

Motion on the Creation of a Working Class and Social Mobility Liberation Officer Role

Proposed: Lloyd James

Seconded: Ansh Bhatnagar (FoNS UG OM), Ariana Sadr-Hashemi (Mental Health Liberation Officer), Shervin Sabeghi (RCSU Welfare Officer), Rhidian Thomas (Ethics and Environment Officer)

Union Notes:

1. Liberation Officers exist to represent and campaign for underrepresented students, support the DPW in their work and facilitate student involvement within the Union.
2. None of the existing Liberation Officer roles are dedicated to representation of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
3. Liberation roles representing economically disadvantaged students currently exist at York, LSE, KCL, SOAS, Manchester and St. Hilda's, Oxford.
4. A 2016 government report found that Britain has a deep social mobility problem, that is getting worse for the younger generations. In particular, it was found, compared with non-FSM (Free School Meals) pupils living in the same neighbourhood and with similar GCSE attainment, FSM pupils are 47% less likely to attend a Russell Group University and 22% less likely to study STEM at university. [1]
5. The only issue faced by less affluent students that is currently addressed by the university is economic troubles (addressed by the bursary scheme). This incorrectly assumes and perpetuates the idea that monetary issues are the only disadvantage faced by these students. Other issues include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 5.1. The same government report cited earlier found that wealthier students, who were found to have higher social capital, were nearly one and a half times more likely to receive careers education compared with students with lower social capital, who were significantly more likely to be from poorer families. However, this is not recognised by the careers service and no services are offered to correct this disparity.
 - 5.2. A 2014 investigation [2] found that for students on the same course, students from the highest socio-economic quintile group are, on average, 3.4 percentage points less likely to drop-out, 5.3 percentage points more likely to complete their degree and 3.7 percentage points more likely to graduate with a first or 2:1 than those from the lowest socio-economic quintile group. This demonstrates a clear attainment gap for students from a low socio-economic background, which currently no work is being done to address.
6. From the College's Access Agreement 2018-19 [3] targets and milestones list, it can be seen that significant work is being done to increase outreach to students from low income backgrounds but no targets have been agreed to improve support for those students once they are here.
7. Students from low income backgrounds are less likely to be involved in Clubs and Societies and less likely to run for Union positions due to a variety of factors (e.g. having

jobs while studying, lack of money to partake in events, etc.) meaning they will be underrepresented/unrepresented on democratic bodies.

Union Believes:

1. The issues that have recently arisen around the bursary scheme have demonstrated a clear need for representation for students who are in receipt of this bursary, as the campaign has been spearheaded by Rhidian Thomas rather than a Union representative (bar the involvement of the DPW). Receiving the bursary is a good indicator of students being from a low income background.
2. The issues faced by students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, while intersecting in parts with other liberation zones, are sufficiently unique to merit dedicated individual representation, and the attention of a dedicated Union volunteer.

Union Resolves:

1. To create a Working Class and Social Mobility Liberation Officer role, to be elected for the 2018-19 academic year.
2. The role description of this officer shall include all responsibilities set out in Sections D21-22 of the ICU Bye-Laws, which apply to all Union Welfare Officers.
3. Furthermore, the WCSM Liberation Officer shall:
 - 3.1. Liaise with the Careers Service to ensure that specialist services are provided for those students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - 3.2. Investigate attainment gaps that exist within all areas of the student experience at Imperial and develop strategies to eliminate these.
 - 3.3. Work to improve the engagement of economically disadvantaged students within ICU and its democratic structures.
4. As part of the review of liberation roles currently being undertaken by the Governance Steering Group, consult students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and revise the role description laid out here in light of this consultation if necessary, as is being done for all other roles.
5. Amend the ICU Bye-Laws to bring these changes to effect.

NB Amending the ICU Bye-Laws requires a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote.

[1] www.gov.uk/government/news/state-of-the-nation-report-on-social-mobility-in-great-britain

[2] www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/wps/WP201431.pdf

[3] www.offa.org.uk/agreements/Final%20AA%20-%20Imperial%20College%20London.pdf