



Imperial College Union Board of Trustees

26th February 2020

AGENDA ITEM NO.	17
TITLE	Deputy President (Welfare) Trustee Board Report
AUTHOR	Deputy President (Welfare) – Shervin Sabeghi
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>An update on my key areas of work over the last 2 months + an appendix with an update on the Liberation Reform.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed Liberation Reform proposal at Union Council – we’ll be introducing networks of students attributed to each Officer and have introduced a new ‘Working Class Officer’. Now moving to working on implementation of this. • Finished negotiations with College over hall rent prices after rejected their model at Council 3 times. Secured £3m reduction over 5 years, and will be starting a Cut the Rent campaign to reopen negotiations. • Work has begun on a review of the WBRN in collaboration with CHERS in College. This may have impact on block grant negotiations as there is £50k explicitly attached to the WBRN.
PURPOSE	To update Board on my goals and work so far.
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	No action required.

EDI and Liberation

Progress/Updates:

- 'Liberation and Community Week' happened 27-31 January led by Representation Coordinator (Wellbeing) Gabi Fulton. Included a video series and poster campaign for each L&C Officer tied into a social media campaign to improve the visibility of the officers.
- Passed Liberation Reform proposal at Council on 21st January to introduce a new 'Working Class' Liberation Officer and networks of students associated with each L&C officer. **More details in appendix.**
- Over £8,000 awarded to student-led EDI activities as a result of the EDI Seed Fund. The Union will be facilitating most of this through the Representation Team.
- There has been another Self-Assessment Team meeting for the Race Equality Charter and for the Athena Swan. Both seem to be in better shape than they did before. Much of the work on the REC has been refocused to the two staff members (REC Coordinator and Stephen Curry) who explicitly need to work on it. The Athena Swan renewal has been made easier by the result of the application review which makes it less intensive and data heavy. A new effort for student focus groups for the REC is underway and it seems the College have learned from the mistakes of the last ones that had very little student engagement.
- There has been a vast plethora of committees established to deliver, monitor and evaluate activities to meet the targets in the Access and Participation Plan. To name them all: Access Programme Board, Programme Delivery Group, Access and Evaluation Group, Student Ambassadors Working Group, and the Marcomms Working Group. There is student representation (i.e. me) on all of these. The focus is currently completely on the access side and all of these groups are essentially to do with Outreach activity of the College. I will be encouraging the College to start to think equally on the progress/success side of the APP as this is currently neglected.

Wellbeing Representation Network

Progress/Updates:

- The Union has been approached by Alejandro Luy on behalf of CHERS in College to collaborate on a review of the WBRN as part of an AdvanceHE collaborative project on 'Embedding Wellbeing in the Curriculum'. They wish to see what impact the WBRN has had on education at Imperial and, essentially in return for access to the network, are happy to research according to objectives we have as well. While this collaboration is generally positive, it is worth being mindful that there is £50k of funding tied explicitly to the WBRN from Simone's budget and it is likely that this review will partly inform the choice of whether or not this is continued.

Student Support Services

Progress/Updates

- Have had conversations with the Disabilities Officer and Head of the Disability Advisory Service where there seems to be a collective agreement that, rather than eliminating it or running a deposit scheme, significantly reducing the fee for assessments (£95 -> ~£30) is the best way forward. This is seen as a good middle

ground to ensure that the fee is affordable while also preventing students from not attending booked assessments and maintaining a sense of ownership over the process. This will require ~£18k extra contribution from the College and the next step is to convince Hannah Bannister to include this in her funding bid this year.

- Mary Bown, the Head of DAS, is retiring at the end of this week and the College are yet to begin recruiting a replacement. Hannah Bannister wishes to extend the remit of the service to also include speciality in addressing the needs of students in very small minority groups. This includes trans students, care leavers, care givers amongst others. Whilst this is positive, I'm concerned it will cause unwelcome delay in the recruitment of a new Head of Service which will put strain on the already stretched service.
- The OfS national collaborative on improving NHS mental health services is ongoing. I attended a national collaborative meeting in January where the various national hubs came together to present work done. The main work of the 'North London' hub (Imperial and UCL) is to consult students and we have since recruited 4 'Student Fellows' across both institutions who will lead on consultative activities.

Hall rent negotiation

Progress/Updates:

- Union Council have rejected a third and final model from the College which included a £3m reduction in rent prices over a 5-year period. This has effectively brought negotiations to an end and the College have now published the prices for prices next year. The £3m is being spent to: smooth average increases over the next 5 years such that there is a 5.5% annual increase for 3 years then a 2.5% annual increase there on; provide a slight discount to hall seniors; provide a (currently obscure) bursary to widening participation students; and to supplement the student contributions to the Halls Social Fund.
- At the Council meeting where the last offer was rejected, we took votes on starting a 'Cut the Rent' campaign and what tactics might be used in these (as already circulated to Board). Alongside this, a blog post was published that encouraged interested students to register their interest (24 responses so far). The next steps are to organise a campaign meeting and invite Council members as well as these students.

Other matters

- The Community and Welfare Board (CWB) has begun its work on reviewing policies. There is a lot to do as many of the delegated policies need significant reworking. The main focus right now is the Safe Space Policy where the plan is to broadly expand it to include all Union activities as well as our physical spaces. Careful consideration needs to be put into how this interacts with our complaints and disciplinary procedures (which are also currently under review).
- Work is ongoing to kick off the new merged SACAs/Union Awards – 'Student Choice Awards'. We are currently reviewing the categories (trying to bring together 24 total categories into one is not easy!), the logistics of the nomination and selection process and organising the final awards evening. We are hoping that this combined approach will help to elevate the profile of student awards while also creating a sense of community between staff and students.

Appendix – Liberation Reform update

Background:

- At the beginning of the year, I decided to start work around how Liberation and Community (L&C) at ICU can be structurally changed to improve our representation of minority groups and better support the L&C Officers.
- I wanted to ensure that this was as much of a co-creation with student officers as possible so introduced this early on to CWB.
- Established a working group mainly with L&C Officers to work out what are the current problems, what needs to change and how this could be changed.
- Came to a proposal that was then reviewed and accepted by CWB which was then taken to Council and passed on 21st January.

The reform:

The reform itself involves:

- The creation of a new 'Working Class' Liberation Officer that represents students from disadvantaged backgrounds. CWB felt this was a missing area of representation especially considering the College's new Access and Participation Plan. The creation of this new officer has garnered a reasonable amount of attention: both positive and negative. Most people seem to be happy with the officer itself, but fewer are happy with the name. That being said, the role has a lot more interest than other L&C Officers in the Leadership Elections so it seems that students are resonating with the new officer.
- The creation of a 'Network' of students associated with each L&C Officer e.g. BME Student Network. These networks will have committees of student volunteers that aid the L&C Officer. They will have the purpose of advocating/campaigning, representation, community building and welfare support. The current officers are very enthusiastic about the concept – many feel that it's very difficult to do all parts of their role on their own and having a committee to delegate work across will be highly beneficial. I personally hope that this means ICU will have more campaigns and that liberation is kept as a student led activity.

Work do be done:

While the concept of the reform has passed (and we are currently electing a Working Class Officer), a significant amount of work still needs to be done to determine how the networks will be implemented. Some considerations/questions around the implementation:

- Ownership and independence of the networks: the networks will be the responsibility of the DPW and CWB as they are distinct from CSPs (therefore aren't tied to the DPCS or CSPB). The exact management structure and chain of responsibility needs to be decided.
- Committee and remit: there will be a core committee that every network must have. The standing orders of each network will dictate any additional roles that are necessary for that network. Also, there needs to be work done to define the nuances of each individual network – this will need to be done in collaboration with some existing CSPs where there is significant overlap with a new network.

- Membership and democratic process: the networks should be free to join by any student. The LCO Chairs will be elected, as they are now, in the Leadership Elections. For 2020/21, the rest of the committee will need to be elected in the Autumn Elections, but how this happens annually will need to be decided. Furthermore, it will need to be decided who is eligible to run for the positions (do they need to be a member first?).
- Finances: there is currently £500 allocated to each LCO which can be carried forward to the networks. Furthermore, Liberation Officers have £500 available to spend on their respective Liberation months which can also be used by these networks for the same purpose. The process of allocating funding will need to be decided i.e. whether each network is assigned a set amount as they are now or if there is a budgeting process to allocate money from a central pot. Furthermore, the expenditure approval process needs to be determined.

From these and from discussions at CWB, the following four work streams have been identified:

1. Procedures & Governance: There is a lot of procedure that needs to be developed around running these networks. This includes how finances are managed, where the networks fit into Union governance, who is responsible for what, what policies are required.
2. Defining the Networks: This stream will essentially lead to standing orders for each network. Includes what roles there will be in each network, what the purpose and goals are for each, where the alignment with current CSPs is, what each network will do.
3. Campaigns: A large part of the reason these networks will exist is around campaigns. Campaigns need to be looked at in a more holistic way in the Union, especially now with the creation of these networks.
4. Support & Alignment: Looking at what support these networks will need – resources, staff support, financial etc. This stream will also look at how these networks will align with the College which is a gap that has already been identified.

Following my steer from CWB, the next steps in the implementation plan will be to involve relevant CSPs (likely iQ, Environmental Society and Mentality).