

Imperial College Union
President's Report - *A Note by the President Alex Kendall*

Hall Senior Training

On November 2, I and Nigel Cooke delivered the Hall Senior training which had been postponed since Hall Senior week in September. Around 50 Hall Seniors turned up, which was enough to justify the event but a lot less than the full number. I am not sure how many Wardens got the information out in time though. Our main points were to highlight to the Hall Seniors the welfare services the Union can offer as well as what other services students can find here, so they can direct their students to the right place. I also updated them on the building refurbishment.

College Senate

The first College Senate was held on Wednesday 3 November. The main issue of interest to us was the report from the Pro-Rector (Education) which mentioned the disappointing NSS scores when it came to feedback. We were updated on what College are doing to tackle poor feedback, starting with a 2 week deadline for coursework returns, which is currently being trialled in the Department of Biology. They are also bringing in, as part of the 'New Postgraduate Framework' a Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma, which is supposed to help Postgraduates do smaller, 3 month courses. We are still evaluating whether this is a good idea or a waste of time. Another item which came up is the move to make examiners reports available to students; we are pushing for this to happen.

The Senate was concluded with various reports from College departments such as the Library and IT. The minutes should be available online soon. I'd like to thank the DPCS for coming to Senate with me, as the DPE was ill.

Union Finances and College Audit Committee

The audited year-end accounts from last year were passed and signed by the Trustee Board on 9 November; we presented them to the yearly College Audit Committee on the morning of 10 November. I am happy to say that the accounts for 09/10 have now been concluded.

EEE PhD Stipend Changes

We brought up an issue during the summer that EEE PhD students weren't being paid for teaching work they were doing, and that work shouldn't be compulsory, despite the acceptance letter from the department indicating that work was 'encouraged' and seemed to be tied to the funding, which broke the rules of the funding body, EPSRC. In short, the situation was confusing.

It turns out that the Department were giving many students Departmental bursaries on top of their teaching grant money which had the expectation of teaching tied to it. This technically breaks tax law as all wages for work have to be declared to HMRC. The Department have had to change to a new system which reduces the bursary students will get but where the students will be given hours of work to get themselves back up to their original grant. They have been cut from £16,000 to approximately £15,300. Myself, the Representation Coordinator and the DPE went along to a meeting between the PhD students and the Department in which two unfair issues arose. Firstly, it is unfair to cut a bursary after the start of the year when many students have budgeted for that year; this was compounded by evidence showing that there isn't enough teaching to go around for everyone to make up their earnings to £16,000. Secondly, the department cannot force students to do teaching work or invigilating. The PhD students suggested, and we supported, a guarantee of £16,000 this year, where the lost £700 would be given up-front, and once a student has earned more than this doing teaching, they are paid by the hour. If a student does no teaching, they will still receive the £700 as a bursary. This will only be the situation this year, with the new intake only given £15,300 (plus inflation). If there are not enough teaching hours available for students to bring up their income, this means a reduction in stipend funding from EEE. As they are currently building a website to allow students to sign up for teaching depending on their interests and time constraints (a welcome move) we will have to wait and see if this is a case as total teaching availability isn't currently documented. We will have another meeting soon.

Senior Treasurers

We hosted a drinks reception for Honorary Senior Treasurers on Monday 8 November. 4 turned up, as well as several CSC Chairs, so although planning it well in advance it could have gone better. After talking to those who came about the role of the HST, it seems we have to change the system slightly in the future. Myself and the DPFS are working out a route forward.

Metric Opening

Metric will officially launch on November 20 with a massive student party with 5 bands and 2 DJs. We will be 'testing' the venue on November 18 to make sure everything is working, and to say thank you to the Architect, Contractors and Builders for all their hard work. As members of Council, you are also invited, alongside the Executive and the Trustees.