Imperial College London

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS

at the sixty-seventh meeting of the

COUNCIL OF THE IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICINE

The sixty-seventh meeting of the Council was held via Microsoft Teams, hosted by Imperial College London, South Kensington, at 10:00 a.m. on Friday 10th July 2020, when there were present:

Mr. J. Allan (Chair), Professor N. Brandon, Mr. C. Brinsmead, Mr. T. Courtauld, Professor R. Craster, Mr. J. Cullen, Professor A. Gast (President), Mr. R. Kalifa, Sir Jonathan Michael, Dr. M. Safa, Professor J. Sanders, Mr. M. Sanderson, Mr. A. Sood, Professor T. Tetley, Professor F. Veloso, Professor I. Walmsley (Provost), Professor J. Weber, Mr. C. Williams and Mr. J. Neilson (Clerk to the Court and Council).

Apologies

Ms. S. Murray

In attendance

Professor M. Dallman (items 4 and 5), Ms. S. Hilton-Knox (item 3.2), Dr David Lefevre (items 4 and 5), Professor E. McCoy (items 4 and 5), Mr. M. Murphy (item 3.2 onwards), Mr. J. Villamil (item 5), Miss A. Wolthuizen, and Mrs. R. Knight (Assistant Clerk to the Court and Council).

MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. There were no comments on the minutes.

Resolved:
That the Minutes of the sixty-sixth meeting of the Council, held on Friday 15th May 2020, be approved.

2. There were no matters arising to note.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audit and Risk Committee Report

3. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, Mr. J. Cullen, presented an oral report from the meeting held on 9 July 2020. He explained that the Committee had approved the 2020/21 internal audit plan and the external audit strategy for the 2019/20 financial year. They had received and discussed a report on the mid to longer term risks to the College presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which built on the paper received at the May meeting which had focused on the immediate operational risks at the outset of the crisis. The Provost had agreed to work with the CIO and HR director to improve uptake of training relating to cybersecurity. The Committee had also received a report about research proposal success rates, a key component of the research income strategic risk, and had discussed the mitigation of that risk.

MATTERS FOR DECISION

2020-21 Budget and plan, including the Finance Taskforce report timeline and Finance Committee Report

4. The Chief Financial Officer presented Paper 3.1 which included an interim budget for 2020-21 and a one-year capital plan. The uncertainty in the revenue forecasts caused by the pandemic, particularly regarding student numbers, meant that it would be more sensible to present a revised budget and full five-year capital plan to the Finance Committee in October and to Council in November. In the meantime, the College would continue to maintain tight cost controls. Council approved the interim budget on this basis.
5. The capital plan had been reduced, until the autumn review, to essential maintenance, already launched projects, projects with external funding and investment in digital teaching infrastructure. In discussion it was confirmed that this short-term limitation in capital spending would not impact on health and safety.

Uncapped indemnities

6. Council received paper 3.2.1 which outlined the procedure set out in Ordinance C1 regarding the prior approval of Council before an indemnity was given in excess of the £30 million limit for acquisition or disposal of assets listed in Ordinance A4.
7. Unlimited indemnity gift agreements were uncommon in the sector and future requests would continue to be assessed on a case by-case basis. However, the two cases discussed had suggested that it would be appropriate to review whether the Ordinances should include delegated authority for guarantees and for offering unlimited indemnities, based on an assessment of the risks involved. Council agreed that these approval processes should be reviewed. The review would be received by the Audit and Risk Committee in the first instance, prior to submission to Council.

CHAIR'S REPORT

8. The Chair reported that the Remuneration Committee had met earlier that day and had considered gender and ethnic minority pay data. Faculty action plans would be developed to address any imbalances and reduce pay gaps.

9. The annual meeting of Court had been held on 1 July 2020. The meeting had received updates from the President and Provost, and Professor Oscar Ces, Head of Chemistry, had spoken about the work of the new DigiFab Institute based at the White City campus.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

10. The President, Professor Alice Gast, provided an update on the continuing actions to manage the College's response to the pandemic. Health and safety remained the highest priority as students returned to campus and the research labs reopened. Measures remained under constant review to respond to the best advice and to minimise the risk of transmission. Members were provided with a link to an article about the first six months of the Covid-19 response. The staff wellbeing day, held on 3 July 2020 in recognition of the intense effort made by colleagues, had been well received. Colleagues in the Faculty of Medicine and Occupational Health had completed 500 tests in the pilot staff Covid-19 tests. The plans to scale up this testing in the autumn were now underway.

11. On 27 June 2020 the Government had announced measures to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic on university research, including grant extensions and loans to cover up to 80% of a research active university's international student income loss. It was not yet clear whether the College would take up the offers. Academic staff were advising a range of forums, including committees, thinktanks, and the House of Lords. In addition to COVID-19 advice, there was a focus on a research-led approach to a green economic recovery. Other topics that had been discussed in recent Advancement salons included the College strategic initiative "towards zero pollution" and data privacy. Contingency planning for Brexit had resumed, and the planning groups had been reactivated to prepare for January 2021.

PROVOST'S REPORT

12. The Provost, Professor Ian Walmsley, introduced Professor Emma McCoy, the interim Vice Provost (Education and Student Experience).

13. Recent staff achievements included Dr Ana Caraiani winning a European Mathematical Society Prize and nine academics being recognised with prizes in the annual Royal Society of Chemistry awards.

14. The sustainability strategy consultation had received over 1,000 responses from staff and students, which would feed into the development of the strategy to be launched in the autumn. The Socially Responsible Investment Policy required the College to engage with firms working towards the targets set in the Paris Agreement, and an internal group had been established to consider how this could be achieved. Advisory and working groups had also been established to engage with issues facing black students and staff. One group would examine the College's history, and another will consider whether there were people and achievements which could be better celebrated and represented in the artwork throughout campus.

15. Following the USS 2020 valuation discussion document in March 2020 it was expected that a further consultation with UUK would be launched by USS in late July. The contributions

required to fund the current benefit structure would not be confirmed until after consultation on technical provisions and negotiations with employers and members representatives.

16. The Provost shared with Council the latest recruitment analysis, including applications, offers and acceptances. There was reason for cautious optimism, but it was noted that the position remained volatile with major risks potentially from Brexit, Covid-19 and the geopolitical situation. Council agreed the need to monitor the intake for widening participation students, so that they were not unfairly disadvantaged by the current environment.

MAJOR DISCUSSION ITEMS

The year ahead in education

17. Professor Emma McCoy provided a presentation on how the College was making the rapid transition to a mixture of online and face-to-face (mixed mode) education and assessment. Over 750 remote exams had been held. The College's ICT systems had stood up well to the rapid move to on-line teaching. The scale and speed of the College's response had been impressive, and in some cases had led to improvements to the student experience, including remote field trips and remote poster sessions. A new cross faculty Education Technology Guild structure had been established to consolidate and draw on the new knowledge and experience. This academic led process aligned well with the academic strategy, particularly through the acceleration of digital education. It was anticipated that there would be opportunities to deliver more lifelong learning with new partners.
18. Council noted that the contribution of College research teams to the pandemic response had been well reported and had increased the brand value of an Imperial education. The high-quality education and lifelong learning offer would benefit if it was clearly aligned to research. In discussion, topics included the future of universities, enabling social mobility, securing the strongest students, measuring education quality, potential risk and global constraints. The Chair of Council invited Professor McCoy to update Council on progress in July 2021.

International Student Recruitment

19. The President introduced Professor Maggie Dallman, the Vice President (International), who provided an update on international student recruitment. A large proportion of tuition fee income is received from international, particularly Chinese, students. The student recruitment teams were targeting specific markets, adapting their approach to each country, informed by data driven analysis at an institutional and a department level. The Imperial 360 virtual tour and open day events would enable academic departments to showcase their offer virtually, but recruitment would need more investment as the College transitioned from a selective to more of a selective recruiting institution.
20. In discussion, it was noted that diversity was key to excellence and to mitigating recruitment risk. The geopolitical situation was a risk, so it was important that the College pursued its relationships with key countries as far as possible through research and other opportunities.

The mobilisation of alumni would continue, both in terms of studentships and scholarships, but also through mentoring and hosting events. The Chair of Council invited Professor Dallman to update Council on progress in July 2021.

21. Council thanked Professor Dallman and her team for their work in developing a specialist maths school, to be delivered in partnership with Woodhouse College. This had been announced by the Government on 7 July. It was agreed that a visit to the site would be organised for Council members when it was appropriate and safe to do so.

MATTERS FOR NOTE

Health and Safety Annual Report

22. Council received the annual health and safety report (paper 6.1) which included reports on fire safety and occupational health. The College Secretary, Mr. John Neilson, presented the report. There had been three significant incidents during the reporting period. The Chair noted that the Health and Safety Executive responded strongly to incidents which caused harm to people, including levying a large fine. It was agreed that Council would be informed of any major incident at the Council meeting following an incident.
23. The departmental completion rate of health and safety training ranged widely. Work was required to understand why there was lower performance in some areas, in order to improve uptake of training.

ICU review of last year and forward plan

24. The President of ICU, Mr. Abhijay Sood, presented his reflections on his first year as President and his plans for the coming year (paper 6.2). Despite the series of challenges faced by the union in 2019-20, its partnership with the College had developed. He hoped that conversations about the operation of the College and increased student representation in decision making groups would continue, because these were important for the student experience. In 2020-21 ICU planned to rebuild, in order to give the organisation a strong foundation for the future. The paper set out the objectives, outcomes and KPIs that had been agreed to deliver the vision in a structured manner.

Revision to Ordinance A6: the use of the common seal

25. The President presented paper 6.3 which explained that, following the Council discussion in 2017 to remove the ribbon from the College crest in branding and other visual identity materials, it was desirable to remove the ribbon from the College seal. The revised ordinance included the new design.

Resolved:
To approve the amended Ordinance as provided at Appendix 1 of paper 6.3.

STARRED ITEMS FOR REPORT

26. Council received paper 7.1, report from Senate.
27. Council received paper 7.2, staff matters.
28. Council received paper 7.3, dates of future Council meetings.

Resolved:
That the dates of future Council meetings be approved.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

29. There were no items of any other business.

MEETING CLOSED AT 12.30pm.