues.

Student Community

To assist student settling in to the University lifestyle, an induction week where there is no teaching, just pure orientation to the help students assimilate themselves to the surroundings, culture and settle in.

The strategic goals don't specifically name Postgraduates as it is an expectation that they know they are in relation to them. It is perhaps a consideration to make it explicit to Postgraduates that they are in relation to them also.

Students engage with Clubs, Societies and Projects but anecdotally don't align these clubs as being part of the union.

Sustainable organisation

The external accreditation for IIP is a huge success for the organisation.

There is a balance of having a financial reserve that is not 'holding on to funds raised for the membership' whilst having a fund that allows the organisation to save for future expenditure on its members.

College are starting to trust that the Union is financially stable and responsible with its resources and the Union needs to continue to hold itself accountable.

Points to ponder:

- How does the Union change its approach so that all members feel engaged.
- How to balance the supporting and regulating aspects of the Union's role with students and groups.
- The organisation and logistics of space and teams
- How to embed the values of the organisation that resonate in the decision making of the organisation.

Challenges in Student engagement – Tom Wheeler

Discipline

The Union is perceived as being a 'heavy hand' when it comes to discipline and where has this perception come from. Some students think that the Union should be always be supporting them and it is not seen that the Union is actually trying to protect them from criminal, academic and financial implications.

Currently there is double jeopardy where there is the potential for both the Union and College to discipline and there needs to be a discussion with college to define how they work together and defining the boundaries.

It was reminded that it is 'Imperial College' that defines Imperial College Union and ultimately this will always link back to College.

College at times 'pick and choose' when they get involved and there has been some cases where they have deferred to the Union to discipline where it should have been College.

Ultimately the Union are the regulators and needs to develop a process of communicating this positively.

Weeks Hall

How do wardens and Halls fit in to the Union's democratic structures or should they? Anecdotally, the function of Wardens is appreciated by academic staff but as seen as unnecessary expenses by College management. Wardens shouldn't sit within the Unions democratic structures but there should absolutely be a relationship with them.

Union Council in its current state is not designed to have a creative conversation and Council are only able to make decision on the information presented to them. The issue with Weeksgate highlighted that Council members assumed that College had consulted with relevant parties before bringing the accommodation paper to the meeting.

Participation in College Committees

It was felt that sometimes having a student representative on a committee is a sometimes a tick box which puts unnecessary burden on Officer Trustees and volunteers.

Officer Trustees are at times not best placed to give the representative view of the students are they may be on a committee where it is asking for Postgraduate students views and they are a Undergraduate.

There is an opportunity for Officer Trustees to be briefed before meetings – it is anticipated that this should be the role of a staff member.

There is a question around the importance of officers contributing in to College Policy and operational aspects of College and at what point the wider student body is consulted.

Officers are being drained by some of the College Committees and it was suggested that there should be a committee amnesty exercise where it assessed what committees officers attend and what their function is on that.

Officer involvement in College Disciplinary process

Why are student representatives on the panels and what purpose do they fit? A student gives legitimacy to the panel as they are there as a peer who is able to understand the situation from a student's perspective. The officer is not there to get

the student 'off the charges' In the case of Fitness to Practice, the student representative is making quite a life changing decision.

Panel reps should receive some type of training briefing before the meetings. The current procedures state that it is the President or their representative. College normally give quite a lot of warning and the panels are split between the officer trustees. In some cases however, a representative from Council is needed due to conflict of interest etc. There has been a situation this year where the Union enacted discipline which lead to a motion of no confidence coming to Council. When the same person was disciplined by College, all of Council were conflicted as they voted on the motion of no confidence.

Communication versus Engagement – How to manage and maintain the support of your stakeholders and members – Jill Finney
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The culture of the organisation determines how it communicates and currently it feels as though the communication is slick and professional but doesn't say what the Union's culture is. The Union has an opportunity to 'flesh out' it's iconic issues – some of which have occurred such as the success of lobbying the House of Lords.

The greatest asset is the relationship it has with the 'lower levels' of its networks – the Dep and Year Reps, CSP's etc. The 'Golden Thread' of linking strategy to lower level is a culture that needs to be embedded but this is a huge task.

The Union needs to think about if its purpose is to provide information or to change attitudes and behaviours and what behaviours does it want to change. It should start listening rather than telling its members and its current methods of listening should be assessed for effectiveness.

Culture should be unifying, influencing and forward looking rather than acting reactively. This is driven by College giving information to the Officers when a decision has already been made, or the Officers are unable to discuss an issue due to the confidentiality surrounding this. There is a belief that the Union is unable to make changes with College and its purpose is to lobby for compromise on the decisions made.

Woodwood Halls of Residence needs to be a priority as this is a blank canvas of opportunity where the Union can set its standards from the outset.

The Union is never going to be exempt from criticism but it is the tone of the response communication which sets how the Union is seen. There is a question as to what is the 'voice' of the Union when it speaks.

Imperial College's Strategic Plan and the relationship between the College and the Union – Debra Humphris
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Professor Humphris spoke of the maturity of the Union and how College has confidence in the organisation which has arisen through the work of the officers, staff and the leadership from the Board.

The cycle of an officer is learning, effecting and then out which sets an exciting tone and pace along with the challenges that come with that limited timeframe. It was recognised that the reality of organisational change is that it takes time which can be frustrating for officers to see the value of making changes which they won't see the result of in their term.

To the students, College has no 'personality' and exists as levels of hierarchy which they are unable to move through.

The Colleges' strategic plan is focusing on sustainability of teaching and learning, financial and fiscal challenges, investment in student experience and students as consumers and their expectations.

College Commits to:

- Build a **supportive, considerate and highly-motivated community** across all disciplines, functions and activities. The only limitation on achieving excellence should be the quality of our intellects.
 - How does College create a supportive and considerate community rather than just react. It is recognised that the culture won't change overnight but it is reiterating the boundaries and rest the 'base' which the development of leaders will do.
- Embed our **education** in the **research environment**. Providing opportunities for our students to learn with researchers who are experts in their fields gives them the practical, entrepreneurial and intellectual skills to tackle societal problems.
- Ensure that we have the **financial strength** to deliver our mission. Our university needs to endure in perpetuity.
 - The political landscape may change and government funding cannot be relied upon for being able to fund the true cost of teaching STEM subjects.
 - College are hesitant in voicing their stance on higher education funding in an open forum.
 - Why doesn't College openly talk about the true costs of teaching? There is a perception that International students and research subsidies Undergraduate teaching and that the College is extremely fiscally buoyant.
 - The information in regards to cost of teaching is available but it isn't accessible in that it is buried in large document.
- Act **courageously** and **innovatively** when pursuing new partnerships and opportunities.
 - There is strength in Imperial's unique voice; both College and Union's and there should be confidence that this voice carries legitimacy.
 - The Union and College should be trusting in each other that they are able to carry mature conversations about the 'unthinkable' and to push each other's boundaries.

Assessing our Strategic Risks- Malcolm Martin

Imperial West and the connect with members needs to come to the forefront of the Unions thinking as things are moving forward with the Union not being aware and there is a high possibility that the Union could be missing opportunities without knowing.

The Risk Register needs to be document that 'lives' and this is a body of work that will be led by the Finance and Risk Committee.

Developing our next strategy- Joe Cooper

The first stage will be a Project Implementation Plan being presented to the Board meeting of May 7 for approval.

June and July will be a process of research and consultation with volunteers, College staff, outgoing Officer Trustee team and other SU's and charities. These conversations will go some way to pick out the 'Themes' of the strategy.

It is imperative that the incoming Trustees are included in the drafting process however it was recognised that this will be before their term begins.

In regards to drafting the new strategy, the things to consider are what worked well in the current plan, what hasn't worked well and what are the key questions and challenges.

Attendees:

Paul	Beaumont	Council Chair
Matt	Bowman	Commercial Services Manager
Richard	Cameron	Council Chair Elect
Chris	Chukwunta	Student Trustee
Joe	Cooper	Managing Director
Becca	Coxhead	Governance & Administration Manager
Abi	de Bruin	Deputy President Clubs & Societies
Jill	Finney	Lay Trustee elect
Julia	Higgins	Lay Trustee Chair of Board
Ben	Howitt	Deputy President Clubs & Societies elect
Chris	Kaye	Deputy President (Welfare) & Deputy President (Finance & Services) elect
Colin	Kerr	Lay Trustee
Tom	Lim	Student Trustee
Pascal	Loose	Deputy President (Education)
Malcolm	Martin	Head of Finance
Alex	McKee	Central Services Manager
Kate	Owen	Lay Trustee
Zain	Rizvi	Student Trustee elect
Neil	Sachdev	Lay Trustee
Hiba	Salem Danish	Student Trustee
Cyin	San	Deputy President (Education) elect
Alex	Savell	Deputy President (Finance & Services)
Jennie	Watson	Deputy President (Welfare) elect
Tom	Wheeler	President
John	Winters	Student Trustee
Serena	Yuen	Student Trustee elect