NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

THE SIXTY-FOURTH ORDINARY MEETING OF CONVOCATION

Saturday 9 October 2021

Present: Sophie McDermott (in the chair) and Millicent Acheampong; Graham Bowes; Ian Campbell; Kushal Reddy Dammannagaru; Suzanne Foster; Richard Gee; Ginny Glitheroe; David Goldsmith; Anthony Grindrod; Patricia Horsham; Abbie Hutchinson; Peter Kelly, Sotaro Kobayashi; Kyrriacos Kouveliotis; John Latham; Anneliese Lenaghan; Qing Li; Eleanor Lythe; Professor S M Monjurul Alam; Alison Martin; Greg Mayhew; Michail Neratzis; Cheng Boon Ng; Professor David Parker; Bimo Reksoprodjo; Nick Richardson; Jo Scriven; Dr Ria Snowdon, Paul Velluet; Andrew Walster; Susan Wilson.

In attendance: Professor Chris Baldwin (Chief Executive Officer, Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia); Dr Colin Campbell (Executive Director of Academic Affairs); Professor Chris Day (Vice-Chancellor and President); Dannika Glaister (Events Officer, NU Advancement); Dr John Hogan (Registrar); Lauren Huntington (Deputy Director, NU Advancement); Professor Anya Hurlbert (Dean of Advancement); Dr Simon Meacher (Executive Office and Governance Manager); Lucy Pritchard (Alumni Relations Manager); Paul Tyack (Director of NU Advancement); Professor Tom Ward (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education).

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to the sixty-fourth ordinary meeting of Convocation which was held on Zoom.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Convocation held on Saturday 10 October 2020 were approved as a correct record.

   [Circulated with the agenda as Document A.]

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising to report.

4. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT’S ANNUAL REPORT TO CONVOCATION FOR 2020-21

Received: The Vice-Chancellor and President’s Annual Report to Convocation.

Noted that:

1. The Vice-Chancellor thanked students, colleagues, alumni and supporters for the hard work, dedication and resilience demonstrated by the whole University community throughout the worldwide disruption brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. In light of the focus of the Alumni Day of Action on the University’s core values, the Vice-Chancellor introduced a video presentation highlighting the University’s commitment to race equality and social and environmental justice. The video featured colleagues who were involved in leading the University’s work in these areas, including the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, the Chair of the University’s Race Equality Network, the Sustainability Team, and the Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
3. The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the University’s excellent performance in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings on sustainable consumption.

Contributions and questions from the floor:


i. ‘It is now over two years since I wrote to you (in April, 2019) to convey my serious concern regarding the closure of Arnold Dunbar Smith’s very fine, statutorily-listed Henderson (Old) Hall (of Residence) at Cochrane Park and its being left unoccupied and enclosed within a tall security-hoarding. I understand that very sadly the situation remains unchanged today, despite the recent, complete demolition of Professor Jack Napper’s extensive group of 1960s residential building on the adjacent site. In your response you advised me that the future of the Old Hall had not yet been agreed, but that a working group had been established to consider the options for the building, and that whilst it was unlikely that it would be reopened as a student residence it would be ‘put to good use and provide high quality facilities in the future’, suggesting that I contact Iain Garfield, the University’s Director of Estates and Facilities for further information.

In his helpful telephoned response to my further letter of July, 2019, Iain advised me that the University was committed to retaining the building in its property portfolio rather than disposing of it, but that any decision on the future was ‘a long way off’. Please can you clarify what progress has been made by the University over the last two years to devise and agree definitive proposals for the future use of Henderson Hall and for its being brought back into beneficial and appropriate use, and assure me that appropriate and effective action is being taken by the University in the meantime to provide for its continued security and sound condition, including keeping the building wind and weather-tight and modestly heated in order to avoid damp problems? As an extraordinarily fine example of the continuing Arts and Crafts movement of the 1930s, Henderson Hall – surely a major cultural asset in the University’s estate - deserves to have as sound and sustainable future as the Armstrong Building which the University has restored and modernised most commendably over recent years’.

Response:

The Vice-Chancellor stated that the redevelopment of Henderson Old Hall was an integral part of a larger development strategy currently being discussed with Newcastle City Council planning and policy officers with the intention of returning it to use. This work was intrinsically linked to a Sports Strategy for the University which sought improved and more accessible outdoor sports facilities for students, colleagues and the local community. This was a complex project requiring discussions with a number of statutory organisations but the University was receiving positive feedback. The hoardings had been retained to improve security of the building which was regularly inspected and maintained as required.


i. Is there any programme on Sustainability Development at the University?

Response:

The University has an MSc programme in Sustainability, but is in active discussions about whether every student should have the opportunity to study climate change as part of their course.
c. Nick Richardson (BSc Zoology, 1977)

ii. Can I request that the minutes of Convocation are made available shortly after the meeting and not 24 hours before the next meeting?

Response:

The draft minutes of Convocation will be published on the University website as soon as they have been reviewed by the Chair. Minutes are not formally approved until the next meeting.

iii. The return to visit Newcastle and the University has always been a key element of Convocation weekend for so many alumni, meeting old friends and new. Can you confirm that it is the University’s intent next year to return to a real and ‘traditional’ meeting of Convocation?

Response:

Next year’s meeting would follow a ‘hybrid’ format, whereby both in-person and virtual attendance would be possible, subject to the prevailing public health context.

d. Chunwee Ng (Marine Technology, 2004)

iv. University merchandise: I find the items available on sale on NUSU website to be quite limited. Could more items be made available so that overseas alumni can buy them online?

Response:

The Students’ Union is currently reviewing its range of merchandise and hopes to expand its online provision in the near future.

5. PRESIDENT OF THE NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS’ UNION

Received: a presentation from the President of the Newcastle University Students’ Union for 2021-22, Abbie Hutchinson (MSc Global Public Health 2021).

Noted that:

1. The President highlighted the purpose of the Students’ Union and introduced the members of the sabbatical officer team for the 2021-22 academic year.

2. A number of current campaigns were highlighted, including ‘North East Solidarity and Teaching’, a multi-award winning and internationally recognised student project which had been supported by alumni investment.

3. A University First Responder service had been established by the Students’ Union in collaboration with North East Ambulance Service and the University. The scheme involved medical students providing a uniformed service dispatched by the NHS Trust in response to patients dialling 999 in the Newcastle area.

4. ‘Our Black History’ was the Students’ Union campaign for Black History Month 2021, aimed at celebrating the University’s Black community and the power to facilitate change. A programme of events and workshops had been arranged.
6. THE CHANCELLORSHIP

Reported:

1. Imtiaz Dharker had been appointed as Chancellor of the University at an extraordinary meeting of Convocation in November 2019 for a period of two years effective from 1 January 2020. The Chancellor had indicated her willingness to be re-appointed for a further period of two years from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023.

2. In accordance with Statute 6.4, the Chancellor shall be appointed by Convocation on the nomination of Court and Senate sitting in joint session.

3. The Vice-Chancellor presented a recommendation from the joint meeting of Court and Senate held on 22 September 2021 to re-appoint Imtiaz Dharker as the University Chancellor for a further two year period from 1 January 2022.

4. Despite the extraordinary circumstances of the past 18 months, which had not only prevented the University from holding the Chancellor’s Inauguration Ceremony but also had precluded Imtiaz from visiting campus, she had nonetheless been a very supportive and engaged Chancellor and as visible as possible in the circumstances. Her obvious concern for our students and their wellbeing had been at the centre of her contact with the University.

Resolved that Convocation approve the re-appointment of Imtiaz Dharker as Chancellor of the University for a further period of two years from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023.

7. NU ADVANCEMENT

Received: a presentation from the Director NU Advancement, Paul Tyack, on alumni engagement and philanthropy activity over the past year.

Noted that:

1. The Director of NU Advancement thanked all alumni present at the meeting for their commitment to the University, and invited expressions of interest from alumni in how they and the University might work better in partnership.

2. The mission of NU Advancement was threefold: to connect alumni with each other and the University (welcoming new graduates, enhancing student and alumni career development, and inspiring change for good in response to local, national and global challenges); to inspire a spirit of giving and volunteering; and to raise the funds needed to achieve transformative growth for the key themes and ambitions that define the University.

3. Tribute was paid to alumni around the world who had taken steps to support their community during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to all those who had chosen to donate to the University, with over £6m to support the University’s Covid-19 response.

4. The University had a range of measures for digital engagement with alumni. These included: a series of virtual events titled Newcastle Develop to explore sectors available to recent graduates; the Newcastle Connect series to build relationships between alumni in key regions across the globe; and Newcastle Discover to connect graduates with research taking place at the University.

5. A Campaign for Newcastle would be launched in the very near future. This would be a
historic effort to raise substantial funds for students, for research, for the city and region, and for the global impact of the University.

8. **CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR OF CONVOCATION**

Reported:

The first, three-year term of office of the current Chair of Convocation, Sophie McDermott (BA Politics and History 2018) was due to end on 8 October 2022.

Convocation is a statutory body of the University. All alumni are members. The Chair of Convocation is also an ex officio member of the Court of the University providing a further formal channel of communication between alumni and University. Statute 47 states that:

“Convocation, from its own members, shall elect a chair and may elect a deputy chair, under procedures as the court may from time to time decide, taking into account any recommendation from convocation. The chair and deputy chair shall respectively hold office for three years. Any retiring chair or deputy chair shall be eligible for re-election subject to not holding the post for more than nine consecutive years in total. Neither the chair nor the deputy chair shall be a member of the salaried staff of the University.”

Nominations would be invited for the roles of Chair and Deputy Chair early in 2022, so that an election may be held and appointments made at the meeting of Convocation in October 2022.

9. **DEATHS AND OBITUARIES**

Noted that:

A list of deaths was available on the Alumni website.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Noted:

There was no other business.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Reported that a provisional date for the sixty-fifth Ordinary Meeting of Convocation had been arranged for Saturday 8 October 2022. This date would be confirmed in due course. Online and present-in-person participation would be possible.

Dr Simon Meacher
Secretary to Convocation
October 2021