

Union President– Council report

Abhijay Sood – 23rd March 2021

Summary:

- Felix Review
- College Council
- Petition System

College Meetings & Prep	Student + Union Meetings & Prep	Operational work (day-to-day)	Project work (major goals)	Misc
15%	37%	15%	23%	10%

Regular updates:

- **Felix review** – this has taken up the lion's share of my work in the past month, from managing the survey, to chairing focus groups, to producing the report. More detail is included in that document.
- **COVID-19 Response** – we are still holding meetings about this on the College side, working to minimise the negative effects the national health situation might lead to.
 - **Safety Net/No Detriment** – this has been published and shared with students. While we appreciate that it isn't all that everyone may have wanted, the package of measures will still go some way to protecting students and is much more comprehensive and positive than what was initially put forward.
 - **Halls** – conversations with the College on this are mostly looking ahead to the reductions and matching algorithms which may be applied for next year, although we're still raising the experience and financial effect on current students.
- **Bullying Scandal** – the OfS investigation is continuing, but there is not much in the way of updates to report.
- **Alice's Successor** – on a broader note, the Council Chair has begun consulting with key staff members on the selection criteria for Alice's successor as College President, since her term of office will conclude at the end of the next academic year.
- Alongside a small number of interested staff and a (now ex-) PhD student, I have tabled the motion on Refugee Access to study at the College's Scholarships committee. Having received support in principle from this committee, we will take a motion to Presidents' and Provosts' boards next term.

Regular updates:

- I am **scheduling meetings for interested students over the next two weeks** on the following areas:
 - Socially Responsible Investment
 - The implementation of the Petitions System
 - Staff support for Student MediaI want to apologise for failing to have done this sooner, as other pieces of work have been overwhelming over the past few weeks.
- We are currently developing an idea around having specific **town halls** including key Union staff aimed at **senior volunteers**, to help ensure you are better kept in the loop.

Key objective updates:

Following from my first report, I would like to share the below updates on my objectives. These have taken a backseat this term as the Felix review and various short-term pieces of work have dominated.

- i. **Working to ensure all relevant stakeholders are properly involved when the College makes decisions** – I have begun work on the relationship map, although it is not yet complete. Governance changes in the College, precipitated by both COVID and the scandal, may help here.
- ii. **Setting a stable trajectory for the Union post-2021 (2021-23)**
 1. **Strategy** – we have conducted positive consultation on the values and aims of this piece of work with key volunteers and staff respectively.
 2. **Handover process** – work on this will take place from (late) March onwards
 3. **Avoiding a vacuum** – with the elections having concluded, we hope this point has been addressed. Our chief goal now is to ensure there are good candidates for any vacant roles or roles we chose not to run in this round; notably the Felix Editor and ICSMSU President.
- iii. **Reviewing Union Governance/Democracy**
 1. **Examining the Felix Editor and DPFS roles and clarifying the relationship between OTs and staff more generally.** – High-level changes made to the DPFS role; for Felix see separate papers
 2. **Clarifying our relationship with constituent unions.** – We have progressed this at GIB, although formal recommendations have yet to be solidified.
 3. **Reviewing Union Council** – We have taken a conscious decision to postpone any deep review until post-COVID; at this stage I think it would be best to preserve recommendations for Council as part of the work on handover, and perhaps hold a discussion here at the start of term 3.
 4. **Supporting the MD in clarifying the relationship between Board, its subcommittees, and Union Council** – This process will commence as a piece of work led by the MD.
- iv. **Coordinating a review of our offer to postgraduates** – Without any major centrally motivated governance changes, and with key services (e.g. h-bar) in an uncertain position due to COVID, this will be more of a focus after the elections, with some actions left to my successor.
- v. **Ensuring the Union's staffing model is fit for the future** – This trifurcates:
 1. **Permanent staff structure/employment relationship** – Our current model is working reasonably smoothly. Any change would need to be developed over time, preferably handled post-COVID.
 2. **Student staff** – we have secured internal agreement to implement the London Living Wage in our 2021-22 budget. We will seek to formalise aspects of the employment relationship here.
 3. **Staff who support student activities** – introducing clear and fair written agreements, short of full employment relations.
- vi. **Supporting the Officer Trustee Team** – part of my day-to-day responsibilities.

This has been an exhausting term, but with new officers elected and restrictions easing, I'm feeling very motivated for next term. I look forward to getting the most out of my final term in this role; likely my last at this institution.

Abs

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