



**Minutes
Board of Governors
24 November 2021
Via Zoom Conference Call**

Present: Ms Victoria Calvino – SU Governor
Mr Jeff Cottle
Dr Chris Campbell – Staff Governor
Ms Noreen Doyle
Dr Fiona Gatty
Mr Dave Hartnett
Mr George Jenkin – Staff Governor
Mr Anthony McClaran – Vice-Chancellor
Ms Claire McDonnell
Rt Rev Richard Moth (Chair)
Ms June Mulroy
Mrs Deborah Streatfield
Professor Dominic Tildesley

In Attendance: Mrs Elizabeth Bell – Director of Strategic Planning
Mrs Jo Blunden – Chief Operating Officer (“COO”)
Mr Paul Bridge – PVC (Global Engagement)
Mr Andrew Browning – University Secretary (Minutes)
Mr Symeon Dagkas – Interim Provost
Mr Richard Solomon – Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”)
Mr Ben Williamson – Interim Financial Controller

Apologies: Mr David Brambell

21/18	<p>The meeting opened with a prayer.</p> <p>Presentation by Professor Anna Lise Gordon Director of the Institute of Education</p> <p>Professor Gordon gave a presentation to the Board about the Institute of Education.</p> <p>She highlighted the current issues within the field of Education. These included the outcome of the consultation on Initial Teacher Training (ITT) with it</p>		
-------	---	--	--

	<p>being anticipated that all ITT providers will be required to become reaccruited. Professor Gordon also highlighted the importance of the University's OFSTED "outstanding" rating and the need to maintain this.</p> <p>Professor Gordon said that the Institute of Education was always looking to have an engaging and diverse curriculum. It was also currently looking to develop "catch-up" classes in GCSE maths and English.</p>		
21/19	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>		
21/20	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of the Board which took place on 21 October 2021 were approved by the Board.</p>		
21/22	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>		
21/23	<p>Vice Chancellor's Update <i>Paper 1 refers</i></p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor told the Board that there had been a launch event held online and in-person for Vision 2030.</p> <p>There had been a UCU re-ballot on strike action which had been 5% short of the turnout threshold required to approve industrial action.</p> <p>The COO provided an update on the current situation relating to COVID. She said that there had been low numbers of infections of staff and students and currently there was only one student on campus who ill. There were some questions in relation to the January intake of students as to how many of them may be coming from "red list" countries where the new variant was prevalent.</p>		

	<p>The Vice-Chancellor said that it remained lively on the policy front. A letter had been sent from the Universities Minister to all HEIs regarding their access and participation plans. It seemed to be the intention that APP should be shorter and clearer. There also seemed to be an increased need for HEIs to work with schools and Further Education colleges which fitted in with the University's own emphasis with developing partnerships within Further Education.</p> <p>The Board were told that research had been published recently by the Sutton Trust which had created a league table using data from free school meals showing which institutes best assisted social mobility. On this league table the University had come 26th overall.</p> <p>The Patronal Feast Day mass would be given by Bishop John Sherrington on 8 December with food and drink being offered afterwards.</p> <p>Monsignor Vladimir Feltzman had raised £60k towards a new organ in the Chapel and would be appearing on Songs of Praise on 2 January.</p> <p>There had been positive discussions with the Heythrop Alumni Association about it potentially linking in with University. The Chair said that the MEC alumni group may also have natural bond with the Heythrop alumni as well.</p> <p>The Board noted the Vice-Chancellor's report.</p>		
21/24	<p>ANNUAL PREVENT RETURN <i>Paper 2 refers</i></p> <p>The COO presented the Annual Prevent Return. She said that the University's location and south-west London more generally remained a low risk area for terrorism. Members of the Board had recently received Prevent training. There had been a handful of enquiries relating to Prevent matters over the past year but nothing serious.</p> <p>The Board noted the details outlined in the report and unanimously approved the Chair of the Board of Governors signing the Prevent return.</p>		

21/25	<p>GRADUATION OPTIONS <i>Paper 2a refers</i></p> <p>The COO told the Board that the paper set out two options for graduations:-</p> <p>Option1: Postgraduate graduations to take place onsite at the University in spring with undergraduate graduations taking place at Westminster Cathedral in the summer.</p> <p>Option 2: All graduations to take place onsite at the University only.</p> <p>The Board commented that from a parental perspective it was nice to see where the graduands had studied and it was easier to meet the lecturers onsite. The ceremony in the Cathedral could also be quite intimidating for students who had non-Christian backgrounds.</p> <p>The Board also noted that in the past parents and graduands had enjoyed the atmosphere and ceremony of the Cathedral and it was important to retain the link to the diocese which was a key stakeholder in the University.</p> <p>The Board voted as follows:-</p> <p>Option 1: 12 votes Option 2: 2 votes</p> <p>The Board therefore approved option 1 with postgraduate graduations taking place at the University and undergraduate graduations taking place at Westminster Cathedral.</p>		
21/26	<p>Students' Union Update <i>Paper 4 refers</i></p> <p>The SU Education President told the Board that more course representatives had been trained and it was hoped that they would have a bigger role in representing students than they had previously.</p> <p>The SU is currently undertaking a re-branding exercise with this expected to be concluded by the end of February.</p>		

	<p>“Wobble Week” which was a week of intended to help with mental health awareness had been successful.</p> <p>Sports engagement had improved and 9 new student societies had been set up this academic year.</p> <p>The Board noted the Students’ Union report.</p>		
21/27	<p>KPI - UPDATE <i>Paper 4 refers</i></p> <p>The Director of Strategic Planning said that there had been no new KPI metrics since the last meeting of the Board. She updated the Board on the review of the NSS which was currently being carried out by the OfS. Phase one had been concluded with the view being that the NSS should continue but that the timing, coverage, and questions should be reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose.</p> <p>The NSS will be launched on 6 January 2022 and will remain open to 30 April 2022 with the results being published in June/July 2022.</p> <p>The Board noted the KPI Update.</p>		
	<p>Management Accounts <i>Paper 6 refers</i></p> <p>The Interim Financial Controller said that the management accounts for the period ending 30 September were broadly in line with current forecasts. The University was currently reporting a net surplus of £0.6m which is £0.5m favourable to budget. This was largely down to high staff turnover and vacancy levels across the University. Income was £0.4m adverse to budget due to the lower than forecast autumn recruitment of students.</p> <p>The Board noted the management accounts.</p>		
21/28	<p>Annual Report and Financial Statements <i>Paper 7 refers</i></p> <p>The CFO presented the Annual Report and Financial Statements. The results for the year showed a net deficit of £426k which was £1.0m better than the previous year and £1.6m better than</p>		

	<p>budgeted. This was due to good student recruitment figure and keeping non-staff costs down.</p> <p>The value of net assets had increased which had meant that the University was able to show a bottom line surplus. The University remained in a strong cash position (£15.6m).</p> <p>The CFO said that at page 41 of the Annual Report there had been a late adjustment relating to the statement of cashflow. This related to classification and made no change to the cash flow figures.</p> <p>Within the Annual Report although it was following the previous strategic plan (Vision 2025) there was still discussion of Vision 2030.</p> <p>The CFO said that the University was able to give sufficient assurances relating to it continuing as a going concern. It had ample liquidity and as had already been mentioned it remained in a strong cash position. The profitability of the University had improved. Various stress tests had been applied to test the going concern assumptions and these had been passed. It was also notable the OfS had removed the enhanced monitoring requirements on the University.</p> <p>The financial outlook was detailed at page 30 of the Annual Report. The optimism contained within this was moderated by the potential risks to the University should it fail to achieve the necessary levels of student recruitment.</p> <p>The Finance and Resources Committee and the Audit Committee both recommended approval of the Annual Report. The Board voted on whether to approve the signing of the Annual Report and Financial Statements. The vote was as follows:-</p> <p>In favour: 14 votes Against: 0 Votes Abstentions: 0</p> <p>The Annual Report and Financial Statements were therefore approved by the Board of Governors.</p>		
21/29	<p>STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE <i>Papers 5 and 5i refers</i></p>		

	<p>The PVC (Global Engagement) said that currently postgraduate recruitment was on target however it was very early in the cycle. The University was behind where it hoped to be for undergraduate recruitment. The PVC (Global Engagement) said there was however often a lag early in the cycle and the University had not yet reached the time of year when there would be a surge in applications.</p> <p>Face to face recruitment events were now possible. There were currently 640 prospective students registered for the Open Day with it being hoped that around 300 would actually attend. A comprehensive conversion campaign had also been prepared.</p> <p>Work that had been done by the interim Provost to bring in new courses was positive but the impact was more likely to be on 2023 rather than during this cycle. The biggest opportunity was currently through partnerships with private providers. The University was also looking to move quickly into the FE sector.</p> <p>The Board asked whether the University was marketing itself to Catholic Schools both in the UK and in Europe. The PVC (Global Engagement) said that work was being done to recruit from Catholic schools. He said however that St Mary’s position in the league tables did make the University the most attractive option to Catholic students who were looking to study at more academically prestigious universities.</p> <p>The Board asked what percentage of students were coming from overseas. The PVC (Global Engagement) said that around 12% of students were currently recruited from overseas. They mostly did business and most came from the US with the University now also trying to recruit from both the sub-continent and south-east asia.</p> <p>The PVC (Global Engagement) was asked what strategies there were for open days. He said that open day attendance had still to recover since the pandemic. He said that only around 50% - 60% of students who came to the University attended open days.</p> <p>The Board noted the student recruitment update.</p>		
21/30	<p>Financial Impact of Student Recruitment Shortfall and Budget Adjustments for 2021/22 <i>Papers 8 & 9 refers</i></p> <p>The CFO presented two papers one setting out the short term impact of the student recruitment shortfall and the budget adjustments required for the current</p>		

<p>financial year and another setting out the medium term impact of the student recruitment shortfall.</p> <p>Paper 8 outlined the short-term impact and the budget adjustments which were being proposed. The gross financial impact on tuition fee income for 2021/2022 was estimated to be in the region of £4m. It was expected that £1.9m of this could be absorbed through contingencies with £2.1m being saved through costs restraint for both staff and non-staff costs. These savings had been identified by members of SLT.</p> <p>The appendix to paper 8 set out the mitigation plan for 2021/22. These had been approved both by the Senior Leadership Team and FRC. The Board were asked to approve the budget adjustment and voted as follows:-</p> <p>In favour: 14 votes Against: 0 votes Abstentions: 0</p> <p>The adjusted budget was therefore approved by the Board of Governors.</p> <p>Paper 9 set out the impact of a student recruitment shortfall in the medium term. Appendix 1 set out the current five year financial forecasts which had been approved by the Board. Appendix 2 set out the new baseline adjusted for lower student recruitment and inflation, Appendix 3 set out the new baseline adjust for lower student recruitment and inflation which also reflected partnership growth and if <i>Augar</i> was implemented. Appendix 4 set out the minimum revised financial trajectory need for adequate capital investment.</p> <p>The CFO highlighted the likelihood of there being increased wage inflation over the next five years. He said that the University must grow as well as control expenditure. The staff/cost ratio still remained a big problem for the University.</p> <p>It would be necessary for the five year forecasts for the University to be revised and these would be coming the Board when it met in January together with the Annual Financial Return to go to the OfS.</p> <p>The Board noted the paper.</p>	<p>27.01.21</p>	<p>RS</p>
--	-----------------	-----------

21/31	<p>Annual Report of the Audit Committee <i>Paper 10 refers</i></p> <p>The annual report of the Audit Committee was presented by the Chair of the Committee, June Mulroy. It confirmed that the internal auditors' opinion was that the University had an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance, internal control and economy.</p> <p>The Board noted the Annual Report of the Audit Committee.</p>		
21/32	<p>Audit Letter of Representation <i>Paper 11 refers</i></p> <p>The Board unanimously approved the signing of the Audit Letter of Representation by the Chair.</p>		
21/33	<p>Finance and Resources Committee <i>Paper 12</i></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee which took place on 4 November 2021 were noted by the Committee.</p>		
21/34	<p>Audit Committee <i>Paper 13</i></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee which took place on 15 November 2021 were noted by the Committee.</p>		
21/35	<p>Dates of Next Meetings 27 January 2022 10 March 2022 (Away Day) 27 April 2022 9 June 2022</p>		

END