



Imperial College Union Council Report

January 2021

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Committee of 2020-21

Executive Team



Muntaha Naeem - President

icsm.president@imperial.ac.uk



Nicole George - Deputy President

icsm.deputy@imperial.ac.uk



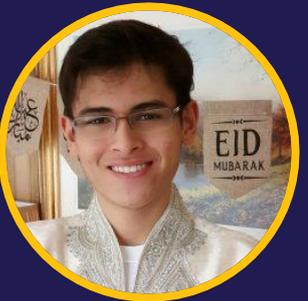
Elena Torrell - BMB President

icsm.bmbpres@imperial.ac.uk



Tom Hess - Executive Treasurer

icsm.sponsorship@imperial.ac.uk



**Rayyan Islam - Secretary &
Communications**

icsm.secretary@imperial.ac.uk



Harroop Bola - Sites & Services

icsm.services@imperial.ac.uk

Academics Team



**Varja Čučulović - Academic Officer
for Early Years**

E: icsm.aocy@imperial.ac.uk



Rachel Kwok - Academic Chair

E: icsm.acad@imperial.ac.uk



**Conor Wisentaner - Academic Officer
for Clinical Years**

E: icsm.aocy@imperial.ac.uk



Rahul Penumaka - Academic Officer for BSc

E: icsm.aosy@imperial.ac.uk



Jai Chapman - Academic Officer for BMB

E: icsm.aobmb@imperial.ac.uk

Entertainments Team



Milly Orr Ewing - Ents Chair

E: icsm.ents@imperial.ac.uk



**Biranavi Kirupakaran - Social
Secretary**

E: icsm.socials@imperial.ac.uk



**Adrija Bhattacharyya - Raising &
Giving (RAG) Chair**

E: icsm.rag@imperial.ac.uk

Management Group Team



Chris Oldfield - Clubs and Socs Chair

E: icsm.cs@imperial.ac.uk



Pedro Chen - Management Group Treasurer

E: icsm.treasurer@imperial.ac.uk



Pritesh Patel - Vice Chair for Volunteering and Academics

E: icsm.vcva@imperial.ac.uk



Seb Mitchell - Vice Chair for Sports and Arts

E: icsm.vcsa@imperial.ac.uk

Welfare Team



Natania Varshney - Welfare Chair

E: icsm.welfare@imperial.ac.uk



Sajan Patel - Vice Chair for Campaigns

E: icsm.vcc@imperial.ac.uk



Mabel Prendergast - Vice Chair for Wellbeing Reps

E: medicvcwr@imperial.ac.uk

ICSMSU Update Report

Foreword

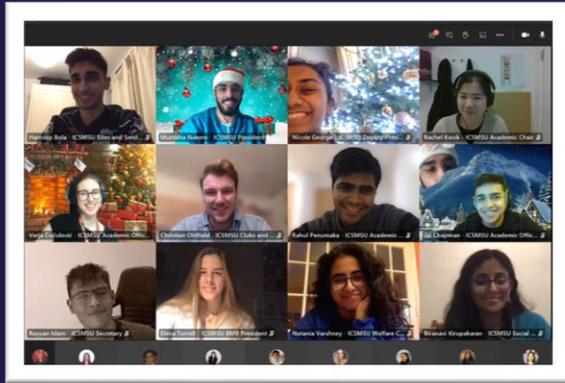


There's been a lot to reflect on after our first term in office.

*We've faced a lot of challenges as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the globe, we've tried our very best to streamline our approaches across all domains - including pushing for clearly signposted guidance to students, particularly those on clinical placements, adapting our events and shifting to a majority digital offering, finding ways to support our over 65 clubs and societies in running online activities, and introducing new welfare campaigns and fundraising initiatives to help combat the many personal challenges the lockdown has brought out. Our main focus for the past term has been providing **stability** to all our members during the most unstable and uncertain times ever.*

Even without COVID, this would have been a significantly challenging year with the aftermath of the Sale of the St Mary's medical school building and commencement of the student consultation focus groups, along with the continued rollout of the new MBBS curriculum. In this last term we've had to swiftly adapt to a few bumps along the way with the surprise announcements of the move of the SAF MDLs and, along with our counterparts from across the UK, coordinate a response to the UKFPO's announcement to remove educational achievements from the FPAS process.

Overall, despite incredibly tough circumstances, I'm really thankful to our SU committee who have tirelessly pushed through against all odds. We have worked immensely hard on a number of our priorities last term, and already began to leave a positive, deep-rooted legacy for many years to come. We hope that in the coming term, we can begin to focus on ambition - pushing forwards to implement new ideas and positively impact our student experience more than ever. Finally, I would like to recognise and wish a big thank you to all of our fantastic student volunteers who have regularly gone above and beyond, and continually work to uphold the student experience of all those within our ICSM community.



Executive Running

Last term, our **Deputy President** did a phenomenal job of training our SU, including introducing **compulsory Welfare and Active Bystander training** for every member of our committee. They have since held another round of 1-to-1 meetings with every member of our committee to discuss any problems and concerns they may have and how we can best assist them. We have also collaborated with Beyond Equality to introduce compulsory workshops for all our sports and arts Club Captains. This is set to cover topics such as sexism, homophobia, mental wellbeing, sexual harassment, online violence, and discrimination. We hope this will help to further a more inclusive and comfortable culture within ICSM, an aim we've really tried and continued to work hard towards in this academic year.

Communication is one of the other main focuses we want to get right this year. Our **Secretary & Communications officer** overhauled our communications strategy and created a more cohesive brand identity which is consistent across our entire range of media. As far as transparency goes, we've also continued to publish our SU meeting minutes and provide a centralised page for minutes from across the board including our SSLGs. We've also hosted multiple Q&As on our social media and have tried to be more prominent in our digital presence to encourage students to step forwards with any questions, concerns and complaints - a very poignant aim in the current climate with an otherwise limited physical presence that we have benefitted from in previous years. On a smaller scale, our website is still continually being updated with more content and features including a full Facebook-integrated events calendar.

Our **Sites & Services officer** has continued to represent us on the Faculty of Medicine's Health & Safety committee. We've also undertaken a stock count and are planning grand office clear-outs on a wide scale as well as

maintenance of our display cabinets in Reynolds in the future. We've also continued to sell our new line of merchandise and implemented a delivery system for the first time ever last term.

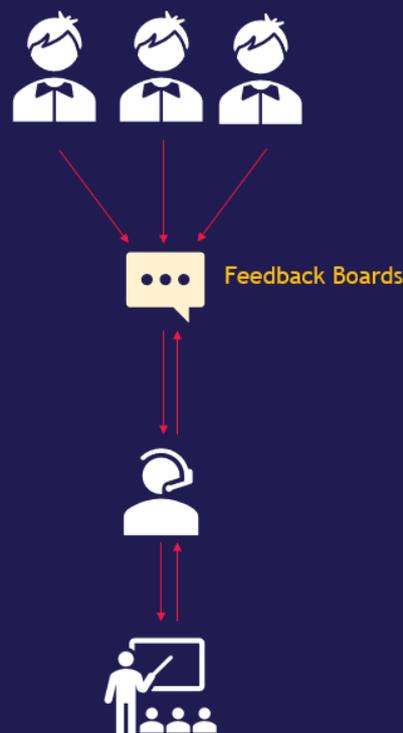
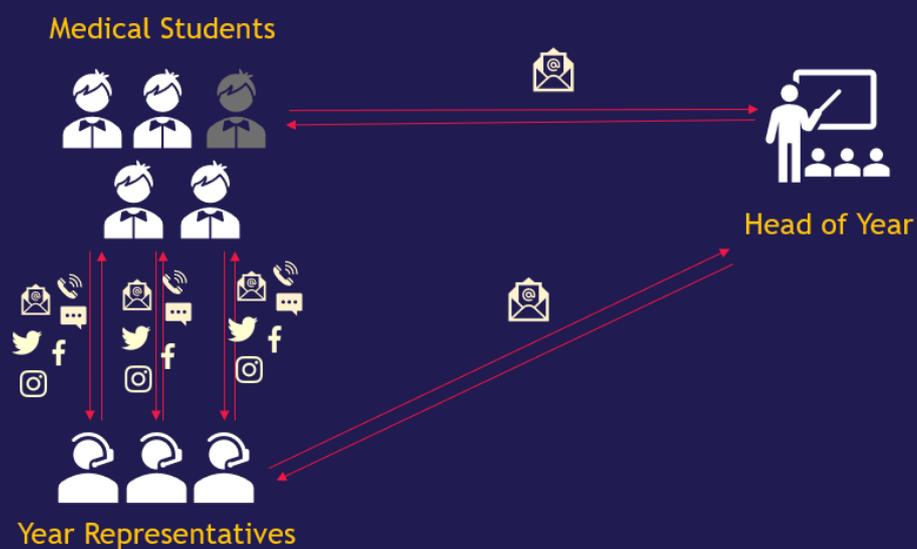
Our **Executive Treasurer** is one of 2 finance-focused roles on our committee. This year we are going to face extraordinarily difficult financial circumstances. Whilst the introduction of a new financial model negotiated over the last 2 years, will go a long way to ensure we can mitigate against the effects of the COVID situation and generally provide the best value to students in future, there is still a long way to go before we can be far less reliant on SGI. This is and has been a big problem in the sustainability of ICSMSU and often a financial stent to the involvement of students, especially those of a widening participation background. After discussions with ICU, we have been undertaking a financial audit in preparation for this year's annual budgeting process where we hope to rewrite our budget from the ground up.

We have also held meetings with our 2 largest **alumni** organisations - ICSM Alumni and the St Mary's Hospital Association (SMHA). As always, we are massively in gratitude to their continued services to our SU and their continued support to the student experience at ICSM. This year, our alumni organisations have provided support to even more of our clubs and societies. With SMHA we have engaged with reports and discussions on the latest updates around St Mary's hospital, ICSMSU, the state of medical school teaching during COVID, the Gazette and more, and finalised the incoming financial model for our SU for this year. We have additionally laid the foundations for greater support of our Volunteering and Academic societies by the St Mary's Development Trust.

Also, notably with ICSM Alumni we have also discussed and are hoping to implement a new subscription model for the association, with a long-term view to build a network and sustainable community existing far beyond our times at ICSM, laid the groundwork for creation of a new dedicated 'Phoenix Fund' by the association to allow for greater investment to our students in future, and have created a new ICSM Colours award honouring the memory of Dr Michael Schachter, who tragically passed away in July of this year.

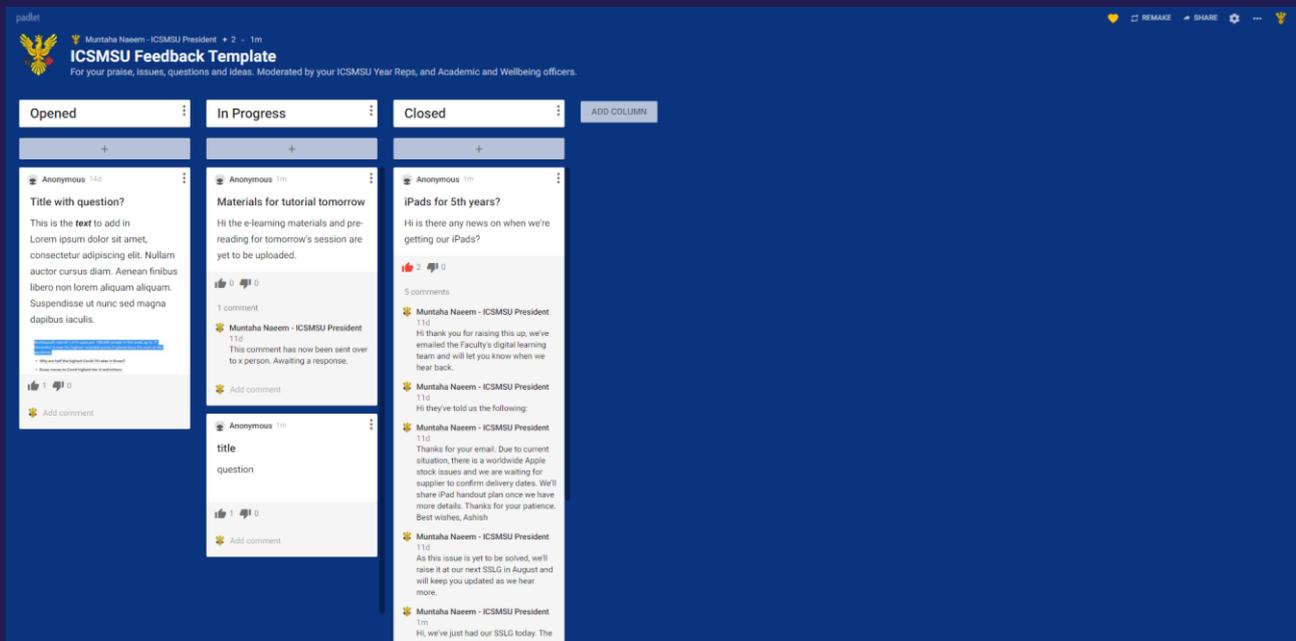
Another big update has been in the realm of **Academics** where we have started to trial new Feedback Boards built via Padlet for our clinical years. The idea originated in response to many years of loud student concerns in regards to the empowerment of the student voice for raising of issues not

encompassed within our existing Student-Staff Liaison Groups (SSLGs). We requested the faculty to work with us on the implementation of a centralised, holistic feedback system 'Unitu' which is currently used by many other medical schools and Universities. Due to hesitations from the Faculty due to their desire to continue to promote the college's SOLE system as the sole (ignore the pun) platform for student feedback, we have therefore implemented our own frugal solution ourselves to provide a centralised board for engagement between students and reps. We will be trialling this new system and evaluating its benefits and shortcomings in practice over the coming months. Some more details on this can be found in the images and associated captions below.



Top: The current system of raising concerns, queries, ideas and praise. Students raise concerns through both informal and formal channels, and there is a lack of centralisation both at a student level and between reps, leading to many similar queries being escalated.

Bottom: The intended process with the feedback boards being a central, open platform for all queries and responses.



Screenshot showing an example template of our feedback boards. Students submit queries which are moderated by the year reps. Once approved, they are placed under the “Opened” channel. Other students can then view these posts and comment and upvote. Once actioned by the reps, the queries are moved to “In Progress” with an update in the comments, and once completed they are placed under “Closed”.

Another focus has been on continuing to remotely integrate our external intercalating students for BSc (Year 4 MBBS). In first term, we collaborated with the Faculty to introduce an all-new external intercalators’ buddy scheme in which external students are paired up with internal students, and we also ran our virtual external intercalators mingle and Q&A session with members of the SU and a previous external intercalating student. This term, we have since been discussing further ideas with the Faculty prior to the students starting their individual research projects, and we hope to be able to run a series of events and coffee mornings spearheaded by ex-external intercalating alumni.

Our SSLGs have continued and we’ve completed all 4 for first term. All in all, they were very productive and we were able to gather a wide, representative set of feedback. We adjusted our approach slightly by rotating the presentation of academic and wellbeing feedback across the

meetings, collating the surveys for both academic and wellbeing together to encourage students to give both areas consideration, streamline the promotion of both areas and ensure a better parity of sample sizes, and we have ensured better signposting of the outcomes from the surveys. Our SSLG meeting minutes are now published on our website for all members of ICSM so they can read through the discussions that have taken place, and hopefully somewhat begin to close the feedback loop by allowing our students to see the actions that have resulted from their feedback. We have also made use of newsletters with our President's weekly message, and our informal channels such as social media and group chats in order to promote the main outcomes of the discussions.

Discussions are now also beginning on our centralised, society-run mock examinations which are a humungous undertaking in which we book out an entire hospital Outpatients department across 4 weekends to offer free of charge practical mock exams for every medical student in years 2, 3, 5, and potentially for this year also year 6.

Our **Welfare** Campaigns have also continued and since our last report in November, we've been able to run 3 more on mental health, finances, and for the new year, our infamous ICSM Blooms campaign to encourage new healthy habits throughout the month of January.

From a **Clubs and Societies** perspective, it has been challenging for some to adapt their activities with consistently changing COVID guidelines, however we have been on-hand to assist them throughout the process and deal with any concerns and queries. Our clubs and socs team are just approaching their busiest time of the year as they are currently in the process of helping our over 65 clubs and societies through the minefield of annual budgeting, having already run a Q&A session as part of our clubs and socs meeting and will be undertaking 121s with each individual society in the coming weeks. The aforementioned rollout of the inclusivity workshops is also taking place, as is the signposting of alumni support for our clubs and socs.

Finally, our **Ents** team ran our Halloween competition back in early November with prizes for submissions in categories including best carved pumpkin, best themed baked good, best Halloween/autumn artwork and best costumes.



Halloween Competition Winners for best pumpkin carving, best bake and best group costume.

We have also since ran a set of Christmas-themed events over the winter holidays in order to support our students staying in London. These are discussed in more detail in the COVID section of this report.

Our Raising & Giving (RAG) chair also sits on our Executive. The RAG committee have bonded exceptionally well. They have continued running weekly Yoga sessions to raise funds for their chosen charities, have introduced a RAG Race Strava competition, and a set of paid tutorials for the first 2 years of the MBBS programme.

COVID-19

Undoubtedly, the biggest factor that has made this year the most challenging ever has been the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We've worked as hard as possible to try to focus on stability - ensuring our students have the information they need as soon as possible, and that we are able to pass on their queries in an effective way. With every big announcement that has come our way, including Lockdown 2.0, the introduction of Tier 4, and the recent announcement of yet another national lockdown, we have been on-hand and ready to immediately respond and cascade information via our formal and more informal channels such as social media and our group chats to provide clarity and certainty to our students. We've been liaising on behalf of our students with our Faculty, ICU, College, and even in a few cases, the government to make sure our students have the information they need and as much certainty as we can provide.

We've engaged with the Faculty continuously and have been meeting with them before-hours every other day since the start of the year at our Faculty of Medicine COBRA meetings where we have been able to escalate the student voice and a vast number of concerns to the highest level, and also at the weekly staff 'COVID forums'. Since the announcement of tier 4, these meetings also continued throughout the Winter break wherein a lot of work was conducted on planning ahead for various eventualities for both teaching and assessment given the uncertainty of the crisis.

We have also worked to organise new weekly All-Student Briefings open to all Faculty of Medicine students, both Undergraduates and all Postgraduates. Each week, we are joined by our Vice-Dean for Education, as well as an Imperial-based expert such as Professor Peter Openshaw and Professor Wendy Barclay, and the ICSMSU President to update us on the current COVID situation and new guidelines nationally, and at a College and Faculty level, along with any new announcements and a student-led Q&A session.

As was the case in last term, despite the pandemic, most of our teaching has remained in-person. Medicine is one of the few subjects listed by the government as being allowed to retain in-person contact due to the interactive hands-on nature of ICSM courses. For our clinical years, placements have continued. For our 1st and 2nd years, knowledge-based teaching has moved to being fully online whilst the remainder of skills-based teaching such as anatomy, which cannot be conducted virtually, has remained in-person. For our BMB students, their 'LabPod' modules are

being taught in-person, although the timings now allow flexibility for international students unable to return due to travel restrictions to instead partake in these during the Summer term. Our BSc students are also set to undertake some of their research projects in-person in the coming weeks, lab-dependent. There have been teething issues throughout, particularly for those on placements, and so we have set up weekly meetings between the heads of years and our clinical year reps to ensure feedback can be addressed in a timely manner. The introduction of our aforementioned feedback boards will hopefully also greatly assist this process.

Our [Sites & Services officer](#) introduced for this year represents us on the Faculty of Medicine's Health & Safety committee. We were able to successfully lobby for College to bring their asymptomatic testing programme over to our Charing Cross campus, and have been working at both an ICSM and a FoM faculty level to help consult on the communications-side of testing and encouraging students to undertake asymptomatic COVID testing on a regular basis.

Another formidable challenge has been trying to assist the social needs of our students, particularly those staying alone over the Winter break. Our Ents team put together a package including running weekly coffee mornings, an Instagram bake-a-long, a games night, a buddy scheme, and of course the release of our yearly [Christmas video!](#)

Overall, our SU has adapted to streamline the past few months and ensure our students are supported academically and kept up-to-date in relation to changes resulting from the always rapidly evolving and changing Coronavirus situation. The faculty have been receptive to our concerns and our year reps, ably supported by our academics team, have continued to move quickly to hear the concerns of on the ground, raise them up, and ensure adequate provisions are in place.

The move of SAF's Multi-Disciplinary Laboratories (MDLs)

Following the Sale of St Mary's medical school building last year, this year the Faculty of Medicine announced their intentions to build a new Institute of Infection in the MDLs in the Sir Alexander Fleming Building, and thus move all our current students to the relatively derelict Royal College of Science building. The announcement arrived on Monday 7th December during the FoM virtual graduation ceremonies.

We initially released a survey to capture the mood and thoughts of our student body, which quickly amounted hundreds of responses from students across yeargroups and from both our Medicine and BMB courses who expressed their overwhelming dissatisfaction.

Student concerns have primarily been centred around 3 areas - The process of the decision-making, specifically concern over the lack of any student consultation (including the SU) prior to the decision being made, secondly the impacts of the decision itself which many feel has potential to disseminate our community, heavily strain resources within SAF, and severely dilute our presence and identity within a building purpose-made in 1998 to serve as the home of ICSM, and thirdly the proposal has raised further anxieties of what comes next for our students and the overall lack of transparency surrounding future projects and the Faculty's *Vision for Medicine*.

Over the past few years, the student body at ICSM have been subject to many big decisions that have affected us, and as an SU we sense this frustration has been heavily building up leading many to feel more strongly than ever that decisions about us shouldn't be made without us.

- 2013: Sale of Teddington with no student involvement in decision.
- 2015: Closure of the Teddington Memorial Bar at Heston with no student involvement.
- 2018: Move of medical student sports from Heston to Harlington with no student involvement.
- 2018: Attempted closure of St Mary's Pool with no student involvement.
- 2019: Sale of St Mary's Hospital Medical School without student involvement.
- 2020: Loss of MDL labs with no student involvement and lack of clarity as to how the future of undergraduate education at South Kensington will look.

Nevertheless, while pushing for a shift in culture to empower the student voice and encourage transparency in decision-making, we must continue to engage and work constructively with the Faculty to ensure we can make the best out of this decision and provide student representation from this point onwards. A more formal Q&A event with the Faculty's leadership is in the works and will hopefully take place within the coming few weeks.

UKFPO Decision to remove educational achievements

The other big decision that has rocked our student body has been the surprise announcement by the UK Foundation Programme (UKFPO) to remove intercalated BScs and additional degrees, and publications from the national junior doctor job application process that our final year students partake in each year. They seek to implement this change from the 2022-23 academic year meaning it is set to affect our current 4th years who are already in the middle of undertaking their intercalated BSc this year. Whilst this decision is opposed by ICSM faculty, the Medical Schools Council, and the BMA, the UKFPO have not actually published the evidence-base behind their changes they claim to have used, thus preventing students from forming their own informed conclusions on the long-term impacts.

From the moment we became aware of these changes through early murmurs that an announcement was impending, we recognised the scale of this announcement and need for a unified approach from students - as this is a national issue that affects all medical schools, we strongly felt our voice will only carry the most weight where our approach can be centralised and we can have a united front as medical students from all across the country and with the same clear requests.

We initiated a dialogue with all the other medical school Students' Unions/associations from across the country, and also remained in close contact with the BMA students executive and the United Hospitals MedGroup throughout, to ensure everyone could complement the work being conducted and pull in the same overall direction.

As a result of this dialogue, in just under 2 days we all coordinated to create a new '**National MedSoc**' consortium bringing together SUs, MedSocs, Associations and other student representative bodies from across the country. Together, we spent the following days (and nights eek) in continuous discussion agreeing a standpoint with broad consensus, and drafting a national petition bringing together students from across the UK.

We subsequently launched our [national petition](#) within the same week urging the UKFPO to delay their rapid rollout on the removal of the Educational Achievement score from the 2023 allocation process for foundation posts, so as not to affect current students, more meaningful student consultation, and full transparency of the decision-making process and evidence-base behind the proposals so we can all reach our own informed conclusions.

In under 24 hours of launch, it reached over 2000 signatures, and rapidly climbed to reach over 6400 as word disseminated out to students across the UK. This petition has now been sent off to the UKFPO and as we await their response, we continue to strategise our approach and evaluate our next best steps.



<http://petition.nationalmedsoc.org/>

Beyond this particular campaign, one of the greatest outcomes from this dilemma has been the coming together of all our respective national medical school representative bodies. This is the first time we have ever mobilised and collaborated together in this way, all under a unified banner at a national level. We intend this of course to be a sustainable group of contacts so we can share best practices in the short term, but also be ready to pursue causes affecting students on the widest scale possible when/if required in the future.

We hope that our National MedSoc will continue to grow in future as it becomes more established and will ultimately mark a legacy and rewarding achievement of this year.

Concluding Notes

All in all, it would be an understatement to say it's been an extremely busy and very tumultuous last few months in the medical school. There are some clear themes to draw across everything that has taken place such as the need for student consultation which we will always continue to push for, and the importance of sticking together as one cohesive voice whether at a communal level when looking out for each other, and when campaigning both locally and nationally. Our students have been rocked by one calamity after the other, all in such quick succession. But the resilience, understanding and patience they have shown has been remarkable. They have continued to place their trust in the Students' Union, and we will always be ready to continue to represent them, advocate for them, and ultimately ensure their time at ICSM is as good as it can be.



ICSMSU

Imperial College School of Medicine
Students' Union

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR FANTASTIC VOLUNTEERS. YOU REGULARLY GO ABOVE AND BEYOND TO FAR EXCEED THE EXPECTED DUTIES OF A VOLUNTEER, AND EVERYONE IS VERY GRATEFUL THAT YOU ALL WORK TIRELESSLY TO IMPROVE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF ALL THOSE WITHIN OUR ICSM COMMUNITY.



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