

Committee of Convocation
Minutes of Meeting

Held on Wednesday, 18 May 2022 at
Graduate House, 220 Leicester Street, Carlton (hybrid), commencing at 5.30 pm.

1. Welcome

The Vice-President Dr Stan Sahhar, took the Chair, opened the meeting, and welcomed those in attendance. He asked Ros McMillan to read ‘The Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country’ as part of the general welcome to all present.

2. Guest Speaker

The guest speaker was Professor Gustavo Duque, Chair of Medicine and Director of the Australian Institute for Musculoskeletal Science (AIMSS) at the University of Melbourne, and Geriatrician (Staff Specialist) at Western Health.

Professor Duque, whilst recovering from Covid, spoke about osteosarcopenia and its relationship to disability and frailty in older persons. Osteosarcopenia is concerned with the connection between fractures and falls of older people. Work continues to be done on muscle and bone interaction, with fat infiltration of muscle, on the inside as well as surrounding the bone.

Further to osteosarcopenia Professor Duque commented on the relationship of a low level of vitamin D to a heightened risk of falls and fractures.

The President thanked Professor Duque for his comprehensive and most interesting presentation.

3. Attendance

a. Members in attendance (some by Zoom, as noted):

John Harcourt, Irene Jablonka (Z), Ros McMillan (Treasurer), Elizabeth Mitchell, John Nelson (Minute-taker), Beverley Rodan (Z), Stan Sahhar (Vice-President).

b. Apologies - Received:

Anne Ada, David Bellair (President), Cecily Close, Gary Israel, David Janson, John Scott (Secretary).

c. Leave of Absence – as granted:

Nil.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The previously distributed minutes of the preceding meeting, held on 16 March 2022, were accepted, and confirmed.

Proposed: Ros McMillan; Seconded: John Nelson; carried.

5. Correspondence

Since the last meeting, the following correspondence was generated:

- a. Nil.

6. Membership

- a. Additions and Withdrawals

None.

- b. Leave of Absence

None.

7. Report of the President

The Vice-President read the attached report that had been provided by the President.

The following points were noted:

- a. He attended an event on 30 March to mark the end of Believe: A Celebration of Impact, which raised over one billion dollars for the University and involved over 100,000 graduates.
- b. An invitation was sent to the President of the Alumni Council to present at one of our meetings.
- c. He noted that little mention had been made of tertiary education during the election campaign.
- d. He is concerned that the reduced numbers of overseas students, whose fees had been cross-subsidising University research funding, has worsened the crisis in funding and has made it obvious that a new scheme for funding is needed.
- e. He is concerned that the government emphasis on “applied” research has reduced the support for “basic” research.
- f. He appended a short paper about the Acknowledgement of Country listing the University’s requirements for such Acknowledgements. He concluded “the Acknowledgement adopted at our March meeting amply meets” University requirements.

In conclusion, the Vice-President offered the Committee’s sincere appreciation for all that the President does in leading the Committee.

8. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Ros McMillan, reported that the bank balance of the Committee stood at \$183.39.

The meeting accepted the Financial Report provided by the Treasurer.

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

9. Key Matters for Consideration

- a. Actions Update – no Actions outstanding as Action Item 114 is complete, the President having contacted the President of the Alumni Council.
- b. Membership Development – all members were again urged to approach eligible colleagues who might be interested in joining the Committee. Where appropriate, members might consider contacting their Dean(s). Elizabeth Mitchell reported that she knows of a possible prospective member.
- c. Projects – nil.
- d. Website – John Harcourt reported that he continues to expand the website as necessary.
- e. Speakers and Tours – Irene Jablonka reported on her aim to secure a tour of the campus in Port Melbourne. Mention was made of a possible return visit to the Burnley campus

10. Other Business

- a. Website
John Harcourt continues to maintain the website, updating the information that it carries, as necessary.
- b. Speakers and Tours
Irene Jablonka advised that she is in the process of arranging a speaker for the meeting in July. She sees no immediate prospect for the organisation of tours.

11. University of Melbourne Items of Interest

- a. Ros McMillan reported that she is giving the ASME (Vic) Music Education Address, a keynote address at the Melbourne UNESCO Observatory of Arts Education, during the UNESCO International Arts Education Week 2022, on Tuesday 24 May at 5.30pm. This address can be viewed online, by booking through Eventbrite, and she will send the link to all Committee members.
- b. Irene Jablonka mentioned that the University of Melbourne Hawthorn Campus is up for sale.
- c. Irene Jablonka informed the meeting that in-person graduations, in the Exhibition Building, have recommenced - for science graduands.
- d. Irene Jablonka advised as to the formation of the 'Collaborative for Better Health and Regulation'. Its co-directors come from the Law School, the Medical School, and the School of Population and Global Health.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is to be held on Wednesday, 20 July 2022, at Graduate House and via Zoom, commencing at 5.30 pm.

13. Close

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm.

Attachments

Report of the President

ADDENDUM

As indicated in Item 7 (b), above, the President had contacted the President of the Alumni Council, Dr Rachel Baird. He subsequently forwarded to members some e-mail correspondence, that had passed between them, indicating that as Dr Baird lives in Brisbane, she may find it preferable to organise a Council Vice-President to attend one of our meetings.

President's Report May 2022

1. I regret that I cannot be part of this May meeting of the Committee.
2. I attended the event on March 30 at Melbourne Connect in Swanston Street, to mark the end of *Believe: A Celebration of Impact*, which raised over one billion dollars for the University and involved over 100,000 graduates. It was a very successful event in an excellent location, and included a number of short presentations by students who have been supported and by supported researchers who have done very useful projects for local and overseas communities. It included a presentation on the establishment of Little Hall, a new university college in Lincoln Square, in the traditional mould, but taking students from a wider range of backgrounds than the original colleges. It has been funded by the Little family, just as some of the original colleges were funded.
3. I sent an invitation to the President of the Alumni Council to give a presentation at one of our meetings, via the contact I was given in the Alumni Office by Ros McMillan, but have had no response. I don't want to speculate about the reason.
4. The Centre for the Study of Higher Education will be holding its biennial Teaching and Learning Summit all day on June 1. I have been to a number of previous Summits and have found them quite informative. The two main topics this year will be:
 - * Experiential and authentic learning: How do we know it works?, and
 - * Cultural diversity and inclusion within the curriculum: What is it and how do we do it?Although they say it is only for University staff and graduate researchers, members who were interested could probably gain admission.
5. I note that little mention has been made of tertiary education during this election campaign.
6. There has been little emphasis on tertiary education during election campaign. There are obviously very few votes to be gained by raising it.
7. I am concerned that the reduced number of overseas students, whose fees had been cross-subsidising University research funding, has worsened the crisis in funding and has made it obvious that a new scheme for funding research on a long-term basis is needed, to avoid dependence on ad-hoc ministerial decisions. Such schemes exist in the UK and I believe also in Canada.

8. I am also concerned that the government emphasis on "applied" research has reduced the support for "basic research. I think that both are necessary in the long term.
9. Following a query from a member about the Acknowledgement of Country adopted at our March meeting, I have appended a short paper summarising what I think are the University requirements for such Acknowledgements.

David Bellair
President
May 2022

University of Melbourne Requirements For Acknowledgement Of Country - Some Background

At our last Committee meeting, which took place at Graduate House (an affiliated college of the University), we adopted a form of Acknowledgement devised by Ros McMillan to be used at our meetings. Since then, one of our members has asked whether we should have formally sought approval from indigenous representatives before adopting it.

The University policy is described in the following University web pages.

1. [a brief summary](#)
2. [a more extensive summary](#)
3. [a comprehensive discussion](#)

The first link above describes an Acknowledgement of Country as:

An Acknowledgement of Country is a statement of recognition that is made by someone who is NOT a Traditional Custodian or Owner of the country or land on which the statement is being made. Acknowledgements of Country can be offered as a formal or informal statement. Depending on your event, you may want to extend the acknowledgement, i.e. to other Indigenous people who may be present or to the Indigenous leadership at the University.

It appears that an Acknowledgement can be formal or informal, so long as it is appropriate for the occasion, is sincerely expressed, and makes reference to Traditional Owners/Custodians of the land on which the statement is made. There is no single Acknowledgement which must be used on every occasion. There is no requirement that an Acknowledgement be formally approved.

I think that the Acknowledgement adopted at our March meeting amply meets the above requirements.

I note that at a recent event for donors and volunteers held at Melbourne Connect, the Vice-Chancellor gave quite a long Acknowledgement, which was sincere and appropriate to the occasion. Other speakers expressed their own briefer acknowledgements which were equally sincere and appropriate.

David Bellair
President
May 2022

Committee of Convocation
Minutes of Meeting

Held on Wednesday, 16 March 2022 at
Graduate House, 220 Leicester Street, Carlton (hybrid), 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 Professor Peter Otto, Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor, English and Theatre Studies; and Executive Director, Enlightenment, Romanticism and Contemporary Culture Research Unit (ERCC), University of Melbourne.

Professor Otto spoke of the work of the ERCC and its interdisciplinary approach to research through “big-picture” questions, the leading one being “What does it mean to be human in the 21st century?” Taking our cultural inheritance and its old certainties from the European Enlightenment and later developments to appear threatened by, for example, modern technology and non-European currents of thought, the Unit pursues research which may reveal common themes between the European and non-European traditions. Involved are common approaches to answering the over-arching question, “What does it mean to be human in the 21st century?”

The President thanked Professor Otto for his highly stimulating presentation.

3. Attendance

a. Members Present (some by Zoom, as noted):

Anne Ada, President David Bellair, Cecily Close (Minute-taker), John Harcourt, Gary Israel (Z) – left meeting at 6.30 pm, Irene Jablonka (Z), David Janson (Z), Treasurer Ros McMillan, John Nelson (Z), Deputy President Stan Sahhar, Secretary John Scott (Z).

b. Apologies - Received:

Elizabeth Mitchell, Beverley Rodan, Noel Whiting.

c. Leave of Absence – as granted:

Nil.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The previously distributed minutes of the preceding meeting, held on 17 November 2021, were accepted and confirmed.

Proposed: Ros McMillan; Seconded: Stan Sahhar; carried.

5. Correspondence

Since the last meeting, the following correspondence was generated:

- a. Letter from the President of Convocation to Dr Rachael Baird, President of the (full) Alumni Council, introducing our committee and inviting her to speak at one of our meetings; and
- b. Letter from the President of Convocation to Professor Pip Nicholson, newly appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor (People and Community), congratulating her on her appointment and wishing her well.

6. Membership

- a. Additions and Withdrawals

None.

- b. Leave of Absence

As previously granted.

7. Report of the President

The President spoke to the contents of the attached report.

The members engaged in general discussion of the points made in the report.

8. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Ros McMillan, reported that the bank balance of the Committee stood at \$173.39.

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

9. Key Matters for Consideration

- a. Acknowledgement of Country – Ros McMillan drew attention to the fact that it is University policy to begin meetings with an acknowledgement of country. She provided the wording, copied below, for consideration.

C of C Acknowledgement of Country

For thousands of generations, young people learnt from their elders and shared ideas on the grounds where we meet today. Now, as a committee of graduates of the institution established and enduring in this place, we gather to reflect upon that which benefitted our lives as well as expressing our hopes that current and future students will similarly benefit.

We thus acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations, and pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Following general discussion, the members approved adoption of the suggested wording for use by the Committee of Convocation.

Proposed: Ros McMillan; Seconded: Cecily Close; carried.

- b. Meeting time and format – alternatives were discussed but it was agreed to maintain the current arrangements.
- c. Meeting Form – it was agreed to continue to conduct meetings of the Committee in hybrid form.
- d. Actions Update – refer to the attached list of Actions.
- e. Membership Development – all members were again urged to approach eligible colleagues who might be interested in joining the Committee. Where appropriate, members might consider contacting their Dean(s).
- f. The Secretary drew attention to discussion that had been held at the meeting of the Executive, held in February. He read the following extract from notes made at that meeting.

It was agreed that the purposes and functions of the Committee include:

- continuing to provide satisfying opportunities for member participation;*
- continuing to strengthen the links between the Committee and the University staff that result from staff members making presentations at meetings of the Committee;*
- maintaining the historical link with the foundation of the University.*

Faculty representation is considered unlikely to expand, greatly, in the current times of general dislocation but Committee members should continue to be alert for opportunities.

- g. Projects – nil.

10. Other Business

- a. Website

John Harcourt continues to maintain the website, updating the information that it carries, as necessary.

- b. Speakers and Tours

Irene Jablonka advised that she is in the process of arranging a speaker for the meeting in May. She sees no immediate prospect for the organisation of tours.

11. University of Melbourne Items of Interest

- a. David Janson referred to the appointment of Professor Pip Nicholson, former Dean of Law, to the post of Deputy Vic-Chancellor (People and Community) of the University. He also drew attention to the productive visit to the University, on 10 February 2022, of Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State, whose father-in-law studied law at the University.

- b. Irene Jablonka mentioned that Antony Blinken had met with Melbourne Connect and staff from Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences to discuss various partnerships with University Bio Science / Biomedical Precinct partners and US Biotech companies such as Moderna, Bristol Myers Squibb and IBM. The Vice-Chancellor and Professor Jane Gunn were present, and others. Mr Blinken said that his visit marks a strong commitment by the United States to work with Melbourne University and partners to fight global health threats.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is to be held on Wednesday, 18 May 2022, at Graduate House and via Zoom, commencing at 5.30 pm.

13. Close

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm.

Attachments

Updated Actions listing

Report of the President

COMMITTEE OF CONVOCATION - ACTIONS

Ref. No.	Date	Description	Responsibility	Status	Ref. No.
114	2021-05-19	Contact Dr Rachel Baird, Chair of the Alumni Council, with a view to arranging for her to make a presentation to the Committee	President	In progress	114

Committee of Convocation President's Report March 2022

1. I thank Irene for tonight's speaker.
2. I thank John Harcourt for setting up Zoom.
3. I have tried to contact Noel Whiting but so far have been unable to talk to him. I'll keep trying.
4. Thanks to Ros, we've found that David Schofield was never President of the Alumni Council, but was President of the Economics Faculty Alumni Council. I guess the Alumni web site wasn't being maintained because of COVID. The President is actually Dr Rachael Baird, a law graduate, and I have written to her via the right person in the Alumni Office, who Ros also discovered, inviting her to speak at one of our meetings.
5. I have written to Professor Pip Nicholson congratulating her for her appointment as Deputy V-C (People and Community). I think that the term "community" means the university community (including students) rather than the general public.
6. I note the cancellation by the Acting Minister of Education Stuart Robert of six research grants recommended by the Australian Research Council after thorough peer review. I note that our Deputy V-C (Research) made a fairly strong public comment opposing that action by the Minister, and I wondered whether the Committee wants to take any action. Perhaps we should wait until after the election. Of course, individual members can act in their personal capacity.
7. *Believe - Celebration of Impact* event, 6:30pm Wednesday 30 March. I hope you have all received invitations as volunteers or donors, but registrations close this Friday. The web page is:
<https://comms.alumni.unimelb.edu.au/link/id/zzzz622fd70e0ec37802Pzzzz564924dc2e35c697/page.html>
8. Ros has drafted an *Acknowledgement of Country* for us to use at our meetings, which she will circulate at the meeting. I used to think that the usual acknowledgement is just rattled off and lacked sincerity, but I've come round to the view that we should understand how our indigenous people must feel after what had been their country for 50,000 years was mostly taken from them. I'd like to hear what other Committee members feel about the Committee using Ros's thoughtful draft at each meeting.

David Bellair
March 2022