

RESEARCH COMMITTEE COMMUNIQUE #1

News and updates from UON's Research Committee Meeting



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

25 February 2019 Meeting

Welcome to the first edition of the Research Committee Communique covering all of the highlights from the first 2019 Research Committee meeting.

The Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation, Professor Deborah Hodgson was Chair for this meeting as Professor Kevin Hall has taken on the role as Acting Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Global Engagement and Partnerships.



Research Committee Discussion on Strategic/Institutional Issues

The Cloud migration Strategy was raised, noting the concerns around storage and security of research data. The Committee discussed the need to balance the considerations of high performance end computing, with ethics and compliance. Confidentiality issues were raised around Human and Animal ethics, noting that the Strategy must ensure confidence in the security of what data is placed in the Cloud. The Committee discussed the importance of the Faculties staying on top of progress and being engaged in the process, raising any issues they encounter.

The Committee discussed capital works projects and relevant infrastructure issues relating to research and innovation, noting that members should be more engaged particularly with the STEMM Bioresources Facility planning and Central Coast developments.

HDR Commencements Report

The Committee discussed the effect of changes to funding of HDR students on the reduced HDR commencement figures. Concerns were raised regarding the financial challenges facing HDR candidates who do not receive a stipend. The Committee was advised that the Research and Innovation Division is working on the planning of future HDR funding models, including through grants and industry collaborations.

The Committee was advised of the introduction of the Vice Chancellor's Higher Degree by Research Training Scholarships program ('the program'). The program includes an additional offering of up to 40 international and 50 domestic HDR scholarships, offered over two rounds in 2019 and 2020. The program can be distinguished from traditional HDRs, by the academic training experience provided to candidates. The Committee discussed the selection process and implementation of the program, noting that the scholarships will not replace the existing HDR offerings.

Presentation from HMRI Director

The Director, Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI), Professor Tom Walley spoke to the HMRI presentation, informing members of his background and that he has been in his current role since November 2018. The Committee were informed that HMRI is an independent medical research institute in partnership with UON. HMRI are in the development of a strategy plan for the next 5 -10 years, noting the current plan ends in 2019. The consultation process for the new strategy is currently open.

The Committee were informed that the majority of HMRI funding is provided by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), with increases in government funding through the medical futures research fund (MRF) but HMRI need to think of where the funding will come from in the future. HMRI's current research is made up of a ratio of approximately 80% biomedical and 20% translational research. This ratio is planned to reach 50%/50% in the future, noting there is also a need to enhance translational activities. The Committee were informed that HMRI are looking to expand the development and delivery of clinical trials, starting with the appointment of dedicated staff members to expand and develop future trial opportunities.

The Committee discussed the current composition of the HMRI Board membership and noted areas for improvement in the diversity of the HMRI Board, including greater female and indigenous representation.

Presentation from GIC Director

The Executive Director, Better Health, Healthcare and Treatment Global Impact Cluster (GIC), Professor Mark Flynn spoke to the presentation. The Committee were informed that the GIC is looking at opportunities to collaborate and support across UON, having spent 2018 in consultation with Priority Research Centres and research leaders to determine areas for greatest impact. The GIC are focusing on alternative sources of funding and addressing research supply and demand challenges, in light of increasing funding applications and decreasing funding from traditional sources. The Committee were informed that the GIC work in collaboration with Australia's medical and technology pharmaceutical sector, to understand the nature of the challenges they face.

The Committee were informed that there are a large group of fantastic Researchers across UON and the GIC are looking at how they can bring these research individuals and groups together, to open lines of communication and enhance opportunities. The GIC focus on bringing UON, the healthcare system and industry together through collaboration.

Report of the Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation

The Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation (ADVCR) introduced herself as the newly appointed Chair and invited all attending members at the meeting to introduce themselves and their role to the new student members. The Committee was advised that Professor Ros Smith has been appointed Acting in the role of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) and welcomed her to this role.

The Committee was informed about a number of new initiatives including:

- 2017 Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) audit was exceptional with the first time in UONs history exceeding \$100m in HERDC income value;
- Success in category 3 industry engagement rapidly growing now ranking 6th. Strong contribution from STEMM and pleasing to see the Faculty of Business and Law improving;
- Partnership between UON, Lockheed Martin and RDA to be launched at Avalon air show; and
- Official launch for the Hunter Pilot Bio Refinery at Muswellbrook, a partnership involving NIER.

Report of the Director, Research and Innovation

The Director, Research and Innovation spoke to this item, noting at the recent Australian Research Council's (ARC) recent visit to the University and discussed recent funding decisions in the Humanities space, including the National Interest Test (NIT). ARC advice on the completion of NIT forms was to apply clear and simple language. The outcomes of Excellence in Research Australia and impact assessment is planned for March 2019.

Contact

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Next Research Committee Meeting

2 April 2019.