

DPCS End of Year Board Report

Introduction

Being an Officer Trustee at Imperial College Union is challenging, dynamic, and at sometimes downright difficult. This can only be amplified during times of staffing vacancy, where those who were helping you with precedent and practice disappeared into the ether. It's at this point where it sinks in that you are the decision-maker for the students you represent, and you should probably start making the decisions. Being at the head of the network of 2000 volunteers and 377 clubs of hyper-analytical and hyper-critical students (a good thing if there is to be improvement) definitely keeps you on your toes.

Manifesto

"I want to improve the communication between Sport Imperial and the union, and to increase funding for clubs and societies.

The allocation to C&S through budgeting has increased by ~10% from £307,000 in 2011 to £332,000 in 2015, whereas participation increased by ~40% from 18,000 in to 25,000 total memberships in this time; this is clearly not proportional. I would like to be able to allocate increased funding to clubs and societies with the aim to increase participation all across Imperial. This is important as they provide an excellent way to make friends and a much-desired break from work, contributing to overall wellbeing and personal development.

There is room for improvement in the communication between Sport Imperial and the union. A joint strategy is currently being developed, the successful execution of which would be a vital task for the incoming DPCS. Our sports clubs are student-run, therefore it is important to me to ensure that students are heavily consulted in this process.

Having been the Vice President of Clubs & Societies for the RSMU, I have a good understanding of how to oversee clubs and to help them where necessary; I understand that most clubs are very happy to run themselves. I organised The Bottle Match, the second oldest rugby varsity in the world played between the Royal School of Mines and Camborne School of Mines; through this I learnt how to create a compromise to appease staff higher-up whilst maintaining the interests of the students."

Club Funding

CSP Grant

Whilst the figures in my manifesto were a bit off in hindsight, the point still stood that club funding had not increased to match activity. Whilst other opportunities fell out of the woodwork as the year progressed, it was most important to me to increase the CSP grant by a suitable figure.

Through this work, I learnt that the importance of effecting a large change was on illustrating the need, the priority, and coming up with a proposal that is supported by all the decision-makers.

The need was dictated by facts and figures pulled from eActivities. I made clear visuals to show the increasing costs of joining a society (shown by membership products as a proxy,

where the no. stayed approximately the same), and highlighted how rapidly the costs of CSPs at Imperial were increasing without an increase in grant.

The priority was proven through a) electing me on this manifesto in the first place, b) the freshers' fair strategy consultation, c) the results from the strategy consultation released to all students and d) the support from my fellow OTs to make it a priority.

Jarlath opened my eyes to the problem of uncapped clubs & societies providing a squeeze on the budgeting pot (to the detriment of the rest of the clubs & socs) and so I truly hope that a large part of the discussion of next year's CSPB is to prioritise the ability to fund new clubs or to sustain funding for our existing ones.

Whilst £35,000 was indeed a significant increase, I decided that funding would need to increase further to ensure affordability of activities from now and into the future.

Syndicate Sponsorship

During my handover I first created the spreadsheet with the previous DPCS to slice club data in order to package small clubs with the intent to sell syndicates to companies.

Fast forward to now, and this work has been vital in feeding into the Sponsorship Working Group, a project with much wider scope than the initial spreadsheet. Generating external revenue in this way has now been engrained into *Our Strategy*, so that we can support our clubs in future without relying on increasing the profits elsewhere within the Union.

Life Membership & Donations

Interestingly, Nas and I sat down early in the year to discuss how to make Life Membership better; however both of us had come up with the same idea.

As of when I write this, we have just launched the new Life Membership, aiming to improve alumni relations and also provide sustainable funding for clubs. People want to give back to what gave them their incredible student experience, in order to support the same experience for the next generation of students and Nas and I realised this.

In future I hope for there to be options for standing orders and a separate account code on eActivities to ensure the fund is spent appropriately, but for now the importance was to change the mindset of those considering Life Membership.

The donations portal angle came where Israeli Society were to receive £22,000 of donations from generous benefactors, not only was it a pain to receive the donation (back and forth in emails), but GiftAid was completely missed; I hope to see this in future.

Give5k

A fun little day, in reality which showed how great our CSPs are; we ended up trending on Twitter! The 5k will be distributed through budgeting, with ACC Badminton getting a little extra as a result of winning.

Use of funds

There would be little purpose in increasing CSP revenue if it were to be spent frivolously on bar tabs and the committee. It is vital that we take a top-down perspective and understand that some clubs are simply struggling to get by. We need to save the pennies for the fairest use of the limited money we have. Hence, the Expenditure Policy to go to Board of Trustees will dictate the appropriate way for our charity funds to be spent, but this will have to pass forward to the incoming DPCS.

Budgeting

It's 1am. You're in a meeting room at CSPB, you are sweating under the pressure of defending a club that forgot how to use a semi-colon; this is how budgeting used to be. This year we are moving to completely change it, with a transition year of funding only the core activities. I hope my successor will be working on this over the summer. We have the data from the past, we know the expense, and we just need the figures and not lengthy descriptions.

Even with process improvements in terms of volunteers using Google Drive to debate lines, budgeting remains a tough task. It needs to change dramatically, and have much more input from the people we employ to assist with club finance (more oversight is necessary).

Sports

Improving sport was a major part of my manifesto, and one of the main reasons I ran for the role.

The sports strategy was running in the background in November, but my issue with the sports strategy was that whilst it was set up to try and tackle these issues, the fact remained that it tip-toed around the actual problems. At a strategy away day we teased out further issues but it was lacking the student voice, the cutting honesty which was necessary at this stage; I proposed a survey.

The survey in January/February highlighted what solution we needed. It was clear the structures we had in place made communication, signposting and cohesive decision-making hugely different. We needed all of club sport to be in one place, with one team, with students making the decisions.

The priority and buy-in for this has been immensely challenging and long-winded, but we have reached a place where we are all on the same page about needing to result in the above solution, which is incredible!

Non-Manifesto

There are some projects which I developed once starting the role, which will have a significantly positive impact which came out of nowhere from inception to implementation.

Management Group Redevelopment

This year's theme has very much been "challenge the status quo to improve clubs' structures and processes". The less time we force upon our elected student volunteers, the more time there is to actually develop the clubs. This idea first came about in 2012, so to kick up the dust and let it settle at completion is an immense satisfaction for me.

At the start of the year I ran a focus group with some engaged CSPB volunteers, which resulted in a definitive list of the problems needing to be solved.

We restructured the existing Management Group structure to put all clubs in their proper place, whilst splitting the groups up into small, manageable sub-groups in order to keep them better supported, and give them a quick pathway up to the top of the chain to solve their problems if necessary. This would significantly decrease the amount of clicking time on eActivities which has been the role of the Management Group Chair in the past! At the same time we increased the expenditure cap before Management Group approval, which looks to reduce the amount of admin by 1/3 in one fell swoop.

At the same time we started a new project to develop effective training and start drop-in sessions, as the fewer emails and queries, the more time there is to work on longer-term benefits.

Room Bookings/Space

Until the student body decides they don't want any more clubs, there will constantly be an increasing demand on space. Fortunately for us, this is not just a Union problem and is felt by Imperial College's thirst for growth afterwards. We secured student club bookings taking priority over external bookings in College in one of their own policies, we persuaded College to let students operate the partition walls, we have even kickstarted a rapid improvement exercise to attempt to make our processes for ad-hoc bookings better by (eventually) having a timetable for students to see existing bookings. Various other changes too will allow the Student Activities Administrator to deal with bookings more quickly, and as a result we can reduce the 3-week booking period.

Some of the major issues clubs that face have been tackled this year, but the looming behemoths of transport and storage remain. I do hope I have laid the foundations to ensure that these can be brought to completion by the next team of officers.

I hope the following can be tackled next year:

- Transport to and from Harlington and Heston for sports teams
- A transition to the joint sports' brand, bought into by students
- Storage to be assessed and a sustainable plan developed (even if it involves capital expenditure as it could be funded from Harlington)
- Work on CSP Expectations to be completed, along with the CSP Expenditure Policy to be enforced
- A sustainable development of the Alumni fund to CSPs
- Increased interaction between CSP governance and executing actions at CSP-related staff meetings.
- Improved training for the middle management of CSPs (Management Groups)