

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS

at the sixty-eighth meeting of the

**COUNCIL OF THE IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND
MEDICINE**

The sixty-eighth meeting of the Council was held via Microsoft Teams, hosted by Imperial College London, South Kensington, at 12 noon on Friday 18th September 2020, when there were present:

Mr. J. Allan (Chair), Professor N. Brandon, Mr. C. Brinsmead, Professor R. Craster, Mr. J. Cullen, Professor A. Gast (President), Mr. R. Kalifa, Sir Jonathan Michael, Dr. M. Safa, Professor J. Sanders, Mr. A. Sood, Professor T. Tetley, Professor F. Veloso, Professor I. Walmsley (Provost), Professor J. Weber, Mr. C. Williams and Mr. J. Neilson (Clerk to the Court and Council).

Apologies

Mr. T. Courtauld, Ms. S. Murray, Mr. M. Sanderson.

In attendance

Professor N. Alford, Professor M. Dallman, Professor N. Jennings, Professor E. McCoy, Mr. M. Murphy, Miss A. Wolthuizen, and Mrs. R. Knight (Assistant Clerk to the Court and Council).

MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. There were no comments on the minutes.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the sixty-seventh meeting of the Council, held on Friday 10th July 2020, be approved.

2. There were no matters arising to note. The action regarding the revision of the White City Syndicate terms of reference was nearing completion and would be considered at the next meeting of Council.

CHAIR, PRESIDENT AND PROVOST REPORTS

3. The President, Professor Alice Gast, provided Council with an update on the College's Covid-19 response and preparedness, including the submission of an outbreak plan, preparations for the new term, support for students, the testing regime and a summary of research developments including funding raised. The media report provided further information on the College's contribution to the development of a vaccine. The Universities Minister had visited the campus to discuss the plans to welcome students back and to see the work that the College was doing. College teams were meeting regularly with public health officials from our boroughs to discuss outbreak management and infection control plans.
4. Professor Hairer, from the Department of Mathematics, had won the Breakthrough Prize, the largest prize in Science. Although the College had risen to 8th in the 2021 QS world university rankings, 3rd in Europe, it had been ranked 11th by the Times Higher. This was a drop from 10th, and analysis would be presented to Council to understand the methodology and why the College's ranking had slipped.
5. The College continued to engage with the Government on the Comprehensive Spending Review and its Research & Innovation road map. This included mapping the College's research links across the UK as part of the levelling up agenda. Council encouraged the senior leadership team to engage with Sir Steve Smith, the new Government international education champion.
6. The Provost, Professor Ian Walmsley, opened his report with an update on the College's promotions round. 120 academic staff had been promoted, 20% of whom were female. Other staff successes included Dr Lededma-Amaro, Dr Gallego, Dr Berta and Dr Bouville who had all been awarded prestigious ERC Starting Grants, and Professor Jackson who will become the first black scientist to deliver a Royal Institution Christmas Lecture.
7. Whilst research funding applications were being submitted at a usual rate and many programmes continued as normal, the UKRI had confirmed that extensions would be awarded to grants impacted by coronavirus and that doctoral student extensions would be supported.
8. The Education background paper set out the admissions challenges. Following the switch to Centre Assessment Grades for A level results, 500 additional applicants had met their offers, of which 132 from three departments were offered a deferral package. There had been a 30% increase in the number of widening participation students admitted as undergraduates this year. PGT registrations were also positive. Students had begun using the multi-mode learning environment, which was working well.

9. The staff total remuneration package, laying out the pay and benefits for staff, including pensions, would be considered further in the coming month. The USS had published a consultation on the technical provisions of the scheme, and the College would continue to work towards a robust and transparent evaluation of the scheme's methodology.
10. Other initiatives included the establishment of a College history group to examine the history of the College through its links to the British Empire, and to report on the present understanding and reception of the College's legacy and heritage in the context of its present-day mission. Another group, the artwork group, was considering ways in which the College's diverse community could be celebrated by means of images and depictions of alumni, staff, and students. Both groups were engaging with the College community and would report to President's Board. The College had joined the STEM black university alliance which aimed to improve career prospects for black youth in the UK's STEM sector. The first initiative progressed by the new academic strategy, Transition to Zero Pollution, would be launched the following week and would include a keynote talk by Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland. Members were encouraged to attend.
11. Council discussed the recent Government policy paper "Reducing bureaucratic burden in research, innovation and higher education".

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Finance Committee Report

12. The Chair of the Finance Committee, Mr Chris Brinsmead, presented the report from the Finance Committee. He noted that the College's cash position was better than had been expected. There remained some uncertainty and a revised annual budget would be presented to the November meeting. Some students had already started their programmes for the coming academic year, and arrivals on campus were staggered between now and January. Fee payments were being received slightly quicker than last year.
13. The Committee had asked the College to focus and negotiate a Revolving Credit Facility with one bank.
14. The Chief Financial Officer, the Deans and their teams were thanked for their continued efforts

MAJOR DISCUSSION ITEM

College Strategy 2020-2025: What does excellence look like

15. The President opened the discussion by summarising achievements against the 2015 – 2020 strategy, and the revised view of excellence presented in 2018. That strategy had changed the College, and the new strategy for 2020-2025, circulated to Council at the February meeting, had extended those aims. Notable achievements included

the Invention Rooms, the new estates strategy, Scale Space, growth in philanthropy and the increased donor base. Capabilities distinctive to Imperial included an entrepreneurial student experience, cross faculty research and education initiatives and links with business and communities local to White City.

16. In discussion, it was noted that the pandemic had proven that the organisation was very adaptable. Flexibility should be added to the strategy as an indicator of excellence. Some of the proposed performance indicators were not particularly appropriate and should be refined. The four societal themes framing the Academic Strategy, included in the overall Strategy, set a direction for major initiatives for the future. It was noted that, although the College had appointed a sustainability champion and was developing a sustainability strategy, this was not adequately reflected in the strategy. As a high-profile institution, the College could set more of an example in the operation of its estate and in incentivising colleagues, for example, in reducing its carbon footprint. Feedback from the community indicated that there was a significant appetite for the College to drive the zero-carbon initiative forward.
17. Consideration needed to be given to what the College wanted to be the best at and where it strived to be in the top quartile. The rapid deployment and development of digital learning would have been thought impossible a year ago, and as such Council encouraged the Senior Leadership Team to be more ambitious in its plans and timescales, not only on digital learning but on social mobility. It was suggested that the College could be bolder in its pursuit of revenue diversification which would then enable greater independence from external influence in strategic choices. The rigour of independent intellectual thought was valued by partners in industry, and the College received funding from multiple sources. If the College were to increase its resources outside of traditional areas of support, greater independence could be possible.
18. Council considered whether the strategy should span a 5-year period given the current uncertainties in the wider environment, which were forcing the College to modify its behaviours and priorities. It was recognised that some of the strategy statements were generic because of the difficulty in looking 5 years ahead, but that aspirational statements provided direction, particularly in challenging times. The College Strategy provided foundations that were further developed in the academic, teaching and learning, research, estates, fund raising, international and community and engagement strategies. Together they provide an evolving framework to inform decision-making, to prioritise resources and concentrate expertise across the College in a focused way. The strategies would benefit from real life examples as well as KPI measures to aid understanding. The annual KPIs should drive this delivery and support the strategic direction of travel by informing faculty and department plans.
19. The strategy needed to be supported by action plans, against which progress could be measured regularly, including by Council. The action plans and growth areas would be explored in more depth at the Council awayday in February.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

20. Council briefly considered the background papers which had been circulated. A large number of the students deferred to 2021 had already accepted their places. 2019-20 had been a good year in terms of research income generated. 1550 FTE staff had been submitted under the Research Excellence Framework and 84 impact case studies were being finalised. Capital expenditure had been £29 million lower in 2019-20 due to COVID, but all the capital projects, including replacing cladding, were back on track.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

21. The President agreed to keep Council members regularly updated via email.
22. The Chair of Council thanked the management team for their hard work in the present circumstances.