

Deputy President (Welfare) – Union Council report

Shervin Sabeghi – 30/09/2019

Intro:

Hello, Council! Time's flown by since I've taken on the role and I can't believe the time for the first Council report has come. It's remarkably difficult to summarise everything that's happened in the last 2 months and introduce my plans for the year in just a few pages, but I hope this gives everyone a reasonable picture. Feel free to email me (dpwel@ic.ac.uk) with any specific questions before the meeting, and you can raise anything for discussion at the meeting itself.

Highlights:

- ☺ Hand-over went smoothly and have formed the necessary relationships with College.
- ☺ Started most of my main projects for the year and made headway on key goals.
- ☺ Involved in the recruitment of at least 3 new counsellors for the Counselling Service.

How I've spent my time over the last 4 weeks:

College Meetings and 121s	Volunteer + Union Meetings	Operational work (day-to-day)	Project work (major goals)	Student time (inc. comms)
11%	25%	34%	11%	19%

Updates:

- ☺ Rep training: we've organised a 'Rep Academy' for October 23rd to train/induct all dep reps, faculty reps and CU Presidents over one afternoon with multiple sessions. This marks a massive change from the training reps usually get.
- ☺ Counselling Service: I was involved in the hiring of several new counsellors for the service, and they have acquired new space to be able to have many more appointments than they have before. Hopefully this will reduce the waiting times, but the exact effect will need to be measured throughout the year.

Upcoming:

- ☺ Liberation reform plan will be hotting up. I hope this will be a main project of CWB and will eventually require Council ratification. Other areas of the Union will be consulted if/when required.
- ☺ I've requested data from the Disability Advisory Service about their numbers and costs of assessments. When I've got these, we'll be able to start formulating a case for removing fees. This will be brought to CWB first (assuming dates work out!).
- ☺ When Welcome dies down and time is freed up (fingers crossed), work on reviewing the WBRN will begin which, of course, will also be a project of CWB.

Key goals:

In each of my reports, I'll come back to these 4 following key goals with progress and updates. In this first one, I've put a summary and context for each – I've also indicated which of my manifesto points fall under each goal! These 4 goals are also on my page on the website (www.imperialcollegeunion.org/dpw), though targeted at a general student.

Goal 1: Reform the Liberation and Community work of the Union, and ensure the College's EDI strategy works for students – *in progress*

Manifesto point(s) covered:

“Reform.. liberation officer training to better equip volunteers”

“Expanding LGBT+ Ally Networks to all departments”

Acknowledging that a) Liberation and Community Officers aren't currently set-up to be fully able to do their roles and b) this is a really important part of what the Union does, I plan to re-structure the Union's L&C work including how our officers are supported, and how staff are involved in the work. Furthermore, EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) is big on the agenda in College right now. Applications are being made to the Race Equality Charter and the Athena Swan award, and the College's EDI Strategy has now been approved.

Key Milestones:

- ☉ Produce Union 'Liberation Master Plan' dictating the future of the Union's liberation work.
- ☉ Make smaller changes before term starts to set up liberation officers for success during their years.
- ☉ Bolstered student representation on College EDI committees.

Progress I've made:

- ☉ Devised the 2019/20 Action Plan for Liberation and Community under current structures.
- ☉ Researched liberation activities of other universities, explored ICU's 2017/18 Liberation Review, and created loose initial idea for Liberation reform.
- ☉ Ensured all Liberation (BME, LGBT+, Disabilities and Gender Equality) are invited to the College's EDI Forum.

Goal 2: Fully review and set a course of action for the Wellbeing Representation Network – *not yet started*

Manifesto point(s) covered:

“Reform wellbeing rep... training to better equip volunteers”

“Ensure postgraduate representation at all levels”

Our Wellbeing Representation Network (WBRN) has been up and running for 2 years now, and I think it needs a proper review to ensure it's effective and to see if/how it should be improved. Certainly, one part of this will be exploring how to extend this to include dedicated postgraduate wellbeing volunteers.

Key Milestones:

- ☉ Produce a comprehensive review of the WBRN to be presented to Union Council.

- ☉ Write a paper for Union Council collaboratively with CWB to make any changes.
- ☉ Implement changes within the Union.

Progress I've made:

- ☉ I've not actually started this officially, yet. But things will get moving soon!

Goal 3: Improve student support services – *in progress*

Manifesto point(s) covered:

“Lobbying to remove the £95 Disabilities Advisory Service diagnosis cost”

“Consulting you on and reviewing the provision of menstrual products around College”

“Investigate new pastoral systems for postgraduates”

This is an ‘umbrella goal’ and covers a lot. There are the specific points from my manifesto above, but also this includes relationships with the department in College. I’ll be continually feeding into the Student Support Strategy and consulting students on specific points as needed (there’s already been a wide consultation on the strategy itself!).

Key Milestones:

- ☉ Remove/reduce the £95 diagnosis fee at the Disability Advisory Service (DAS).
- ☉ Find a form of providing free sanitary products around campus.

Progress I've made:

- ☉ Started conversation with the DAS, and Hannah Bannister (Director of Student Services) about the diagnosis fees and have them on board to make a change.

Goal 4: (Re-)establish the Felix Welfare Section – *in progress*

Manifesto point(s) covered:

“Work with the Felix editor to re-establish the Felix Welfare section, to give students an outlet and raise awareness about welfare topics”

In previous years, *Felix* has contained a Welfare Section. Considering that the team this year believe communication with students is one of the most important things we need to do (and it’s something that isn’t always given enough attention), I want to bring this section back as a way for me to communicate to students about what I do and generally about welfare. But, crucially, a place for students to communicate with each other, destigmatise certain issues and express opinion on welfare topics.

Key Milestones:

- ☉ Liaise with *Felix* editor to introduce the section.
- ☉ Build up a team to work on the section.

Progress I've made:

- ☉ Started conversations with *Felix* editor and established version of the section (shout-out to Henry for being so helpful with this!). Produced first introductory article for first edition of the year.