

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**Central Executive Committee (CEC)**

2 – 4 July 2021

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

The C E C is asked to:-

- i) **note** this regular report from the Board of Trustees

1. There is a requirement under the Articles of Association for the Board of Trustees (BoT) to provide a report to the CEC at each meeting. This report is intended to provide the following:
 - a) a formal opportunity for CEC members to raise any questions arising from the minutes or other matters relating to the role of the Trustees, and
 - b) the opportunity for Trustees to raise any specific items with the CEC or report on progression of any non-routine matters.
2. The Board met on 6 May 2021 via Microsoft Teams. The meeting minutes can be found via the link here. Trustees welcomed Julian Lomas, from Almond Tree Strategic Consulting, who was in attendance to present the findings from the Governance Review.
3. The Trustees received the Chief Executive's report. Discussions arose surrounding succession planning for key roles and it was decided that the Chair of the Trustees and the Chief Executive would meet in due course to discuss this further. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would be progressing recruitment for the External Trustee vacancy as soon as possible in the light of the resignation of Annabel Lane. The Chief Executive, President and Chair of the Trustees are due to meet soon to discuss the future of CEC and Trustee online meetings and other issues relating to recovery planning. The Chief Executive flagged that there was an outstanding decision to be made around the future nature of the EDI Working Group. The Group's draft terms of reference had been shared on the forum in advance of the meeting and he drew reference to the relevant section of the Governance Review report which was fairly neutral with regards to whether this should or should not be a formal sub-committee of the Trustees or remain a Working Group.
4. Trustees were presented with the Strategy Performance Report and were made aware of the vast progress that has been made and continues to be made as we hit halfway on the strategy timeline. The positive trends with the KPIs were

outlined, which was greatly received by the Trustees and they commended those involved in facilitating the Association's strategic aims, particularly throughout the pandemic.

5. Julian Lomas from Almond Tree Strategic Consulting presented the findings from the Governance Review, following the recent presentations to CEC and the staff team. Wide-ranging discussions concluded that Trustees were generally supportive in principle of implementing the recommendations, with agreement that the behaviour governance and EDI recommendations should take precedence. The Governance Review Working Group was actioned with meeting again to create an implementation route map, which will detail how the recommendations are planned to be delivered and will be brought back to the next Trustees meeting for approval.
6. The Finance report was introduced to the Trustees and detailed that the projected forecast for turnover for the OU Students Shop is likely to exceed the budget by around £8k, and that it could potentially surpass the £80k threshold. If the Association anticipates exceeding the threshold on an ongoing basis, then the subsidiary may need to be re-established. The Trustees were made aware that this will be closely monitored.
7. Trustees were also updated on USS pension matters, which will potentially see an increase of the total current contribution rate of 30.7% rise to either 56.2%, 49.6% or 42.1%. Trustees recognised the challenges that these uncertainties are causing staff and the Association as an employer. Trustees considered the current employer consultation and actioned the Head of Finance and Resources with contacting the OU to try gain an insight into their position on this matter with a view to seeing if we could support their response to the consultation or whether we would be better served by submitting our own. The Investments Working Group was felt to be best placed to deal with this matter further and they were therefore actioned with re-convening to discuss this issue and making a recommendation to the Chair of the Board. After the meeting, the OU's draft response was indeed shared with the Association and the group made a recommendation to the Chair which was approved and the rest of the Trustees were updated on progress.
8. Trustees then considered the draft outline budget for 2021-22 and approved the proposal made by the Head of Finance and Resources to develop the fuller budget within these parameters on the understanding that a final budget plan would be presented at the next meeting. It was noted that the situation was very complicated at present due to the recovery planning work, delivery of the Governance review recommendations and other implications which presented various scenarios for the fuller budget.
9. Trustees considered the draft investments policy which had been drafted by the Investments Working Group. Trustees approved the proposed Investments policy, subject to changes being made in relation to the level of delegated authority.
10. On the forums, Trustees approved the Social Media Policy. The manifesto for the Scottish elections and an update from the EDI Working Group was also shared with the Trustees for their information.

11. Staffing matters: This last quarter has boasted many changes within the Association. On the 10th May, Amy Undrell returned from maternity leave to start her secondment as Student Advisor, developing and introducing our new individual representation service.. Following a series of strong interviews, Sarah Smerald was appointed successfully as a part-time Volunteering and Representation Administrator. She also started her new role on the 10th May. Georgie Moore was appointed as Executive Support Assistant and commenced in her role on the 24th May. She will work alongside Gabby Cull in the Executive Support and Staff Welfare team. Both new starters have completed their two-week induction period and have settled in well. Following Beth Metcalf's recent appointment as Director of Membership Services, Allan Musinguzi succeeded in the interview process for Head of Volunteering and Representation and was thus appointed in this position and started his new role on the 4th May. As a result, Nicola Powell was promoted into the Senior position within this team, becoming Senior Volunteer Training and Wellbeing Officer as of 1st June supporting Allan. Reiss Miller has finished her term working an extra day per week to support the Student Support team and has now returned back to her part-time contract of 4 days per week. This is due to the Association welcoming back Sammi Wright on the 1st June, following her maternity leave. We are all very pleased to have Sammi back as part of the team.

Upcoming recruitment will consist of recruiting for a Volunteering and Representation Officer, following Allan's recent promotion. This is intended to commence mid-July. There is also anticipation to recruit for a Policy and Public Affairs Manager, following Dan Moloney's promotion to Director of Engagement, subject to approval by the Board of Trustees of the budget for the post. The Head of Digital Communications recently announced her pregnancy, so we anticipate planning the recruitment for her maternity cover in the upcoming months.

The Covid Recovery Group recently met and following discussions, staff will be continuing to work from home until the 1st October at the earliest.

13. The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Tuesday 27th July.

Rob Avann
Chief Executive