

VIEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

In Australia 10 out of 38 VCs were women, one of the highest proportions in the world. Three women VCs have retired this year and all been replaced by men, so the numbers have dropped. Against this background, Professor Ingrid Moses talks to **Dr Lesly Huxley** about the challenges of development of senior staff in Australian universities, her experience of successful development initiatives and her new role.



Professor Ingrid Moses was appointed chancellor of the University of Canberra on January 1 2006. She was previously vice-chancellor and president of the University of New England (UNE), Armidale, New South Wales and deputy vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellor (academic) at the University of Canberra. Ingrid Moses was founding director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Technology, Sydney and professor of higher education. Her research interests are in the academic profession and environment and evaluation of academic performance at individual, departmental, institutional and country level.

There are active programmes in Australian universities to encourage women for promotion, but to be appointed vice-chancellor you still need to be a full professor, demonstrate experience of university-wide responsibility and have national visibility and reputation. Whilst women in Australian higher education could be said to be doing quite well, they are still under-represented in the professoriate, which is where you need to be to aspire to a deanship or higher.

There are barriers to women's progression which may not be so acute in other countries. For example, Armidale is a rural and regional university, four to five car hours away from the next closest university and with no air or rail links to it. Staff participation in national bodies becomes costly both in time and money. Recruitment and retention of senior staff is particularly challenging for regional universities; it's very difficult, for example, for a prospective VC's partner to find an appropriate job in the local area.

VCs are usually appointed on a five-year term, renewable by mutual agreement. In general most Australian vice-chancellors come via deputy vice-chancellor or pro-vice-chancellor routes. Even then there's a big step change in the level of strategic responsibility. The Harvard Seminar for New Presidents has been very helpful and a number of Australian DVCs/PVCs and new VCs have participated and really appreciated it. An alumni network for programmes like this and the Top Management Programme you have in the UK is very important for mutual support and continuing development.

The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee has sub-committees which meet up around three times a year, which foster networking. There's also formal mentoring at lower levels. The VCs' Committee has a programme for senior women which started about 10-12 years ago, and there's a register of senior women who can be selected for seats on committees, etc, giving

them experience at senior strategic levels. Interestingly at UNE, as well as a middle managers' programme (including one specifically for women), I also initiated a student leadership programme. UNE has one of the highest proportions of residential students of Australian universities, with high engagement in extra-curricular activities such as fundraising, sports and cultural activities, some of which require leadership skills. The programme focuses on individual development, project management, time management and so on, with an intake of only 20 students per semester. It exposes them early to the notion of leadership in an academic setting and some students have gone on to become civic leaders in their home communities and in their professions.

Heads have to deal with a lot of conflict management and quickly need to develop heightened skills of persuasion and negotiation

At the University of Queensland, Brisbane and the University of Technology, Sydney, where I worked earlier, we had workshops and staff development programmes for heads of departments. I think that's absolutely crucial. The role is not a career position; for most people it's temporary. Some will go on to become deans, but most go back into the collegium. Heads have to deal with a lot of conflict management and quickly need to develop heightened skills of persuasion and negotiation. The role is much more complex and onerous now than it was when I did some research in this area 18 years ago, but also more crucial.

It's very interesting when I sit on a selection committee for a dean, for example. Unless you've

had management responsibility as a head of department or similar, you're not likely to be successful in moving to a role where you have to manage staff and finances, or show that you can raise funds and be entrepreneurial. That experience is nearly always a pre-condition for senior jobs.

The nature of higher education also poses some development challenges. Australia isn't yet ready to go to teaching-only universities - our definition of a university very clearly includes research, but we have to question whether the nation can afford to fund so many universities, or whether it should cluster funds into particular research universities. The reality too is that whilst many academic staff officially do teaching and research, some publish very little. The impact of that may be felt when the Research Assessment Exercise is introduced to Australia. From the Armidale perspective, we've watched with some misgiving the enormous resources that go into the RAE in the UK and are concerned that solutions can't easily be transplanted without adaptation to the local context.

Coming back to Canberra now as chancellor I am aware that I have a very different role. Since 2003, the size and composition of university councils, our governing bodies, have been prescribed by the federal government and their responsibilities - which are like those of a company's board of directors - have been more clearly articulated. Council is responsible for the management and governance of the university, but delegates management to the VC. My first challenge will be the development of a new strategic plan - that's a council responsibility, but I know from my own experience that the direction comes from within the university. Some of the issues I've had emails about recently are management ones, not issues of governance. It may take staff a while to realise the difference in my role now.

POSTSCRIPT

During the first few months of my chancellorship we have spent quite some time as council members reflecting on and refining our understanding of governance. I have found the guidelines and reports issued by the Committee of University Chairmen (CUC) most helpful.

An unexpected challenge so early in my chancellorship is the selection of a new VC. Our current VC has indicated that he does not wish to negotiate a second term - he is planning to return to full-time research in May next year. And recruiting a new VC surely is the most important role a council and chancellor has.

"CAN YOU DEVELOP A VICE-CHANCELLOR?"

This was the title I was given for the seminar I led at the Association of Commonwealth Universities - Conference of Executive Heads at the University of Adelaide in April, writes Ewart Wooldridge, chief executive of the Leadership Foundation. I had no option but to answer the question in the affirmative! I believe we are already providing evidence of this in the Leadership Foundation's work in the UK.

There were a number of interesting characteristics to this session in Adelaide. Firstly, I was very pleased at the high attendance at this particular event. There was strong interest across a wide cross-section of Commonwealth universities in the issue of equipping leaders and managers for the ever-increasing pace of change in higher education. Secondly, I shared the platform with Professor Dayanand Dongaonkar, secretary general of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU). We very much complemented each other. Not only did we find we were dealing with many common agendas of change, but we placed emphasis on different aspects of the need. He

particularly covered the induction of vice-chancellors once they had been appointed, and the three-day leadership programme run by the AIU. I laid my emphasis on the development of tomorrow's leaders with a description of our Top Management Programme, and other processes of coaching and mentoring which we have instituted to equip senior leaders for the highest roles. There was also recognition in the general discussion at the event of the need for Commonwealth-wide networks in leadership development. Professor Robin Middlehurst and I will be following up that idea in discussions with John Rowett, secretary general of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU).

Quite apart from the discussions about leadership, the ACU conference covered an extremely rich range of issues on research and innovation, the links between universities and their communities, and indeed, relationships between higher education and government.

Details of the conference can be found at www.adelaide.edu.au/acu2006

**Leadership
Foundation**
for Higher Education

STAFF DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE
INNOVATION CULTURE PERFORMANCE

LIVERPOOL, 8-10 NOVEMBER 2006

The programme committee met in early May for the hard task of selecting around 20 from over 40 proposals for contributions to SDC2006. A new short series of 'speed training' events and posters will feature in the programme alongside the more familiar workshop format. The conference's performance and innovation themes in particular are reflected across contributions, from IT to dance, performance management for individuals and organisations and a range of offerings in between. An outline programme with keynote speakers is available from the conference website. Bookings already stand at over 50, with early bird members' booking fee of £495 available only until 9 June and £525 thereafter. See www.lfhe.ac.uk/membership/staffdevelopmentconference2006 for more details.