

## **Imperial College Union**

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

*A note by John Collins*

#### **Aldwych Lobby**

On February 21<sup>st</sup> Ben Harris and I joined other sabbatical officers from Russell Group universities to lobby MPs on higher education funding at parliament. ICU, along with the rest of the Aldwych Group, are opposed to top up fees and therefore campaigning against proposals to increase the cap beyond its current level of £3K seems to be a sensible thing to do. The lobby was successful in parts; we were able to speak to Boris Johnson and some Lib Dems who take an interest in educational issues. However, neither Ben nor I were able to meet our MPs and I don't believe many people from the Aldwych delegation managed to meet a member of the government.

#### **Elections**

The less said the better.

In all seriousness, I would like to thank Eric Lai for his hard work in seeing the Sabbatical elections through to completion. I would also like to congratulate Steven Brown, Kirsty Patterson, Chris Larkin, Alistair Cott and Tom Roberts in their successful election to sabbatical office.

#### **Senate debate on degree classifications**

Ben and I watched with mild amusement as the Maths department were attacked by senior managers in Senate for awarding relatively few 1<sup>st</sup> and 2:1 class degrees in recent years. The fact that we started this row (with our presentation to the Strategic Education Committee last month) made this all the more enjoyable to watch.

After much debate, the following promises were made by the committee:

1. *"That ... the Senate was of the view that students entering the College with the same high level of entry qualifications should expect a greater equity of degree results than was currently the case.*
2. *That the percentages observed [in ICU's paper] were unacceptable in comparison with the majority of departments in the College and with peer institutions.*
3. *That the Senate concurred with the view of the SEC [Strategic Education Committee] that a target of 70% as a combined percentage of first and upper second class degrees awarded should be implemented across faculties, and that departments should review their marking schemes, ensuring that the full range of marks was used."*

*Senate minutes 27<sup>th</sup> February 2007*

I suggest that academic representatives should keep a close eye on this issue over the next few years.

### **Building Masterplan**

Our architects presented the second phase of the Beit Building redevelopment project to the Executive Committee on February 28<sup>th</sup>. These plans will be presented to the RWB, CSB and Executive Committees before coming to Council.

In summary, the proposals are:

- To construct a mezzanine floor in the gymnasium,
- To relocate the Student Activities Centre to the mezzanine floor,
- To move the gymnasium up to the top floor to where meeting rooms 1-3 are presently location and construct modern changing room facilities,
- To convert the East Basements into new seminar rooms,
- To move the snooker tables from the top floor to the area below the mezzanine and turn this space in to a games room.

The last point listed above is being re-considered at this Council meeting.

Council will receive papers to approve this plan, which will cost approximately £3.2M, in the summer term.

### **Planning round meetings**

Jon Matthews and I met with the Rector and a few other senior managers to discuss the ICU three year plan. The subvention bid does not seem to be causing any concern, which is a good thing. The building project capital bid has made it into the final round for funding (another good thing) but reservations have been expressed about converting the top floor of the west wing of the Beit Building into a gym. I think we need to be more careful in our language and perhaps start referring to it as “multi-use club space”.

### **NUS Conference preparations**

All eight delegates have been elected and all but one have been fully briefed by the Regional Officer on how conference works and how we can contribute to the proceedings. I am grateful to Stephen Brown and Omar Hashmi for offering to represent ICU at the tedious compositing session on March 11<sup>th</sup>. The NUS working group’s recommendations about which motions we believe should be supported by ICU’s delegation at next conference will be presented at this Council meeting.

### **Rector’s Forum**

I think this event was fairly successful and the Rector said he had an enjoyable time. Turnout was a little below what I had hoped but there seems to be enthusiasm in College for giving this event another go in the autumn.

### **Governance and Service Level Agreements**

I have been working quietly behind the scenes with the College to prepare several Service Level Agreements that set out in detail what level of professional support each non-academic division of the College are prepared to provide to the Union in future years. Currently this relationship is governed by a cumbersome Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and I expect that these agreements will be incorporated into the MoU if and when they are agreed by ICU Council this summer. So far we have been promised formal Human Resources support and the opportunity to join the College's PC rolling replacement programme (for no extra cost).

As I reported verbally at the last meeting, we are seeking legal advice on whether or not ICU is obliged to register with the Charity Commission next year from a QC who seems to know a great deal about these things. I will report back his opinion when I receive it.

### **University Challenge**

The only two Centenary events left that I am particularly involved in at the moment are the University Challenge Internal competition, which will be held on March 22<sup>nd</sup> in the SCR (please come and watch!) and the Centenary Ball, which will be held on June 16<sup>th</sup> (please buy your tickets now whilst they're still cheap!).

### **ULU Meltdown**

ULU has fallen out with the University of London in a spectacular fashion and both sides seem to be gearing up for open warfare. My reading of the situation is that the university are trying to persuade the colleges that ULU is pointless and should be abolished to save money. I believe that this is dangerous and I would argue that we should support ULU in this dispute. If there were no ULU then there would be no ULU leagues and cups, which would be most unfortunate.

### **London Student Assembly**

Finally, I am delighted to report that I have been elected as a representative on the 25 strong London Student Assembly. This body is designed to advise the Mayor on issues that are close to students' hearts, namely transport, housing, crime, the environment, and culture / sport. The next meeting will be held at City Hall on March 15<sup>th</sup> – if you are interested in coming along then please speak to me or Ben Harris.

**JC 08/03/07**