

## Report to Union Council

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### Introduction

My time and effort so far in this role has been heavily invested in working toward my manifesto pledges (as was anticipated), with much of my effort and energy having been unexpectedly divested into NSS-related issues. I have enjoyed meeting the first elected members of the Rep Network as part of forming the wider team of students which will lobby College to make positive change this year.

### NSS Response

- This year Imperial College London saw an overall 5% drop in student satisfaction rates (compared to last year); this drop was reflected across most departments according to the NSS (National Student Survey) results. Imperial College Union wrote an NSS Response document outlining recommendations for how the College can improve in different areas.
  - The Response had useful contributions from Nayab, Sky and Nas (President).
  - Current and outgoing Academic Reps in certain departments were consulted via exit surveys and face-to-face conversation with myself in order to learn more about the reasons for these drops in satisfaction. Identifying any particular systemic cause for this decrease in satisfaction has proven to be a challenge.
- Our NSS Response was first formally presented by Nas and I at VPAGE (Vice-Provost's Advisory Group for Education); prior to this, the document was circulated to HoDs, DUGs and all Academic Reps elected at the time.
  - Following a positive reception at VPAGE, Nas and I were invited to present the document at President's Board and Provost's Board.
  - Every NSS recommendation was endorsed by James Stirling and all members at Provost's Board.
  - This success has laid a foundation for the Union to work closely with College (particularly Simone Buitendijk) in shaping a new Education Strategy for Imperial College.

### *Education Strategy*

- Following the NSS adversity and recent appointment of Simone (Vice-Provost Education), College are keen to establish a new strategy which will assist in shaping and reforming education at Imperial College. The Union are pleased to see student satisfaction at the heart of this intention; College are beginning to embrace the 'Students as Partners' approach.
  - The strategy can be divided broadly into two separate sub-strategies: 1) E-learning strategy (one of my original manifesto pledges) 2) Teaching and learning strategy.
  - Students have been invited to openly discuss what they feel comprises 'excellent teaching' and 'excellent feedback', including recently at ERB (Education Representation Board) where our Dep Reps, AAOs and CU Presidents contributed some excellent ideas and insights.

- Nas and I have been working closely with Simone in determining the content of the strategy.
  - We have been invited to appear in a video with Simone which will introduce the strategy. The video will hopefully initiate a change in culture whereby changes made in College are effectively communicated to all students.
  - Nas and I will be travelling to Boston, US to attend *Transforming STEM Higher Education* conference. This will act as an extended research opportunity to learn more about how we can engage and teach our students in a STEM institution.

### **Academic Representation Network**

- The Union Education and Welfare team have redesigned the Rep training programme provided for Reps. These foundational training sessions will now be tailored to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Reps (separate sessions).
- Dep Rep/AAO training was delivered by Nayab and I with feedback given by attendees on how we can better cater for the training needs of Reps in future. Reps are now equipped with the skills, platforms and information needed to do their job confidently.
- Dep Reps have been informally tasked to think carefully about which areas of their department need improving this year (particularly after they were equipped with department-specific NSS data); Reps are important agents for change and I am therefore supportive of any departmental action plans which they choose to embrace.

### **Feedback Traffic Light system**

- I have been in conversation with different faculty and IT members about the implementation of this system which monitors the feedback timeliness from staff to students for course assignments.
- The NSS has served as an effective vehicle to propose this as a recommendation for improving feedback across College.
- This system is currently used in Life Sciences. Alan Spivey and Rebecca Middleton are now looking at introducing it in other FoNS departments, based on its effectiveness thus far. The Engineering E-learning team are working with myself and IT to explore how Blackboard may serve as a technological medium to monitor feedback timeliness.
- Dep Reps and AAO's have been encouraged to support this idea in SSCs.

### **Postgraduate Wednesday afternoons**

- A paper was compiled based on data provided by Central Timetabling and data derived from surveys with outgoing PGT/MRes Reps. Timetabling data proved that close to 50% of MSc and MRes students are being failed the opportunity of having Wednesday afternoons free. Interacting with Reps was enlightening for me since I gained a feel for how strongly certain students feel about this topic.
- The paper was presented at VPAGE with approval for it to be escalated at Provost's Board. The majority of committee members were positively receptive to this proposal as they recognised the benefits to Postgraduate satisfaction and wellbeing; a few members were a little concerned around the issue of space which has often been the reason for programmes having to schedule academic contact on Wednesday afternoons and evenings. The central timetabling team are keen to mitigate this issue as part of their new Space Sharing policy.