

Report to Union Council
Union President –Paul Beaumont

The last few weeks have been a whirlwind of activity in the Union.

Website Re-launch

On Sunday 5th August, a power surge hit the College data centre whilst our server was in backup mode – corrupting it. OtherMedia – the company commissioned to develop the website five years ago wanted nearly £15k to put the server back online (£5k in unpaid ‘support’ fees for support the Union says we never received, and nearly £10k in labour costs). Naturally – as we were developing a new website anyway - I said no. I have quite a lot of my time helping develop our new website that went live on the 21st September. The old website cost the Union circa £70,000 to develop. As this one has been coded by myself, two staff members and a student volunteer, it has cost £420 and offers more tailored functionality than the old site.

Links with other Unions

I have been actively seeking to associate ourselves with our neighbouring Unions. This is for mutual benefit: our students and theirs get to interact with more people, they get use of our facilities and clubs and societies, and we in return see an increased turnover in the bar, conferences (through a partnership where one institution is using our facilities for a conference), and membership services (through increased club participation).

Governance Review

I have reviewed and presented to the Chairs of the Board, Council and Court plans to reform the constitution. These are in a paper attached to the Charity Registration item. The Managing Director and I have started discussions on how to structure our new constitution and regulations.

Discount Scheme

After liaising with local companies, I have secured discounts for students in a number of local businesses. These will be promoted heavily throughout Welcome Week to both to incoming and existing students which will help to alleviate the inevitable questions from Freshers as to why they are not entitled to purchase an NUS extra card.

Union Commercial Services

Again liaising with a local company, I have secured a cheaper way of catering clubs and societies, in which the Union benefits too with a “10% back” offer. This is building on an agreement with College last year in which external caterers can be used in departmental spaces.

Commercial Services & Wardens

Work and talks have started with the director of commercial services and the head of the wardens’ committee regarding re-instating the hall senior subsidy.

Preparation of Papers for Council

Much time has been spent researching discussions to be had at the first three Councils of the year, including value added scores, open academic publishing, the creation of a ‘market’, widening participation and UKBA. I have also been writing up renewals of policy that weren’t done at the end of last year.

Responding to Calls for Evidence

I have been working with the Representation Coordinator to draft a response to a call for evidence on the future of Higher Education. Vague plans for our NSS response 2012 (Olympic themed!) are also being worked on, but are on the back-burner until the full NSS results are released.

Preparation for Presentations

I have nearly twenty presentations to give in the next few weeks; preparations for which are well underway!

Leave

I have taken six days leave in the period 1 July 2012 to 27 September 2012.

The rest of the team

The rest of the Sabbatical team have each been working on their preparations for the forthcoming year – as well as taking holiday during the ‘quiet period’ themselves.