

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

THE SIXTY-SEVENTH ORDINARY MEETING OF CONVOCATION

Saturday 13 July 2024

Present (in-person) 46: Nick Richardson (Chair of Convocation), Clare Talbot-Jones (Deputy Chair of Convocation), Christopher Alcock, David Armstrong, Lauren Bell, Simon Bishop, Lesley Braiden, Lynn Carter, Duncan Chapple, Philip Coyne, Helen Coyne, Sanjana Das, Ingrid Dos Santos, Amanda Earnshaw, Suzanne Foster, Gillian Gill, Emily Howell, Norman Huntington, Florence Huntington, Antony Jones, Lesley-Anne Kirkup, Nishmitha Koteshwar, Claire Lambert, James Lister, Robert McCrae, Thomas Meadows, Michael Nee, Patricia Percy, Laura Perry, Haaris Qureshi, Aviva Rayne, Alex Richards, Madeleine Robinson, Robert Skelton, Carola Sprengel, Goda Stasytyte, Jian Tan, Robert Theaker, Elena Trayanova, Eric Waggott, Anthony Walton, Jane Wigfield, Claire Wright, Sarah Wright, Gordon Wynn, and Kalliopi Yannadaki.

Present (online) 18: Pamela Clarke, Salsabila Fadhilah, Jihad Fatah, Louise Forster, Jaime Hernandez Garcia, Binjie Hu, Tarun Jindal, Sotaro Kobayashi, Yi-hsian Lin, Ivy Matoju, Angus McVittie, Chiahemba Nor, John Pain, Barry Robertson, Mushtaq Saleem, Paul Velluet, Elizabeth Wilkinson, and Sharhabil Yahaya.

In attendance: Professor Chris Day (Vice-Chancellor and President) Dr Colin Campbell (Registrar); Lauren Huntington (Deputy Director, NU Advancement); Professor Anya Hurlbert (Dean of Advancement); Lindsey Lockey (Chief Executive, Students' Union); Lily Moore (Alumni Engagement Manager, NU Advancement); Jeremy Pidgeon (Alumni Programmes Manager, NU Advancement); Aerian Rogers (Deputy Director, Advancement), Paul Tyack (Director, NU Advancement); Laney Wang (International Alumni Manager, NU Advancement); Laura Watson (Head of Supporter Marketing and Events, NU Advancement)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to the sixty-seventh ordinary meeting of Convocation and referred members to the history of the University included in the minutes of the previous meeting. The Chair also recommended a concert by the Newcastle folk-rock band Lindisfarne taking place the following day at the Palace of Arts at Wylam Brewery.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Convocation held on Saturday 4th November 2023 were approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising to report.

4. UNIVERSITY OVERVIEW FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT

Received: An overview of the University from the Vice-Chancellor and President incorporating an update on alumni engagement from Lauren Huntington, Deputy Director Advancement and Head of Alumni and Supporter Engagement.

Reported that:

1. The Vice-Chancellor and President gave an update on the University's progress in implementing its Vision and Strategy, notable developments, and achievements including colleague success
2. The University is ranked in the Global top 130 with three campuses in Newcastle, Malaysia and Singapore. The student population is currently 29,000 with over 250,000 alumni. In the last year over £190m was secured in new research grants.
3. Highlights of the last year include the award of 5 QS stars for the quality of research, a global 100 ranking for sustainable development, a Queen's Anniversary Prize for global research excellence in water and an audience of over 600,000 for cultural venues and events.
4. Research is focussed on 5 areas of global excellence:
 - a. Helping people live healthier, happier, longer lives – this includes development the UK's first Health Innovation Neighbourhood, leading the world's biggest study into non-alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver and ranking in the global top 80 for Medicine
 - b. Ensuring that there is enough, for all, forever – this includes a world top 100 ranking for sustainable development, the Queen's Anniversary Prize for global research excellence in water and a new MSc in Leadership in Climate Change and Sustainability
 - c. Nurturing arts and culture to fuel positive societal change – this includes the heritage of the Hatton Gallery as the birthplace of Pop Art, the range of activities and events hosted by our cultural venues and ranking as 2nd in the UK for Fine Art.
 - d. Helping to build sustainable communities fit for the future – this includes an innovative partnership with the University of Pittsburgh, the Arrow Innovation programme that has supported over 150 growing businesses and a global top 100 ranking for Architecture.
 - e. Unlocking the power of data to discover solutions and drive innovation – including leading the UK National Innovation Centre for Data, the development of Newcastle Helix as an innovation district and a partnership with the Alan Turing Institute on data science and AI
5. A new strategy for teaching, Education for Life 2030+, is being rolled out with the vision of Newcastle being a global, future-facing provider of leading edge, inclusive and transformational higher education for our students. The strategic aims of the Strategy are: 1) Equity 2) Encounters with the Leading Edge 3) Fit for the Future.
6. The University's accommodation offer is evolving to suit the needs of current and future students. This includes the demolition and rebuilding of Castle Leazes to

provide accommodation in line with student expectations and meeting requirements for sustainability. The development will provide significantly more accommodation on the same footprint.

7. Following a fire, Henderson Hall will be fully repaired ahead of an appraisal of future options for the site.
8. The two overseas campuses in Malaysia and Singapore are flourishing with a strong level of medical education provided at the campus in Malaysia
9. The fundraising Campaign for Newcastle continues to be successful. Since launch in 2021, nearly 1,600 individuals have supported the Campaign together with 172 organisations.
10. The University is grateful for all support for the Campaign with impact including the success of the Newcastle Student Fund, donations and grants towards cutting edge research and support for the IntoUniversity partnership and the University of Sanctuary Programme.
11. Lauren Huntington gave a report on work with the Newcastle's global graduate community. She reported that there are now c. 266,000 graduates in 191 countries with the majority of these under 40.
12. Alumni relations programmes are grouped under four headings:
 - a. Connect – Helping Newcastle graduates keep in touch with each other and their university
 - b. Develop - Supporting the career development of Newcastle graduates so that they can reach their potential
 - c. Discover – Providing lifelong learning opportunities and sharing the latest discoveries from the university community
 - d. Support – Fundraising and volunteering for future students, future research and a future of positive change in our city and around the world
13. The *Arches* newsletter is received by 130,000 people, alumni attended 76 events in 2023/24 with over 3,000 taking part in person, 500 alumni gave time as volunteers and over 1,000 made a donation. We now have 31 active Alumni Networks around the world.
14. Highlights of the last year include NCL in Action on the theme of 'Moving on Up', graduations and alumni events in China for students who were unable to graduate in person due to the pandemic, an honorary Bachelor of Education graduation for Post Graduate Certificate holders from the 1960's whose qualifications would now be classed as degree level.

In response to questions from members of Convocation that had not been addressed during his presentation, the Vice-Chancellor and President responded:

1. Regarding Mining Engineering – this programme has been combined with wider Civil Engineering programmes in response to changes in employer and student demand.
2. Regarding research into liver disease – As a liver specialist himself, the Vice-Chancellor was pleased to hear of the level of support for this area of work and noted the importance to patients and their families of recently adopted approaches to the terminology for fatty liver disease.
3. Regarding the inclusion of Agriculture within a wider School of Natural and Environmental Science – In common with other high performing universities, individual disciplines are often grouped together within a wider School that draws together related research strengths. This gives access to the strength of a larger and broader research environment and infrastructure. It has led to a growth in research performance in this area.
4. Regarding the University's Net Zero target – The target for Net Zero is 2030. The Vice-Chancellor reported that this is an ambitious target, but that the alternative of setting a more relaxed target (e.g. 2040) would not have created a similar sense of urgency. The University is currently spending c. £15m p/a on net zero, especially solar panels. The rate limiting factor for achieving net zero is financial with costs for some technology expected to fall in the later 2020's.
5. Regarding student home economics – It was remarked that members of the WI may be able to help students learn how to cook.
6. Regarding research with institutions in Kurdistan – Would the University consider co-operative research in this region? This question will be passed on to the relevant colleagues.
7. Regarding devolution and the change of government – The University supported the preparation of the Devolution bid and it is hoped that the Devolution Deal will create positive opportunities for further partnership. It is noted that the new Mayor is a Newcastle University graduate. The Vice-Chancellor reflected that there are positive signs from the new Labour government As Chair of the Russell Group he will continue to advocate for growth through research and skills development.

5. NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

Received: A presentation from the Chief Executive of Newcastle University Student's Union, Lindsey Lockey.

Reported that:

1. Student life has changed radically in recent years. Young people spend c. 7.5 hours /day on their phone with less face-to-face interaction. Socialising has also changed with reduced alcohol consumption, a desire for a 'slower pace' and concerns about costs. 74% of students have cut back on socialising due to the cost with 60% missing out on a club or society that they would have liked to join. 33% work more than 20 hours / week and 25% work more than 30 hours / week.
2. This presents challenges for student unions around the country. Traditional types of activity including Freshers Fairs and large-scale venue and bar events in central campus location are less popular. There is a shift towards providing activities at lower cost in terms of time and money and towards providing welfare services. This has a knock-on impact on the financial model for Students Unions.

3. NUSU is responding to the changing needs of the student population by offering help with basic needs, access to second hand markets, advice around tenancies, employment of more students, loan schemes and participation bursaries.
4. Members of NUSU are sincerely grateful to those alumni who support the Newcastle Student Fund. This has made a really powerful impact for students across campus.

The Chair of Convocation commented that as the decision had been made not to include catered accommodation in the redevelopment of Castle Leazes, the Students Union should open a shop and / or cafe on the site.

6. CELEBRATING ALUMNI SUCCESS

Received: A report on the Alumni Achievement Awards, Honorary Fellowships and Honorary Degrees from Clare Talbot-Jones, Deputy Chair of Convocation.

Reported that:

1. The Alumni Achievement Awards have been refreshed with new categories for:
 - a. Outstanding Social and Civic Contribution
 - b. Outstanding Global, EDI or Intercultural Contribution
 - c. Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Justice and Sustainability
2. The refreshed format was well-received with a strong range of applications.
3. The Winners of the Awards were warmly congratulated with information on their achievements
4. Alumni are also encouraged to submit nominations for Honorary Fellowships and Honorary Degrees. The criteria for these awards is available online and nominations can be made at any time.

7. CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor and colleagues for their contributions to the meeting and thanked members for their participation.

In Closing the meeting, the Chair shared the following observations:

1. That successful universities develop an approach to mutual support of alumni by alumni.
2. That the Blue Star rowing crews were currently performing impressively.
3. That alumni may wish to view Turner's *The Fighting Temeraire* on currently on display at the Laing Gallery.
4. That attendees at the Refresher Weekend are encouraged to fill in the post-event questionnaire and that views on the timing of this event are especially welcome.

5. That any future alumni dinner or ball would need to be organised by alumni and to be financially self-supporting.

Following his Closing Remarks, the Chair thanked alumni again for their participation in the meeting and announced that he had informed the University Executive of his intention to resign from the role of Chair of Convocation effective from the close of the meeting.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

On behalf of the University, the Vice-Chancellor accepted Mr Richardson's decision to resign from the position as Chair and thanked him for his work in this role. He confirmed that Clare Talbot-Jones, the Deputy Chair of Convocation, had agreed to deputise for the role of Chair for the remainder of the period of office (to autumn 2025) and thanked her for her service to the University.

8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting will be announced following a review of timing.