

22/11/17

Liaison Committee Meeting, Michaelmas Term 2017

November 22nd, 2017

Minutes

Present

*Prof. Barnard, Senior Tutor
M. Burrell, BA President
Prof. Crawford, Steward of College
Dr Curran
Dr Fairbrother, Senior Treasurer of TCSU
L.D. Gaviano, TCSU Vice President
T. Henley Smith, TCSU President
Prof. Kusakawa, Dean of College
Mr Landman, Senior Bursar
R. Oosterbeek, BA Liaison Officer
The Revd Kirsty Ross, Chaplain
J. Samardzija, TCSU Treasurer
Dr Spagnolo
S. Taylor, BA Secretary*

Apologies

*Mr Bourne, Junior Bursar
The Revd Dr Andrew Bowyer, Chaplain*

Chair

Senior Tutor

Minutes

TCSU Vice President

1. Freshers' week discussion – BA Society

The BA President stresses that actual spending remained very close to forecasted spending in relation to all events, and that explanations for each deviation are available upon request. He also notes that surveys have shown that postgraduates were pleased with the events in freshers' week, and that the key reason some were not well-attended was the fact that they were clashing with events run by departments.

Among the improvements suggested by the BA Society, the BA President emphasizes changing the timing of the Fellows' Panel and of Matriculation photos, setting up a unique registration portal to collect sign-ups and dietary requirements for all BA Formal Halls taking place as part of freshers' week, and introducing a new music/dance event in the marquee. Different possible formats for said event are suggested by BA Society representatives.

Two possible times for the Side F Matriculation Photo were suggested: earlier in the morning between the Side F Harangue and the beginning of the Safety Talks between 9-10 am, and on an alternate date, possibly the day of the matriculation feast, with preference for the alternate date. This would have cost implications, on which the College Council must ultimately decide.

The Senior Tutor notes her appreciation for all of the contributions of both students' unions to the management of freshers' week.

22/11/17

The Senior Treasurer of TCSU and the BA President discuss the present state of the financial reserves of the BA Society.

2. *Human waste policy*

The Dean informs meeting attendees that the occurrence of a number of incidents regarding human waste has forced members of the College staff to clean in unacceptable conditions. It is therefore noted that using the services of a specialized biohazard cleaning company is being considered as a necessary step.

The Dean emphasizes that this creates the issue of cleaning costs in the event of the student responsible for the incident not being identified, and she proposes a system whereby both students' unions and the College would contribute financially. The Dean clarifies that for the time being these are just suggestions, and that she is open to working with meeting attendees on how best to devise a new system to deal with the matter.

The TCSU President expresses his support for the Dean's initiative, and offers for both students' unions to fully cover the cleaning costs in the event of a human waste incident involving a student who is then not identified. The BA President emphasizes the need to devise an appropriate formula for sharing said costs among the students' unions, in that, for instance, the Trinity JCR and MCR are different in terms of numbers and locations of student accommodation.

The Senior Tutor suggests that TCSU and BA Society representatives discuss this issue and the related matter of covering the cleaning charges in an *ad hoc* meeting with the Dean and/or as a separate sub-committee.

The Senior Treasurer of TCSU raises the issue of gathering the necessary data on the location, frequency and type of the incidents involving human waste. The Dean will look into obtaining such information from the housekeeping staff of the College.

3. *Drugs policy*

The Dean outlines modifications to the existing College policy against drugs usage, which are aimed at signalling strongly what the stance of the College is in relation to the consumption and supply of drugs. It is noted that the second aim of these changes is to ensure that students do reach out for help to College officials, so that College may aid them through all available medical, personal and educational means.

The TCSU President notes that following some of the proposed changes to the policy, some students may feel conflicted as to whether to reach out for help due to the possibility of subsequent disciplinary sanctions. Dr Curran expresses his concern as to how difficult it is to strike a balance between discouraging and sanctioning individuals engaged in said activities and ensuring that they do reach out for help and are properly assisted by College, in that this may be potentially viewed by some as a way of condoning the usage of certain substances.

The Dean stands ready to change the order of the additional clauses of the College policy, so as to emphasize its commitment to assistance and education rather than to punishment, and that the best approach to deal with the issue raised by Dr Curran is to retain one's flexibility and adopt a case-by-case approach.

22/11/17

4. College Nurse and Health Centre updates

The Senior Tutor informs meeting attendees that with the retirement of the College nurse in late October, an interim one working on reduced hours has been appointed until January. Furthermore, it has emerged that only a very small portion of the student population of the College visit the health centre. It is acknowledged that it is indeed unclear whether this is due to very few individuals becoming ill, or due to them being unaware of the services provided by the health centre.

On this note, the BA President stresses that the surveys carried out so far do indicate that there is a degree of awareness of the health centre within College, but it remains true, as suggested by the TCSU President, that both students' unions could do more to showcase the key practical advantages of using it.

Dr Curran notes that the underlying problem may well be a broader one of public health awareness, and that a way of tackling this could be to provide a differentiated set of advice regarding whom to contact for medical help, so as to clarify under which circumstances one should visit the health centre as opposed to one's GP, for instance. Indeed, it is suggested that TCSU and the BA Society could provide this information on their respective websites.

It is agreed that the Tutorial Manager, Mrs Gardner, and Dr Curran will liaise with the TCSU and BA Presidents in relation to what the best ways of disseminating said information could be.

5. TCSU and BA Society elections

While the elections for BA first year representatives will take place soon, the full committee elections will not take place until much later in the academic year.

TCSU committee elections will take place in mid-Lent, and the TCSU President is confident that they will be competitive. He also expresses his wish for a longer handover period, which would enhance the level of cooperation between outgoing and incoming officers.

6. "Women at 40" communications

The Senior Tutor notes that there does not seem to be enough awareness among undergraduates of the various 'Women at 40' initiatives, and that she will soon meet with some committee members of Trinity FemSoc in order to discuss how to improve the publicity of these projects.

7. Catering-related matters

The Steward notes that relative to past years, currently the subsidy on Formal Halls is focused on reducing the ticket price for College members, as opposed to their guests. It is also noted that BA Formal Halls are subsidized more heavily than undergraduate ones.

The BA President stresses how rapidly tickets to BA Formals sell out, whereas the TCSU President has observed a decreased attendance at undergraduate ones relative to past years. Indeed, the Steward states that it is relatively more expensive to run Formal Halls when they are sparsely attended.

22/11/17

The BA Secretary expresses the gratitude of the BA Society for the College subsidy on Formal Halls, as it provides a substantial encouragement for all of those graduate students who would normally rarely come to College to do so more frequently.

8. Freshers' week discussion – TCSU

The TCSU Treasurer notes that the financing of the week proceeded smoothly and with no major issues, and that there were some instances of over-budgeting in some international freshers' week events. She clarifies that the only reason a cash flow issue arose in the previous months was that a new payment method was trialled during freshers' week, allowing freshers to make several purchases with their university cards alone, meaning that TCSU would only receive such revenue no earlier than upon the payment of college bills in January.

The TCSU President stresses the logistical advantages for those organizing freshers' week of allowing payments via the Upay Chilli platform. The Senior Treasurer of TCSU emphasizes that relying on this platform not only effectively postpones payments by a few months, but it also creates problems were some students not to pay their college bills. Due to the uncertainty that is likely to be caused by this new system, the Senior Treasurer of TCSU strongly suggests undertaking a thorough review of the financial impacts of it in the coming weeks.

The Steward stresses the importance for all those residing in College of the students' unions adhering to the set ending times of their evening events taking place during freshers' week.

9. 'Trinity bun' naming competition

The Senior Tutor informs meeting attendees that a new competition has been launched to name the new 'Trinity bun', which is a new dessert to be created as part of the 700th anniversary of the establishment of King's Hall.

10. Blue Boar bike storage security

Having clarified the nature of the dynamics of the reported incidents, it is agreed that the TCSU President will raise this issue with the Junior Bursar.

The Dean stresses that a comprehensive CCTV system would be part of the solution to this problem. It is also noted that a similar security issue may arise at the gate between Angel Court and Trinity Street.

11. Refugee student scholarship initiative

The TCSU President presents to meeting attendees the initiative of the Cambridge refugee scholarship committee, which is trying to replicate a scheme run in Balliol College, whereby a small levy was added to college bills in order to finance a donation to the university, aimed at funding a number of scholarship for refugee students. This system was implemented through an opt-out mechanism. At the last TCSU Open Meeting, there was a consensus in favour of this initiative.

The Senior Tutor notes that the hope is to get this project approved in numerous colleges, so as to gather the necessary funds for the financing of multiple scholarships. She further raises the issue of who would administer the scholarship.

22/11/17

The Senior Treasurer of TCSU stresses that an opt-out system may be tricky to implement in practice, as the levy will have different effects on different students, depending on their income. The TCSU President argues that rendering opting out as easy and direct a process as possible should ameliorate this issue.

Dr Spagnolo emphasises that the notion that student associations can charge levies for purposes that are not linked to their operations should be carefully considered in order to ensure compliance with the Education Act.

The BA President stresses that this issue has not been raised at a BA Society Open Meeting yet, and therefore that in the meantime he would only feel comfortable with an opt-in system, as opposed to suddenly imposing an opt-out mechanism.

The Senior Bursar suggests simply administering the system via paypal payments and email.

Dr Spagnolo and the TCSU President discuss what the role of CUSU is in relation to this initiative.

12. Date of the Liaison Committee meeting

Lastly, the TCSU Vice President confirms that the first meeting of the Committee of Lent term will take place on January 24th at 2.15pm, once again in the Senior Tutor's office.

BA Society Freshers' Week 2017 - Report

Overall, the graduate Freshers' Week was highly successful and ran very smoothly, in great part thanks to the extensive planning with college departments and the hard work of both college staff and committee members. Here we reflect on what worked well and what might be improved in the next year, report spending and results of a survey. We believe the programme of events worked well and would aim to repeat most, if not all, events next year.

Spending was very close to the proposed budget. Excluding profit from gown sales, total spending was £5414.46 against the proposed spending of £5460.00. An unexpected high volume of gown sales, which is largely determined by the number of gowns bought off departing graduates at the end of the academic year, offset the spending proposed from the BA Society's Reserves. The total breakdown of income (versus budgeted) was College Grant: £4260 (£4260.00); Gown Sale Profits: £980.00 (£600.00); Spending from Reserves £174.46 (£600.00). Per event spending can be found on the following page. Spending not related to events was £493.95 (£450.00) for Committee Jumpers and £30.72 (£30.00) for printing.

Survey of Student Opinion

To gauge student opinion, we surveyed both Freshers and College Parents for their opinion on the events and organisation of Freshers' Week. The Freshers' Week survey had 59 (54 complete) responses from freshers (39 ordinary, 20 associate) and 12 (8) from college parents. From their answers we can conclude that the events with best attendance were the High Tea party, BA Dinner and Jazz, Family dinner and Wine and Cheese Night. These also rated better in the satisfaction question and were repeatedly flagged up as favourites. Other events commonly cited as favourites were the walk to Grantchester and punting. Excluding International Food Night, all events have over 80% responses as Extremely Satisfied, or Somewhat satisfied. The International Food Night satisfaction rating was lower than other events and from the same event in previous years - the comments indicate this is because there was not enough food and those arriving late missed out. We attribute this to better attendance than in previous years and propose increasing the budget for this next year.

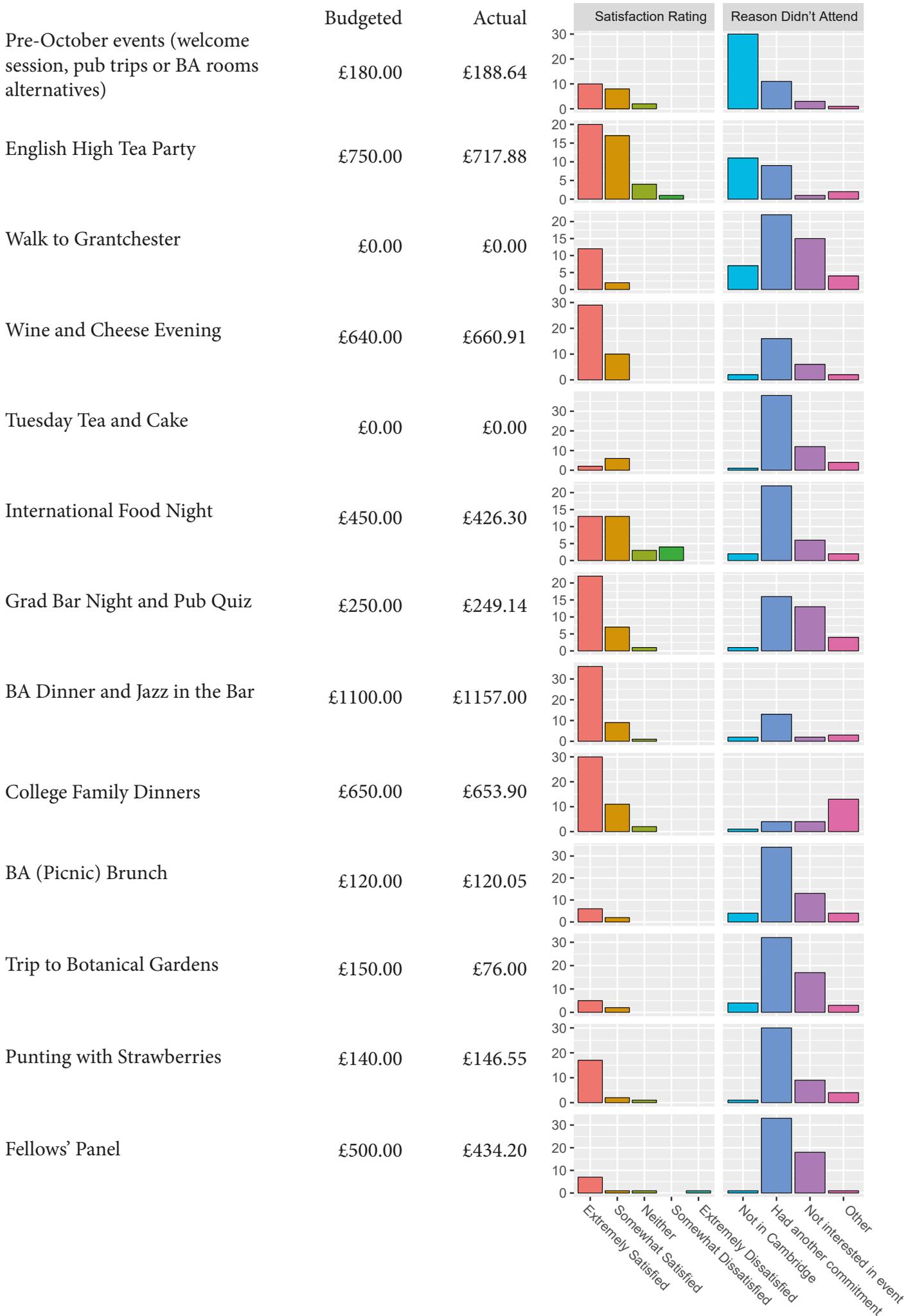
Overall the feedback was very positive, however common suggestions for improvements/complaints were: (1) earlier release of the Freshers' Week Schedule (this was released two weeks ahead of first arrivals), which is difficult as the list of new graduates only approaches being final in early September and (2) inclusion of associate students in college families. It is difficult to gauge whether this is a majority opinion in associate students and the college family system is principally to benefit new Side F graduates. There were 100 associates this year and including all of them in families would require more college parents, which is difficult, and an additional £500-600 of money for subsidising family dinners. Other suggestions including rescheduling to reduce conflicts with departmental events (addressed below), and a dance/party event (also addressed below).

New Events in 2017

The range of events was broadly similar to the previous graduate Freshers' Week, with five new events: (1) three non-alcoholic alternative evenings (craft night, movie night, board game night) to pub visits in International Freshers' Week (prior to Saturday 30th), (2) the tour of the CU Botanic Gardens and (3) the Fellows' Panel. All of these events were successful and ran smoothly, however the attendance at some of the non-alcoholic alternative evenings was low and future committees could consider how this might be improved. The Botanic Garden trip was oversubscribed but there were a number of drop-outs on the day, likely due to the weather. The Fellows' Panel ran successfully but attendance was lower than hoped. Moving it from the Monday after Freshers' Week to an earlier day may improve attendance as it was only one of many events around the University that Monday.

Suggested Improvements

Late in September, the BA Society copied TCSU's idea to have a dedicated phone (a cheap SIM in an old handset) with a number that could be distributed to Freshers' to contact if needed, working well for a number of students who needed help finding their way. We believe implementing this earlier will improve its usefulness and also distributing this number to college departments and officials so the committee member on call for the day is accessible by one number.



The most problematic scheduling is that of the Side F Matriculation photo and we would like to investigate moving it earlier in the day or alternatively to a weekend. Unfortunately, both the safety talks and the Matriculation photo often clash with various departmental inductions for graduate students, often themselves mandatory, creating anxiety in those who do not know which event they should attend.

Some events, in particular the International Food Night, the Grad Bar Night and Pub Quiz and the BA Brunch had higher than expected attendance and an increase in the budget for these events for next year would be sensible to guarantee a fair amount of food and/or drink for all attendees.

There are three dinners that for graduates are part of the extended Freshers' Week programme, each with their own purpose. The Graduate Welcome Dinner unites both new Side F and returning graduates early on, the first BA Dinner introduces new graduates to the cornerstone event of the BA Society and the Matriculation Dinner celebrates new students joining the college and allows graduates to meet both undergraduates and fellows. Each of these dinners required separate RSVPs and collation of dining requirements, and many new students failed to respond in time to the matriculation dinner and some ultimately missed out. We suggest that Tutorial, Catering and the BA Society work together to combine the invitations, ticketing and collation of dietary requirements for these dinners to both reduce the workload for these departments and make it easier for students to respond.

Possible New Events for 2018

The BA Society would still like to explore having a music/dance event, whether that be a Ceilidh or something more modern, in the marquee during Freshers' Week, possibly after the Wine and Cheese Reception. With the lack of event space to accommodate Freshers, the marquee offers a limited opportunity to run what would be a popular event for graduates, in a similar way Nevile's Ents is a special event for undergraduates. Such an event would need to consider increased security on the door to check only graduates are attending and set clear parameters to minimise disruption to Nevile's Court residents. There is a clear demand for such an event from student feedback. Some suggested formats are listed below that could be considered for next year.

Suggested Formats

- Organising club nights in a similar format to TCSU, selling discounted entry for an event after the current events. This will require extra helpers, probably from College Parents, to attend and supervise the event. Tickets would be sold at cost and not subsidized.
- Ceilidh in the marquee to be held after Wine and Cheese Event (Sunday night) - This would be a good opportunity to use the marquee for something that we cannot do at any other time of the year, due to lack of event space of adequate size in college. Ceilidhs have proved popular in the past with students and would be a friendly way to have a dance event, focused on the cultural aspects. This would require additional people on the door, to monitor flow to and from the Chaplains' Squash and hiring a band for the event.
- Graduate Nevile's Ents - hold an event similar to the Undergraduate Nevile's Ents (dance music, subsidized drinks and food) in the marquee following the graduate welcome dinner (Monday night). This would involve considerable new expenditure but not organisation as it would duplicate the arrangement held by the undergraduates.
- Combined Undergraduate and Graduate Freshers' Silent Disco - there are nights in which the marquee is not being used. To maximise the benefit of this space for both graduates and undergraduates, we propose a silent disco could be held on the Thursday night of Freshers' Week. This would give graduates and undergraduates an opportunity to mix in a social setting prior to their current first meeting at the Matriculation Feast.