**Community & Welfare Forum (CWF)**

**Date:** Thursday 28 Nov 2024

**Time:** 18:00- 20:00
**Location:** Blackett Lecture Theatre 2

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| Agenda |  |
|  | Welcome and updates22 attendees. NH – Nico Henry, Welfare Officer Trustee. HC – Hannah Corsini, Democracy and Representation Assistant.  | Verbal update |
|  | Signposting improvements* If students have issues they should be pointed to the Student Support Zone
* Every student is entitled to 5 counselling sessions per year.
* A lot of services are underused but oversubscribed – NH is pushing to get more availability of these services.
* Students who have gone through counselling services have raised that the counselling is not very diverse and they may need extra training on intersectionality.
* Wait time for the disability advisory service is very long.

**Feedback**There are technical issues with the counselling services platform, for example, it says it is down when it is not, and only accepts referrals at certain times of day. Many students echoed that the waitlist is very long. Students may go through the waitlist for either counselling services or mental health advice only to be referred to the other platform and have to go through that waitlist too. Additionally, many of the recommendations given for further places to go are based in South Kensington which is not useful for students living elsewhere in London.  | Actions: NH to raise the fact that the counselling service does not accept referrals 24/7 with the student support director during their catch-up.  |
|  | Imperial rent negotiations* Uni trying to increase rent
* CB and NH have been negotiating rent increase – from 30% increase to 25%
* Uni is passing on net zero cost to an increase in rent
* CB and NH then negotiated to decrease to 17%
* University calculated increase in cost by calculating surface area of campus which is accommodation vs academic then applying this to net zero cost
* Union Council paper passed to attempt to publicise the issue surrounding rent.

**Feedback**Students raised that postgrad accommodation is often even more expensive than undergrad accommodation. In one case, students are being charged £350 a week for rooms that are now being advertised for £280 a week and are not being offered the difference back.  | Verbal update & group discussionActions: NH to follow up on postgrad rooms which are being advertised for less than they are currently being charged for.  |
|  | Consent education* Office for students (OFS) has new rules on consent education
* Imperial is behind on this
* For the OFS registration, students have to complete consent education (unless they opt out for personal reasons)
* UCL and LSE train and pay students to lead consent education sessions, and run active bystander training for clubs and societies leaders

**Feedback**Students would like to see jobs offered to students surrounding consent education. They echoed issues with the consent training – it is very easy to click through without actually learning anything from it. Suggestions included ‘train the trainer’ sessions, involving Sexpression society, offering certificates of completion and monitoring attendance.  |  |
|  | Biodiversity* Imperial does not have many “third spaces” i.e. places where students can chill out
* There is the bar but it is not the best place as there is a focus on alcohol
* Imperial has contracted J&L Gibbons the same company who redesigned the NHM garden and they have proposed redesigns for Beit Quad
* This can be implemented quite quickly and also may mean more jobs for students
* Current Beit Quad area is not very biodiverse, and bush forms a large block – general agreement from forum on this.
* Plans for various plants, loose seating, pergola.
* Imperial has an issue with belonging and this may help address this as well as allowing students to bring ideas to the table
* NH would like a community allotment
* Currently, there is the Secret Garden behind the chaplaincy, but not a students know about this.

**Feedback**Students would like to see the Environmental Society involved in redesigning Beit Quad. Other suggestions included having a ping pong table, bookswap space, clothes swaps, student-run booths to sell things and getting counselling services involved so they could run group sessions gardening outside.  |  |
|  | London Living Wage* Imperial is not accredited to the London Living Wage (LLW), every other university is
* Some students are not getting paid LLW – was raised by NH and this was called an administrative error, and their pay was raised.
* NH would still like accreditation but the president does not want to be signed onto third parties.
* Imperial’s website says all staff are being paid the LLW but this is still not the case.

**Feedback**It was raised that jobs are currently being offered for med school interviews in January paid for £11.44 an hour (below LLW). NH said he would follow up on this.  | NH to follow up on med school interviews being paid at less than £11.44 per hour. |
|  | Food on campus4 key problems:* Cost is too high
* A lot of food waste – this was one of NH’s manifesto points
* Not enough signposting on allergens
* Not enough options
* NH met up with the MyImperial app people to set up a to good to go section where there can be alerts on food which would otherwise go to waste.
* Catering says they don’t waste food, but NH does not believe this is the case.
* Also, no allergens are advertised by catering at the moment – you have to go up and ask.
* NH asked catering about this and they said they would publish them on instagram – NH responded that some students block Imperial posts on their instagram.
* Fusion have said that they do waste food and are okay to collaborate on the MyImperial app.
* Catering have agreed to advertise their allergens on MyImperial app.

Feedback Students echoed the lack of food choices, particularly on White City campus, Charing Cross campus, Hammersmith campus and in the library cafe. Students with dietary requirements like gluten intolerances are particularly affected. There are issues regarding halal certification as staff do not know what is and isn’t halal. There were additionally several complaints the food is too expensive – especially in the above campuses. Several students have had issues with lack of microwaves and microwave uncleanliness in various departments. The latter should be fixed as of recently, but NH will check if the physics department administers cleaning contracts differently. Students seemed supportive of the use of MyImperial to reduce food waste, but raised concerns around the use of bluetooth as there are bluetooth issues on campus, and questioned whether it would be oversubscribed.  | Actions: NH to check if the physics department has made the same changes to cleaning contracts wrt microwaves.  |
|  | Lacking library space* Currently there is an issue with space hogging in the library
* Imperial is second worst of the Russell Group universities in terms of library space access for students
* There is additionally no plan for a library at White City campus, and the academic building will not be opened until 2029 – this will be highlighted in Felix in the upcoming week.
* There is a new section of the library being opened up on floor 4.
* The Union is pushing for other unused offices and the library basement to be converted into extra space for students.
* The Library team is supportive of pushing for extra space.
* Suggestions have included an open letter and a petition
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|  | Mentorship schemes for underrepresented students* NH would like to introduce new mentorship programmes in the style of FoNs, who pay students to reach out to other underrepresented students.
* Even if these schemes end up being unpaid, he believes this would be good to do on a voluntary basis and would help to create more of a community feel.

**Feedback**Students pointed to helpful existing schemes such as the ones in the Engineering and Business schools, which offer £5 vouchers for students to go out together, or Bioengineering, where staff are given this coupon instead.Students agreed it would be good to see more staff involved in this scheme across all departments. It was also raised that students may not realise they qualify as ‘underrepresented’ and sometimes there can be too much jargon – it would be helpful for mentors to give more of a biography-style introduction so people can see if they relate to it.  |  |
|  | Active travel* NH is trying to get financial aids for people who wish to travel onto campus by bike
* One of the key issues is that South Kensington is one of the only boroughs in London which doesn’t have proper cycling infrastructure.
* There are a lot of concerns around safety and traffic which are stopping people from cycling – this is a very gendered issue too.
* NH would like to set up a cycling buddy scheme where people who live nearby can cycle in together.
* NH has tried to argue for more bike spaces but this is extremely expensive, so he is now pushing for doubled up bike spaces.
* He is also planning on doing a video cycling from home to campus

**Feedback**Students echoed safety concerns, especially as it is getting dark very early now. Students would like more frequent bike auctions throughout the year – currently there is one with all of the summer bikes which have been abandoned. Students suggested refresher courses both in-person and online on highway guidelines, especially for international students who may not be familiar with British cycling rules. They also asked for a map showing the best routes in terms of busyness and lighting. International students find it hard to own a bike outright and would like more information on bikeshares and renting, and where to store their bikes over the summer. |  |
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 | White City Planning * Although over 5000 students and staff will be based at White City campus, there are no clear plans for a gym, prayer space or library.
* The uni seems to be prioritising commerciality over student wellbeing.
* NH requested students feedback on this
* He also requested they submit ideas for street names as per the uni’s request
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|  | Disability Guidelines* MS and NH have been reviewing accessibility guidelines on events and have written some guidelines.
* They are also looking into security staff training around accessibility as, for example, some do not know what sunflower lanyards are.
* The union’s accessibility policy has run out, and when they renew it, they would like it to be more comprehensive.
* They would like more CSP guidelines on making events and publicity accessible.
* Things like lifts, disabled toilets, crowded events should be publicised for events as students should have all the necessary information before buying a ticket.

**Feedback**Students suggested that the university is not meeting requirements to provide reasonable adjustments. Students from the Faculty of Medicine had faced barriers in getting slides published before lectures, even after meetings with faculty staff. Students suggested that for CSPs, it may be worth putting together a training module for them. It was suggested the guidelines are a bit too soft and that CSPs should have a reason for an event being inaccessible.  | Action: NH to meet with the Vice-Dean of Medicine and the EDI provost and raise the lack of slides before lectures with them.  |
| AOB | Rep social is on Monday 9th December in the Union building – there will be a Christmas film and snacks! |  |