

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

THE FIFTY-FOURTH ORDINARY MEETING OF CONVOCATION

Saturday 18 June 2011

Present: Mr AE Jones (in the chair); Mr KD Aybe; Dr M Anderson; Ms AJ Armour; Miss TB Aslam; Miss CR Ball; Dr CR Bamford; Professor C Brink (Vice-Chancellor); Mrs AM Brown; Dr RJ Butterfield, Mrs C Butterfield; Mr P Byrne; Mr J Carlson; Dr P Chitsabesan; Mrs PM Chrisp; Dr P Coyne; Mrs H Coyne; Ms SL Davies; Mr MF Downing; Miss R Draper; Mrs EE Earnshaw; Mr E Ekwo; Mr M Emery; Mr IH Forster; Mrs M Grant OBE; Dr K Harland; Miss S He; Dr M Heather; Mr PBF Hood; Mrs E Hood; Mrs J Houston; Mr DJ Howarth; Mr CL Humphreys; Mr F Ives; Mr J Jeffery CBE; Miss L Jones; Mr K Kavathekar; Miss Q Lai; Mr DP Large; Mr AA Logan; Ms RR Mawson; Dr RW McCrae; Mr J Megson; Mr AR Mitchell; Mr WG Oliver; Mr HRC Owen; Mrs M Owen; Dr S Papagiannidis; Mr JDRB Percy; Mrs PAM Percy; Mrs JA Penny; Miss LS Perry; Dr BAO Randall; Mrs E Randall; Mrs J Redgrave; Mr H Regnart; Mr NP Richardson; Mr A Robson; Mrs L Robson; Dr LM Rozner; Mr MJ Scott; Mr M Scrimshaw; Dr RS Shiel; Nojat Soltani; Mr RM Theaker; Mrs SM Walker; Professor AJ Walton; Mr FT Walton; The Rt Hon Lord Walton of Detchant; Revd RC Wardale; Ms JA Wigfield; Dr W Zhonghui

In attendance:

Miss TA Angelopoulos; Mrs A Burton; Miss F Clarke; Mrs J Clubley; Mrs K Hendrix; Dr JV Hogan; Mr JA Johnston; Ms TM Readshaw; Professor E Ritchie; Mr SCC Tindall

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Convocation held on Saturday 19 June 2010 were approved as an accurate record. **DOCUMENT A**

2. MATTERS ARISING

Item 5. Amendments to the University Statutes

Reported:

That the Privy Council had approved the amendments to the University Statutes, subject to the following minor change recommended by the Privy Council advisers:

3.(2) The object of the University is, for the public benefit, to ~~promote~~ **advance** education, learning and research.

3. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S STATEMENT 2010 – 2011 AND A FORWARD LOOK TO THE NEW FUNDING REGIME

Received: The Vice-Chancellor's Report to Convocation, 18th June 2011.

Noted:

- (a) This has been a challenging time for all in Higher Education, primarily driven by the Coalition Government's policy changes. There have been swingeing cuts to public sector bodies following the Comprehensive Spending Review, including the abolition

of ONE Northeast from April 2012. ONE Northeast has been a key supporter of the University and a major source of funding for regional development projects, including Science City.

- (b) Parliament have adopted proposals for a radical new approach to fees and funding from September 2012. The HEFCE Teaching Grant is to be cut by ca. 80%, and student fees are to rise to a maximum of £9K from September 2012. There have also been changes to visa regulations which will impact on our international student and staff recruitment. Overall there appears to be much more of a market orientation being adopted to Higher Education.
- (c) Despite these challenges, the University has continued on its trajectory towards a world-class Civic University. This is demonstrated through being world class in both research and teaching, and in our engagement with civil society. For example, we are in the top 20 for research power and have recently been recognised as one of only 12 top-performing “Framework Agreement” universities by EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council). In teaching, we are top 20 for student experience and have maintained an 87% student satisfaction rating in the National Student Survey.
- (d) Our engagement with civil society focuses on the three Societal Challenge Themes identified in Vision 2021. The second of these, the Sustainability theme, was successfully launched in January 2011, and Social Renewal will be launched in January 2012. There is also a continued emphasis on Newcastle Science City, and planning approval was obtained earlier this year for that development.
- (e) Having a City Centre campus is an important characteristic and we play this to our advantage. We have continued to invest in the campus; the Baddiley-Clark Building is now open, the New Business School building has been completed, and the INTO Buildings are progressing well. We have a number of other projects in progress and planned, to rejuvenate the campus, including the refurbishment of the Students’ Union to be ready in September 2011, and we plan to create a new Student Forum, to be ready by September 2012.
- (f) International developments include the completion of the NUMed campus in Malaysia with its official opening on the 1st November 2011, and an agreement has been signed for a Singapore Campus in Engineering, with the Singapore Institute for Technology.
- (g) As part of our preparation for the new dispensation, our undergraduate fees have been set at £9,000 p.a. with the proposal (yet to be approved) that postgraduate taught fees start at £5,500 p.a. We have submitted our OFFA (Office for Fair Access) access agreement outlining our commitment to disadvantaged students. We will spend ca. £11 million p.a. on fee waivers and bursaries and outreach activity; ca. 30% of new entrants will not pay the full fee; and we will give 20% fee discounts to our own graduates for admission to postgraduate studies.
- (h) In relation to the new fees and funding approach, it is important to note that

under the proposals University study would remain free at the point of entry for home students. Admission guarantees a government loan that is to be repaid only once the student starts to earn. There is also a threshold of £21,000 earnings per annum before repayment commences and a maximum repayment period of 30 years.

- (i) Financially the University is in good shape. We have a good buffer of cash reserves against uncertainties, (almost) no debt, and a strong surplus in 2010-11, much of which will be reinvested in the student experience.
- (j) We are focussing strongly on enhancing the student experience, on providing good facilities and equipment, increasing part-time employment opportunities for current students and focusing on employability in our programmes.
- (k) In summary, this has been an interesting year, during which we have not needed to change our fundamental vision. We are working hard to prepare for the new fees and funding dispensation and we welcome any support that our Alumni can give us towards making the overall vision come true.

Contributions from the floor and questions:

- (a) Lord Walton of Detchant, (MBBS 1945; MD 1952; DSc 1972; Hon DCL 1988) reported on discussions in the House of Lords concerning the recent changes to visa requirements (in this case impacting on the recruitment of doctors from overseas) and on the impact of the Health and Social Care Bill of 2008. The bill seeks to enhance professional regulation and create a new integrated regulator, the Care Quality Commission, for health and adult social care, with focus on providing assurance about the safety and quality of care for patients and service users. Lord Walton pointed out that there is virtually no mention in the bill about the education of the health professionals involved in providing this care, nor of the role of universities with medical schools in this matter. The Regional Strategic Health Authorities have been abolished and they have had the responsibility for this education through the postgraduate deaneries. However, he was able to report that the Minister has now agreed to reconsider this matter.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the topic of postgraduate deaneries is of concern to the University and thanked Lord Walton for keeping us informed of these issues.

- (b) Ethel Randall (Cert Education 1962; DipEd 1970; Med 1973) enquired whether the Russell Group was still in existence.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that this Group does still exist and that Newcastle is an active member. The Russell Group represents the 20 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector. The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the influencing role of the Group and the fact that it is routinely consulted by Government. Members can find more information at <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/>

- (c) Horace Regnart (LLB 1968) commented that the government's ideology will lead to education being priced and not valued, and with society having to pick up the bill for unpaid student loans in the future. He also felt that the changes to visa regulations indicated the Government's lack of ability to differentiate between people seeking the right to stay in the country permanently and those who simply wish to visit for a defined period of time.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that the government's current policies place a strong emphasis on education as a private benefit, with students expected to pay the full cost of their education. His view however, is that Higher Education is both a public good and a private benefit, and that both the state and the individual should contribute to the cost. However, whatever his personal views, he has to keep the University well positioned in this new dispensation in order for it to prosper.

- (d) Nick Richardson (BSc Hons Zoology 1977) raised the question of how the Alumni Association could help with the University's relationship with new graduates who will leave with large financial debts, rather than the "debt of gratitude" that he and his peers felt they had when they graduated in the 1970's.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the University will do its best to prepare for this situation and that there is an opportunity for a conversation between our Alumni and the University about this. There will inevitably be a significant change in the way that people think about higher education and it is important that we keep our view of the public value of HE and that we remain in touch with our new graduates.

The Chairman added that Alumni can also help by promoting the good work done at the University and the value of a life-long relationship between the University and its graduates.

4.EMPLOYABILITY

Received: A report from the Professor Ella Ritchie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on the activities undertaken by the University to enhance the employability of its graduates.

Noted:

- (a) That employability is increasingly important under the new fees regime and that the University is aware of the need to strengthen the employability of students on all of its programmes.
- (b) Our employability record is good, but we are not complacent. We were 12th in the Sunday Times Guide 2011 for "most in graduate level jobs", 15th in the Guardian league table rankings for graduate prospects and 15th in the Complete University Guide (in the Independent). We are consistently in the top 20 of institutions targeted by graduate employers.
- (c) We are aware of the importance of the quality of the institution and the quality of our programmes to student choice, and we aim to increase opportunity for skills

development, placements, internships, and study abroad, all of which are key discriminators.

- (d) Our Alumni can also help by promoting the University wherever possible, using their networks to support placements, work shadowing, mentoring, and linking up with their degree subject school to see what they can do to support them on this front.
- (e) Where there are companies run by alumni, then hiring our graduates is a great way to support us.
- (f) The Newcastle University Business School and the Careers Service, actively encourage support and participation from our graduates, and would welcome any contact or help from Alumni.

5. RESULTS FROM THE ALUMNI CONSULTATIVE GROUP ELECTION

Received: A report of the results of the Alumni Consultative Group election, from Mr Antony Jones, Chair of Convocation.

Reported:

- (i) There are 10 vacancies to be filled, and 50 candidates have put themselves forward for election.
- (ii) That the voting stage of the elections ended Friday June 10. In total 1360 individuals voted for candidates, 89 by paper and 1271 electronically. 70 submissions were declared void.
- (iii) Two of the vacancies are to be filled by members elected as representatives of their branches, in both cases these were not contested, and the individuals elected are:
 - Mr Ian Forster (BSc Geography 1955; DipEd 1956) for the University of Newcastle upon Tyne Graduates Society (North of England)
 - Mr Alastair Mitchell (MEng Naval Architecture 2008) for the Newcastle University Marine Alumni branch
- (iv) The full list of successful candidates is as follows (in alphabetical order):
 - Miss Sue Bevan (BSc Zoology 1979; MSc Public Health Engineering 1981)
 - Miss Helen Buckley (BSc Geography 1994)
 - Dr Pramithra Chitsabesan (MB BS 1997; PhD Medical Sciences 2009)
 - Mr Ian Forster (BSc Geography 1955; DipEd 1956) for the University of Newcastle upon Tyne Graduates Society (North of England)
 - Professor Patrick Lavery (PhD Arts 1968)
 - Mr Alastair Mitchell (MEng Naval Architecture 2008) for the Newcastle University Marine Alumni branch
 - Dr David Moffatt (BSc Agriculture 1966; PhD Agriculture 1971)

- Dr Savvas Papagiannidis (BSc Physics 1999; PhD Theoretical Physics 2003; DBA 2009)
 - Mr Mark Scrimshaw (BA History 1976)
 - Mrs Pamela Stephens (BA History 1972)
- (v) That of the ten successful candidates, two had indicated that they are willing to stand as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Alumni Consultative Group. No further nominations were received at the meeting.

Agreed:

- (i) That the ten successful candidates be elected to serve on the Alumni Consultative Group for a period of three years from 18 June 2011.
- (ii) That Mr Ian Forster be appointed as Chair of the Alumni Consultative Group and Dr Praminthra Chitsabesan be appointed as Vice-Chair, also for a period of three years from 18 June 2011.
- (iii) That the new membership of the ACG be asked to review its constitution and the election process and report back to Convocation at its next meeting.

6. ALUMNI CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Received:

- (i) An oral report from the Chair of the Alumni Consultative Group (ACG), Mr Mark Scrimshaw.
- (ii) A report from Mrs Jane Clubley, Director of Development

DOCUMENT B

Noted:

- (a) That the number of people standing for election demonstrated the opportunity for increasing engagement and participation amongst Alumni.
- (b) As outgoing Chair of the Alumni Consultative Group, Mr Scrimshaw thanked a range of volunteers and staff for their work over the years with Alumni.

Members of Convocation conveyed their thanks to Mr Scrimshaw for the work he has done as Chair of the ACG to support the University.

7. CHAIR OF COUNCIL

Reported:

- (i) That Mrs Olivia Grant, Chair of Council and Pro-Chancellor, would come to the end of her third term of office as Chair on 31 July 2011, at which point she would have served as a member of Council for 10 consecutive years.
- (ii) That Mr Mark l'Anson, Vice-Chair of Council, has been appointed Chair of Council and will take up office on 1 August 2011.

Members of Convocation conveyed their thanks to Mrs Grant for the work she has done to support the University over the past 10 years and congratulated Mr l'Anson on his appointment as Chair of Council.

8. HONORARY DEGREES 2010-2011

Reported:

- (i) That Honorary degrees were conferred on the following individuals at a special Honorary Degree Ceremony held on 6 December 2010, recognising their achievements in fields related to the Societal Challenge theme of Ageing and Health:

DCL	Dame Joan Bakewell , broadcaster.
DSc	Professor John Hardy FRS , geneticist and molecular biologist.
DCL	Professor Anne Martin-Matthews , international scholar in the social science of ageing.
DCL	Professor James Vaupel , demographer.
MD	Professor Rudi Westendorp , clinical epidemiologist, geriatrician, and gerontologist.

- (ii) That Honorary degrees will be conferred on the following individuals at Honorary Degree Ceremonies to be held on 13 and 14 July 2011:

DLitt	Mr David Almond , award-winning writer who specialises in children's literature.
DCL	Mrs Olivia Grant OBE DL , retiring Chair of the University's Council and Pro-Chancellor.
DCL	Mr Ian Gregg , retired Executive Chairman and Managing Director of Greggs the Bakers.
DCL	Ms Dianne Nelmes , award-winning investigative journalist and media executive.

9. HONORARY FELLOWSHIPS 2010-2011

Reported:

That Honorary fellowships were conferred on the following individuals at a ceremony held on 11 October 2010.

Mr Chris Hilton, former Vice-Chairman of Council.

Dr Laura Rozner, alumna and one of the original members of the Graduates Association.

10. DEATHS AND OBITUARIES

Listed online at:

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/involved/strategic/convocation/obituaries/2010.htm>

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Reported:

The provisional date of the Fifty-Fifth Ordinary Meeting of Convocation was reported as Saturday 24 June 2012.

After further consultation, the date of this meeting has now been confirmed as Saturday the 16th June 2012.

Ruth Draper
Acting Secretary to Convocation
11 July 2011