

8 April 2015

The Board of Trustees met on 8 April 2015 in the Board of Trustees Room, EZ Parramatta campus. A summary of matters discussed in the open session of the Board meeting is provided below. The confirmed minutes of the 25 February 2015 meeting are also now available.

Chancellor's Report

The Chancellor spoke briefly to his report. Engagement activities through the Foundation Council are achieving good results in generating scholarships and internships. A recent Universities Australia conference was well represented by UWS, with the Chancellor speaking at satellite events conducted by University staff in areas such as governance and academic senate activities.

The draft agenda for the Board's strategy day in June was tabled for noting. The theme is "Reconceptualising UWS" and builds upon the Securing Success strategic plan approved by the Board in February. Board members were encouraged to provide input into the agenda to ensure the day covers the major areas of interest and relevance to the members.

The Chancellor tabled the 2015 performance plan for the Vice-Chancellor, noting that the Vice-Chancellor's self-assessment for the year will be discussed under closed session at the December Board meeting.

Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Vice-Chancellor briefed the Board on the status of the proposed higher education reforms. The legislation is unlikely to be passed in its current form and discussions are ongoing. The University's stated position is the encouragement of debate and engagement on the issues, including the sustainable funding of higher education and the maintenance of the demand-driven system and HECS.

During a recent trip to China, the Vice-Chancellor progressed plans for the establishment of joint learning centres in China and Taiwan and more details will be brought back to the Board as they emerge.

While the University's sponsorship of the Western Sydney Wanderers has changed from being the community sponsor to an educational sponsor, opportunities for engagement will continue.

The Board noted recent media reports that were critical of a shortened and exclusive pathways program offering students of one Sydney private school entry into Sydney University and were advised that the UWSCollege pathway program, in contrast, is an intensive 36 week, open-access program.

2014 Audited Financial Statements

The University and its controlled entities achieved an unmodified report. The Board noted key improvements in the quality of the financial statements over recent years and collaboration to ensure the timely resolution of issues. Three NSW universities have been selected by the Auditor-General to use outsourced auditors to conduct their 2015 audits and the Vice-Chancellor re-iterated the University's offer to be part of the trial. The Board acknowledged the efforts of the NSW Audit Office and University teams in resolving issues as they arose.

Student Load Trends

The Board discussed the March report on student load, noting that final figures will not be known until post-census data is available. UWS College numbers are exceeding expectations while UWS enrolments are down in some areas. The load model is being re-built to address changes in the nature of the take-up rates as students respond to the varying offer methods employed.

Annual Report and Board Report

The Board approved the 2014 Annual Report. The Board noted that the report is a compliance document to report in a standardised way on a range of measures. The annual reports across NSW universities provide similar information on the previous year's activities.

Streamlined Visa Processing

The Board noted the report on measures that the University is taking to protect its streamlined visa processing arrangements that enable the expeditious processing of visas for international students.

Campbelltown Clinical School

The Board approved the establishment of a new clinical school on the grounds of Campbelltown Hospital. The new clinical school will replace the outdated clinical facility and will be jointly funded by the University and the Health Administration Corporation (HAC) (as owners of the land).

UWS Online

The Board noted the interest among on-campus students to enrol in online units as part of their program. The UWS Online suite of programs will be supplemented by a pathways program and is currently available to some high school students through The Academy.

Academic Integrity

The Chair of Academic Senate reported on the national development of a strategy to address issues of academic honesty and integrity. Software is used to detect non-original work and work submitted in instances of collusion, although the Board noted the difficulties in detecting some forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF)

The Board agreed to the proposed priorities for the application of the Student Services and Amenities Fee, noting that student representative groups support the 5 tier strategy that allocates funds across a range of services.