

ACADEMIC SENATE COMMUNIQUE

21 FEBRUARY 2023 MEETING



This was the first meeting of incoming President of Academic Senate (PAS) Professor Tania Sourdin, who began the meeting by welcoming all returning members to the Academic Senate for 2023. PAS then advised and welcomed the following new members to Senate: – **Professors’** Jesper Gulddal, Sandy Steacy, Jon Hirst, and Francesco Paolucci. Associate Professors’ Elena Prieto-Rodriguez, and Allison Cummins, Drs’ Penelope Fotheringham and Megan Huggett, and student members: Ms Shireen Sidhu, Ms Tamara Asmus, Mr Richie Mondido, Mr Edward Bissaker, Mr Rustin Lam, and Mr Andrew McIlwraith. PAS welcomed the incoming PVC CESE Professor Craig Simmons to Academic Senate and noted that Professor Laura-Anne Bull would be acting as Interim PVC EI following the retirement of Professor Mark Jones.

The PAS noted outcomes following the annual Academic Senate Assurance Report; the increase in academic participation in the December graduation ceremonies; the academic delegations review; the University submission to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Report; and gave brief updates on institutional and sector news including WIL for All and the National Interest Test (NIT). The Chair also outlined several proposed changes to the structure of meetings as a result of feedback from the annual Academic Senate Members Survey which she hoped would enable more robust discussion.

The Vice Chancellor spoke about the Universities Accord terms of reference and expert panel noting the University submission will be forthcoming mid-year. The VC advised of funding for the Central Coast campus following the NSW Government announcement. The VC praised the achievements of Professor Penny Jane Burke (appointed as a UNESCO Chair in Equity, Social Justice and Higher Education), Mr Nathan Towney (2023 Newcastle Citizen of the Year), and Professors Claire Collins and Brian Kelly in the Australia Day honours. It was noted that although domestic student numbers were down, the University is seeing the highest ever enrolment of the international student cohort and thanked all those involved in O-Week activities to help welcome the 4000 students who attended.

The Director, International Global Engagement and Partnerships advised that the decrease in international student commencements due to Covid-19 had now started to recover with strategies put in place to minimise the risk of visa refusal to certain cohorts.

The Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC), gave an update on the Course Experience Surveys and noted that positive student experience was the highest recorded. The available QILT data was also discussed, noting that results had seen significant rises for the University in areas such as nursing and that 2021 data is available via SPP for benchmarking. An update on the WIL for All project implementation was also presented by the General Manager (Academic Division).

In academic integrity issues, the DVCA noted much discussion around open AI and ChatGPT with the University agreeing for the need of a nuanced approach to access and use. The DVC A also thanked outgoing SACO Coordinator Dr Greg Preston for his work over the years in that role.

The DPAS - Research spoke for the DVC RI on the recent Research Committee meeting, noting that the engagement priorities framework and the 2022 highlights were presented by the DVC RI at the meeting. The meeting also saw guest speaker ResTech General Manager, Mr Pierre Gouhier, to advise the RC on the role industry can play for the commercialisation of research and the opportunities for student industry placement. The discussions surrounding the implications of the increase in HDR stipends was also noted.

The PVC CHMW and Chair, gave an update on the College Board activities noting the new nursing program and the joint podiatry program with Western Sydney University will commence in 2024. The success of the Alumni Excellence and College awards were noted, along with the appointment of Professor Nathan Bartlett to Assistant Dean – Industry and Partnership. The PVC CHMW noted that the College would be focussing on the conversion of preferences to enrolments and noted a large number of international student enrolments in nursing and allied health disciplines.

The incoming PVC CESE noted the success of Associate Professor’s Karen Blackmore as the Assistant Dean WIL and Vicki Keast as the EDI Officer, as well as the success of School of Information and Physical Sciences (SIPS). The PVC noted the focus for the College would be on student retention and 2023 would see an emphasis on clean energy strategic planning. The collaboration between College PVC’s to introduce the new STEM stream with STEM / Communications degree was also advised.

The PVC CHSF joined the VC in congratulating Professor Penny Jane Burke on her UNESCO Chair, noting the importance to the both the region and the University of such a distinguished appointment. The PVC CHSF noted that the University is being recognised worldwide by its commitment to equity with recent collaborative work between Newcastle and Ghana on gendered violence highlighted.

The Director of PALS spoke about the recent activity of the Board noting more direct enrolments into degrees with competition lowering enrolment criteria by Universities. This highlights the vital importance of support to assist these students to ensure success and retention. The Director noted the PALS programs: Studiosity, Learning Advisors on Campus, PASS, and the English language pathways (awarded 1st in Australia), are offered to all students who require assistance.

Contact

For more information, email Academic Senate Services: academicssenate@newcastle.edu.au or the President of Academic Senate: PAS@newcastle.edu.au.

Next Meeting – 19 April 2023