

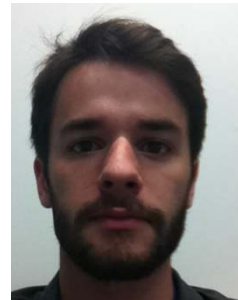
Deputy President (Education) report
A note by Alex Dahinten

Handover

During July we had our handover month, during which Jon Silver did his best to teach me about the job I had gotten myself into, introduce me to the College big-dogs and filling me in on any ongoing projects which were happening. A large part of handover was being throw into the deep end and discovering the position on my own. By far the hardest bit was learning all the countless College meeting name acronyms!

Andrew Keenan

We have hired a new permanent staff member as Representation Coordinator. His name is Andrew Keenan and just finished a 2 year Union presidency term at St. Andrews. I work closely with him on most topics which concern both UG and PG representation, and he is currently working on making sure we have a rock-solid PG rep structure for 2010-11. Don't be frightened by his Scottish accent, he is a very approachable and nice guy and can be found on the second floor of the Union building (just beyond SAC) or reached under a.keenan@ic.ac.uk (please cc me in when you e-mail him).



Feedback

Since both Kendall and I centred our campaigns on improving feedback, I decided it was probably best to start addressing it over the summer! Feedback given back to the students on their coursework has proven to be Imperial's Achilles heel when it comes to national surveys; there are two main areas of concern surrounding feedback: quality and timeliness. The first is an ongoing project, for which we will produce a comprehensive feedback policy latter this year. The latter I worked on over the summer. The way this will be addressed next year is by asking the lecturers let students know by what date they can expect their feedback returned to them. This is a very large step in the right direction for Imperial; however we are expecting some resistance from lecturers, especially the lazier ones. I will be giving my year and dep reps a comprehensive training later this month on exactly how we they should be monitoring if the lecturers are enforcing this. The Rector even wrote a letter to every department telling them to get on board!

Representation and Training

My position heavily relies on a solid rep system, and therefore I have dedicated much time reviewing the current training and structure. I have been in contact the faculty presidents, AAOs and well as dep reps over the summer, and they seem as devoted and enthusiastic as me to make sure every student is well represented. I see a good year ahead, and cannot wait for all the year, section and division reps to be elected! I will be leading both the UG and PG rep training which will take place on the 26th October (UG), 4th November (PG - PhD) and 9th November (PG - Masters).

Survey

With the Browne Review outcome to be made public any day now (it may even be out when you read this!), I felt that I was not sure how Imperial students felt about the proposed changes to higher education funding. Of course I have my own opinions, however to effectively represent the student body I felt that a survey was due. We currently have about 750 responses, however only once we hit close to 1000 will I start to analyse the results. College is already very keen to hear what the students have to say, although it will most likely be quite different to what they are wishing for! Please take the time to fill out the survey on the Union website and publicise it to you peers.

Working groups

Currently I am organising two working groups, and still need volunteers (especially PGs!). The first working group is one which Jon began to assemble last year, and it will look into improving Blackboard. College will be replacing Blackboard in the next two years, and would like to find out what the students have to say about it. The second working group is on international student balance. We have never looked into how students feel about the very high proportion of overseas students at Imperial, and therefore we will be holding some informal discussions with students from all kinds of backgrounds to gather their views.

Vouchers

College departments and faculties love to attract student “volunteers” for their surveys and working parties by offering incentive prizes. FACT. The prizes are usually Amazon vouchers and are often not used by students. Together with Ravi, I have been working on implementing Union Shop vouchers which can be purchased at the Shop, or can be used by College as incentive prizes. We are almost done with these and the system should be implemented any day now.

Welcome Week

As DPE, my role during the first week tends to be more of a “lending-a-helping-hand” one. All week I have been manning Union stands, selling tickets to our events and promoting the services we provide. Any free time I had I made myself useful by meeting freshers, and making them feel welcome to this new environment –we’ve all been in their shoes before! The bright neon green t-shirt we wore all week meant that students began to recognise us, and would come up to us for a chat. It’s been a fun week, however draining at the same time!

Casework

I did not take a vacation this summer, and that meant that at times I was helping out across the table when it came to casework. The usual academic appeals were handled as soon as they came through the door, and many of them were successful. I became scarily familiar with College procedure regarding appeals. On top of that I have been helping out with welfare issues, and advising students accordingly when they came in with issues. Although DPE is now its own position on paper, there sure is still a lot of overlap with DPW!

Blogs

I began blogging for the first time in my life, and am doing my best to post a new and exciting story at the very least once every two weeks (now that term has started, once every week). Follow it on the Union website.