

Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 28 October 2020

Managing Director Update

Author(s): Dr Tom Flynn (Managing Director)

Purpose: To report on the work of the Managing Director since the last Board meeting and provide an update on upcoming projects.

1. Key Projects / Work Delivered

Alongside the work contained in the Board papers, some key projects and work I have been involved in include:

- i. COVID-19 response: as you would expect, a significant amount of my time continues to be spent working on the organisation's response to the pandemic alongside other team members. The changes demanded by Tier 2 are less disruptive than previous announcements but have still required amendments to some areas of our operation (particularly the bar).
- ii. Organisation restructure: the staffing reorganisation is now largely complete, but there are still a number of outstanding issues to work through within the Shop. I will provide a verbal update on this at the Board meeting.
- iii. Financial context and 2020/21 budget: the stage three 'final budget' has been developed and approved at Finance & Risk Subcommittee. Jayne and I have also met with the College's CFO and Director of Finance to talk them through the work and assumptions contained within it.
- iv. Student / External Trustee Induction: I delivered a comprehensive induction for all new trustees based on the sessions run earlier in the year for the Officer Trustees. These will be rolled out on an annual basis for Board and will be opened up to key staff over the next 12 months.
- v. Strategic review planning: the Board paper TB/20-21/17 comprehensively sets out the next steps in our transformation, as we head into phase two of our one year plan.
- vi. Annual Report: Jayne and the team have worked extremely hard to get the annual audit complete. I have compiled this year's annual report from scratch due to operational issues, which means we now have a template document for future years. This is included on the agenda.

A significant amount of my time continues to be spent 'firefighting' and responding to immediate requests from the College. This is particularly true for HR and venue issues – although it is important to note that Ashley Cory and Kay Counter have both now started to pick more of this up.

2. Key (Short Term) Future Projects

As well as continuing to respond to the current circumstances and inevitable changes in government policy over the pandemic, some of my specific priorities over the next month include:

- i. Departmental plans and staff PDRs: the SMT will be working with line managers over the coming weeks to put together some high-level annual plans for each team and individual staff

objectives. These will be less detailed and less formal than in future years due to the timing of the process and requirement to be flexible in the current context.

- ii. Finance office planning: between now and December Jayne and I will be putting in place an interim arrangement within the team to mitigate the risk of her completing the assignment with the organisation. I will provide a verbal update on this in the meeting.
- iii. Staff 'away day': the SMT are planning an all staff interactive session in November, bringing everyone together for a morning virtually. This will be a combination of team building and an opportunity to run a consultation on some major changes – for example the values section of the strategic plan.
- iv. Strategic Plan development: this project will commence in early November and will require a significant amount of time – analysing research on our current performance and thinking about our future.
- v. Risk management: this will involve the development of a new risk management policy and strategic risk register, ahead of the December meeting of Board. The College's team responsible for this are extremely busy at the moment, but we will look to align as much as possible.

3. Annual Objectives

Ahead of my probation review on 2 December, I wanted to outline some early thoughts regarding objectives for the year. Usually, this process would be undertaken in July with the Chair and President, then cascading through the entire staff team. These will be built out in further detail between now and December.

Task Orientated

- i. COVID-19 Response: continue to ensure the organisation responds to the challenges posed by the pandemic. Start the planning for the spring and summer periods and understand potential opportunities that the spring / summer months might present.
- ii. Strategic Review: the development of a new two-year strategic plan, and completion of the other four associated major reviews. This also includes the submission of a new funding model proposal to the College in May 2021.
- iii. College Relationships: build positive relationships with key College staff, as well as ensuring other members of the SMT are doing this. The stakeholder power map currently being compiled by the President will support this.
- iv. OT Support: work with the OT Team to ensure objectives are set and that officers are supported in delivering the changes they want. This also includes the mentoring and professional development sessions and supporting those moving on from the organisation in the second half of the year.
- v. Staff Culture: with the reorganisation complete, bring the staff team together and start work on the creation of a new culture. This will be underpinned by a new set of values, translating into a behavioural competency framework and reward scheme.

Personal Development Orientated

- i. 360-degree Review: undertake the 360 review alongside the wider Leadership Group in January, to look at my working style and understand how it will need to adapt in the new environment that ICU presents.

4. Crisis Communication Plan

At the previous Board I agreed to circulate an update regarding our approach to crisis communications over the COVID-19 period. I can confirm we have the following (very simple system) in place:

Level One

We are using a dedicated MS Teams chat function during core office hours to keep Leadership updated on any potential issues. We have already made use of the group call function to manage one possible situation regarding Piers Corbyn and an unauthorised protest on campus.

We have also made clear to various media outlets that requests for comment must come through the President or another OT, so we can manage any public statements centrally.

Level Two

Out of hours we have a dedicated WhatsApp group for the Leadership that can be used for crisis communication management. This will be used to ensure staff can 'switch off' notifications from MS Teams, whilst ensuring the ability to respond at short notice.

The Venues Management Team are able to contact both the CEO and HoMS during any hour of operation and are providing daily 'end of night' report so we can track issues and respond to anything serious the following day.

College

The College have developed their own communication plan and have included the Union as a 'department' in the event of any crisis. The MD and President are listed on the automatic contact process.

5. University, Sector and other Updates

3.1 Sector

Students' Unions have all broadly followed the same planning process as ICU this year – with an interim budget in July, a final plan in October, and a revision in January. It is worth pointing out that a large number of Unions have actually seen cuts to their block grant this year – with some dealing with upwards of a 20% reduction.

Those will large commercial operations have taken a similar approach to us in terms of permanent staffing reductions – with Sheffield and Leeds, for example, both reducing their headcount by 25-30% this year.

NUS have now opened up the route to purchasing consortium membership without political membership. We will need to consider this in the new year as part of our commercial review. If the decision is made to access this it is critical that we 'take students with us' – particularly Union Council – it will not simply be a financial cost/benefit exercise.

3.2 College

The College seems to be managing COVID-19 outbreaks extremely well, and cases remain quite low for an institution our size. The support package available for students who are required to self-isolate is one of the most generous in the sector, providing three hot meals a day for free. Regular daily updates are provided here: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/covid-19/covid-19-testing-data>

The College has now brought all Academic Services together and is recruiting for a permanent senior role to lead this, reporting directly into the Provost. This directorate now also includes student recruitment and outreach. We have an excellent working relationship with the current interim postholder and will ensure we maintain this irrespective of the recruitment result.

The Campus Services restructure has been partially delayed and is now due to complete in December this year. It has progressed very similar to ours – although obviously involves much higher numbers of people.

The 'College Values' project is now underway and was discussed at the Directors of Professional Services forum this week. As discussed in previous meetings, we will make sure we engage with this during the development of our own values as part of the strategic plan development. The current College draft has: respect, integrity, excellence, innovation and collaboration.