

DPW report to Union Council

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Updates:

- Took my first turn chairing the Student Experience Committee in College.
- Interviewed two EDI consultants for work on the EDI Strategy Action Plan with three other members of the EDI Task and Finish Group. We selected Koreo, a firm which has done impressive work both in other student unions, as well as outside of the higher education sector. Their biggest strength was their strong understanding of EDI issues within and outside of the sector.
- Met with the Director of Estates and the Gender Equality Officer to discuss lighting on campuses. Gave some guidance on how to present our findings from the lighting survey at the next meeting.
- Had conversations with the chair of the board of trustees, Lloyd, India, the student activities team and the representation team about the CSP culture review. The current plan is to identify risks associated with different groups (e.g. culture, sports, arts etc) and take a risk-based approach to address problem areas.
- Met with a variety of reps after the provost's work-from-home mandate. They all cited similar concerns; lack of clear and direct communication would be the biggest risk affecting student welfare in the coming weeks.
- Had three meetings with Lloyd, Daniel and core College staff in response to Omicron concerns to discuss plans for students returning to College after the break, exam arrangements, and support for students over College closure.
- At the time of writing this, the agreement we reached with College is to return to normal in-person teaching after the break, with departments having their own guidance around access to shared spaces. This may change if new government restrictions come into effect.
- All students will be required to return to campus, and timed remote exams will be in effect in January. Provisions for exceptional circumstances around COVID that would prevent students from being able to return to London will still be in effect, apart from MBBS students (as the number of in-person teaching hours they receive is strictly regulated).
- Faculty will check in regularly with students who test positive over the holidays. Students in halls who test positive will continue to have meals delivered to their room. High-risk students in halls who test positive will also receive pulse oximeters to monitor their vitals.
- Helped the other OTs write Christmas cards to all the permanent staff in the Union. Made one of them cry when they received it (happy tears of course!)
- The sexual misconduct survey report has finally been completed.
- Got my booster shot! The best place to get it is the Science Museum at 7:30 am (Sam and India can confirm).

Upcoming:

- Will set up evidence groups for the College Disciplinary Review in term 2.
- Will draft a Union Members' Code of Conduct and Operational Guidelines for enacting Union disciplinary procedures.

- Will write a Project Initiation Document for the CSP Culture Review.
- Will engage with Koreo and the Union's EDI Task and Finish Group to make a list of priorities for the EDI strategy work.
- Will share the results of the student sexual misconduct survey with the Student Experience Committee as well as other key stakeholders.
- Will continue to facilitate a discussion between the Gender Equality Officer and the Director of Estates on how to improve street lighting on South Kensington, White City and Silwood campuses.

Objectives:

Objective 1: Post-Pandemic Reintegration of the Imperial Community - [In progress]

I was feeling a bit stuck and unsure of how to proceed on this objective, so I decided to consult with a variety of welfare reps (AWOs, CU welfare reps and departmental welfare reps). I asked them what affected students the most during lockdown, and what was different this term. They shared some fairly similar views: the main well-being concerns that were brought to them by students during lockdown were caused by a lack of clear and direct communication about what was going to happen next over the course of their studies, which led to immense anxiety among students. Much of this uncertainty was absent in Term 1, and as a result departmental welfare reps had very little to report in this regard.

That said, the main well-being risk around the new variant currently seems to be around communication. I worked closely with College over the last week of term to ensure that College communications were clear and informative. Email templates were drafted for departments to use; different versions were created for taught and research students.

Support for students testing positive is also being continued by College, with some slight variations due to the expected high number of cases. Faculty staff (rather than departments) will be communicating directly with students over the holidays and asking if they need any additional support. Meals and pulse oximeters will continue to be provided to students in halls. Since fully vaccinated close contacts will no longer be required to self-isolate and most vaccines obtained overseas are now being recognised as valid, the good news is that less students will be required to self isolate than we had originally anticipated.

In the coming weeks, I will continue to check in with welfare reps on how students are coping with the current climate.

Objective 2: CSP Culture Review - [In progress]

I have had two meetings to discuss the strategy and direction of this objective. In a meeting with India, Lloyd, the managing director and the chair of the board of trustees, we determined that a one-size-fits-all approach would most likely be ineffective, given the vast variety and number of CSPs. Lloyd had also spoken to Jim Dickinson (a higher education journalist who gives us updates from the sector) who reported that simple blanket solutions have failed in other student unions. As such, we decided to use a risk-based approach.

This will entail establishing a set of criteria to evaluate cultural risk factors in CSPs, using the CSP disciplinary policy and guidance from regulatory bodies (eg BUCS) as a starting point. We will then use evidence from both inside Imperial (eg student consultation, the CSP survey) and the higher education sector (eg NUS surveys) to evaluate and group together CSPs with similar types of risk. The final step will be to formulate an action plan to address identified risks.

Now that I have established these aims, I will be working closely with India and the student activities team to write a project initiation document and timeline, and allocate tasks to get started on this project.

Objective 3: Improving Safeguarding and Disciplinary Procedures - [In progress]

The terms of reference and membership of the core working party have been presented at Senate and approved. Daniel was present at this meeting and provided us with a very helpful rundown of the conversation that took place around the paper. In summary, most members of Senate appeared to be in support of the review. There were some questions raised around the possibility of recruiting someone external from the higher education sector into the working party; however, in a later conversation with Richard Martin we agreed that there currently are no good examples from the HE sector to easily choose from. To counteract this, Lloyd and I

will continue to lobby to have an individual with legal expertise both inside and outside the sector to work closely with the working party. We have already identified one such individual.

In the first week of term will be setting up evidence groups to collate and present the student opinion to senior members of College within the core working party.

I am also continuing to work with Sam Hammond (ICSMSU president) to write follow-up letters to external venues about their spiking measures. India and I will also write a template letter for CSPs that they can use to communicate with external venues about their anti-spiking measures prior to having off-campus socials. This will be rolled out as an optional resource for CSPs.

Objective 4: Welfare Representation Network Review - [In progress]

At least once a week, I have met with department reps to have a chat about their experiences within their roles. I have made some notes on what they feel can be done to improve their ability to represent more effectively, and what the Union could do to better support them. Some of these preliminary suggestions include better signposting resources and more training on how to support lower-level reps.

My goal for the next council meeting will be to write a list of priorities that need to be examined in this review.

Objective 5: Developing the Union's EDI Strategy - [In progress]

The Union's EDI Task and Finish group has selected Koreo as the consultant that we will be working with to write an EDI Strategy and Action Plan. In the coming weeks, we will be working together to establish a list of questions that will be asked in consultation with students, Union staff, and College staff.