

Imperial College Students' Union  
Board of Trustees / 28 April 2021

Minutes (24 March 2021 Board of Trustees)

**1. Introduction & Attendance**

Jill Finney (JF) (Chair)	Ross Unwin (RU)
Stephen Richardson (SR)	Michaela Flegrova (MF)
Kate Owen (KO)	Shervin Sabeghi (SS)
Abhijay Sood (AS)	Milia Hasbani (MH)
Phil Power (PP)	Lloyd James (LJ)
Sam Lee (SL)	Alex Auyang (AA)
Ross Unwin (RU)	

In attendance

Tom Flynn (Managing Director) (TF)  
Tom Newman (Head of Membership Services) (TN)  
Rob Scully (Director of Finance and Resources) (RS)  
Ashley Cory (Systems Manager) (AC)  
Victoria Agbontaen (Governance Officer) (VA)

**2. Apologies**

Chris Carter (CC)	Dorothy Griffiths (DG)
Kelvin Zhang (KZ)	Graham Parker (GP)

**3. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved pending amendments to item 7.

**4. Matters arising/Forward Agenda**

TF noted that matters arising will be discussed during item 16 and all other actions will be addressed in the May meeting.

**5. Conflict of interest declarations**

AC noted a conflict of interest for item 11 on the agenda.

**6. Consideration of confidential business**

TF identified item 11 and 13 as confidential business.

**7. Managing Directors' Report**

TF gave a brief overview of the MD report, highlighting to Board the work around the roadmap out of lockdown to start reopening and giving students a more positive experience back on campus over the next three months, a substantial piece of work on the financial model which will have a long-term impact on the Union and finally confirming a May sign off for the strategic plan. TF added that he has met with the College's Risk Manager and the risk register will be completed in May which will align with the new strategic plan.

*Board noted the MD update.*

**8. Officer Trustee Team Update**

MF noted that she had been in talks with some other SU Officers about Post-Graduate representation and has also been working on introducing covid-19 impact statements for PG

Research students. MF highlighted that the package of no detriment measures had been agreed with the College which meant that international students will not have to take exams during the night etc. and the overall results will not be worse than in previous years.

SS highlighted that the work on CSP culture is ongoing and there is set to be an official Board update in May. SS added that the induction of the new Representation and Advice Manager has begun, and she will officially start in May.

RU noted that CSP elections have been done solely online this year and over 4000 positions were elected. RU stated that storage continues to be improved as the West Basement has been pest-proofed and other areas around the UDH have been rearranged. RU highlighted that talks on the CSP Roadmap have started which will enable CSPs to return to full activity when government guidance permits.

SL noted that he has been working closely with College on their sustainability strategy, as a sustainability committee which will sit under the Provost Board is starting up and it is likely the DPFS role will be a part of this committee. SL added that the timeline of the redevelopment project is still in discussion, but the structure of the project has been signed off.

AS noted that his focus has been primarily on the Felix review, but he is also working with College Council on the development of obtaining a successor for the College President as her term is ending in Summer 2022. AS added that the socially responsible investment has started and his focus for the upcoming months will be looking at the petition system, policy, staff support for student media and financial support for refugees and asylum seekers.

- i. A question was asked by JF whether there were any stats available on the turnout of the elections. Trustees were informed that the number of voters and votes cast were much greater than last year but a full summary paper on the elections will be coming to the next Board meeting.

*Board noted the update of the Officer Trustees and expressed their thanks and congratulations to all those who were involved with the elections for such a great turnout and result.*

## **9. Council Chair Update**

AA informed Trustees that last Council meeting took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March & outlined two key papers that were brought to Council. This included the stance on Union membership for students on an interruption of studies as these students are not considered members of the Union and it was suggested that these students may need extra support as they are taking a year out for personal reasons. AA understood that most of Council agreed to the sentiment of the Union extending support, but it was unclear if this should be on an opt-in or opt-out basis.

AA added that Council voted on adding the Felix Editor role into the byelaws of the Union. It was noted that the role should not be listed under the Officer role of the Union as the role of the Felix Editor is to hold the Union and College to account so it would be added to section A in the byelaws.

- i. Trustees were informed that a meeting has been scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> April to discuss the next steps for a short- and long-term amendments to the policy.

*Board noted the update of the Council Chair.*

## **10. ICU Roadmap: Exiting Lockdown**

TN outlined that the ICU Roadmap is based on government guidelines that were provided and the approach being taken is to balance the safety of students with in-person activity. Outdoor activity to be able to start from the 29<sup>th</sup> of March.

TN added there is a plan to bring staff back gradually from May-June onwards as it becomes possible and there has been consistent communication of this expectation with staff. As we are a membership charity, and it is important that staff is interacting with members which is being used to manage staff expectations and staff will be expected to be back in the office for a significant proportion of their time. However, as the majority of staff have been working remotely for almost a full year, TN noted this will be challenging and staff will need to be supported with this moving forwards.

TF added that 568 will be re-opening an outdoors only service on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April and the College are aware and supportive of the plans. TF and AS both sit on the College's return to campus working group for staffing and College HR is providing guidance notes on model's staff may end up following which means that the Union can use this guidance. However, ICU will still have an adopted approach and a detailed paper of staff expectations on returning to campus will be brought to Board in June.

- i. A question was asked by MF as to what points food will be served at 568. Trustees were informed that food will be served throughout all periods that 568 is open as it is an essential part of the service.
- ii. A question was asked by JF whether graduations this Summer will take place in-person will be or online. Trustees were informed that May graduations will be held remotely. However, a decision on the October graduations has not yet been finalised.

*Board noted the formal 'return to the office' plan regarding staff.*

## **11. Financial Model Update\***

*This item was considered confidential business.*

## **12. Management Accounts (February 2021)**

RS noted that the Management accounts for February are measured against the stage four budget that Trustees approved last month. As expected there are smaller variances recorded than in the previous set of accounts and there are a couple of items that did not arise when the stage four budget was being set, however the Union is still on track to deliver the stage four budget at the end of the year.

RS reminded Trustees that the budget assumes that retail and venues will remain closed for the remainder of the year meaning future management accounts will be showing variances there, assuming that these services will reopen.

RS highlighted that the Union is in a good cash position, however there is an increasing balanced owed to College regarding money for payroll which is currently being held up due to complicated issues around staff furlough.

- i. SL questioned whether the invoices relating to the bars from December have now been properly reconciled. Trustees were informed that RS is working with the

finance team to gain further understand into the causes of these issues as to avoid making them again in future.

- ii. A question was asked by JF is Jayne Hufford would not be attending any further Board meetings. Trustees were informed that Jayne will be leaving the organisation on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March and would therefore not be attending any other meetings.

*Board noted the update on the position and narrative and thanked Jayne for her remarkable work over the last 9 months.*

### **13. 2019/20 Annual Accounts Update**

RS noted that since the last Board update, the auditors have highlighted one additional issue with the audit which is recharges including several invoices going back a couple of years which has subsequently caused further delays.

RS highlighted that the next steps are to draw up a new draft of accounts, for the auditors to formally sign off the accounts pending adjustments and Trustee sign-off with an updated letter of representation.

*Trustees agreed the mechanism and will approve the draft accounts once complete at the next Board meeting in April.*

### **14. Casual Staff Pay Update 2021**

AC stated that the purpose of the paper is to propose the implantation of a 2.2% increase in the lowest paid casual staff hourly rate and a 1.6% pay increase for all other casual staff in line with the College approach from October 2020 as the Union has not previously followed this approach in the past.

AC highlighted that there is to be a change to national living wage in April 2021 which necessitates the Union by law to increase the pay by 2.2% to match national living wage, this would raise the rate to £9.99 per hour for category one casual staff.

AC added that the reason for increasing casual staff rates of pay would be useful into reducing staff dissatisfaction, increasing staff motivation and productivity. staff retention and reducing the inequality between permanent and casual staff.

- i. A question was asked by AS whether there would be more benefit from using an internal benchmark rather than an external one and whether this could be committed to sooner. Trustees were informed that once the detailed work on retail and venue budgets have been completed it would be reviewed then to be in line with the academic year. Trustees were informed that alignment with the College would offer a natural and automatic mechanism to automatically raise rates when appropriate.
- ii. A question was asked by MF whether casual staff would receive backpay for the 1.6% they have missed. Trustees were informed that this would be an operationally challenging task due to the bars being closed for the majority of the year as well as all casual staff being put on furlough.

*Trustees approved the implementation of the 2.2% increase in lowest paid casual staff in line with National Living Wage and a 1.6% pay increase for all other Casual Staff in line with the College approach and proposed further changes to pay in the future.*

## **15. Strategic Plan Discussion: Our Aims & Our KPIs**

TF asked Trustees to consider two key questions including what is understood by the term back to basics and what types of things should be measured within the aims and the enablers.

*Trustees shared feedback from their individual groups and agreed to share this directly with Tom Flynn.*

## **16. Chair of Trustees Recruitment**

VA explained that she had gone out to research five different recruitment consultant and gave a brief overview of the pros and cons of each consultant as outlined in the paper. Although all five consultants were credible, it was agreed that Inclusive Boards would be selected to assist and manage the recruitment process for the Chair of the Board as they specialise in recruiting candidates from a variety of backgrounds while still ensuring to target those with the skills and experience necessary to be successful in the role.

VA gave an overview of the proposed recruitment timetable and requested that AS and AA consider which student representatives should be a part of the student stakeholder panel while it was agreed that RU and MH would join the shortlisting panel.

- i. A question was asked by JF as to which College member we would recommend to join the final selection panel. Trustees were informed that Ian Walmsley would be the recommended member of College staff to join the panel but if he is unable to do so Emma McCoy or Richard Martin would be suitable potential alternatives.
- ii. A question was asked by AA as to how many students would be required to be on the student stakeholder panel. Trustees were informed that the panel should be within 6-8 students.

*Board approved Inclusive Boards as the recruitment consultant for a new Chair of the Board of Trustees and approved the proposed recruitment timeline and process.*

## **17. Felix Review and Byelaws**

AS outline that the Felix review has been motivated by under-performance as well as longer-term challenges that the role has faced including feelings of isolation and a lack of coordination between the Union and the Editor role. AS noted that it has been an oversight that such a prominent role has not been included in the Union's byelaws.

- i. A question was asked by MH whether training for the Felix team would be left solely to the Editor or whether the Union would help with this. Trustees were informed the training would be a blended approach with both this Union and the Felix Editor.
- ii. A question was asked by JF as to who would be managing the implementation of the recommendations and changes made in the review. Trustees were informed operationalisation of this will be key and TN will actively support this as the line Manager for the role as a branch of the student activities and development team.
- iii. A question was asked by JF as to when a stakeholder map would be provided to the Board to review. Trustees were informed that this would be provided before the end of term three.

*Board approved the adaptation of the Felix byelaw.*

### **Any Other Business**

AS brought up the issue of the elected student trustee recruitment process, which should have already begun. AS suggested that the advert for the role should go live before the Easter break and interviews should take place before the end of the Easter break to avoid clashing with exams season.

- i. A question was asked by MF is that as the Easter break is only four weeks, whether that is sufficient time to effectively advertise the role and whether we should focus on proper advertising to attract the right students.
- ii. A question was asked by MH as to whether there is a clear brief as to what type of student trustee the Board require and if this is in alignment with the newly elected trustees. Trustees were informed that an official process will be proposed to find a student trustee by the end of term three.