



**Minutes
Board of Governors
25 June 2024**

The meeting was held in the Waldegrave Drawing Room

Present:

Mr Ben Andradi
Ms Laura Blackhall
Ms Caitlin Finn – Student Life President
Dr Fiona Gatty
Mr Anthony McClaran – Vice-Chancellor
Ms Claire McDonnell (Vice-Chair)
Dr Mary Mihovilovic
Rt Rev Richard Moth (Chair)
Ms Adeola Oke
Ms Deborah Streatfield
Professor Dominic Tildesley (via Zoom)
Dr Ann York

In Attendance:

Professor Mike Bewick – Interim Dean of the Faculty of
Medicine
Ms Elizabeth Bell – University Secretary and Director of
Strategic Planning (minutes)
Mrs Jo Blunden – Chief Operating Officer (“COO”)
Dr Jane Chambers – Head of School of Education
Professor Symeon Dagkas – Provost
Ms Kristen Pilbrow – Director of International Engagement,
Student Recruitment and Admissions (IESRA)
Mr Richard Solomon – Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”)
Professor Stephen Parker – Director of CERRL
Ms Cynthia Kinduelo – Governance Officer

Apologies:

Mr Paul Barber
Mr David Brambell
Mr Esteban Jurado Traverso

23/23	<p>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</p> <p>The meeting opened with a prayer. Members remembered in their prayers the mother of Adeole Oke and Lyn Davis (SMU staff).</p> <p>Apologies had been received from David Brambell, Paul Barber and Esteban Jurado Traverso.</p>	
23/24	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
23/28	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2024 were approved by the Board.</p>	
23/29	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p><i>23/80 Strawberry Hill House</i></p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on discussions with the Strawberry Hill Trust (SHT) about the potential for a closer collaboration. He reported that since the last Board meeting, the University had developed a proposal for SHT to consider. The proposal would have seen the University take over the running of commercial operations and SHT would continue to manage the curatorial aspects of the House. Subsequent discussions with SHT confirmed that they are now in a better financial position than they had been at the beginning of the calendar year. They had also appointed a new Director who took up post at the beginning of June and wanted to give her the opportunity to review the work of the House. It had therefore been agreed that the University and SHT would not pursue the proposal at this time but instead would re-visit opportunities for closer collaboration in the Autumn.</p> <p>Fiona Gatty, link Governor for SHH, reported that she had met with Zoe Colbeck, the new Director at SHH. She told members that Zoe had a strong conservation background and seemed keen to work with SMU to build closer collaboration.</p>	

	<p>23/83 Security Update</p> <p>At the previous Board meeting the COO was asked to provide information about security measures in place, particularly given that SMU has an open campus. The COO presented a paper which set out the current security measures in place.</p> <p>Members noted the paper.</p>	
23/30	<p>CHAIR'S UPDATE</p> <p>The Chair informed members that this would be Caitlin Finn's last meeting as her term of office would end on 30 June 2024. He thanked Caitlin on behalf of the Board for her contributions both here and to the wider university. The Chair welcomed David James to the meeting. David had been elected Student Life President for the 2024/25 academic year and would be joining the Board in October.</p> <p>Members heard that the University Promotion Committee had met recently and had recommended that the Vice-Chancellor should be promoted to the title of Professor of Higher Education Policy and Practice. Members of the Board joined the Chair in offering their congratulations to the Vice-Chancellor.</p> <p>Following a visit from the OfSTED inspection team in May the University had today received confirmation that it had retained its outstanding award for the third time. The Board congratulated the School of Education and acknowledged the work that had gone into preparing for this review.</p> <p>The Chair reported that the Nominations and Governance Committee had been overseeing the implementation of the Governance Review undertaken by SUMS in Summer 2023. Good progress had been made and a full report would come to the Board meeting in October 2024. He noted that over the Summer he would be working with the University Secretary to refine the approach to Governor appraisals and details would be shared in due course.</p>	
23/31	<p>MEDICAL SCHOOL UPDATE</p> <p>The interim Dean of the Medical School provided an update on the Medical School application process. He reported that, as</p>	

	<p>previously communicated with Board members, the GMC had confirmed that the University's application could progress without conditions. He presented a paper which outlined priorities for the coming weeks and set out the requirements of the next phase which would be the completion of a Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ). The University was aiming to submit the SAQ in October 2024. Following the submission of the SAQ the GMC would then conduct a site visit.</p> <p>Members asked whether the GMC would expect to see the Centenary Building as part of the site visit. The interim Dean confirmed that the GMC would not need to see the building but would expect to see detailed plans. They would also expect to see a Plan B in the event that the Centenary Building was not ready by September 2026. The COO confirmed that contingency plans were in place.</p> <p>The Provost reported that the advertisement for the founding Dean of the Medical School had gone out. The University was using a search firm (Perrett Laver). Other key posts would be recruited over the coming academic year.</p> <p>Governors queried whether there was any possibility that a competition for funded medical places might be opened up in the short term. The interim Dean reported that this was highly likely, although dependent on the outcome of the General Election on 4 July 2024. He noted that the GMC had recently appointed a Director of Strategy whose remit was likely to include expansion of medical training.</p> <p>Members heard that as the University enters the next phase of the project there was a need to ensure that the right governance structure for the Medical School was in place. The interim Dean and the University Secretary were reviewing the relationship between the steering group, programme board and BoG to ensure that this was operating effectively.</p> <p>The University was in the final stages of agreeing the contract with its contingency school and once this was signed a public announcement would be made.</p> <p>Members noted the Medical School update.</p>	
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23/32	<p>RECRUITMENT UPDATE: SEPTEMBER 2024 ENTRY</p> <p>The Director of IESRA provided an update on the current recruitment position. The numbers were broadly unchanged from the previous report to Board and current projections were that recruitment would be flat year on year. There were some positive signs on international recruitment following confirmation that the post study work route will remain. The University had recently received confirmation of its CAS allocation which was in line with the number requested.</p> <p>The first open day for the 2025 cycle would take place on 26 June 2024. Bookings were higher than in the previous year and a large school group had also booked to come. The open day format had been tweaked following advice from a consultant who ran a session with academic colleagues about running a good open day. A Postgraduate open evening would also run for first time on the same day.</p> <p>Members noted the recruitment update.</p>	
23/33	<p>RECRUITMENT UPDATE: CATHOLIC SCHOOLS RECRUITMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>The Director of IESRA presented a draft strategy for catholic schools recruitment for feedback from the Board. This strategy would form one strand of the broader domestic recruitment strategy which was currently under development. Activity in this area had already increased by c.50% since the appointment of a Faith Schools Officer in the recruitment team.</p> <p>In September 2023 the University had recruited 112 students from Catholic Schools. The data showed that the conversion rate for applicants from Catholic Schools was higher than the University average so it made sense to target these schools in a more focused way.</p> <p>The strategy had been developed in an evidence-based way and data provided by UCAS had enabled the recruitment team to identify twelve schools that would likely yield student applications for SMU. Members heard that through the strategy the recruitment team was looking to work more closely with both Board members and colleagues in the School of Education to build the University's catholic schools network.</p>	

	<p>Members were supportive of the strategy but highlighted the need to work through the existing structures for Catholic education such as the CMATs and Diocese.</p>	
23/34	<p>CMAT STRATEGY</p> <p>Colleagues from the School of Education presented a strategy for engaging with the CMATs. The strategy was research informed and focused on the formation of leaders within CMATs. The School's offer was built on existing postgraduate provision which has been re-branded to broaden appeal. The School was also looking to develop an MBA Education in partnership with the Faculty of Business and Law and the Director of Catholic Mission. It would be important to ensure that provision was flexible to enable CEOs and executive teams to participate in a way that works for them.</p> <p>In addition to the provision of training and development the School was also developing research activity in the area of CMAT leadership. Given the recent introduction of these structures there was a need to conduct research and inform the debate around the development of an Institute for leadership for CMATs.</p> <p>Members of the Board endorsed the strategy and approach to supporting CMATs.</p>	
23/35	<p>STAFF PULSE SURVEY RESULTS</p> <p>The HR Director presented high level results from the recent staff survey. Overall the results of the survey were positive with a three percentage point increase on the overall engagement score. All themes showed an increase in favourable scores from 2023 although two of the themes, reward & recognition and leadership, sit below the HEI sector benchmark.</p> <p>Members heard that there had been some differences in the results between academics and professional services. The engagement score for academic staff did increase but the services score had increased more significantly. The most surprising academic score was that the percentage of staff who would recommend SMU as a place to study have declined.</p>	

	<p>The results of the survey will be used to create local action plans. HR will drill down into the data to understand where significant improvements have been to share good practice. There would also be a series of staff focus groups.</p> <p>In relation to the two areas that were below the HE sector benchmark the Board heard that, in relation to leadership, there had been an SLT action after the last staff survey to focus on improving this score. A number of actions were implemented such as changes to the format of VC reports and SLT visits to Faculties/Services to improve visibility. This has resulted in an increase of six percentage points in the score in this area. However, given that the score remains below benchmark, during the focus groups staff will be asked for examples of how this could be improved so that more specific actions can be created.</p> <p>The second area falling below benchmark is in the area of reward and recognition, however, the overall score had improved by ten percentage points. This increase in score reflects the considerable amount of work has been done to improve benefits on offer to staff. There continue to be sector wide constraints in relation to national pay which are likely to affect scores in this area.</p> <p>The Board noted the results of the staff survey.</p>	
23/36	<p>EXCHANGE LEASE UPDATE</p> <p>The CFO presented an update on the negotiation of the renewal of the lease for The Exchange. The Board was not required to approve the new lease but given the strategic importance of The Exchange the Board had been kept informed.</p> <p>The lease would run for a period of seven years and the team have managed to negotiate better terms. The only remaining sticking point was the ability to use the sides of the building for advertising. Colleagues from SMU would be meeting with LBRUT on 26 June 2024 where the University would be seeking final agreement.</p> <p>Members asked whether it was possible to raise awareness more generally in the local area about The Exchange. Other local venues such as the Hampton Hub Club had done this very effectively. The Director of Commercial and Community had been tasked with raising the profile of The Exchange in order to ensure that we get</p>	

	<p>maximum value from it. The COO noted that the layout of The Exchange can limit the type of events that can be held.</p> <p>It was agreed that the University Secretary would explore the possibility of holding a Board meeting at the Exchange so the members could see the site.</p> <p><u>ACTION:</u> University Secretary to look at holding Board meeting at The Exchange.</p>	<p><u>ACTION:</u> <u>EB</u></p>
23/37	<p>VC REPORT & POLICY UPDATE</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor presented his regular report to Board which provided an overview of developments internally and externally. He noted that policy developments had slowed due to the upcoming General Election. There had not yet been any explicit plans from the Labour Party about policies for HE but the expectation was that the hostility towards sector would change under a Labour government. The sector was expecting Bridget Phillipson to retain the HE brief if elected.</p> <p>The University was looking forward to welcoming governors to graduation on 17 and 18 July and any governors who had not yet confirmed their attendance were encouraged to do so.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor asked the Board to join him in congratulating the WP team who had recently won a London Higher Award for Outstanding Widening Participation or Outreach initiative of the Year. The award was made in recognition of the ‘Get Set for Success’ programme which is an annual extended induction initiative to give widening participation students confidence, practical information and a sense of belonging about University life before beginning their studies.</p> <p>The Board also offered their congratulations to Chris Bryde, a PhD student, who has been selected to compete in the 2025 Invictus Games for the United States Marine Corps. His selection comes after winning five medals at the Marine Corps trials.</p> <p>The Board noted the Vice-Chancellor’s report.</p>	

23/38	<p>CHARITY COMMISSION EXEMPTION</p> <p>The University Secretary presented a paper which was seeking approval from the Board to make an application to the Privy Council for Exempt Charity status. This had been discussed at the Board meeting in January 2024 in the context of a complaint that had been made to the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission had advised the University to apply for Exempt status in order to reduce its overall reporting burden. This would also bring the University in line with most other Universities which had already been granted Exempt status.</p> <p>The Board approved the recommendation to seek Exempt status.</p>	
23/39	<p>SU REPORT</p> <p>The Student Life President provided an update on progress made against the SMSU strategy during the 2023/24. Members of the Board commended Caitlin and her SMSU colleagues on the achievements of the year.</p>	
	<p>MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS</p> <p>The CFO presented the Management Accounts for the period ending 30 April 2024.</p> <p>Members noted the Management Accounts.</p>	
	<p>CHAPLAINCY ANNUAL REPORT</p> <p>Members of the Board received the Annual Report from the Chaplaincy which had been prepared by the Chaplain.</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
	<p>ACADEMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</p> <p>Members of the Board received the minutes of the meetings held on the 11 April 2024 and 11 June 2024 for noting.</p> <p>Members heard that the ASC had reviewed the proposal to transfer three theology and philosophy programmes from the Maryvale Institute, part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The Committee had approved the proposal and the agreement with Maryvale had now been signed with programmes being delivered by SMU from September 2024.</p>	

	<p>The Chair of ASC also reported that the Committee had reviewed a report which summarised the findings of a recent review of collaborative partnerships undertaken by the University. The ASC had endorsed the findings of the review.</p>	
	<p>AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE</p> <p>Members of the Board received the minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2024.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted the risk update that had been presented to ASC and which was included in the Board papers for noting. Members endorsed the revised risk appetite that had been approved by Audit Committee.</p>	
23/40	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>The Student Life President presented Claire McDonnell with a lifetime membership for the Students' Union. The SMSU made lifetime awards to individuals who had made an exceptional contribution to the work of students across the University.</p>	
23/44	<p>DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS</p> <p>1 October 2024 27th November 2024 30th January 2025 12th March 2025 (away day) 30th April 2025 19th June 2025</p>	

END