



**Minutes
Board of Governors
20 June 2023**

The meeting was held at the Twickenham Rugby Stadium and Online

Present: Mr Ben Andradi
Mr Paul Barber
Dr Fiona Gatty
Mr Dave Hartnett
Mr Anthony McClaran – Vice-Chancellor
Ms Claire McDonnell
Dr Mary Mihovilovic
Rt Rev Richard Moth (Chair)
Ms June Mulroy
Ms Adeola Oke
Professor Dominic Tildesley
Ms Deborah Streatfield

In Attendance: Professor Mike Bewick – Interim Dean of the Faculty of Medicine
Rhiannon Birch – SUMS Consulting
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
Professor Adam Longcroft – Dean of Teaching and Learning
Mr Tim Emmett – Business Development Director
Canon Peter Newby – University Chaplain
Ms Ruth Thompson – Director of Human Resources
Mr Richard Solomon – Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”)
Mr Esteban Jurado Traverso - Observer
Mr Ben Williamson – Financial Controller

Apologies: Pietro Palladino, David Brambell

22/62	Welcomes		
	The meeting opened with a prayer.		

	<p>Esteban Jurado Traverso a potential new governor was welcomed to the meeting of the Board as an observer.</p> <p>Rhiannon Birch from SUM Consulting, who are carrying out an audit of governance, was welcomed to the meeting as an observer.</p>		
22/63	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>		
22/64	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 20 April 2023 were approved by the Board.</p>		
22/65	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>22/52 Maryvale – The University Secretary gave an update on the present situation regarding Maryvale. He told the Board that a paper had been considered by the SLT the previous day. The University were looking to acquire some of the programmes under the Maryvale banner. These would be distance learning programmes one being a BA in Philosophy in the Catholic Tradition and the other being the MA in Catholic Applied Theology. These had been costed by the University and the view was that the number of students expected to be recruited onto these programmes would make them financially viable. The costs of acquiring these programmes would be in the region of £25k to £50k and this would include seeking undertakings from the Birmingham Diocese that the Maryvale name would not be used in relation to the provision of education.</p>		
22/66	<p>CHAIR’S BUSINESS</p> <p><i>Governor Identity Cards and Lanyards</i></p> <p>Governor lanyards have been delivered to the University in order to give Governors more visibility when they visit the University. Governors can also</p>		

	<p>obtain an identity card from the security office. The University Secretary shall advise on the process for collecting these. ACTION</p> <p><i>Review of Governance</i></p> <p>The review of governance was currently underway with most of the meetings with governors and staff now being scheduled. It was expected that the report would come to the next meeting of the Board.</p>		
22/67	<p>PEOPLE STRATEGY AND STAFF SURVEY PRESENTATION</p> <p>The Director of Human Resources presented the People Strategy and the Staff Survey to the Board. She told the Board that the University's People Strategy was being refreshed in order to align with objective of developing people as set out in Vision 2030.</p> <p>The Director of Human Resources gave the wider context within which the survey had been carried out. Following the Covid pandemic many UK employees had not returned to work. The CIPD had calculated that in five years time the average age of the working population would be 58 years with 36% of the workforce being over 50 years. There were also the challenges being faced as to how to react to advances in technology with automation and artificial intelligence making it less clear what jobs people would be doing in the future. Equality and diversity issues continued to be important and there were no issues of costs of living which in turn would have an effect on workforce retention. Industrial action was also on the increase.</p> <p>The Director of Human Resources said that the survey engagement level was 72% which was in line with the benchmark for Higher Education Institutions.</p> <p>Those surveyed had been generally positive about the employee experience and were positive about their colleagues and line managers. On the whole they also found the work interesting and challenging and felt strongly about the future of the University.</p> <p>The main weaknesses which were highlighted in the survey related to leadership, equality and diversity,</p>		

	<p>and non-inclusive behaviours. There were also large pockets of neutral responses.</p> <p>The Director of Human Resources told the Board about the response of the University to the survey. She said that focus groups were being set up to consider the issues that had come up in the survey results. She said that Deans and Directors would also be looking at their local results and would be coming up with action plans to respond to these. It was important for the University to consider how it communicates its response to the staff survey.</p> <p>To ensure that the University was an attractive proposition to potential employees it needed to ensure that it provided a competitive value proposition as a place to work. A specialist recruiter had been employed by the University and the recruitment processes were being improved.</p> <p>A Learning and People Development Team had been created and this had an aim to upskill University staff.</p> <p>The Board asked if there had been anything in the results which had surprised the Director of Human Resources. She said that she was surprised in the difference in satisfaction between the professional services and academic scores. Whereas usually the professional services would score higher in satisfaction levels than academics at St Mary's academics scored higher.</p> <p>The Board noted the Staff Survey presentation.</p>		
22/68	<p>MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION <i>Paper 1 refers</i></p> <p>The Interim Dean of the Medical School presented the draft application to the GMC to set up a faculty of medicine at the University. He said that the Board had seen some of the application before; however, the screening application form was new. The University was still awaiting some letters of support but aside from those the Board had sight of the application. The section on ethics had been re-written with the assistance of the Director of Catholic Mission and Bishop John Sherrington.</p>		

	<p>The Interim Dean said how impressed he had been with the support that had been given to the project by third parties outside of the University. Work was being done to raise the profile of the University with potential partners.</p> <p>It was proposed that the University should use UCLAN as its contingency medical school as it shares the same value base of SMU, the quality of its curriculum, and that it provided an experiential course enabling students to gain a lot of experience before they went into their final year.</p> <p>Some SMU staff and governors had visited UCLAN earlier that month. Dominic Tildesley said that he felt that it was an excellent visit and he felt that SMU would be capable of providing the necessary space to facilitate the medical school. He said that he noted that resources would be required to bring overseas students up to speed in terms of their language comprehension and potentially in mathematics as well. He said that it was clear that in making its application to the GMC and during the GMC's assessment processes it was necessary for the University to be of one voice in relation to the project.</p> <p>The COO said that she agreed that the University could provide the necessary space and facilities for a medical school. She also said that medical students were also likely to need more pastoral support than was provided to existing SMU students. The COO said that there was a need to consider rephrasing the University's resource plans. She also noted that that the GMC inspection and compliance processes were understandably extremely stringent and the University should be prepared for this.</p> <p>The Chair said that he noted the accent that UCLAN had put on pastoral care and that they had been honest about the challenges that had been faced when setting up a medical school. He said that he felt that SMU was starting from a good base and he was interested in the way that UCLAN was open to new ways of studying and this could be emulated by the University.</p> <p>The Board asked what steps the University had taken to ensure that there was internal engagement. The Vice-Chancellor said that a campus wide briefing had taken place and this had been well attended both in</p>		
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	<p>person and online. It had been made clear that there were going to be no resources lost from other areas within the University. The Vice-Chancellor said that the message was that this was not the sole development at the University with other initiatives such as computer science and St Mary's online also being undertaken and the new building would not be for the exclusive use of the University.</p> <p>The Board asked about the possibility of the government pushing for universities to run a four-year graduate course in medicine and what steps the University should be considering in order to provide this type of programme. The Interim Dean said that the GMC could not make it a stipulation that the University runs such courses. He said that this issue may come up in the next election; however, this would need the backing of the profession.</p> <p>The Board asked about the staff student ratio of 1:12. The Interim Dean said that this ratio was on a par with Warwick/UCLAN.</p> <p>The Board asked what option the University would have during the application process if the outlay of setting up the faculty of medicine exceeded the viability of project. The interim Dean said that there were a number of "off ramps" at particular points where the University could exit the process. The CFO said that the financial modelling had shown that much of the costs of the new building would not be attributed to the medical school as the building was required come what may. This meant that the financial costs would not ramp up in a significant way.</p> <p>The Interim Dean was asked what external scrutiny the University would face. He said that the University would be scrutinised by the GMC and the contingency medical school as well as NHS England, the OfS, and other local medical schools on the medical school council.</p> <p>The Board asked about how risk was monitored. The CFO said that the medical school's risk register was reviewed frequently by the steering group and was a standalone risk on the University's risk register. He said that this was a high risk with mitigating actions.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor said that there was potentially some reputational damage if the University did not</p>		
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	<p>get a medical school but the reputational benefits were disproportionately high.</p> <p>The Board were asked to approve the initial application to the GMC. The voting was as follows:-</p> <p>13 in favour 0 Against There were no abstentions</p> <p>The initial application to the GMC was therefore approved and it was expected that it would be submitted to the GMC by the end of July</p>	NC/MB	31/07/23
22/69	<p>VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT <i>Paper 2 refers</i></p> <p>The Vice Chancellor asked the Board to take his paper as read. He did however want to highlight the University being awarded the Athena Swan Bronze award.</p> <p>He told the Board that the House of Commons Education Committee had started an enquiry into the recruitment and retention of teachers following the drop in the numbers of qualified teachers.</p> <p>The House of Lords had concluded the evidence stage of its investigation into the work of the OfS and the report was now being prepared.</p> <p>Together with all other HEIs the University had received a letter from the Minister for Housing and Homelessness announcing the government's intention to legislate to prevent public bodies, including HEIs, from enacting their own boycotts, divestment, and sanction policies against foreign countries. This seemed to be as a consequence of the BDS campaign against Israel. It was not expected that this would have any impact on the University.</p> <p>Th Vice Chancellor said that he had met with the local MP, Munira Wilson, at which he had briefed her on the new medical school, SMU Online, and Computer Science. He had also raised concerns regarding the governments intention to place restrictions on international students bringing their families with them to the UK. They also discussed local concerns including flooding and aircraft noise.</p>		

	<p>The Board asked about the partnership with Mauritius Institute of Education and what steps had been taken to protect the University from any risks arising from the partnership. The University Secretary said that the necessary due diligence had been carried out including a review at CPSC and it had been approved by the University's partnerships sub-committee.</p> <p>The Board noted the Vice Chancellor's report.</p>		
22/70	<p>CHAPLAINCY REPORT <i>Paper 5 refers</i></p> <p>The Chaplain presented the report on the work of Chaplaincy over the past 12 months. He said that this had been the first full year of "normal" post covid life. He said that the effects of the pandemic were had included a greater interiorisation of life, a consumer mentality to find alternative catholic provision, and lessened interest in developing the provision at the chaplaincy.</p> <p>A challenge for Chaplaincy was how to interact with other elements of the University year such as interfaith week, black history month, LGBT+ week and others.</p> <p>Chaplaincy was able to provide a good communal service throughout term time with mass being offered at 9.00am and 1.05pm on weekdays and Sundays at 11.00am.</p> <p>Highlights of the year had included the relics of St Bernadette spending the day at the University with at least 2000 people coming to visit them. A visit to Rome had taken place which had been arranged by Liberal Arts. An "End of Academic Year Mass" had taken place to mark the conclusion of the year.</p> <p>The Board welcomed the Chaplaincy Report and the sense it gave of the work that was being done at the University. The Vice Chancellor said that a Catholic Staff Group had been set up. He said that the organ had been moved off site for refurbishment.</p> <p>The Board noted the Chaplaincy report.</p>		
22/71	VISION 2030 KPIs		

	<p><i>Paper 3 refers</i></p> <p>The Interim Director of Strategic Planning said that the new retention KPI now allowed the University to measure student attrition rates as it progressed through the year. The current forecast for end of year retention was 83% for full-time first-degree students which was a 2.2% improvement on 2021/22. Postgraduate retention was 88% which was the same as 2021/22 but below the 91% target for the year.</p> <p>The results for the University in the OfS' outcomes data for Continuation and Completion had been positive. For undergraduate recruitment the University achieved target for 2022/23. For postgraduate recruitment it was well above the minimum threshold.</p> <p>The Board noted the paper.</p>		
22/72	<p>RETENTION UPDATE <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 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> <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 noted the retention update.</p>		
22/73	<p>MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS <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</p>		

	<p>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 noted the management accounts</p>		
22/74	<p>BUDGET AND FINANCIAL FORECASTS <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 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</p>		

	<p>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 approved by the Board.</p>		
22/75	<p>STUDENTS' UNION REPORT <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 noted the Students' Union Report.</p>		
22/76	<p>STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE <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</p>		

	<p>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 noted the Student Recruitment update.</p>		
22/77	<p>STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS <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> <p>The Board noted the update.</p>		
22/78	<p>REVIEW OF FUNDRAISING <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 noted the update.</p>		

22/79	<p>GOVERNOR TRAINING <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 noted the paper.</p>		
22/80	<p>CUG RANKINGS <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 85th 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 noted the paper.</p>		
22/81	<p>AUDIT COMMITTEE <i>Paper 14 refers</i></p> <p>The Board noted the minutes of the meeting of the audit committee which took place on 25 May 2023.</p>		
22/82	<p>FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE <i>Paper 15 refers</i></p> <p>The Board noted the minutes of the meeting of the finance and resources Committee meeting which took place on 08 June 2023</p>		
22/83	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</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</p>		

	<p>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"> i) That the Board of Governors approves in principle the signing of the Deed of Variation by the Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary 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. iii) Subject to no concerns or objections being raised the Vice-Chancellor and University Secretary shall sign the Deed of Variation. <p>The Board of Governors unanimously approved the above.</p>		
22/84	<p>VALEDICTIONS</p> <p>June Mulroy, Dave Hartnett, and Jeff Cottle were coming off the Board of Governors after 9 years' service. They were thanked for their service to the University.</p>		

	Pietro Palladino was also leaving the Board having served for three years he too was thanked for his service.		
22/85	DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS 11 October 2023 22 November 2023 24 January 2024 14 March 2024 (Away Day) 25 April 2024 19 June 2024		

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