

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

## **From the Council**

# **An Update on Council Business for Members of the Senate**

June 2009

### Introduction

This briefing provides an update for members of the Senate on the items of business that have been considered and the discussions that have taken place at the University Council. From 2009/10 a briefing will be sent to all members of the Senate within four weeks of the Council meeting taking place.

If any members of the Senate have any questions regarding any of the items or wish to have any further information then they should contact the Deputy Registrar's Office in the first instance.

Update from the Meeting of the Council held in March 2009

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
Strategic Topics of Discussion for Future Meetings	<p>Council focuses on one main strategic topic for discussion at each of its meetings. Recent meetings have focused mainly on the economy and the University's financial strategy. Previous discussions have included the Development Office, e-Communication, and international reputation. The Council agreed that in forthcoming meetings it would like to discuss the physical development of the campus and business engagement as strategic topics.</p>
Strategic Topic: Navigating the Recession	<p>The Council discussed the University's approach to navigating the recession and were supportive of the University's recognition of the need to not only manage the current and immediate financial situation but also to ensure that the University was best placed to benefit from economic recovery when it came.</p> <p>The Council agreed that any steps taken needed to ensure that the University could deliver world class teaching and research in all areas and an exceptional experience.</p> <p>The Council supported the University's proposals to achieve significant savings in each year of the financial plan being prepared and for returning the University back to achieving a financial surplus from 2010/11.</p> <p>The Council approved the following principles to underpin the University's planning and decision making in the forthcoming period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) The University remains committed to a multi-disciplinary academic strategy covering the four faculties of Arts, Social Studies, Science and Medicine focused only on the fulfilment of international excellence in all supported areas.</li> <li>(ii) The University's shape and structure is not pre-determined or fixed.</li> <li>(iii) Academic Departments must be sustainable.</li> <li>(iv) Investing in capital (buildings and equipment) is vital but it must be affordable (including a recognition that adequate consideration must be given to future capital requirements including replacements when considering the sustainability of academic departments).</li> <li>(v) The risks relating to borrowing should be managed and borrowing should be linked directly to projects that deliver positive strategic financial returns.</li> <li>(vi) The 2008/09 deficit must be reversed if possible in 2009/10.</li> <li>(vii) The operating costs of the University must be optimised to focus on delivery of the Strategy (including the need to enable the Registrar to take a holistic view of the costs, shape and effectiveness of administration both centrally and in departments (working under the aegis Academic Resourcing Committee and Steering Committee as appropriate)).</li> <li>(viii) The University's surpluses must be increased to allow for investment.</li> </ul>

	<p>(ix) The University remains committed, even in challenging circumstances, to its role as a positive employer and an excellent learning and development environment for students.</p> <p>(x) The quality and maintenance of the campus remains a vital internal and external signal of a well-managed institution.</p>
Membership of the University Council	<p>The Council receives regular reports from the Nominations Committee with recommendations for new lay members of the Council and regarding those existing members whose term of office have ended but might be eligible for reappointment. Senators will be aware that nominations can be submitted from any member of the University and a formal call for potential lay members is made each year.</p> <p>The Council was advised that the process for identifying a new Pro-Chancellor (and Chair of Council) was about to begin but supported the view of Nominations Committee that the Pro-Chancellor should take up office in 2010 to shadow the existing Chair for one year before assuming the Chair in 2011.</p> <p>The Council therefore approved an extension of appointment for both the Pro-Chancellor, John Leighfield and the Treasurer, Brian Woods – Scawen, to 31 July 2011.</p> <p>The Council also approved the appointment of Mr John Higgins to the lay membership of the Council from 1 August 2009. John is currently Chair of the Audit Committee and was previously a lay member of the Council from 2002 to 2008. John Higgin’s Biography can be found at:  <a href="http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/gov/atoz/council/members/">http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/gov/atoz/council/members/</a></p>
Finance and General Purposes Committee	<p>As well as receiving reports on the University’s financial position for the current year, the Council received feedback from a presentation that the Director of IT Services had given to the Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGPC) on the University’s IT provision.</p> <p>The Council was advised of FGPC’s view that there had been significant improvements to the University’s IT services since the new Director was appointed and that the Committee supported the continual review of the University’s IT needs to ensure that its strategic goals can be achieved.</p>
Audit Committee	<p>The Council received a report from the Audit Committee which outlined the objectives of the Committee and how it sought to add value and protect the University in the face of increasing external regulation and interventions in University activity. The report also highlighted the reviews that the Committee had undertaken of the University’s risk management process, value for money and internal audits that had been conducted over the previous period.</p>
Review of Devolved Financial Arrangements	<p>The Council approved the terms of reference for a group which was being established to consider the impact and effectiveness of the devolved financial arrangements that had been put in place for both the Warwick Business School and the Warwick Medical School. The Council was advised that an initial report from that group was expected before the start of the new academic year.</p>