

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

3 – 5 December 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 12 October 2021 via Microsoft Teams. The meeting minutes will be published shortly.
3. Mike Farwell, our external auditor from James Cowper Kreston presented the 2020-21 financial statements for approval from the Trustees. He illustrated that in comparison to other charities, the OU Students Association had maintained a consistent income. This, along with an increase in expenditure, has led to an increase in reserves. Mike then shared experiences that other charities and Trustees in the sector have dealt with in the past year or are currently dealing with. These included the Covid 19 pandemic, financial resilience, safeguarding, reputational management, cyber security, issues with staff recruitment and wider societal issues such as climate change and EDI concerns. Overall, feedback was really positive, and Mike emphasised that there are no internal control issues, no adjustments required to the accounts and that they can confidently present a clean audit for this year. Trustees approved the report, approved the signing of the letter of representation and also approved the re-appointment of James Cowper Kreston as the Association's auditors.
4. The Chief Executive then introduced the Governance Review Working Group's paper and proposals for the next steps with the implementation of the recommendations around Student Leadership and Representation structures and Annual General Meeting.. Trustees worked through each of the areas of the paper in turn, starting with the Student Leadership Team. Trustees were also

informed of the feedback from the CEC's discussion of these proposals and the comments that had been received. Trustees agreed with the CEC feedback that the Nation representatives would offer important insight as non-voting members of the Student Leadership Team when relevant issues were discussed. Trustees noted that this proposal was the least popular structural change with the CEC. However, with the inclusion of the change noted above, Trustees approved the rest of the proposals regarding the Student Leadership Team. Trustees shared some of the concerns over potential recruitment and administrative burden of the Student Forum, but it was felt to offer real potential to involve and engage a range of students in the Association. This would be a challenge for the implementation, but again it was agreed by Trustees with the inclusion of a change suggested by the CEC which was to include a Faculty Rep for Open and Access. Trustees were keen for Faculty Reps to be elected, even if that was potentially elected by the School Reps on the Student Forum from amongst their own number. Trustees turned to the Scrutiny Panel. They noted feedback from both CEC and some staff that the name may not be the right one, and perhaps something softer would be more appropriate. However, Trustees felt that scrutiny was the appropriate title. They further approved that the Scrutiny Panel should have available to it all of the three options for membership detailed in the paper. Finally, Trustees approved the proposals regarding the AGM.

5. Trustees were presented with the behavioural governance changes by the Deputy President and Director of Membership Services. As well as approving the changes to the Bye-laws, Trustees also approved the addition of 'kindness and compassion' into the Association's values.
6. The Conference and Association 50th Project Manager called for Trustees to approve the weekend of 21st – 23rd January 2022 for the upcoming Conference. Trustees approved the date and the proposal to hold this fully online.
7. Trustees approved the new proposed Finance, Resources and Risk Committee's terms of reference and proposed membership. They confirmed that the current members of the working group should continue onto the new committee.
8. The Board of Trustees approved the revised volunteer policy.
9. The Trustees received the regular Strategy Performance Report.
10. Trustees were updated on the Association's financial situation by the Head of Finance and Resources. She illustrated a strong indication of an overall underspend for the second year running, which is partly due to the pensions provision being higher than required given the recent developments in negotiations, delays in recruitment and lack of face-to-face events. This would in turn lead to an increase in reserves if it transpires.
11. Trustees agreed a proposal from the President to re-start the opportunity for CEC and BoT observers at each other's meetings, commencing with the December CEC meeting for a BoT observer to attend.
12. On the forums, the Chief Executive has been keeping the Trustees up to date with each step of the recovery planning, most recently outlining the start of the blended working trial which will be the week commencing 15th November. The

Trustees have also been kept up to date with the USS pensions and industrial action situations.

13. Trustees were also asked to give their expressions of interest to participate in the co-option panel. VP Admin and a Student Trustee signed up to this.
 14. Staffing matters: The last quarter has been an extremely busy one with 8 successful inductions into the Association. Emily Cox joined us on 27 September and has settled in well as the Events and Projects Officer. Shortly after, Ciara Linehan joined the Digital Comms team as Digital Communications Media and Admin Assistant on 5 October. Gabby Willis, also joined the Digital Comms team as Digital Communications Officer on 11 October and is busy getting things off the ground with the Hoot. The 11 October also saw the inductions of Linda Aradi (Projects Officer, EDI) and Danielle Cafearo (Volunteering and Representation Officer). Georgia Demopoulou (Projects Officer, Student Community) and Hannah Prue (Digital Communications Officer) also joined the Association in the last month and have made great impressions already. Heather Bloomer has settled into her new role as Head of Digital Communications (Maternity Cover) and is doing a great job managing the team. Kate Dungate, who is on maternity leave, gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, Josie, last month. Ryan Cragg, who had previously worked for the Association, re-joined on the 11 October to offer some additional fixed-term support to the Operations team as they enter a busy period. He has been appointed as an Operations Assistant until the 31 March 2022. A slight restructure has taken place within the Operations team as both Mandy Turner and Keith Minter have been temporarily promoted to Projects Officers (Operations), with Mandy taking the lead on graduations and Keith gaining greater responsibility for the OU shop and the potential transition of trading to the new website. They will remain in their new roles until 31 March 2022.
 15. Pooja Sinha recently announced her pregnancy and is due to go on maternity leave in February 2022. Samantha Wright is also due to go on maternity leave following Conference 2020. Recruitment for Sammi's maternity cover will commence on Monday 15th November with an aim for them to start after Christmas. Magda Hadrys, Head of Operations, is also expecting a new member of the family in the Spring 2022 and recruitment for maternity cover will commence soon. Recruitment is also to commence on Friday 19th November for a new position to assist Amy Undrell with the Student Advice service. This role will be an Admin Assistant and will be a part time role. We anticipate for this person to start after Christmas. Following the unsuccessful recruitments for the Head of Policy and Public Affairs role, a specialist recruitment agency, Prospect-us, have been engaged to help us recruit for this position. They will update the Director of Engagement with any possible candidates.
11. The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Tuesday 7 December 2021.

Rob Avann
Chief Executive