

# ACADEMIC SENATE COMMUNIQUE



**11 MAY 2021 MEETING**

## MATTERS DISCUSSED

A new membership structure for the Academic Senate, which will take effect from 1 January 2022, was endorsed for Council approval. This change is required as a result of the University's restructure from five faculties to three colleges.

In his report, the Vice-Chancellor informed members of the appointment of Professor Kent Anderson to the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global, and Professor Tony Travaglione as Pro Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), UON Singapore. Thanks were expressed to Professor Caroline Chan for her work during her time as Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor and CEO since January.

An update on the NUW Alliance was also provided, advising the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic would chair the Short Course Forum which has responsibility for the delivery of the Multiversity short courses, which makes new funding available for online courses, many of which are able to be offered using existing infrastructure.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked everyone for constructively feeding back as part of the Enabling Change process, noting submissions received are now being worked through. The opportunity will also be taken to take a holistic view to realign programs and courses in a strategic way.

An update regarding key capital works was provided. It was noted that no new major capital works have been approved and any additional works undertaken have been to accommodate for the decant of the Hunter Building.

The Vice-Chancellor formally acknowledged Professor Deb Hodgson and her significant achievements whilst in the role of Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation (PVCRI), particularly in leading the University's Athena SWAN accreditation. Members were informed that Professor Roberta Ryan would be the Interim PVCRI until recruitment efforts are finalised.

The Director, Strategy, Planning and Performance (DSPP) spoke to a presentation and provided an overview of the progress and achievements being delivered against each pillar of the Looking Ahead Strategic Plan (the Strategic Plan). Members were informed that the website for the Strategic Plan has also been refreshed.

There were two strategic items relating to Academic Matters for discussion: Update on the University's compliance with the Foreign Relations Bill (presented by Kate Ramzan); and Update on External Review on Academic Governance (presented by the President of Academic Senate).

Ms Kate Ramzan, University Lead, National Security Compliance, spoke to a presentation and provided an overview of the Foreign Interference Taskforce Guidelines and relevant legislation the University is required to comply with. Members were advised that following a recent

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) memo, the University is required to report at both the institutional level as well as the 'academic to academic' level and have until 10 June 2021 to comply with existing arrangements.

Members were informed that the University is required to register information within a DFAT portal and a workflow tool is being developed to support staff to meet the requirements, with a view to automating tools as much as possible. An overview of the other activities supporting the University's national security compliance was provided noting the development of a draft framework which maps out the governance, policy, communications, knowledge sharing and cyber-security considerations.

The importance of the University complying with the requirements was emphasised to ensure that DFAT is fully informed of the volume and nature of international work undertaken. There was discussion about the administrative burden this creates for academics and concerns were expressed it may act as a disincentive for individuals to engage internationally. Members were informed that a community-of-practice has been established to establish the University's systems in a streamlined way, reducing the amount of paperwork as much as possible.

The PAS provided an update on progress against the recommendations of the External Review on Academic Governance noting that feedback and support of the Colleges was appreciated, and confirmed there is a desire to reduce bureaucratic processes and streamline where possible. Members were informed that the Council has requested a 'traffic light' reporting framework be developed, to enable progress against the recommendations to be tracked.

The Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee provided an update noting that following the release of the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) data the University has identified short-term and long-term strategies for improvement. Members were informed that the QILT reports on two years of data and uncertainty due to COVID-19 resulted in a drop in satisfaction across the sector.

Members were also informed of the efforts to increase student survey engagement rates and consideration of ways to improve the accuracy of results is ongoing. It was noted that there needs to be an emphasis on communicating with students in their second semester, especially those within large student cohorts, around the importance of completing surveys as a means for the University to improve its teaching and learning experiences.

## Contact

For more information, email Academic Senate Services: [academicssenat@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:academicssenat@newcastle.edu.au) or the President of Academic Senate: [PAS@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:PAS@newcastle.edu.au).

**Next meeting – 14 July 2021**