

RCSU General Committee

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Royal College of Science Union

Start of Term Report to Council

Tuesday 7th November 2017



*Prepared by Michael Edwards on behalf of the
RCSU General Committee*

President's Report - Michael Edwards

It has been an excellent start to the year for the Royal College of Science Union. We've had many successful events to kick the year off and expose the new cohort of Imperial students to us, including the first large-scale ball event we have run for years that has run to a profit.

On the representation front, our Academic Affairs Officer and the Academic Departmental Representatives have spent the summer laying the groundwork for a successful year of advocating change based on our poor NSS results for the past year. My appointee for Welfare Officer has spent significant time developing how the nascent Well-being Representation Network will be received in future years, developing the practical and 'on the ground' aspects of the roles in tandem with the Academic team that had not been considered by the implementation team during the developmental phase.

The committee's approach to the RCSU portfolio is outlined in this report alongside an update on how each strand of our activities is going. My own focus over the past three months has been on the following.

- Developing a Faculty wide approach to developing community spirit both within and between departments, following on from the NSS.
- Planning an organisational review incorporating all stakeholders in RCSU activities at South Kensington to inform our Constitution renewal as we have identified new areas to address.
- Ensuring RCSU concerns are heard regarding the nascent Well-being Representation Network, in particular supporting important concessions such as compulsory training sessions for all volunteers, and meeting with key student representatives throughout RCSU-FoNS to ensure student voice was incorporated in the final stage of development for the network.

I am open to any questions on any aspect of this report, but please be advised that I may be unable to immediately provide an answer to technical aspects that are the realm of individual officers.

I would like to congratulate Shervin Sabeghi and Yizhou Yu on being officially elected to their positions of Welfare Officer and Biology Departmental Representative, and thank them for the work they undertook as my provisionally appointed officers. I would also like to congratulate the newly elected Year and Departmental Representatives in the Faculty of Natural Sciences for both the Academic and Wellbeing Representation Networks.

A plain text version of this report is available on request.

Financial and Administrative Report

Michael McGill and Michael Suarez

RCSU's current financial situation

The RCSU has been fortunate enough to renew all of its standing financial support from the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the Royal College of Science Association, and a number of corporate partners who have retained links with the RCSU through sectorial interest and alumni engagement. As a result we retain our strong financial position with full ability to carry out our core activities and operations. An overview of our current finances is contained below, and a copy of the RCSU Budget for 2017-2018 is available on demand from the RCSU Honorary Secretary and Junior Treasurer.

We negotiated and secured our block grant from the Faculty in the quickest time in recent years, largely due to efficient staff processes on the College side. This was a donation of £15,000 towards our core operations, the Broadsheet, Science Challenge, and Welfare provision.

Pending final confirmation with the RCSA, we will be supported to the sum of £1,500 for the Science Challenge. Discussions with Mohammed Dulloo and Nas Andriopoulos, the current Executive Officers of the RCSA, have suggested further engagement with the Science Challenge on their end would be attractive, and we will be chasing this up with them. There are also outstanding sums from last year including the prize donation for the tenth Science Challenge, and a number of events. Through the RCS Rugby team, we will also be seeking support for the second reinvigorated Sparkes Cup.

A summation of our efforts towards corporate partnership is contained later.

FUNDING OVERVIEW

Funding (Code)	Total Amount (£)
Grant (0)	3,220.76
SGI (1)	5,868.59
College (4)	21,217.04
	30,306.39



Activities

Ayush Dharap, Alexander Crew, Oscar Scrivens, Rohan Kamath and Matthew Stone

Freshers' Fortnight Events

Our Welcome Events as part of RCSU Freshers' Fortnight were generally successful. A report of each event is contained below. Thanks are due to all the committee members who turned out to support each event, and particularly the Entertainments team who organised the most intensive events over the course of the summer.

Thursday 5th October – RCSU Mums and Dads Pub Crawl

This year's event was significantly oversubscribed – we ran out of the pre-ordered 200 t-shirts within 15 minutes and turnout was estimated to be over 300 people. The route went down through South Kensington, up to Gloucester Road and ended at the William Morris in Hammersmith with an afterparty at Belushis.

Friday 6th October – RCSU Book Sale

This year the RCSU took over the Chemistry Book Sale and became the unified outlet for preowned textbooks for students in the Faculty. Over the course of a lunchtime we raised over £1,800 for graduating students. A noted improvement for next year is to request books earlier, in June or July, to ensure students are still around in large numbers to provide their books for sale.

Monday 9th October – RCSU Tea Party

This year's event was generally positive with some minor issues. The provider of the crockery was far more expensive than quoted, which ballooned costs. This event was jointly run with RAG with a loose tie to the Mental Health Foundation's Tea and Talk initiative, which unfortunately wasn't fully integrated into the event. Thanks are due to TeaSoc for providing their hot water urn for use at the event.

Tuesday 10th October – Quad Union Carnival

This event was the first of its kind, building on the success of the Tri-Union events that have been held over the past several years. There was a strong competitive element with inflatables and a darts tournament. On the night, there were several issues, but they have been raised with Commercial Services for future reference. We are still waiting on some of the figures to determine the cost of the event. Poor RCSU turnout is predicted to be due to the next event.

Thursday 12th October – RCSU Autumn Ball @ Ruby Blue Bar, Leicester Square

This event was one of the most successful of the fortnight, and a Welcome Ball for the RCSU for several years for several reasons. We managed to sell out the event and sold further tickets on the door at a further premium. The event came in at a profit and managed to provide a similar experience to similar ball events in the past that were subsidised to the sum of £'000s, which demonstrates the idea remains viable with a lower level of resources, providing the event quality is high and publicity is strong. General

feedback was highly positive and we are looking for partners to build on the success of this event.

Upcoming and planned events

At the Entertainments Committee on Wednesday 25th October, it was decided that we would plan for the following events.

- A Christmas event separate from the Departmental Society Christmas Dinners – maybe a Christmas Pub Crawl or Bar Night.
- A joint RCSU-CGCU Ball event at some point in the year – a meeting to discuss is planned for the week of the 6th November.
- The REVEL – a large-scale event collaboration between the RCSU and the Department of Computing Society. A meeting to discuss this is pending.

Further events since the last report

Since the End of Year Report to the 2016-2017 Union Council, the revival of the Constituent Union rugby tournament, the Sparkes Cup, is the only major event that has not been mentioned. Funded largely by the Royal College of Science Association, the event was held at Rosslyn Park RFC on Saturday 24th June between the RSMU, CGCU and RCSU. Congratulations are due to the CGCU Rugby team for their overall win on the day, and thanks to the RCS Rugby team and club for spearheading the organisation of the event. We aim to get more support from the CGCA for this year's event to ensure the event continues to grow and attract a wider pool of attendees. A meeting is planned between the RCSU Sports Officer and the RCS Rugby team to set in motion the planning of this year's event.



Operations

Becky Neil, Pranavi Agarwal, Ansh Bhatnagar, Ivan Tang and Lloyd James (volunteer)

Broadsheet

We've had a successful start to the year for our award-winning Broadsheet publication. Starting with our Freshers' Fair stall, the Editor and Broadsheet volunteers signed up over 100 interested people to our new mailing list. We then had a meeting of interested writers where the theme of the first issue was decided - *Unheard Voices*, covering people working in science whose contributions are not recognised. At time of writing, we are awaiting content and are aiming to publish the first issue of the year by the start of December.

Science Challenge

The topic of this year's Science Challenge is 'One Small Step, One Giant Leap'; beyond the grandiose history behind those words, we will be pushing for submissions considering how the smaller scientific discoveries build up to have a greater impact on our society. This theme was advised by polling of the wider RCSU and College community, and we thank those who took part in the first step of this year's Challenge.

The Launch event is scheduled for the 5th December and will be held in the City and Guilds Building at the same time as the Imperial Fringe in the College Main Entrance. We have one confirmed judge out of four - Felicia Yap, a Biochemistry alumna and renowned upcoming author - and have shortlisted a number who are currently pending a reply. An interview with

Prof. Robert Winston will be released in Felix as part of the promotion of the event, and we thank Felix for this opportunity to promote science communication in the student newspaper.

The Final is scheduled for the evening of Tuesday 6th March and will be held in the House of Lords sponsored by the Science Challenge Ambassador, the Lord Winston. We will also be financially supported through a generous donation by the RCSA, our alumni association, and the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

Alumni Affairs

We are continuing to actively engage the Royal College of Science Association in our activities, such as the Science Challenge. An RCSU delegation attended the AGM of the RCSA on Thursday 14th September, and was part of the first RCS Convention, which we believe will be a good forum for re-engaging the full 'RCS Family' after years of poor engagement.

We will be looking for effective ways to be involved with Alumni Weekend 2018 as the RCSU, and this is something we would like to discuss with the other Constituent Unions and the wider Union volunteer community.



BAHFest

BAHFest (the Festival of Bad Ad-hoc Hypotheses) is an RCSU-organised science comedy competition, the UK arm of an international event which is now going into its 3rd year of being hosted at Imperial College London.

BAHFest 2018 will be held in the Great Hall on





March 17th, and will be open to the General Public and also live-streamed on YouTube. Entrants will compete to present their ridiculous theories and support them with as much scientific evidence as possible, with the winner receiving a cash prize and a 3D printed trophy. BAHFest 2016 was the runner-up for ICU Event of the Year and was reported on by Ars Technica: arstechnica.com/gaming/2016/02/bahfest-london-2/

Updates for this year

We have received a substantial discount from College on the booking over previous years.

Confirmed involved so far: Matt Parker (of standupmaths), Dr Lindsey Fitzharris (Oxford University). Prospective keynote talks from Dr Adam Rutherford (BBC Radio 4) and Dr Jorge Cham (of PhD Comics).

We have arranged to book H-Bar that evening as a setting for book signing and post-show drinks.

This year there will be a 'special' prize, the Lloyd James Prize for Best Use of Graphs, with a 3D printed medallion.

(Note from the President - the role of BAHFest Co-ordinator is being trialled as a voluntary position within the RCSU and will be added to the Constitution pending discussion with our organising partner and a review of the role)

Sponsorship

Relations with external companies have largely

remained the same since last year. The RCSU has managed to retain our major sponsor, Applied Predictive Technologies, and has close ties to FTI Consulting through alumni links. Through these relations we have secured £875 towards our activities for the coming year.

It must be noted that our Departmental Societies have continued to outperform the RCSU in terms of sponsorship, with PhySoc securing almost £3,000 and all DepSocs managing to sign up at least one major partner. Congratulations are due to all the involved DepSoc volunteers for developing and maintaining such effective industry links.

We will be adopting a new strategy in terms of developing the Constituent Union's relationship with industry, which will be reported on in later in the year.

Academic Affairs

Abhijay Sood, Lidia Ripoll Sanchez, Yizhou Yu, Katerina Stavri, Michael McGill and Michaela Flegrova

At time of writing, most of the FoNS Departmental Staff-Student Committees are yet to occur. Therefore, a verbal update will be provided by the Academic Affairs Officer, Abhijay Sood.

Our Academic Representation strategy for the year, in tandem with the Union's NSS response, is contained within the RCSU's report to the Education and Representation Board on Thursday 12th October 2017. In essence:

- We are pushing for significant student involvement in the 2018-2019 Course Reviews across the Faculty as part of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.
- We are advocating for further support for Departmental Societies to fulfil their core mission to promote a sense of community within their departments.
- We are using the RCSU Five Year Strategy to advocate for change or improvements in representation across the Union structures,

including development of the Representation module on eActivities.

An innovation for this year is the RCSU-FoNS Volunteer Social, which includes all newly elected representative volunteers. This is being done to foster a sense of community among the entire volunteer network in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, and includes both ARN and WBRN volunteers.

Welfare and Wellbeing

Shervin Sabeghi, Tiah Cudjoe-Cole, Felix Thompson, Natasha Boyd and Chenyu Lin

RCSU Welfare and Wellbeing recent activity is outlined in the RCSU report to the Community and Welfare Board for Thursday 19th October 2017.

Our key strategy points for the year are:

- Develop the Wellbeing Representation Network (WBRN) to its most effective form within the FONS. Much of this will be a dynamic process using the on-going feedback from Wellbeing Representatives. In the medium-term, we are aiming to start implementing separate SSCs for Wellbeing and Welfare both on a departmental and faculty level.
- As outlined in the CWB report, a key aim is to foster a sense of community within the student body using DepSocs. We hope to also use the WBRN to achieve this and that the Wellbeing Representatives will be encouraged to organise community-building events and to complement work done by DepSocs to this end.
- Using the WBRN to raise awareness about positive wellbeing self-care techniques, but equally importantly where, when and how to get help when needed

Since the CWB report, we have had our Rep Social, which partially succeeded in creating inter-departmental community, and created a relaxed

place for reps to share ideas and concerns. We would like to push for a bigger turnout next time.

(Note from the President - the Wellbeing Departmental Representatives are being treated as provisional members of the General Committee in parity with the Academic Departmental Representatives. This will not be official until constitutional amendment has been passed in January 2018)

Clubs and Activities

Michael Edwards, Michael McGill and Michael Suarez

Our portfolio of 7 clubs - 5 Departmental Societies, 1 Academic-related club, and 1 club in the Incubator - has had a fairly successful start to the year. To reiterate, all clubs have managed to find success with industrial partners, with some clubs having stronger success than the overall RCSU.

All clubs had a range of Freshers' events, including alcoholic and non-alcoholic socials, seminars and mingles. The RCSU supported the Mums and Dads element of the DepSoc social experience through the RCSU Pub Crawl and Tea Party.

It is our aim to expose our clubs to the inner workings of the College and Union to a greater extent than in previous years, in order to demystify the organisations and break down certain barriers that are perceived to exist towards their success. To this end, we invited the FoNS Advancement team and a staff member from the Alumni Office to attend our first Management Group meeting on Monday 23rd October, to expose the club to the opportunities that exist to critically engage alumni in their activities.

Major concerns continue to exist within the RCSU club network regarding the Mums and Dads system and room bookings that have continued from last year. The RCSU will be moving to address these concerns by proposing changes to Mums and Dads provision and following the DPCS's progress on improving room booking services.