

# Deputy President (Welfare) – Council report

Shervin Sabeghi – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020

## Introduction

In my professional welfare opinion, life sucks right now. Since the last Council meeting, work mainly consisted of a mad rush to Christmas to ensure students were supported over the break. An escalation from Tier 2 to Tier 3 to Tier 4 to lockdown has made professional and personal life harder, but we're still doing we can at the Union to represent and support students. Maybe it's just an eternal optimism, but it does feel like there are glimmers of hope and an end in sight. Looking forward to, fingers crossed, something close to normality later in the year.

## How I've spent my time since the last meeting (24<sup>th</sup> November – 12<sup>th</sup> January)

College Meetings and 121s	Union Meetings	Desk work (day-to-day)	Time with students + comms	Project work
25%	35%	15%	15%	10%

## Key latest updates

- Before Christmas, ran the Christmas Buddy Scheme which was very well taken up with 204 students signing up. About 75 one-to-one matches were made and 35 buddy groups. Alas, the scope of the scheme became much reduced due to Tier 4, however with support bubbles still allowed, students who would otherwise have been alone were able to spend time with one other over Christmas. The online communities also had some success, but didn't quite organically take off as hoped.
- Concluded a club culture disciplinary which has informed a greater piece of work at the Union which will continue this term. We want to ensure all students are able to access and feel comfortable in every CSP - this will include looking at support and training for committees, how welfare issues are dealt with and how issues are reported and handled when they arise.
- Since term has restarted, there has been a lot of College discussions to respond to the new lockdown.
  - Abhijay and I successfully negotiated a lenient, student focused approach to dealing with rent this term. The College were originally proposing to grant rent waivers on an application basis, however we convinced them to instead grant a default waiver to all students without in-person teaching and no student should have been invoiced rent for second term.
  - We have been encouraging the College to ask students to come back on to campus as little as possible, and there shouldn't be many students forced to come back with leniency for those who can't/don't want to.
  - With Michaela and Abhijay, we're discussing how to ensure fair assessment this year and adapt the safety net from last year. Reps – please come to the meeting tomorrow!
  - Bringing increased student wellbeing/mental health support on the agenda for College meetings, with more work to be done to support in prolonged periods of remote learning/isolation.

- Continuing to invest a lot of time on OT/Union comms and helping the College with their comms to ensure students are informed fully.
- Some sad news: Gabi, our Representation Coordinator at the Union, left at the end of last term to go back to her career in healthcare. Alongside this, due to a series of cock-ups from College HR and a loss of recruiting momentum over Christmas, there have been delays in getting a new Representation Manager. This means, effectively, Michaela and I currently have no staff support at the Union so desperately ask for some patience from reps and LCOs in dealing with things until we have more support!
- Halls: continuing to invest time into supporting Halls – both in terms of mind numbing admin to provide the social fund, as well as attempts to greater support Wardening teams to support students. Also been involved in a number of Halls Tribunals – nearly exclusively related to COVID breaches.

### **My 2020/21 objectives**

Here are updates against my objectives.

#### **1) Liberation and Community (L&C) Development**

- Slowed down, due to loss of staff support.
- Planning a week drive in February to get students to take part in the L&C networks

#### **2) Representation Network Review**

- Due to start later in term when Representation Manager has been hired.

#### **3) COVID-19 Response**

- Ongoing ESOG (Education Strategy and Operation Group) meetings dealing with immediate issues (e.g. new lockdown) – see updates above.
- Will be conducting work with reps and College staff to improve support and facilitate students staying connected and building/maintaining communities during lockdown.

#### **4) Student Discipline and Harassment**

- Tangential work related to club culture has begun, with updates at the next Council meeting.

#### **5) Campaigns and Student Voice**

- Again, slowed down due to loss of staff support. Until a proper format is sorted, will continue to support campaigns on an ad-hoc informal basis.

**Congrats if you've read this far! Please feel free to drop me an email whenever at [dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk) if you've got any questions or feedback.**