

Imperial College Union Council Report

Thomas Fernandez Debets, Deputy President (Clubs & Societies)

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, most of my time has been spent responding to the crisis and coordinating a response with staff teams. Though initially working very operationally, I am now working on projects looking ahead to the rest of the academic year and beyond. This report details progress against my manifesto points as well as updates regarding my involvement in the recruitment of Imperial College Union's next Managing Director, the development of a Volunteer Strategy and starting conversations with the College about widening their approach to what the student experience looks like in the context of Covid-19.

Goal 1 – New Sports Complex

At the time of running in the Leadership Elections 2019, Imperial College London's sports facilities were outdated and not fit for purpose.

- In 2019, £700,000 was invested in improving facilities at Harlington
- Sale on Heston consulted on with student stakeholders and set for summer 2020
- The Monday night service now forms part of a wider transport strategy being devised for the Union, with the aim to cater to students' transport needs. This includes minibuses, coaches and the recently acquired truck. A price freeze for Monday night transport has been secured at £4.50 for the rest of term.
- *No further update – major updates are unlikely given the current restrictions due to Covid-19*

Goal 2 – Promote CSPs' activities

Our Clubs, Societies & Projects (CSPs) have great knowledge and experience within their respective fields and cater to their members' needs. Promoting their activities does not only provide them with a platform to showcase them but would also ensure the Union engages more adequately with its membership, reflecting their interests.

- Arts Night and ACC Nights are two student-led events that take over the venue at Beit Quad. They are also two of the venues' most successful nights.
- An events group, similar to the Concert Hall User Group, has been created to review the events put on by the Union and how we work with students to improve the events they put on, with the aim to better reflect students' interests.
- The design of a social media takeover app has been paused. In the meantime, forms are now available to advertise [CSP events on screens](#) in the Union building and on the Sheffield walkway, as well as through [Instagram takeovers](#).
- *Though the response to Covid-19 has mainly been responsive so far, we are now looking at how to promote CSP activity effectively in the 'new normal'. Work is currently underway with the Events & Conference Manager to better promote all the work that is currently being done by CSPs during lockdown.*

Goal 3 – Implement the new Athletic Union

The roll-out of the Sports Hub over the next few years is a joint project between Move Imperial and Imperial College Union that will improve students' experience within sport.

- Our partner creative agency, Borne, have come back with initial creative plans for the Sports Hub. At this stage, the Sport Chair, myself and Move Imperial have given feedback and a consultation session was held with representatives from sports clubs.
- With CSP Annual budgeting done, I will now be reviewing the model that was put forward last academic year to ensure Field, Court and Performance clubs can be phased in. Along with the development plans Move Imperial are creating with the clubs, this will form the basis for the roll out in September.
- Kit tender to take place once the branding of the Sports Hub is completed

Goal 4 – Improve spaces and processes

Our spaces are outdated and some of our processes need reviewing

- A review of the training provided to our volunteers has been recognised as a priority for the Union. Led by the new Opportunities & Development Manager (Rachel Sunderland), a Volunteers Strategy was developed following consultation with a wide range of volunteers (inc

academic and wellbeing reps as well as CSP committee members). A plan is being devised to develop training and take advantage of the current situation to build good online material.

- The first step of this review looks at supporting senior volunteers who have long been undervalued by the Union but are essential to the running of our core networks, including CSPs. Starting this term, senior volunteers (including members of CSPB) will be invited to regular meetings where we will provide Union-wide updates and engage in conversations to answer any questions they may have about the wider Union's works.
- A storage project is underway, looking at maximizing the use of currently available spaces in Beit Quad and understanding further space requirements
- A project looking at supporting CSPs to be more H&S compliant is underway, with an external consultant supporting project leads with the Union.

Goal 5 – Better consultation and student inclusion

Despite a common aim to improve the student experience at Imperial College London whilst thriving for academic and research excellence, students have often been left out of the decision-making process at the highest level of the Union and the College. Their inclusion, and better understanding of the different groups that constitute our membership, will lead to better tailored decision-making.

- It is one of the aims of the Head of Student Experience and DPCS to write a plan to build on the relationships developed this year with senior volunteers. This plan aims to scope out what a meaningful partnership with our engaged students looks like and to embrace a model where students are partners.
- Looking to put students at the centre of more decisions, I am working to get the Clubs, Societies & Projects Board (CSPB) involved in more decisions that affect CSPs, including those around Welcome Week and systems improvements to eActivities.
- 3000+ students have completed the Student Experience Survey. This will be the start of a wider project to utilise available data to better inform decision-making at the Union. An approach has been put forward and accepted at the Communications Committee, a sub-committee of the ICU Board of Trustees, and submitted alongside this paper for reference.

Covid-19 focus

Since mid-March, a lot of my time has been spent responding to the pandemic. Though this has mainly manifested itself in operational tasks, we are now in a place where I can look forward to next steps.

- Stepped in to help with Covid-19 related mass refunds, helping DPFS through an extraordinarily large number of requests
- Communicated weekly with CSPs to ensure they are kept up-to-date with the breadth of information that is relevant to their activity
- Worked with the Opportunities and Development team to coordinate a response to student queries and CSP needs
- Delivered CSP Spring elections online for the first time. This was a success though not without its flaws given the limited time scale to organise and deliver this project
- Collected information from CSPs regarding the financial impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on their finances to put together a plan, involving available resources within the Union and with the IC Trust, to minimize the impact.
- Started conversations with the College to start looking at the wider student experience ahead of the new academic year, beyond the academic concerns.

Other

In this section, other items are succinctly mentioned:

- Involved as panel member for the two rounds of managing director recruitment
- Reviewed ICU budgets ahead of the next academic year, taking into account the uncertainty around the 'new normal'
- A project to semi-automate the room booking process is underway and will go live this term.
- Following initial conversations with DoCSoc, we are going to look into the feasibility of having Imperial students directly contribute to the improvements of the Union's systems