



**Minutes  
Board of Governors  
11 October 2023  
The meeting was held in the Waldegrave Drawing Room**

**Present:** Mr Ben Andradi  
Mr Paul Barber  
Ms Laura Blackhall  
Ms Caitlin Finn – Student Life President  
Dr Fiona Gatty  
Mr Anthony McClaran – Vice-Chancellor  
Dr Mary Mihovilovic  
Rt Rev Richard Moth (Chair)  
Ms Adeola Oke  
Professor Dominic Tildesley  
Ms Deborah Streatfield

**In Attendance:** Professor Mike Bewick – Interim Dean of the Faculty of Medicine  
Ms Elizabeth Bell – Director of Strategic Planning  
Mrs Jo Blunden – Chief Operating Officer (“COO”)  
Mr Andrew Browning – University Secretary (Minutes)  
Mr Neil Carleton – Project Manager (Faculty of Medicine)  
Professor Symeon Dagkas – Provost  
Mr Tim Emmett – Business Development Director  
Ms Melina Healy – Learning Development Lecturer  
Mr Richard Solomon – Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”)  
Mr Esteban Traverso – Observer  
Dr Anne Yorke- Observer

**Apologies:** Claire McDonnell

23/01	<b>Welcomes</b>  The meeting opened with a prayer.		
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	<p>Laura Blackhall who had been elected as the non-academic staff member of the Board was welcomed to her first meeting.</p> <p>Esteban Jurado Traverso and Dr Anne Yorke who were both to be appointed new governors were welcomed to the meeting of the Board.</p>		
23/02	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>		
23/03	<p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 20 June 2023 were approved by the Board.</p>		
23/04	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <p>It was asked by the Board whether Ex Corde Ecclesiae had been distributed to Board members. The University Secretary said that he would arrange for this to be done.</p>	AB	22/11/23
23/05	<p><b>RACE EQUALITY CHARTER (“REC”) SUBMISSION</b></p> <p>Melina Healy (MH) who is the Co-Chair of the Race Equality Charter presented the REC submission to the Board. She said a lot of work had gone into the submission. She said that the action plan still needed some adjustments but they were at the point where the Board’s approval was being sought in principle to the submission. The holders of the actions such as Deans and HR had been consulted on the actions and had agreed to these.</p> <p>The Board made comment regarding section three of the submission asking whether more of could be made of the inter-religious dialogue within the catholic tradition which was specific to the University and would be relevant to the submission. MH said that this could be considered and added.</p> <p>The Board asked what challenges the University would face in implementing the actions. MH said that it may be the case that financially resourcing</p>		

	<p>some of the roles outlined in the submission would be difficult. The Provost said that there would be some challenges in this regard but he felt that they were achievable.</p> <p>The Board asked how employability was going to be made more inclusive as set out in 7.1.3 of the submission. MH said that she could not say how this would be done exactly as she was not the action-holder but she said that it was a good question and something that she would go back to employability about.</p> <p>The Board unanimously <b>endorsed</b> the REC submission. It would be going to the Finance and Resources Committee once further amendments had been made for final approval before submission.</p>		
	<p><b>VICE CHANCELLOR’S REPORT</b> <i>Paper 1 refers</i></p> <p>The Vice Chancellor asked the Board to take his paper as read. He highlighted the outcome of the House of Lords Industry and Regulations Committee’s report into the OfS which had raised a whole series of challenges about the way in which it operated. The Government was required to respond to the report by the end of November.</p> <p>The Vice Chancellor said that there had been no participation of St Mary’s staff in the marking and assessment boycott and therefore there were no students who were graduating without a degree classification. The St Mary’s branch of UCU had written to the Vice-Chancellor stating that it would not be taking strike action on the final week of September and that ultimately the entire union withdrew from strike action that week.</p> <p>Following the recent industrial action in the sector the government was proposing that universities would be required to have minimum work agreements to avoid situations where there can be a complete withdrawal from staff from academic activities.</p> <p>The Board were told that at the invitation of the ambassador to the Holy See the Vice Chancellor and Director of the Bakhita Centre would be</p>		

	<p>attending a general audience with the Pope as part of events at the Vatican to highlight exploitation and modern slavery.</p> <p>A message of support was going out to all staff and students offering support to anyone who was affected by the events taking place in Israel and Gaza.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the Vice Chancellor's report.</p>		
	<p><b>FACULTY OF MEDICINE UPDATE</b>  <i>Paper 2 refers</i></p> <p>The Dean of Medicine confirmed that the stage one application had gone to the GMC in July. Following the submission the GMC had changed its application process and stage one was now known as a screening application.</p> <p>The GMC had requested further information be submitted in relation to the application and there had also been a meeting that day with the GMC. This meeting had been very positive and the University would be looking to submit further information in the early part of next year. It was not expected that this would have a significant impact on the timetable for setting up the medical school.</p> <p>The Board felt that the project had continued to make progress and that the University was in a good position. It said that there were two areas that the GMC seemed to want the University to make progress in the first being buildings for use by the faculty of medicine and establishing what the staff needs would be.</p> <p>The COO said that there were live discussions in relation to options for the University's estate which would be coming to Board of Governors for discussion soon. High level plans had also been made regarding the staffing of the medical school and these would become more detailed soon.</p> <p>The Board noted that the government had announced that there would be around 200 new place in medical schools created but that almost two-thirds would be through apprentice schemes generated by hospital trusts themselves. The Dean of Medicine that this would not impact on the</p>		

	<p>University's own plans. He said there is a consultation on the proposed apprenticeship scheme in the same way as there was on whether it should move to a four year graduate programme and there was some difference of opinion between the medical profession and the government about these options.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor said that he had visited Worcester University who were about 2 to 3 years ahead of the University in terms of setting up a medical school. They had admitted their first cohort of students which consisted of in the region of 20 domestic students and 24 overseas students. This had been done in the absence of government funded places and they had constructive dialogue with local health authorities who had assisted in creating domestic places with the provision of bursaries.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor said that he had also had constructive meetings with the Chief Executive of the local council and they had discussions about the way that the medical school could integrate with the wider care plan for South West London.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the update on the Faculty of Medicine</p>		
	<p><b>LEAGUE TABLES/STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE</b>  <i>Paper 3 refers</i></p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the paper.</p>		
	<p><b>RETENTION UPDATE</b>  <i>Paper 4 refers</i></p> <p>The Dean of Learning and Teaching said that while as had been previously described above by the interim Director of Strategic planning there had been a 2.2% improvement in retention the University was currently behind its competitor group when it came to retention at undergraduate level.</p> <p>The University would not know the actual figure for retention until after exam board had taken place and resits had been completed but it appeared that there</p>		

	<p>would be an improvement at levels 4,5, and 6 and a significant improvement in partner programmes. The Provost cautioned that the exam boards and student misconduct cases could have significant effect on the retention figures for the year.</p> <p>There had been an overhaul of the “student at risk” policy with further initiatives introduced including the student app and student success teams. The student retention strategy had also been approved.</p> <p>The target for retention in 2030 was 90% which would mean there would need to be an improvement of 1% per year.</p> <p>The Board asked how the student app would tie in with support being given to students. The COO said that the app can be a signpost tool to assist the University with retention. It makes the attendance monitoring system easier for the student to use and push notifications could be used to prompt student engagement. She said that the next stage would be using the data to monitor how often students were going into Moodle in order to build a holistic risk profile.</p> <p>The Board asked what number of students were leaving due to behavioural reasons. The COO said that she did not have the exact numbers but behaviour was not the typical reason. The main reason was academic either because they had been withdrawn, withdrawn themselves or been found to have committed academic misconduct. The Dean of Learning and Teaching said that there had also been a significant increase in the number of withdrawals due to financial pressures on students.</p> <p>The Board asked if there was any segmentation showing the types of students who were more likely to leave early. The Dean of Learning and Teaching said that international students had higher attrition than home students but when it came to results international students achieved on average better results. The Provost said that more work needed to be carried out but anecdotally there seemed to be no direct correlation between race and attrition. He said that cost of living did seem to be a significant factor.</p>		
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	<p>The Board asked whether the recruitment of international students to the medical school would create a further retention issue. The Provost said that a different demographic would be recruited to medical school meaning that this may not be as much of a problem.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the retention update.</p>		
	<p><b>MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS</b> <i>Paper 6 refers</i></p> <p>The Financial Controller presented the management accounts to April. He said that the University was currently tracking ahead of budget although a slight deficit (-£0.3m) was showing due to the phasing of income. The income stream from partners was improving and there had been a growth in international recruitment.</p> <p>The current cash balance stood at £10.9m and the University remained on track to achieve its forecast surplus at the end of the financial year.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the management accounts</p>		
	<p><b>BUDGET AND FINANCIAL FORECASTS</b> <i>Paper 7 refers</i></p> <p>The CFO presented the paper. He told the Board that the five-year financial trajectory which had been approved by the Board was based on a 15% growth assumption for student enrolment. In the short term it appeared that risks relating to PGCE numbers and international recruitment numbers were likely to crystallize and therefore it was necessary to cool down these growth assumptions. To cover this reduction in income the University was going to reduce its income contingency to £1m and this would mean the targeted Budget Net Surplus for 2023/24 would remain at £700k. The University should also be able to maintain the previously target trajectory for the outer four years of the five-year plan.</p> <p>The Board asked how the contingency was calculated. The CFO said that this was done on the basis of experience and judgment. He said that £1m</p>		

	<p>contingency should be reasonable as the targeted income was not fanciful.</p> <p>The Board asked whether the number of CAS' issued by UKVI would have an adverse impact on the number of students who could be recruited to the medical school. The COO said that CAS levels were currently based around retention levels which due to the tail from SMULIC still needed to improve. It was expected that in future year the number of CAS issued would increase and so this would not impact on medical school recruitment.</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, Dave Hartnett, said that the issues raised in the Budget and Financial Forecasts paper had been discussed at Committee and that he had subsequently discussed updates which had been made to the paper with the CFO and he was satisfied with the changes that had been made.</p> <p>The Board voted on whether to approve the Budget for 2023/2024 and the Financial Forecasts. The voting was as follows:-</p> <p>In favour: 13 votes Against: 0 votes There were no abstentions.</p> <p>The Budget for 2023/24 and Financial Forecasts were therefore <b>approved</b> by the Board.</p>		
22/75	<p><b>STUDENTS' UNION REPORT</b> <i>Paper 8 refers</i></p> <p>The SU Education President said that the Annual Review of the Student's Union had been published and this was distributed to members of the Board.</p> <p>The SU had hit its £10k target for charity fundraising. In May the first ever SU Awards night had taken place. Over 100 students attended.</p> <p>On the campaigning front in May it was Deaf Awareness week and June was Pride Month. A campaign had also been launched to encourage and support students to write to their MP to encourage better financial support for students.</p>		



	<p>The “Big Student Survey” was currently being undertaken and an update on this would be provided at a future report to the Board.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the Students’ Union Report.</p>		
	<p><b>STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE</b> <i>Paper 9 refers</i></p> <p>The Provost provided an update to the Board on student recruitment. The paper included data relating to both undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment.</p> <p>At the end of June the main UCAS scheme closes with the ‘decline by default’ date being 17 July 2023. The UCAS data showed that the University was doing better than its competitor group, the Provost however cautioned that clearing could change the University’s position. A clearing strategy would shortly be coming to the SLT for approval.</p> <p>The first open day of the next recruitment cycle had taken place with attendance being 40% up from last year.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the Student Recruitment update.</p>		
	<p><b>STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS</b> <i>Paper 10 refers</i></p> <p>The COO presented the update on the response to the OfS statement of expectations on Sexual Harassment and Bullying. She thanked the work of Claire McDonnell in assisting with this. She said that it was likely to become a condition of registration for HEIs to have capacities and resources to deal with sexual harassment and bullying.</p> <p>The COO said that incidents remained low. She said that of the students surveyed over 100 felt comfortable and confident using Report and Support demonstrating the face to face culture at the University. The paper outlines the approach that the University was taking.</p> <p>Claire McDonnell said that she drew a lot of comfort from the work that was being done. She said that a major challenge was to resource and finance this.</p>		

	The Board <b>noted</b> the update.		
	<p><b>REVIEW OF FUNDRAISING</b> <i>Paper 11 refers</i></p> <p>The CFO said that following on from the presentation to Board members the previous month the paper was intended to set out the next steps that were being taken in relations to the recommendations that had been made by CCS.</p> <p>The University was therefore looking to budget for the hire of a Director of Development. There would be further updates given to the Board in the following academic year.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the update.</p>		
	<p><b>GOVERNOR TRAINING</b> <i>Paper 12 refers</i></p> <p>The University Secretary outlined the training that was going to be provided to the Board of Governors for the coming year. This included online training and a training day scheduled to take place November.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the paper.</p>		
	<p><b>CUG RANKINGS</b> <i>Paper 13 refers</i></p> <p>The interim Director of Strategic Planning told the Board that the University had consolidated its position in the CUG rankings moving 2 places up to 85<sup>th</sup> overall.</p> <p>Within the subject areas there had been significant rises for the University in Business Law and Society. The areas that the University continued to struggle in were those relating to outcome and tariffs.</p> <p>The next league tables to be published were the Guardian and the Times.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the paper.</p>		
	<p><b>AUDIT COMMITTEE</b> <i>Paper 14 refers</i></p>		

	The Board <b>noted</b> the minutes of the meeting of the audit committee which took place on 25 May 2023.		
	<p><b>FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE</b> <i>Paper 15 refers</i></p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the minutes of the meeting of the finance and resources Committee meeting which took place on 08 June 2023</p>		
	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p><i>Strawberry Hill House- Deed of Variation</i></p> <p>The University Secretary told the Board that Strawberry Hill Trust (“SHT”) had applied for funding from the Arts Council for the maintenance and repair of three of the pinnacles, the woodwork and windows on the south side of the property, the upgrade of CCTV and improvements to be made to the heating systems of Strawberry Hill House. SHT was awarded £125k for these works to be carried out.</p> <p>One of the requirements of the Arts Council was that in order to receive funding of over £50k SHT needed to have a registered lease of at least 10 years without a break clause. As the break clause can be invoked in 2032 this requirement is not met and the Arts Council has advised SHT that they need to enter into a Deed of Variation to change the date that the break clause may be invoked.</p> <p>The University Secretary said that he had yet to receive the Deed of Variation and was therefore asking the Board to approve the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) That the Board of Governors approves in principle the signing of the Deed of Variation by the Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary</li> <li>ii) That upon receipt of the Deed of Variation, the University Secretary distributes a copy of the Deed to all Board members. Board members will then have 5 working days to raise any concerns or objections.</li> </ul>		

	<p>iii) Subject to no concerns or objections being raised the Vice-Chancellor and University Secretary shall sign the Deed of Variation.</p> <p>The Board of Governors unanimously <b>approved</b> the above.</p>		
	<b>VALEDICTIONS</b>		
	<p><b>DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS</b></p> <p>22 November 2023  24 January 2024  14 March 2024 (Away Day)  25 April 2024  19 June 2024</p>		

**END**