

Committee of Convocation
Minutes of Meeting

Held on Wednesday, 21 October 2020,
Virtual Meeting by Zoom, commencing at 5.00 pm.

1. Welcome

The President, David Bellair, took the chair and welcomed those in attendance.

2. Guest Speaker

The guest speaker was Professor Mark Considine, Provost of the University of Melbourne.

Professor Considine explained that the role of the Provost is to act as the Chief Academic Officer and to be the Ranking Deputy to the Vice-Chancellor. He has been in his current position since 2017 and he was Dean of Arts for ten years, before that.

Professor Considine dealt with a range of matters, as follows.

- An investigation of the student experience indicated a need to rebuild the connected notion of that student experience and, as a result, the Student Life initiative was developed and implemented. 2020 is obviously a difficult year to implement this program.
- There was a sudden need to convert all courses to the online format because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Much has been learnt but there remains some distance to go. The huge workload on staff is appreciated as is the challenging situation for students both in Australia and those undertaking U of M courses from overseas.
- Student welfare has been a pressing matter, many international students having been stranded overseas and many here, without support. Even so, most students have been retained. Whether future enrolment rates will match those of the past remains to be seen. \$70 million has been spent thus far on student support programs
- Budget modelling is on-going and expenditure savings programs are being deployed.
- Involuntary redundancies have been avoided so far. It will not be until next year's rate of enrolment is known that the possible need for redundancies can be resolved.
- The Federal Government funding adjustments introduced by the Minister for Education and known as "Job Ready Graduates" or "Tehan Reforms", are possibly not yielding the results being aimed for. In particular, the Arts group of faculties expects to receive increased funding whereas the groups of faculties that include engineering, health and science will receive reduced funding. There is no evidence that schemes that aim to financially incentivise students have a strong influence on student choice of course. It is the current year 9 and 10 students who may be influenced in their subject choice.

In response to a question from David Bellair, Professor Considine suggested that Graduates have a role as mentors, within the student community, and as promoters of the concepts and values of higher education within the community, at large.

The President thanked Professor Considine for his presentation and for the time that he had so generously devoted to his participation.

3. Attendance

a. Members Present:

Anne Ada, David Bellair, Cecily Close, John Harcourt, Gary Israel, Irene Jablonka, David Janson, Ros McMillan, Elizabeth Mitchell, John Nelson, Christine Oldham, Stan Sahhar, John Scott, Noel Whiting.

b. Apologies - Received:

Beverley Rodan.

c. Leave of Absence – as granted:

Nil.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The previously distributed Minutes of the preceding meeting, held on 16 September 2020, were confirmed.

Proposed: Stan Sahhar; Seconded: John Nelson; carried.

5. Membership

a. Additions and Withdrawals

Nil

b. Leave of Absence

None granted.

6. Report of the President

The President had distributed a written report on University events in advance of the meeting.

At the meeting, the President reported, as follows.

I thank John Harcourt for once again organising this Zoom session, and I ask people to raise a hand if they want to say something, so that we keep things orderly. I'll keep everyone on my screen so that, hopefully, I will see your raised hand. Please keep your microphone muted unless you are speaking, so that extraneous domestic sounds do not intrude.

It does appear that the University is somehow coping in the short term, and it has received some help for research from the federal budget, but it's hard to see where the federal government is coming from, apart from the fact that Education Minister Tehan, the member for Wannon, wants to encourage regional students, and courses leading to "jobs on demand". It seems illogical to me for the government to reduce the HECS fees for those courses while at the same time reducing the grants to universities for teaching those courses.

I wonder whether some government members are unhappy about Arts course syllabi or are unhappy about their own study experience, as are some members of the community, generally. I also wonder whether some members of the government believe that the role of universities is to provide vocational training, rather than to broaden the students' horizons and give them a deeper understanding of their fields of interest so that they can think laterally, understand complex issues, continue learning throughout their lifetime, and move across to related or different fields as the world changes. I also believe that employers should be prepared to induct new graduates into workplace realities and to explain what is expected of them.

My impression is that there is no clear consensus among the group-of-8 universities, or even within University of Melbourne commentators, as to what should be done, so I haven't yet personally written to the Minister for Education urging a particular course of action.

Subsequent to the meeting, the President has further advised, as follows.

As a postscript, following Professor Considine's talk and recent Zoom seminars, I wonder whether the most important point to make with Minister Tehan might be that universities have a much broader role than just vocational training, and that governments need broader advice from the community, rather than just financial advice from management consultants.

7. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Christine Oldham, reported that the bank balance of the Committee stood at \$203.19, approximately half of the membership having contributed, since the last meeting. The report of the Treasurer was accepted.

Members are reminded that payments to the Committee should be made by bank deposit to: BSB 633-000 Acct No. 141509497.

8. University of Melbourne Items of Interest

David Belair had prepared a report on University events that the Secretary had distributed to all members of the Committee.

Irene Jablonka reported on the Speakers Survey that she is conducting. She will report further, when survey has been concluded and the results have been collated.

Irene Jablonka drew attention to a mailout from the Convergence Science Network that the Secretary has since distributed to all members of the Committee.

Gary Israel had prepared a summary of an article that had appeared in the journal of the Australian College of Educators that the Secretary had distributed to all members of the Committee.

9. Key Matters for Consideration

- a. Actions Update – no change.
- b. Membership Development – all members were again urged to approach eligible colleagues who might be interested in joining the Committee. Where possible, members should attempt to make contact with their Dean(s).

10. Other Business

a. Website

Normal maintenance is proceeding.

b. Tours and speakers

Irene Jablonka reported that the speaker for the November meeting will be Professor Anthony Scott, who leads the Health Economics Research Program at the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research at the University of Melbourne, and who jointly co-ordinates the University of Melbourne Health Economics Group.

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is to be held by Zoom on Wednesday 18 November 2020, commencing at 5.30 pm.

12. Close

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.

Attachments

Updated Actions listing

COMMITTEE OF CONVOCATION - ACTIONS

Ref. No.	Date	Description	Responsibility	Status	Ref. No.
85	2015-09-16	Identify individual graduates who may be approached to determine their possible interest in joining the Committee [Sub-committee of David bellair, Ros McMillan and Gary Israel formed on 2018-06-20]	All Sub-committee	In progress	85

Committee of Convocation
Minutes of Meeting

Held on Wednesday, 16 September 2020,
Virtual Meeting by Zoom, commencing at 5.30 pm.

1. Welcome

The President, David Bellair, took the chair, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance.

2. Guest Speaker

The guest speaker was Dr Gemma McKibbin, Research Fellow, Department of Social Work, School of Health Sciences, and she was accompanied and supported by Cathy Humphreys, Professor of Social Work and Co-Director of MAEVE, the Melbourne Alliance to End Violence Against women and their children.

After acknowledging country, Dr McKibbin presented the findings of the research undertaken during her PhD studies. Her talk was entitled “Enhancing the child sexual abuse prevention agenda”.

She commenced with a warning for the audience to “take care of yourself” should the discussion trigger uncomfortable memories.

Gemma reported that about half of the abuse of children is perpetrated by other young people. Her research focused on ways of understanding why some young people offend and about developing effective interventions. Peak abuse age for the perpetrator is 14 years.

She found that there were 3 opportunities for prevention:

- Reform the sexuality education in schools - this education was introduced too late and the content was often too biologically focused rather than addressing issues such as the age of consent;
- Recognize and redress the victimization experiences that perpetrators have, themselves, experienced - such as neglect, maltreatment, bullying or domestic violence;
- Help the management of pornography.

Some 45,000 young people are in out-of-home care and 2700 of these are in residential care. The action program Gemma described was focussed on building the capacity of the carers in residential care to assist the young perpetrators to realign their behaviour.

The President thanked Dr McKibbin and Professor Humphreys for their input and, particularly, Dr McKibbin for her insightful presentation.

3. Attendance

a. Members Present:

Anne Ada (Minute-taker), David Bellair, Cecily Close, John Harcourt, Gary Israel, Irene Jablonka, David Janson, Elizabeth Mitchell, John Nelson, Christine Oldham, Stan Sahhar, John Scott, Noel Whiting.

b. Apologies - Received:

Ros McMillan, Beverley Rodan.

c. Leave of Absence – as granted:

Nil.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The previously distributed Minutes of the preceding meeting, held on 19 August 2020, were confirmed.

Proposed: Stan Sahhar; Seconded: Cecily Close; carried.

5. Membership

a. Additions and Withdrawals

Nil

b. Leave of Absence

None granted.

6. Report of the President

7. The President distributed a written report (attached hereto) in advance of the meeting. At the meeting, the President spoke to his report, and there was related discussion.

a. Some discussion as to the starting time of meetings. It was resolved, by show of hands, that while meetings are held via Zoom the starting time will be 5.00 pm.

b. The issue of holding an appropriate end-of-year celebration was discussed. It was recognised that uncertainty regarding gatherings continues, but it was decided that there would be a special dinner in February, if practicable, in lieu of that normally held in November.

c. The President reported that the University of Melbourne is now 31st in the Times World Ranking of Universities. This is higher, by one place.

8. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Christine Oldham, reported that the bank balance of the Committee stood at \$292.89, several members having contributed, since the last meeting.

The report of the Treasurer was accepted.

Members are reminded that payments to the Committee should be made by bank deposit to: BSB 633-000 Acct No. 141509497.

9. University of Melbourne Items of Interest

Irene Jablonka reported that there will be an opportunity for the Committee to contribute to the Sustainability Plan of the University, now in preparation.

Anne Ada attended a most impressive talk by Professor Jim Watterston, Dean of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, on “Education During COVID -19 – A catalyst for change or a retreat to the safety of the past?” This is available for viewing on the Centre for Rural Health website.

10. Key Matters for Consideration

- a. Actions Update – no change.
- b. Membership Development – all members were again urged to approach eligible colleagues who might be interested in joining the Committee. Where possible, members should attempt to make contact with their Dean(s).

11. Other Business

- a. Website

No discussion

- b. Tours and speakers

Irene Jablonka reported that the speaker for the October meeting will be the Provost Professor Mark Considine. There was discussion as to possible topics that the Committee would like to be informed about and it was suggested that all might give thought to that, in advance. Irene indicated that, generally, speakers determine the nature of their addresses.

Irene has forwarded information about virtual tours and events at the University such as the recent Open Day.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is to be held by Zoom on Wednesday 21 October 2020, commencing at 5.00 pm (note change).

13. Close

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm.

Attachments

Report of the President
Updated Actions listing

President's report September 16, 2020

I hope you and your families are keeping well, and surviving without haircuts etc..

I once again thank John Harcourt for setting up this Zoom meeting. I'll set up my screen so I can see everyone all the time, so please put up your hand if you want to contribute.

It would be useful if you click on "Chat" along the bottom so anyone who has a short comment can type a comment, which we can all see. Please don't over-do it.

This will be a short report.

1. A member has requested that we start at 5pm rather than 5.30, as that member has to leave at 6.30. Would that inconvenience anyone?
2. Ros has wondered whether we can do something a bit special for the November meeting (our last meeting for the year), as we can't have dinner afterwards as usual, inviting partners also? What suggestions do members have?
3. I note that the University has moved up one place in the Times Higher Education Work ranking to 31st. This is a broadly-based measure over most university activities.
4. Finally, the Provost Professor Mark Considine, will be addressing us at our October meeting. He is the standing deputy to the Vice-Chancellor, and so a very senior person in the University, and the most senior staff member to have addressed us for many years.

As the role of this Committee since it was established as the University Senate was to act as a sounding-board for the University, I think that is still the way we see ourselves even though the Committee no longer has a formal role, and I think we can still offer sensible advice without having been asked. I ask members to consider how we should schedule his talk and questions within the available time, and over the next month consider the issues they would like to raise with him.

David Bellair

September 16, 2020

COMMITTEE OF CONVOCATION - ACTIONS

Ref. No.	Date	Description	Responsibility	Status	Ref. No.
85	2015-09-16	Identify individual graduates who may be approached to determine their possible interest in joining the Committee [Sub-committee of David bellair, Ros McMillan and Gary Israel formed on 2018-06-20]	All Sub-committee	In progress	85

Minutes of Meeting

Held on Wednesday, 19 August 2020,
Virtual Meeting by Zoom, commencing at 5.30 pm.

1. Welcome

The President, David Bellair, took the chair, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. He particularly welcomed the Guest Speaker, Professor Pip Nicholson, Dean of Law.

2. Guest Speaker

The guest speaker, Professor Pip Nicholson, Dean of Law, began by stating that her talk would cover four main areas:

- a. the University budget;
- b. the work of the University in regard to future planning;
- c. the effect of COVID-19 on the University and Law Faculty;
- d. the impact of the pandemic on teaching in the Law Faculty.

a. Budget

The University is facing a billion-dollar shortfall over the three years of 2020-2022. It has budgeted for no shortfall in 2023, however, this is only an estimate. Initiatives to cope with this situation, over the last few months, have included a reduction in operating expenditure (e.g. for travel and for external consultants), making only critical new appointments, putting capital projects on hold and implementing pay cuts for the University Executive. The University has approximately \$3bn. in reserves; however, these reserves are partly encumbered (endowments, staff entitlements, research allocations, etc.) and the Vice Chancellor has made a point of publicising that. To the relief of all, however, a proportion of the reserve funds will be used for student support.

b. Future planning

Early in the pandemic, two task forces were established, one in regard to the budget and a second on the future state of the University in regard to its size, shape and teaching resources, including online learning. There will be a greater use of shared services, e.g. in HR.

c. Law Faculty

In the first months of the pandemic every aspect of the School was impacted. As a result, changes need to be made to the selection of students, both in Australia and internationally, to the current examination system (which would have been impossible to manage) and to how students can access library resources. Subjects involving international relationships have been profoundly affected, including those normally affording travelling scholarships and internships. Some PhD programs have had to have been recast.

New legal issues have arisen as a result of the pandemic. Now, there is the COVID-19 Research Network, which is providing new collaboration and research opportunities. It has been heartening to see scholars working across multiple Faculties, with new approaches to learning.

d. Teaching

Previously there was no online teaching in the Law Faculty, so it has been necessary to build a virtual classroom for staff and students to be connected (rather than simply to provide virtual teaching). A synchronous teaching and learning experience has been the goal.

The internet protocols of Zoom and Canvas have allowed students the necessary access and a digital designer has been appointed to facilitate teaching and learning. Professor Nicholson meets students weekly to discuss what 'works', in this regard. She has seen enhanced collegiality amongst the students, and she is very optimistic that the planning undertaken to date will result in greater access to students, internationally, particularly in Asia. As Professor Nicholson pointed out, international time zones are the new 'devil in the detail'.

No law school people have been directly impacted by the virus. Home schooling places strenuous demands on many.

Comparing law schools, Cambridge has gone online for a year, whilst Sydney University has returned to campus.

This year there are more enrolments than were anticipated. Now that the courses are fully online, students have been attracted, from afar: many of these would not have come, otherwise. The student body is diverse, not vulnerable to any particular ethnic group.

The President thanked Professor Nicholson for her time and, particularly, for her inspiring presentation.

3. Attendance

a. Members Present:

Anne Ada, David Bellair, Cecily Close, John Harcourt, Gary Israel, Irene Jablonka, David Janson, Ros McMillan (Minute-taker), Elizabeth Mitchell, John Nelson, Christine Oldham, Beverley Rodan, Stan Sahhar, John Scott.

b. Apologies - Received:

Noel Whiting.

c. Leave of Absence – as granted:

Nil.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The previously distributed Minutes of the preceding meeting, held on 15 July 2020, were confirmed.

Proposed: Anne Ada; Seconded: John Harcourt; carried.

5. Membership

a. Additions and Withdrawals

The President confirmed that he will contact Jenny Stillman in respect of her membership of the Committee.

b. Leave of Absence

None granted.

6. Report of the President

7. The President distributed a written report (attached hereto) in advance of the meeting. At the meeting, the President spoke to his report, and:

- a. The President noted that the University staff has done a wonderful job in regard to both the University and the wider community. He believes that the Vice Chancellor and the administration appear to be working well and that the VC intends to consult widely with staff members;
- b. The President noted that the University has moved up six places to No. 35 in the Shanghai Ranking Index, known as the Academic Ranking of World Universities 2020.

8. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Christine Oldham, reported that the bank balance of the Committee stood at \$212.89, five members having contributed \$20, each, since the last meeting.

The report of the Treasurer was accepted.

Members are reminded that payments to the Committee should be made by bank deposit to: BSB 633-000 Acct No. 141509497.

9. University of Melbourne Items of Interest

The President noted that Gary Israel had provided material from Gwenda Thomas, on Scholarly Services, which had been circulated to all members, prior to the meeting.

Irene Jablonka reported that she had attended some events during the recent Science Festival 2020 week. This included the Dean's Lecture entitled "Trusting Science in Times of Crisis". At this lecture, one of the panellists, Professor Fiona Fidler, mentioned the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the attention that it has been placing upon the replication of published results. Professor Fidler, made the point that volunteers had found that, in the small sample of published results and claims in biological journals that they looked at, only 50 % could be replicated. However, the sample was small, due to poor funding. Professor Fidler had added that the volunteers keep a low profile as their 'bone fides' are often challenged and they were harassed, because of their work.

Anne Ada had attended four webinars hosted by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. The series was entitled "Propelling Education Through a Covid-19 World".

Anne Ada had also attended the Science Festival 2020 Dean's Lecture "Trusting Science in Times of Crisis". Further presentations were: "Politicisation of Climate Science", "Reliability of Forensic Science" and "Vaccine Acceptance".

Stan Sahar voiced his concern in respect of the decision by the State Government to implement the assessment of current Year 12 students, on an individual basis, by their teachers. This would be based on teachers' opinions as to the levels that students might have achieved, but for the current pandemic. It was noted that this would amount to an enormous amount of work for teachers.

Stan Sahhar also raised the question of whether the University should place increased emphasis on the education of citizens of Victoria.

10. Key Matters for Consideration

- a. Actions Update – no change.
- b. Membership Development – all members were again urged to approach eligible colleagues who might be interested in joining the Committee. Where possible, members should attempt to make contact with their Dean(s).

John Harcourt has asked the Dean of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences to suggest someone to approach and he has been informed that the e-mail has been received.

11. Other Business

- a. Website

No discussion

- b. Tours and speakers

Irene Jablonka reported that the speaker for the September meeting will be Dr Gemma McKibbin of the Department of Social Work in the Faculty of MDHS. Dr McKibbin will discuss her research into Domestic Violence and Child Sexual Abuse.

The speaker for the October meeting will be the Provost, Professor Mark Considine.

- c. DORA

A lengthy discussion was held in relation to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). A central theme of the discussion was the need for repeatability in respect of research findings.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is to be held by Zoom on Wednesday 16 September 2020, commencing at 5.30 pm.

13. Close

The meeting closed at 6.51 pm.

Attachments

Updated Actions listing

Report of the President

COMMITTEE OF CONVOCATION - ACTIONS

Ref. No.	Date	Description	Responsibility	Status	Ref. No.
85	2015-09-16	Identify individual graduates who may be approached to determine their possible interest in joining the Committee [Sub-committee of David bellair, Ros McMillan and Gary Israel formed on 2018-06-20]	All Sub-committee	In progress	85

President's report August 2020

I thank John Harcourt for setting up this Zoom meeting for us.

The impact of COVID-

I think that University staff have done a wonderful job in changing to on-line teaching at short notice, and coping with quarantine rule changes brought about by the second Melbourne outbreak. The medical research staff have developed new diagnostic tests and provided expert advice to governments, while many have provided helpful public comment and information. Unfortunately, non-essential research requiring physical access to University facilities seems to have been suspended.

I think that overall the University has amply fulfilled its obligations to learning, research, and the community. Reading the VC's recent advice to staff, I think that the University will continue for a year with staff cuts, pausing capital expenditure, cutting unnecessary expenditure and using some cash reserves, while it rethinks its longer-term operations. Hard decisions will be taken, impacting many staff and programs.

I can think of a number of possible longer-term issues for the University of Melbourne and for the federal government, brought to a head by the pandemic. I hope both are willing to consider radical changes. As Winston Churchill said "Never let a good crisis go to waste".

Issues for the University include:

- Does it expect the reduction in student numbers from China to be permanent?
- How does the University continue to fund research costs, especially the research infrastructure not funded by grants?
- To what extent do the University international rankings affect its international standing, and which ratings are the most important?
- Is the federal government sympathetic to universities such as Melbourne, which are inherently different from more skills-based universities?
- Ought the University continue to develop the intellect as well as imparting knowledge?
- Should the University continue to offer courses in such a wide range of disciplines, and could it cooperate more with other institutions?
- Should the University allow some academics to concentrate on student learning without prejudice to their careers?
- Can University student learning continue long-term with a large part of the teaching staff on short-term contracts?
- What can graduates do to help their University?

Issues for the federal government include:

- Is it sensible for all universities to conduct teaching and research?
- Is it sensible to encourage so many students to attend conventional degree-granting universities, rather than other post-secondary institutions?
- Is it reasonable for employers to demand "job-ready" graduates, so avoiding their own responsibility to provide workplace training for new graduates?
- Will the conventional multi-year broad qualification be supplanted by very short *micro-qualifications* with limited and specific content? To what extent will they co-exist?
- Will the government make substantial long-term changes to university and TAFE education to provide a broader range of academic, professional and trade qualifications at all levels?
- Is it time for an independent Post-Secondary Education Commission to undertake long-term planning and decision-making for the whole post-secondary education sector?
- Is it desirable for Education Ministers to be making frequent policy changes, with limited consultation, which seriously impact the post-secondary sector?
- To what extent ought the federal government support universities financially?
- Can graduates lobby the government in helpful ways?

I hope that Committee members can add to the above lists.

My feeling is that in the present circumstances graduates must rely on the good sense of senior University staff to make good decisions for the University as a whole.

I am sure that Committee members want to keep informed, and I thank those members who assist with that.

Further contact with the University Director of Scholarly Services

You will have received already copies of further contact Gary Israel has had with Gwenda Thomas, the Director of Scholarly Services. I thank Gary for pursuing this, and will ask him to report on it under item 8.

San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

Last month I mentioned that the University of Melbourne has just become a signatory to the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) (see the report to staff by the Deputy VC (Research) James McCluskey, *Contemplating the future of research at Melbourne*, dated July 9, 2020). DORA includes the statement that research should be judged on its intrinsic merit, rather than on the prestige of the journal in which it was published. I know that one member would like to discuss this further, so it has been included under Item 10, Other Business.

David Bellair
August 19, 2020

Committee of Convocation
Minutes of Meeting

Held on Wednesday, 15 July 2020,
Virtual Meeting by Zoom, commencing at 5.30 pm.

1. Welcome

The President, David Bellair, took the chair, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. The Committee had been in abeyance since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic. John Harcourt acted as Zoom Host, having expended considerable effort to do so on behalf of the members.

2. Guest Speaker

There was no guest speaker on this occasion.

3. Attendance

a. Members Present:

Anne Ada, David Bellair, Cecily Close (Minute-taker), John Harcourt, Gary Israel, Irene Jablonka, David Janson, John Nelson, Christine Oldham, Beverley Rodan, Stan Sahhar, John Scott.

b. Apologies - Received:

Ros McMillan, Elizabeth Mitchell, Noel Whiting, Eugene Antczak (interested colleague of John Scott).

c. Leave of Absence – as granted:

Nil.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The previously distributed Minutes of the preceding meeting, held on 20 November 2019, were accepted and confirmed with one amendment, proposed by Irene Jablonka, that the words “registration of the” be inserted in the second paragraph of 11 (a). [*Amended minutes, Revision 2, were subsequently circulated to all members by the Secretary.*]

5. Election of Office Bearers

It was agreed that the biennial election of Committee office bearers should be deferred until the next face-to-face meeting of the Committee.

6. Appointments

It was agreed that the biennial Committee appointments should be deferred until the next face-to-face meeting of the Committee.

7. Correspondence

(Refer to the report of the President)

8. Membership

a. Additions and Withdrawals

It was reported that Trefor Morgan had resigned from membership of the Committee on 28 January 2020.

It was agreed that the long leave of absence of Jenny Stillman should not be extended. The President undertook to write to her, explaining this and pointing out that there would be no obstacle to her re-joining, should she wish to do so, in the future.

b. Leave of Absence

None granted.

9. Report of the President

David Bellair advised, as follows.

“I hope you and your families and friends are all well and have avoided the corona virus. I guess most of us are in the vulnerable group. Thank you all for joining this meeting.

Firstly, I would like to thank Gary Israel for suggesting a Zoom meeting.

Secondly, and importantly, I would like to thank John Harcourt for setting up this meeting.

It appears that there is no quick solution to the pandemic, so it seems unlikely that we can have physical meetings and dinners any time soon.”

Report

1. I attended an event at University House organised by the Dean of Engineering, on February 27, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the launch of an amateur radio satellite built by a group of students from the University. The main dining room at University House was packed for the main event, and those closely involved, including the American who had championed our launch with NASA, had dinner afterwards in the Karagheusian Room. One of those students, now Emeritus Professor Rod Tucker from Electrical Engineering, was instrumental in getting the support of the Dean of Engineering, Mark Cassidy.

2. I wrote to the VC after our November meeting last year, supporting the Library Scholarly Services Accommodation Master Plan (SSAM). Gwenda Thomas, the Librarian expressed her appreciation.

3. Early in December, last year, I wrote to Mark Considine, the Provost, on behalf of the Committee, supporting his *Academic Advising* initiative, to encourage closer personal contacts between staff and students, and he thanked us for our support.

4. I thank Ros McMillan for putting a tribute into the Age for Barbara Hamer who passed away recently. She had been a member and President of this Committee.

5. Early in June, I wrote to the V-C, on behalf of the Committee, expressing our support for him in these difficult times. Not long afterwards, I think, there was an announcement of staff cuts.

6. After the recent Executive Zoom meeting (held on 17 June 2020) I wrote to the Director of the Doherty Institute, Professor Sharon Lewin, expressing our admiration and respect for the work being done at the Peter Doherty Institute.

7. We may be seeing the beginnings of a shake-out in the tertiary sector as a consequence of COVID-19. The probable reduction in income from students from China will have a major impact on the University, and the recent related policy announcements by the Minister for Education, Dan Tehan, have seemed unhelpful and confusing.

8. Former V-C Glyn Davis suggested reforms of the tertiary sector, including the formation of an independent Commission to make long-term plans and, hopefully, that suggestion will not have been forgotten.

9. A recent seminar arranged by the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) with participation by Frank Larkins and Mark Warburton from the CSHE, and others, showed that nobody seems to know what the Minister is trying to achieve. An advisory group, that includes V-C Duncan Maskell, has been set up to advise the Minister on research funding.

10. A positive step is that the University of Melbourne has just become a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) which urges that published papers be judged on their intrinsic merit rather than on the status of the journal in which they are published. It has been claimed that roughly half of all peer-reviewed scientific papers contain results that cannot be replicated by others and that, therefore, would appear to be suspect.

10. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Christine Oldham, reported that the bank balance of the Committee stood at \$112.89. It was agreed that members should be requested to contribute \$20, each, by direct bank deposit to bolster funds.

The report of the Treasurer was accepted.

Members are reminded that payments to the Committee should be made by bank deposit to: BSB 633-000 Acct No. 141509497.

11. University of Melbourne Items of Interest

John Harcourt reported that, although the Dental Advisory Committee had been subsumed into a new structure, adopted in January, former members were invited to continue to submit items of interest. All teaching was being done on-line and other restrictions were being applied.

Ann Ada reported that the Faculties, with which she is concerned, were going a good job, having switched to a webinar format for the Dean's lectures.

Irene Jablonka recalled that she had distributed information before the meeting on Science Faculty public offerings. She mentioned that she viewed the virtual visit to Burnley Campus. Having previously organised a tour of this campus she found the real-life visit to have been far more enjoyable.

The Zoom seminar from the Melbourne Centre for the Study of High Education, referred to in the President's Report (point 7), is available at its website.

12. Key Matters for Consideration

- a. Actions Update – It was agreed that actions 107 and 108 should be discontinued, but action 85 should be ongoing.
- b. Membership Development – all members were again urged to approach eligible colleagues who might be interested in joining the Committee. Where possible, members should attempt to make contact with their Dean(s). John Harcourt offered to ask the Dean of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences to suggest someone to approach.
- c. Advancing Melbourne 2030 - the President undertook to circulate his readily readable text-only version of the latest report from the University.

13. Other Business

- a. Website

The website has been modified and it was agreed that it is much improved. John Harcourt was thanked and congratulated in respect of this.

- b. Tours and speakers

Irene Jablonka advised that she had been asked to find speakers for the forthcoming lectures on Zoom. She said that Prof Considine had been scheduled to be our April 2020 meeting speaker. Unfortunately, that meeting had to be cancelled due to the government regulations connected with the State of Emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. She said she is now in the process of, once again, contacting the VC and Prof Considine in the hope they can attend a Zoom meeting.

She also reminded members that she has previously sent to members lists regarding virtual Public Lectures and tours arranged by University staff. At this stage, no face to face Public Lectures are planned for this year. She suggested members consider viewing the virtual July Physics Lectures and others on the lists, which were sent.

She mentioned that, due to the situation that exists at the University of Melbourne, with respect to trying to carry on business as usual in these trying times, she is unable

to arrange any face to face tours for the Committee of Convocation this year. She asked that the item relating to pre-meeting tours be left off the Agenda, until further notice.

Irene was warmly thanked for her work in securing speakers.

14. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is to be held by Zoom on Wednesday 19 August 2020, commencing at 5.30 pm.

15. Close

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.

Attachments

Updated Actions listing.
