RESERVED BUSINESS

SM82  THE VICE-CHANCELLORSHIP
CM 87

Considered Reports from the Joint Committee on the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor, copies of which had been laid on the table at the meeting.

[ Copies filed in the Minute Book. ]

Process

Reported that:

(a) The University statutes stated that ‘the Vice-Chancellor shall be appointed by Council on the nomination of Council and Senate acting jointly’.

(b) Following Professor Edwards’ announcement of his intention to retire in 2007, Council and Senate had established the following Joint Committee under the chairmanship of the Chairman of Council in order to make a recommendation for the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor to succeed Professor Edwards:
Chairman of Council: Mrs M O Grant

Council appointed members: Sir Leslie Elton
Ms J Henderson
Sir Miles Irving
Ms K Priestley

Senate appointed members: Professor J B Goddard
Professor M Goodfellow
Professor T B L Kirkwood
Professor E Ritchie

(c) Professor Kirkwood had been invited to attend the joint meeting of Council and Senate at the request of the Chairman of Council.

(d) Throughout the process, the members of the Joint Committee co-operated extremely well and had a shared understanding of the desirable characteristics.

(e) The Senate members were appointed following a ballot of members of Senate. All those appointed to the Committee were expected to serve as individuals and not as representatives of any particular part of the University.

(f) In accordance with Council’s resolution at its meeting in September 2005, Council agreed that the Chairman of Council, the Registrar and the Director of Human Resources should act on Council’s behalf in deciding which search consultants to appoint. Following a selection process, Heidrick and Struggles were appointed to act on the University’s behalf. Representatives from Heidrick and Struggles remained in close contact with the Chairman of the Committee throughout the selection process and attended preliminary meetings of the Joint Committee.

(g) The Joint Committee received an equal opportunities briefing prior to the commencement of the selection process.

(h) The Joint Committee appointed Professor Sir Martin Harris, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manchester and Director of Fair Access to act as an External Assessor. Sir Martin’s contribution was extremely helpful and the University should be grateful to him for his advice.

(j) Heidrick and Struggles undertook an extensive consultation process, interviewing approximately 80 people, to help prepare the necessary information for candidates. The majority of people interviewed were members of staff, but care was taken to consult individuals from One NorthEast, the Strategic Health Authority, Newcastle upon Tyne NHS Trust, Newcastle City Council, the Chancellor, Chair of the Alumni Association and other representatives of stakeholder groups.

(k) Several comments on the proposed appointment were received from academic colleagues and considered by the Joint Committee.
(l) In conducting its work the Selection Committee followed the best practice set out by the Universities UK in its publication ‘Appointing Senior Managers in Higher Education’. The Committee, in consultation with Heidrick and Struggles, produced the advertisement, job description, person profile and further particulars. [Copies filed in the Minute Book.] The advertisement was carried in the Times Higher Education Supplement, the Economist and the Chronicle of Higher Education.

(m) The Chairman of Council wrote to members of Court, Council, Senate and Academic Board inviting them to make suggestions of individuals who would be suitable for appointment as Vice-Chancellor, in confidence, to the Director of Human Resources for onward transmission to the search consultants. Twenty-six names were suggested and forwarded to the search consultants.

(n) An item appeared on Newslink publicising that the search of a successor to Professor Edwards had begun and advising staff of the progress made by the Joint Committee.

(o) At its meeting held on 17 May, the Joint Committee considered seventeen potential candidates that had been identified by Heidrick and Struggles, either in response to the advertisements or after having been contacted by the search consultants directly. It was encouraging that Heidrick and Struggles reported that both the role and the institution were attractive to candidates. The Joint Committee unanimously agreed a shortlist.

(p) Arrangements were made for all the candidates on the shortlist to meet Senate appointed members of the Joint Committee and, for reasons of confidentiality, a limited number of University officers, including the Chairman of Council and the Communications Officer from the Union Society, in advance of the interview process to allow them the opportunity of finding out more about the institution.

(q) The shortlisted candidates were interviewed in three stages over two days in mid-June. Only members of the Joint Committee participated in the interview process with the Director of Human Resources and the Registrar in attendance. The Joint Committee was divided into two for the first day of interviews, with one group focusing on leadership and management and the other on teaching, research and finance. The candidates were asked to make an individual presentation to the full Committee on the second day followed by a full further interview. The candidates were interviewed off-site, but in the City of Newcastle.

(r) The candidates who were shortlisted were given additional information about the University and access to the University’s website.

(s) The University was extremely fortunate in having a very strong shortlist available from which to make the eventual recommendation.
(t) All the members of the Joint Committee believed that the process was thorough and extremely helpful in ensuring that the University could make the best appointment possible.

(u) Special thanks should go to the Chairman of Council for her work during this exercise. The search consultants were particularly complimentary about Mrs Grant’s willingness to talk to the unsuccessful candidates and explain the reasons for the University’s decision. We have, directly from candidates and via the search consultants, received some flattering comments about the process used.

(v) In making its final recommendation, the Joint Committee paid particular attention to the requirement set out in the job description and person specification, all members of the Joint Committee contributed effectively to the selection process.

Noted that:

1. In making its recommendation, the Joint Committee had been particularly impressed by Professor Brink’s outstanding academic background, his considerable international experience, his exceptional and clear strategic thinking, his excellent communication skills, but above all the way in which he had demonstrated a commitment to the values of higher education and how his commitment to these values informed and shaped his leadership role.

2. Under Professor Brink’s leadership, Stellenbosch University had strengthened its position as one of the leading research universities in South Africa and had attracted international attention for Professor Brink’s transformation initiatives and diversification policies. This included, in particular, increasing the number of black students and the support for English, as well as Afrikaans, as a language of tuition.

3. Professor Brink’s experience as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of Wollongong was particularly relevant given some of the issues faced by the decline of heavy industry in Wollongong.

4. It was expected that Professor Brink would join Newcastle University from 1 July 2007. The University would need to respect the fact that he was an existing Vice-Chancellor and some care would need to be taken over the interim arrangements, both to ensure that Professor Brink could be consulted on key strategic matters that might shape his period of office and to ensure that the University did not suffer from a period of planning blight by in any way undermining the authority of Professor Edwards, who had done an outstanding job in leading Newcastle University since 2001. To this end, members of Senate and Council were requested to ensure that any communications to Professor Brink should be routed through the Vice-Chancellor’s PA, Alison Pickard, to ensure that this line of communication could be managed in an appropriate manner.
5. Professor Brink intended to visit Newcastle during December or early January. The hope was expressed that he would be able to have further opportunities of interacting with the University before his appointment.

6. Some consideration should be given to the possible use of the information obtained during the appointment process to allow an interesting and authoritative picture to be presented on how senior figures in higher education regarded Newcastle University and identified key issues for the University.

7. The University’s Chancellor had been kept informed about the process and had been informed about the recommendation.

8. During the interview process, Professor Brink had presented a clear vision on the development of Newcastle University and had identified the role as one that he wished to undertake next as part of his commitment to higher education.

9. Professor Brink would require some support from Senate and Council during his transition phase but members of the Joint Committee were confident that, given his experience and intellect, the detailed matters concerning the UK’s funding mechanisms, research assessment exercise and other policy issues would not present any serious obstacles.

10. The University did intend to review the process used which, in the views of the members of the Joint Committee, had worked well but there were aspects that could be refined in the future.

11. The Joint Committee had been aware of the need to secure both value for money as part of the appointment process and to manage the risk as well as maximise the opportunity for the University in making its recommendation.

Resolved that:

(i) Council be asked to approve the recommendation of the Joint Committee on the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor that Professor Chris Brink be appointed as Vice-Chancellor of the University from a date to be determined in 2007.

(ii) Council and Senate record their appreciation of the volume of work undertaken by the Joint Committee and of the way in which the Committee had carried out its task.