

**CONFIRMED**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE**  
**COMMITTEE OF CONVOCATION**

**MEETING 9/08**

**MINUTES**

A Meeting of the Committee of Convocation was held on Wednesday 19 November 2008 at 5.30pm in the Council Chambers, University of Melbourne.

**Present**

Ms L Boston (Chair), Mr A Abbott, Ms A Ada, Dr C Close, Ms J Crowe, Mr BFB Dance, Mr B Fitt, Ms H Fitzpatrick, Dr J Flesch, Mr D Ford, Dr A Gibbs, Dr JK Harcourt, Mr P Hirst, Mr G Israel, Ms I Jablonka, Mr F Lees, Mr R McGauran, Dr R McMillan, Dr V McRae, Mr J Meehan, Dr J Nelson, Dr R Otzen, Dr D Parbery, Dr I Rechtman, Dr B-A Rodan, Mr L Rowe, Dr L Simpson, Dr J Stillman, Mr G Thomas, Mr M Warwick, Mr N Whiting

**In Attendance**

Professor Glyn Davis (Vice-Chancellor), Ms J White (University Secretary), Mr S Halliwell (Minute Secretary), and Mr Adrian Green (Trusts Lawyer)

**SECTION 1**

**1 Welcome, Apologies and Leave of Absence**

Ms Boston welcomed members to the meeting, in particular Miss Jillian Crowe who has returned to the Committee after serious illness. Apologies were received from Ms Clare Cummins and Mr Phillip Davies.

Ms E Parker was on leave of absence.

No further leave of absence requests were received.

**2 Returning Officer's Report**

Mr Barry Southern has resigned his position as a representative of Science graduates. He cites the increased cost of fuel and other commitments. He sends the Committee his best wishes. Ms Boston has accepted the resignation with regret and has written to Mr Southern. There are therefore four casual vacancies in Science as well as the vacancy in Arts caused by Mr Phillip Davies's taking up the Law position. A final list will be presented to the December meeting and that meeting will also be asked to discuss a proposal from the University Secretary for simplifying the casual election process and a proposal for filling the casual vacancies from the beginning of 2009.

### **3 Starring of Additional Items**

None.

### **4 Receipt of Unstarred Items**

The Committee received the unstarred items.

### **5 Minutes of Meeting 8/08 (15 October 2008)**

The minutes were approved.

### **6 Matters Arising**

Dr McMillan reported in relation to Item 10.6 of the 8/08 minutes (VCA and Music faculty amalgamation) that she and Dr Gould had finally succeeded in contacting the Provost and had been offered two meeting dates: one five weeks and one eight weeks hence. When Dr McMillan contacted Dr Richard James in a further attempt to offer their services, she was assured that the implementation of the amalgamation was progressing smoothly. If the implementation committee felt the need of further assistance, they would be in touch.

Dr Flesch reported in relation to the potential redundancies in the Arts faculty (see item 10.5 of minutes 8/08) that the Provost had recently sent an email to all staff saying that the number of “involuntary redundancies” was being reduced and that it was hoped that all staff reductions necessary could be achieved by “voluntary redundancies”. The next meeting of the faculty is in December and Dr Flesch will report back to the Committee.

#### **6.1 Action Sheet 8/08**

##### **6.1.1 Casual Election Process**

As noted above, proposals from the University Secretary’s department will be discussed at the December meeting.

##### **6.1.2 Clarify Position of Giblin Library**

An email from Jenny Ellis was sent to members on 6 November.

##### **6.1.3 Working Group re University Giving Proposal**

Mr Israel drew members’ attention to the paper from the working group that had met to discuss the potential for contributing to the University Giving Program following the presentation from Professor Warren Bebbington at the October meeting. There was some concern that the University’s system as currently established did not seem to allow for the acknowledgement of the Committee of Convocation. Mr McGauran asked whether donations could be routed through the Chancellor’s Circle in which individuals are named if they contribute \$1,000 or more. Ms Boxtel also advised that there is a regular publication from the Advancement Office called “Report to Donors” and that too lists people who have donated certain amounts. It was recommended that there be further discussion of the various possibilities. Members were encouraged to send comments and suggestions to the working group convened by Mr Israel.

##### **6.1.4 Submission to CNGC re University Legislation Review**

Ms White reported that the Council Nominations and Governance Committee (CNGC) that met on 17 November had made the following responses to the submission from the Committee – circulated for Item 9.1 below:

- In relation to the first dot point (explicit representation of the Committee on faculties and graduate schools), the draft of Statute 5.1 has been revised and this is now included
- In relation to the second dot point (addition of a section re open and transparent communication to Statute 1.7), the University is already very open to scrutiny; a code of conduct is being developed, as noted by the Committee in its submission.

Ms White reported that the draft legislation will go to Council on 8 December for “in principle” approval. It will then go through the normal Legislation and Trusts Committee process in 2009, although she noted some uncertainty still because the final form of the revised University Acts is not yet known.

Ms White further noted that detailed advice received from Dr Ian Hardingham QC is that the proposed changes to the University’s internal legislation are quite consistent with the provisions of the *Melbourne University Act 1958*.

In response to questions, Ms White advised:

- It is not possible to give a general statement about how the advisory boards to faculties will operate; within the parameters set by the new Statute, it will be up to individual faculties.
- The draft legislation has been to the Academic Board twice already and is going again to the meeting on 20 November.
- The Academic Board has over 400 members, all of whom are in faculties. If it appears that the current provisions of relevant statutes are not being applied by deans, or if deans are not consulting sufficiently widely about the proposed changes, then that is a matter that should be taken up with faculties.

Although it was reported that the new dean of the faculty of Veterinary Science was operating in a collegiate manner, it was felt that the crucial issue was that such collegiate style was not mandated in the proposed legislation. Ms Boston noted that specific questions on the issue of collegiality had been sent to the Vice-Chancellor who would be addressing the Committee later in the meeting. She also noted that the issue of the variation with which individual deans operate could be discussed with the Chancellor when he attends the December meeting.

#### **6.1.5 Summary of Actions to Date re Commemoration of Traditional Owners**

A detailed summary of actions to date was tabled. Ms Boston advised that a recommendation on this matter will be going to Council on 8 December.

## **7 President’s Report**

Ms Boston reported on the 20 October meeting of Council. In particular, she quoted from the Chancellor’s report to that meeting as follows:

*“I support in principle that the President of the Committee of Convocation continue to have a*

*standing invitation to attend all meetings of Council, including the Annual Planning Conference, and have the right to speak on all matters pertaining to the Committee of Convocation. (In practice, the Chancellor welcomes contributions from the President on any topic addressed by Council). Further, I support the principle that a member of the Committee of Convocation be invited to join each of the standing committees of Council. This is indeed the current position.*

*I do not believe that it is appropriate to specify that in every case that a sub-committee of one of the standing committees is established a member of the Committee of Convocation must be included – as these sub-committees all report to a standing committee on which Convocation is represented, and some of the sub-committees serve specialist purposes. Similarly, I do not think we should specify in advance the composition of ad hoc committees established to examine a particular proposal (eg the student administration system or a proposed acquisition).”*

This addresses the concerns raised in the Committee’s report to September Council.

Ms Boston reported that a gift had been bought for the Chancellor who will be retiring as of 10 January 2009. It is a crystal paperweight which will be put in a display case with an inscription. Ms Boston reminded members about the Annual Dinner at the Lyceum Club. The closing date for RSVPs is 24 November. Cheques payable to the University of Melbourne should be sent to the Minute Secretary.

## **8 Reports from Sub-committees and Working Groups**

There was none.

## **9 Issues of Concern to Members**

### **9.1 Response to Legislative Review**

Discussion on this matter was minuted under Item 6.1.4 above.

## **10 Vice-Chancellor’s Report to 20 October Council.**

No matters were raised

## **11 Legislation and Trusts Committee Report to 20 October Council**

No further matters were reported on.

## **12 Building and Estates Committee Report to 20 October Council**

Mr McGauran reported that in September, a draft copy of the University’s Master Plan was issued to the Building and Estates Committee with a request for responses within a short time-frame. The document reads well, but is lacking in detailed statistics. It will be backed up with a campus plan. Mr McGauran has raised a number of matters in relation to the Master Plan:

- The quality of graphics in some places
- Matters not covered
- Sustainability
- Engagement with public transport at the western side of the University
- Safety and security on campus
- Protection of open spaces

His comments have been endorsed by the City of Melbourne and other University bodies.

In response to questions, Mr McGauran advised that although emphasis in the Master Plan is on perimeter parking, the underground car park will remain. There is little chance of grade separation in Grattan Street, although with the development of the Medical Precinct, it is possible that the role of Grattan Street will be reduced to that of a local street.

### **13 Academic Board Report to 20 October Council**

No matters were raised.

### **14 Reports of Faculty and Committee meetings**

There was none.

### **15 Other Business**

#### **15.1 Alumni Matters**

Ms Boxtel reported on the Alumni Preferences Survey and tabled a document "*Alumni Preferences Survey 2008 the initial results*".

### **16 Guest Speaker**

Professor Glyn Davis, Vice-Chancellor of the University, was guest speaker for the meeting. As requested, members had submitted written questions for the Vice-Chancellor. He answered many at the close of his presentation, but, advised he would provide also a written response to the President.

Professor Davis began with a PowerPoint presentation.

Professor Davis set the Higher Education context for what he said was likely to be a momentous year in 2009. He showed the fall in Commonwealth support per university over the past two decades. Though investment per student has fallen it is no cheaper now to educate students: rather it is more expensive with necessary investments in infrastructure. For several years, the University has filled the gap in funding in large part by international student fees. There are now 11,200 international students on the Parkville campus – which some have argued is the largest number of any University in the Western world. This is by and large a good thing, but it is worrying to be so dependent on a single source of income, particularly in the context where many of the countries of origin of the University's students are investing heavily in their own Higher Education sectors in order to encourage more of their students to enrol locally.

Another key factor affecting the development of the University is the amount of government regulation. For example, the Commonwealth Government decides how many CSP students the University can enrol in its courses, although the criteria for such decision making are not clear. The pitfalls of such central decision making were illustrated by the statistics of enrolled medical students and the number of medical practitioners recruited to Australia.

There is good news for the sector in the fact that there are currently two significant reviews taking place: the Bradley Review and the Cutler review. Links to these reviews are below.

[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher\\_education/policy\\_issues\\_reviews/reviews/highered\\_review/](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/policy_issues_reviews/reviews/highered_review/)

<http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Pages/home.aspx>

The Bradley review is due to report in December and there is likely to be a Government White Paper in February 2009.

Professor Davis continued with comments about the introduction of the Melbourne Model at the University. He noted that no other University had undergone such a radical transformation of its curriculum, and it was particularly pleasing how well the changes had been accepted, notably by prospective students. This was illustrated by the details of VTAC “Pop Polls” that the Vice-Chancellor tabled for members’ information. It is also notable that other universities such as the University of Western Australia and the University of Aberdeen have decided to adopt a similar approach, though each no doubt will give the new curriculum a unique name as befits their institutions.

In respect of research, the University of Melbourne appears to be the largest research organisation in Australia, with strong performance in recent research funding rounds. In order to retain this pre-eminent position, it is necessary to invest heavily in research infrastructure, and Professor Davis outlined several new significant developments:

- The Peak Computing facility which will enable a quantum shift in research such as that needed for the analysis of medical epidemics: the only facility in Australia with this capacity
- The Grattan Institute recently announced in the media (see <http://blogs.unimelb.edu.au/musse/2008/11/19/inaugural-directorceo-of-the-grattan-institute-appointed/> )
- The Neurosciences facility planned for Royal Parade (see <http://voice.unimelb.edu.au/view.php?articleID=3291> )
- The Centre for Coasts and Climate at Point Nepean (see <http://uninews.unimelb.edu.au/view.php?articleID=5375> )

In conclusion, Professor Davis noted that 2009 was going to be a difficult year. The University was fortunate in having the largest endowment of any Australian university, but the downside of that was that the current financial crisis has meant that some \$100m in investment income will be lost in 2009. Nevertheless, the University will strive to avoid the large losses of staff seen in other local institutions, and will work hard to avoid a deficit next year.

Ms Boston thanked Professor Davis for his detailed presentation. She then referred to the written questions that had been submitted by members and which had been provided to the Vice-Chancellor. Professor Davis reiterated his intention to provide written responses to the President, but provided also some immediate responses.

### **Concerns about the apparent primacy of Research rather than Teaching and Learning**

Professor Davis began by saying that he did not, as reported in some media, argue that some universities should be told that they cannot do research, although there was a good case for a continued focus on teaching.

The University of Melbourne prides itself on being a research-led University, and its teaching and learning should flow from that. Each year, the Vice-Chancellor meets with deans and other senior

staff to review rigorously the Quality of Teaching surveys ('QOT'). They begin with those subjects and courses with low QOT scores and analyse the reasons. The quality of teaching is consistently impressed on deans and senior staff. Professor Davis noted that some faculties that had had a poor reputation for teaching, such as the School of Engineering, had shown marked improvement.

### **Problem Based Learning ('PBL') in MDHS**

Professor Davis noted that PBL is meant to be research-led, but it was fair to say that it has mixed outcomes. The faculty has decided to review PBL in the context of delivering a graduate medical degree.

### **Melbourne School of Engineering Objectives**

Professor Davis acknowledged that in its list of objectives, Melbourne School of Engineering puts "research" above "teaching", and in fact had been encouraged to do that. The University has a history of recruiting for teaching capability rather than for appropriate research capacity, and this revised emphasis is a means of building a coherent research team.

### **Redundancies in the faculty of Arts**

Professor Davis acknowledged the difficulty whenever it becomes necessary to reduce staff. He said that the faculty had done an excellent job in addressing the budget issues and was now back in the black. There have, as yet, been no involuntary redundancies and the faculty is now down to only a handful of positions that it is discussing. It may be possible to achieve its required staffing profile without involuntary redundancies. On the question of criteria used in targeting particular positions, Professor Davis advised that the faculty had eliminated from discussion anyone with a teaching load of over 50% of the faculty average. Final decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

### **The Melbourne Model and Student Preferences**

Professor Davis said that there are several lessons from the introduction of the Melbourne model, and some are not the obvious ones. It is true that Deakin, for example, has increased its preferences but the average ENTER score for its students appeared to fall in 2008. The University of Melbourne has a slightly smaller pool but the ENTERs are the same as before or even higher. It was always anticipated that numbers would decrease, but the quality remains. Members were encouraged to read the detailed October VTAC Pop Polls provided. Overall, the picture is encouraging.

### **Relationship of the Business School and the Faculty of Economics and Commerce**

Professor Davis drew members' attention to the new Economics and Commerce facility in Pelham Street with its advanced teaching spaces and extended hours of access to student services. He confirmed that business courses remain essential for attracting both international and postgraduate students, and the University's aim is for a roughly 50:50 ratio of undergraduate and postgraduate students. There are discussions currently under way about how best to align the Melbourne Business School and the faculty.

### **Collegiality and Faculty Governance**

Professor Davis thanked Mr Peter Hirst for his questions on this matter. He noted that more detail would be provided in a written response. In relation to physical spaces, he observed that the new Master Plan envisages having a central cluster for undergraduate students with the graduate schools planned for off-campus and south of Grattan Street. The University now has in excess of 44,000 students. New Learning Hubs are being created with the largest – the Science Precinct – opening in the New Year. These are intended to recreate the service centres previously provided by Union House as a hub.

In relation to the structure of faculties and the role of the Committee, Professor Davis noted that the Committee's submission had been discussed by CNGC on 17 November. It has now been confirmed that the Committee by right should have a place on each faculty advisory board – a significant change in policy. There is continuing discussion with deans about the precise role that faculty advisory boards will play.

### **Expansion of Melbourne Dental School**

Professor Davis informed the Committee of discussions with the State Government about the need to allow for University expansion on the now vacant Royal Women's Hospital site, and the first priority is to get an expansion of the Dental School.

Professor Davis then took questions from members and provided the following in response.

### **Kwong Lee Dow Scholarships**

This is an excellent program which has had a powerful effect particularly on those schools and students, notably Indigenous students, who had not previously thought the University of Melbourne accessible to them.

### **Amenities and Services Fee**

The previous federal government had passed so-called "Voluntary Student Union" legislation ('VSU') which had the effect of banning all compulsory non-academic fees. This resulted in the loss of some \$12m in revenue for the University, and since that time it has been subsidising student services by approximately \$5m each year. If the current government's proposed legislation is passed, the University will be able to recoup some \$4m, but Professor Davis advised the legislation is not a certainty to get through the Senate. The Shadow Education Minister had recently been invited to campus to see first-hand the effects of VSU on University services.

### **Australian National Academy of Music ('ANAM')**

Although ANAM was funded directly by the Commonwealth as a free-standing institution, it has always been a subsidiary of the University. A review of ANAM commissioned by the previous Arts Minister had never been published. When the current Minister flagged his intention to cease funding ANAM, the University offered an alternative linking ANAM to the faculty of Music and the VCA located at Southbank. The University hopes one day to build a new Melbourne Conservatorium.

### **Access to Courses by Mature-age Students**

The Melbourne Model is designed so that access to its graduate courses is available to students with any Bachelor degree, although faculties will decide whether particular entry tests are necessary in accordance with the demands of a particular discipline. One good illustration of the benefits of this model has been the type and calibre of students enrolling in the new Masters of Teaching. The profession is very impressed with the quality of students to the extent that the current cohort all have secured jobs in teaching.

Ms Boston thanked Professor Davis for his thorough and informative presentation, and for his willingness to address the detailed concerns raised by the Committee. She hoped that the Committee could welcome the Vice-Chancellor again in 2009, and she assured Professor Davis of the Committee's continued interest in and support of the well-being of the University.

Meeting closed at 7-40pm.

President's Signature.....Date.....