

## GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING

Report of meeting of Thursday, September 9<sup>th</sup> 2021  
3.00pm, via Video Conference.

### **PRESENT:**

Prof Daire Keogh (Chair)  
Ms Zainab Boladale  
Dr Audrey Bryan  
Ms Marian Corcoran  
Prof Yvonne Daly  
Mr John Darby  
Mr Justin Doyle  
Ms Kate Goodman  
Cllr Jimmy Guerin  
Ms Carol Hanney  
Mr David Harney  
Ms Rachel Hussey  
Prof Lisa Looney

Mr Cathal Marley  
Dr Kara McGann  
Ms Fiona Naughton  
Ms Deirdre O'Connor  
Prof James O'Higgins Norman  
Dr Aisling de Paor  
Ms Michele Pringle  
Dr Declan Raftery  
Mr Terence Rooney  
Ms Marie Sinnott  
Mr Brian J. Smyth  
Mr Seamus Walsh  
Prof Ray Walshe

### **APOLOGIES:**

Ms Kathy Quinn

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ms Marian Burns  
Mr Ciaran McGivern

Prof Anne Sinnott  
Ms Marie Mellett (recording secretary)

### **WELCOME**

The President welcomed members to the first meeting of the new Governing Authority and thanked them for their commitment to the University. All members gave a brief introduction.

The President informed members that the roles and responsibilities of Governing Authority are detailed in the University's Act 1997 and this Act is currently under review by Government. This new Governing Authority has been formed under the conditions of the 1997 Act. It is proposed that a new updated Universities Act will reduce the overall size of Governing Authorities to between 12-17 members with a transition period to allow for existing Governing Authorities to comply with the new Act. Therefore we are unsure of the exact term of this Governing Authority.

At a very high level, the responsibility of Governing Authority is to act on behalf of the University. The Authority has control and administration of the land and property of the University. The Authority also have responsibility for the appointment of Chief Officers.

The President noted that he will Chair today's meeting in the absence of a Chancellor as provided for in the Universities Act. The appointment of Chancellor is under agenda item 4.2. If the appointment is approved the Chancellor will join and Chair the next meeting.

The agenda was adopted.

The Chair enquired if there were any interests/conflicts in relation to any item on today's agenda that required a declaration on the part of a member(s) – None were declared.

**1. MINUTES OF GOVERNING AUTHORITY MEETING OF 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

It was noted that the previous Governing Authority approved the minutes of its final meeting electronically and that the minutes have been signed by the outgoing Chancellor, Dr. Martin McAleese.

**Noted** by the Authority.

**2 REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS**

Action 1: October meeting

**Actions to be tracked:**

Action 1: Ongoing

Action 2: Postponed until permitted by public health guidelines.

Action 3: Ongoing

Action 4: Ongoing

**3 MATTERS ARISING**

None

**FOR DECISION**

**4 GOVERNANCE**

**4.1 Orientation for Governing Authority**

The President proposed that the incoming Chancellor will host an orientation on November 3rd, at which Governance and the role and responsibility of the Governing Authority will be covered. An external company, Board Excellence, who are contracted by the IUA, will provide a full briefing to Governing Authority regarding their roles and responsibilities.

The Code of Conduct is available on the University website.

**4.2 Nomination for Chancellor**

After working with members of the outgoing Authority and Senior Officers throughout the summer, the President nominated Ms Brid Horan as the new Chancellor of DCU. Ms Horan's CV was circulated to the Authority prior to the meeting. The President stated that he believed Brid was an outstanding candidate with an impressive depth and breadth of experience in both the private and public sectors. Brid had also served as Chair of the DCU Audit Committee and Deputy Chair of the previous Governing Authority.

The nomination of Ms. Brid Horan as Chancellor of DCU was unanimously approved by the Authority.

**Approved** by the Authority

#### **4.1 Nominations for Chair of Sub Committees**

The Governing Authority's sub-committees play a critical role and it is important to put Chairs in place, to ensure their activities continue without delay. Once the Chairs are approved they will select the membership of their respective committees which will be tabled at the next meeting of the Authority for approval.

##### **4.3.1 Audit**

Mr Cathal Marley, current member of the DCU Audit Committee, was nominated as Chair for the DCU Audit Committee.

**Approved** by the Authority

##### **4.3.2 Risk**

Ms Marie Sinnott, current member of the Governing Authority Risk Committee, was nominated as Chair of Governing Authority Risk Committee.

**Approved** by the Authority

##### **4.3.3 Strategic Finance Advisory Committee**

The appointment of a Chair to this Committee is reserved for the Chancellor.

##### **4.3.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Ms Rachel Hussey is nominated to remain as Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

**Approved** by the Authority

##### **4.3.5 Honorary Degree**

This Committee is Chaired by the Chancellor.

##### **4.3.6 Governance and Nominations**

This Committee is Chaired by the Chancellor.

## **5 FINANCIAL MATTERS**

### **5.1 Approval of the University budget for the financial year 2021/2022**

The Director of Finance, noted a forecast outturn for year ending 2021 as a loss.. Student fee income was significantly ahead, the assistance of Government grants and the significant reduction in overheads due to staff working from home all contributed to this outturn. A loss for the University and a loss for the DCU Commercial Group was budgeted for year ending 2020 / 2021 due to the uncertainty caused by COVID. DCU came into the pandemic with a very strong financial position, although we forecasted losses we didn't have any immediate financial concerns. The strategy throughout the year was to minimise losses, maintain the services in the University and be in a position to elevate business within the commercial companies as restrictions were eased.

The introduction of a flexible accommodation model, drove up occupancy for Campus Residences. The Helix moved its pantomime online, which was incredibly successful. The Commercial Group also benefited from the Government subsidies.

Government COVID subsidies work on a calendar year, therefore if anymore subsidies are to be received they may be included in the 2021 financials. There is also an ongoing insurance Business Interruption Claim of €10m and if successful this would have a further positive impact on the financials.

The University Budget for year ending September 2022 was drafted during the summer when engagement between Heads of Units and Faculties took place. Budgets were reduced and from this we were able to bring the budget back to breakeven. We have made provisions for significant cost increases required to ensure a safe reopening of the campus. As part of the annual budget the University has historically made a transfer to capital each year to provide a reserve for the capital and interest repayments due under the EIB and ISIF loans. Given the current strength of the university's balance sheet and the significant budgetary pressure for 2021/22 and to enable a balanced budget to be achieved for 2021/22, the opportunity was taken, on a once off basis, to forgo this transfer to capital for the 2021/22 financial year. The Director of Finance also noted that any strategic projects that could be postponed were postponed, while strategic projects that were critical continued. Provisions have also been made for inflation.

We are seeking approval for a breakeven budget for the 2021 / 2022 financial year.

**Approved** by the Authority.

## **5.2 Approval of the opening of bank accounts with An Post**

During the summer the NTMA gave us notice that they were moving from 0% interest rate to -0.6% of 1% interest rates, which would cost DCU approx. €0.5m per annum. There are very few options for 0% interest rate open to the University at this time. An Post have a state savings charity account whereby registered charities can open up an account and lodge a maximum of €5m.

We are seeking Governing Authority's approval for the Director of Finance to open up an An Post State Savings Charity Account for each of our five registered charities (DCU, Campus Property DAC, DCU Commercial DAC, Dublin Business Fund DAC and Campus Residences DAC. This will enable us to mitigate our negative interest rate exposure.

**Approved** by the Authority

## FOR DISCUSSION

### **6 PERSONNEL MATTERS**

The Director of Human Resources presented no candidates for approval.

### **7 STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIS) UPDATE**

The SIS Project was approved by the previous Governing Authority as it is central to our future operations. Without this we would not be able to meet the strategic objectives of the university which include flexibility in terms of blended and online learning etc. Therefore the original scope of the project has not changed due to the pandemic.

SIS is a programme in which we have purchased a suite of integrated software solutions to support all elements of a student's journey. The original University system was nearing end of life. Elluican are our programme providers for the new SIS.

The programme will impact our processes therefore there is a strong emphasis on operational excellence and data governance. The University also need to ensure that nothing is missed when transferring from the old system to the new.

Currently we are the implementation stage. We launched our post graduate application software module last November.

The Vice-President of Academic Affairs will discuss with the incoming Chancellor the best way to bring updates on the project to Governing Authority.

## **8 PRESIDENTS REPORT AND UNIVERSITY OFFICERS' REPORTS**

### **DCU President**

This summer was very busy in preparing for the safe return of our students and staff to campus. The appointment of the first Minister for Further and Higher Education was very welcome and decisions made on reopening were made at a sectoral level with the support of the new department of Further and Higher Education.

The mission of the University is to transform lives and societies. We do this through Research, Teaching and Learning and Engagement. This year we launched 'DCU Futures' which are courses that have been developed in collaboration with Industry and Stakeholder partners and are designed to address future challenges.

The delay in the Leaving Cert results also brought its own challenges and we made the decision to start the academic year a week later. DCU offered 4256 places through CAO to students, which is our largest ever CAO places offer. Great credit must be given to our Student Recruitment Team.

DCU Language Services (DCULS) are launching an international foundation programme which is an important milestone as we seek to grow our international students.

DCU are also working hard to promote the research element of the University.

An Executive Director for External Affairs was appointed and we hope this person will take up the position by the end of the month. This person will be critical in developing relationships with industries and external partners.

### **Vice President of Academic Affairs**

The Vice President of Academic Affairs noted that this is a significant year as we start a new academic calendar and students will compete their first term before the Christmas break.

We will reflect on the last year in the context of online delivery and student performance. We will take the next 18 months to discuss what this means for the future of learning. For this year we have communicated very clearly to students that we have put all our efforts into having campus based classes delivered as close as possible to normal on campus. We are also liaising very closely with the Students Union to help answer any queries students have.

### **Chief Operations Officer**

All the operational focus is currently on the safe reopening of the University campuses. All our planned activities are based on careful risk assessments. We have reduced the capacity in certain rooms where we feel the ventilation is not sufficient while others with high quality ventilation will be run at 100% capacity. We have an Estates maintenance response team on standby should any issues arise with the ventilation systems, as they are not designed to run on full power fresh air intake all day.

We have over eighty CO2 monitors in place across the University to monitor air quality. Additional outdoors seating and marquees have been set up across the campuses and 1.2m facemasks are due to arrive over the coming days which will be distributed to staff and students.

The Estates Team and Health and Safety are working together and are meeting daily to ensure that we are continuing to operate in a safe manner.

A HSE PCR COVID-19 Testing facility will open on the Glasnevin campus from the 21<sup>st</sup> September.

The Student Union President welcomed all the efforts made for a safe return to campus. He noted, that with the high volume of people due on campus, students anxiety levels are very high and accommodations should be made to assist them. He also noted that students are finding it extremely difficult to find affordable accommodation.

#### **Director of Finance**

Discussed under agenda item 5.

#### **Director of Human Resources**

The Director of HR is working very closely with the Chief Operations Officer to ensure the safe return of staff to campus and providing clarity to staff on what the return means for them. There is concern among staff having to be in classrooms with a large number of students. Personal responsibility is being strongly communicated to all staff.

From October 22<sup>nd</sup> we are expecting to have a large percentage of staff physically back on campus. This is important as we want the 'DCU community' element to remain. As a part of this the 'Our DCU workshops' are being revisited.

HR are currently preparing to launch the staff awards call. Free flu vaccines are being offered to staff.

HR are also working on managing change with the schools/units that have been impacted by the redeployment of staff to the SIS project.

## **9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The President congratulated all members on their appointment to the Governing Authority.

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The Chair

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Date

**Action Items:**

<b>Action</b>		<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1.	Update on the Renew aspect of the Strategy.	Deputy President	November meeting

**Items to be tracked:**

<b>Action</b>		<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1.	Quarterly progress reports on each risk in the Strategic Risk Register.	President	On-going
2.	Meetings of GA to be held at different locations.	COO	Every 2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting will be held off campus subject to public health guidelines
3	New VPEA to present on International Affairs - within 3 months of appointment.	COO	Ongoing
4.	The President and Senior Management will withdraw from the April meeting each year to allow for a discussion in their absence.	President and SMG	Ongoing