

Deputy President (Welfare) – Union Council report

Shervin Sabeghi – 05/10/2019

Intro:

Hello, Council, and welcome to all new members! Apologies for the late report. For those who weren't here last time, I'll keep the introduction and context to each major goal as I had last time before dropping these for future reports. 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.

Recent Highlights:

- ☺ Inducted most of the dep and faculty reps during Rep Academy on October 23rd.
- ☺ After 10 months of the role being vacant, finally now have recruited a new Representation Coordinator (Wellbeing)!
- ☺ Attended the 'Topping Out' ceremony for the College's new Kemp Porter accommodation in North Acton, shovelling the last bit of cement on top of the tower.
- ☺ Graduated!!

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)	Recruitment	Rep training
11%	15%	35%	1%	13%	8%	17%

As you can see, this month has involved a lot of operational work – with vast amounts of time being spent on recruiting the role I mentioned above and in planning and delivering rep training. I hope to increase that measly 1% on project work for next time!

Operational/Other Matters (not in my key goals):

- ☺ Year Rep training is now ongoing, with day and evening sessions happening for most of November to train all reps.
- ☺ The College's Access and Participation Plan for the Office for Students has been approved. Key targets around admission rates for students from low socio-economic backgrounds and black students, and retention rates of students with disabilities have been committed to. The Outreach department, who will be responsible for delivering many of these targets, will be presenting to CWB next week.
- ☺ **Discussion for Council:** before this year, after each Officer Trustee would give their report, Council members would automatically take a vote on whether or not they accepted the report. When we approved the standing orders at the first council, we voted to no longer do this. I'd like us to discuss whether or not we want to go back on this decision, with a view to amend the standing orders to resume voting on reports.

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.

Progress:

- ⊙ Researched liberation activities of other universities, explored ICU's 2017/18 Liberation Review, and created loose initial idea for Liberation reform. Presented initial paper with background and summary to CWB where it was decided, due to the interest in the room, to create a working group for the reform. This group will hopefully start meeting in early November.
- ⊙ Ensured all Liberation (BME, LGBT+, Disabilities and Gender Equality) are invited to the College's EDI Forum. Also, I've begun to map out what EDI committees happen around College to ensure they all have student representation (as many do not).
- ⊙ Meetings for the REC and Athena Swan are ongoing. College student focus groups for the former were very poorly attended, I welcome suggestions for how students can be better consulted/engaged in the process.

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.

Progress:

- ⊙ I hadn't officially started yet as of last Council, and this is still the case. Operational work and making up for the longstanding vacancy of the Union staff member most closely operationally aligned to my role has meant this has fallen to the wayside so far. I will rectify this by next Council.

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 have DAS and Senior College staff on board to make a change. I’m awaiting data from them about costs and numbers for the last 3 years to work out a way forward.
- ☉ A collaboration has begun between ICL/ICU and UCL to work on how universities can partner with the NHS to improve mental health care pathways for students. An initial meeting happened at UCL on Tuesday where we decided to have 2 student consultation facilitators at each university and we began to decide the themes they would consult on. This is an exciting project, and I’ll update as necessary.
- ☉ As an off-shoot of the College’s NSS/PTES Working Group, a group investigating student advisory/pastoral roles did work over the summer working out what exists in each department. It was found that there does exist at least one dedicated staff member in each department but, going forward, work will happen to coordinate/share best practise, and work out how to ensure the smaller demographics of students (e.g. trans students and care leavers) are supported.

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.

Progress:

- ☉ 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. Since then, there has not been anything in the section and I need to do more work to build up the foundations.