



**University of Hertfordshire Students' Union Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, 13th June 2023 on campus and via MS Teams**

Present:

- David Ball (DB)
- Hamnah Baig (HB)
- Ahmer Ilyas (AI)
- Steve Isaacs (SI)
- Umar Mohamad (UM)
- Osama Siddiqui (OS)
- Aman Tripathi (AT)
- Dr Mairi Watson (MW)

In attendance:

- Chizi Ezechukwu, *incoming Mature Students' Officer, HSU (CE)*
- Rebecca Hobbs, *Chief Executive Officer, HSU (RH)*
- Olawale Joshua Komolafe, *incoming Commuting Students' Officer, HSU (OJK)*
- Divya Maheshwaram, *incoming Women Students' Officer, HSU (DM)*
- Manoj Kumar Nagireddy, *incoming President, HSU (MKN)*
- Moyinoluwa Ifeoluwa Olaiya, *incoming Placement Students' Officer, HSU (MIO)*
- Steve Owen, *Head of Student Services, HSU (SO)*
- Leena Patel, *Head of People and Resources, HSU (LP)*
- Karen McKenna, *Secretary, HSU (KM)*
- Rajiv Sudan, *incoming External Trustee, HSU (RS)*
- Padmavathi Valluri, *incoming International Student's Officer, HSU (PV)*
- Chinmay Vyas, *incoming LGBTQ+ Students' Officer, HSU (CV)*

1. Apologies for absence

- Sean Ferrie
- Sarah Fuell
- Md Sajal

Non-Attendance

None

Welcome

DB welcomed attendees to the last Board meeting of the year, with a particularly warm welcome to the incoming Officers and Trustees.

2. Declarations of Interest

None noted.

Signed Dated

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The Board of Trustees approved the minutes of the previous meeting, which was held on Tuesday, 9th May 2023.

Further to the last meeting, DB reported on the opportunity for HSU to pay a proportion of the pension deficit. However, the offer would have caused such a substantial dent in Reserves that the decision was taken not to proceed. HSU will therefore continue to make repayments as per the existing schedule over the next 13 years.

4. To note: Deputy Chair for meeting

DB reminded the Board that as the current President, HSU, has now left the organisation, this has left the position of Deputy Chair of the Trustee Board vacant. It was therefore decided that the position would rotate amongst the three Vice-Presidents, if required, and as such, at today's meeting, AT will serve as Deputy Chair.

5. CEO Update – Year in Review

The Board received the update from the CEO. RH highlighted the following:

- Rebrand. RH reminded the Board that HSU's rebrand had arisen because of an issue with the website domain (Herts.su) which had unfortunate connotations with the Soviet Union and Russia and therefore, there had been a need to change. As a result, it was decided to overhaul the brand identity entirely, with the assistance of the design agency, IE Designs. The new branding has been very well received and is appealing.
- Elections. RH reported on the huge success of the revised Elections process, with a record number of candidates standing, alongside a record number of students voting and who were engaged with the process. RH congratulated all the appointees and warmly welcomed them to the Board.
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC). On behalf of the Board, DB extended his warmest congratulations to MW on her appointment as DVC which she will take up from the end of the year.

6. May Management Accounts, Year-end Forecast and 2023-24 Budget

The Board received the Management Accounts for May. RH highlighted the following:

- For the benefit of new Trustees, RH explored the sources of HSU's income.
- Net surplus forecast of £38,365 against a budgeted surplus of £18,288. RH said this is mainly due to a number of vacancies in the staff team that have arisen over the year.

Highlights of the subsequent discussion included:

- RS asked about the investment strategy in respect of Reserves. RH replied that the Reserves Policy is to retain 10% of the Block Grant to allow HSU, as a charity, to distribute maximum monies to the membership. However, prudence has resulted in Reserves of circa £250k currently being held but now that Covid has passed and commercial activity has stabilised, HSU will move to reduce this figure to closer to the 10%. The Finance, Audit and

Risk Committee will explore suitable projects for the funds to be employed within. In terms of investment, funds are not treated in this way. DB noted that there isn't the expertise in terms of this kind of strategy and it would not be prudent for HSU to take this kind of a risk.

- UM asked for clarity on current recruitment and budgeting in this area. RH replied that there is currently one vacancy, shortlisting. In terms of budgeting, RH reported that UH have approved an uplift of 5.7% for staff wages and an inflationary uplift of 10% for non-staff costs. Two new positions have been approved: a) a full-time role to support on academic societies, with particular focus on auto-enrolment; b) a one-year post to support a voter registration drive to encourage students to register to vote in light of an upcoming General Election in 2024/5. The UH Legal department have supported, and will continue to support, HSU on this latter issue.
- As is customary, the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee will seek new members at the start of the new academic year.

7. Sabbatical Officer Year in Review

The Board received the Sabbatical Officer report. Highlights of the subsequent discussion included:

- In MS's and SFe's absences, DB thanked them both for their outstanding work on SummerFest 2023. The event may take place in a different format next year.
- DB thanked OS and AT for the huge amount of work they have both undertaken this year which has been much appreciated. He asked his thanks to also be passed to MS, in his absence, for his considerable contribution over the year also.
- Both Officers shared their reflections of the past year and passed on their advice to the incoming Officer team.

8. University update

MW updated the Board on the current opportunities and challenges facing UH:

- Policy changes in respect of International student visas. MW reported that for international students arriving from January 2024 there will be restrictions on their ability to bring family members on their student visa, unless they are on postgraduate courses currently designated as research programmes. The government target of attracting 600k International students per annum to study in the UK is to be retained. MW said that UH's International recruitment remains buoyant. Also from January 2024, International students will be stopped from switching from a student visa to a work visa until their studies have been completed. In response to AT, MW noted that 10-25% of the student body travel with dependents.
- Marking and Assessment boycott. MW reported that there has been very little impact to UH students, with only a very small number of modules that will be affected. She said that UH have made a commitment that no student will be prevented from graduating as a result of the boycott.
- Graduation period runs from 5th to 14th September 2023 at St Albans Cathedral.
- Advice to incoming Officer team. MW said that communication across the team and awareness as to which Officer is championing an issue will be key to the team's success over the year. Officers will benefit hugely by asking who the key person within UH is that can assist them, and leaders within the university will be delighted to help.

DB thanked MW for her valuable update and her very sound advice.

Signed Dated

9. Strategic Plan

DB reminded the Board that the three-year Strategic Plan for 2020-23 is coming towards its close. A new Plan for 2023-26 is therefore required and is in train. There has been some considerable ongoing discussion about the Plan.

The Board thus received the final draft and an accompanying presentation. Highlights included:

- RH took Trustees through the ambition, values, strategic framework and strategic foundations of the Plan.
- SO reported that goals coming from the Plan will not be as numerical or as numerous as before in order to reprioritise high impact new initiatives.
- LP highlighted the energy, positivity and engagement of the staff team who are all committed to working and supporting students.
- RH noted the Annual Operating Plan which will come to the Board for approval in September and be reported on at frequent points throughout the year in addition to be reviewed annually.

DB thanked the team. He noted that the Plan is very much a 'living' document which can be changed year on year as circumstances change. The draft circulated today is in effect the final version, which can now move forward to implementation.

MW congratulated RH and the team on the Plan. She said she very much liked 'Our ambition' but she queried how this will be measured and how HSU will manage the inevitability of not hitting these 100% targets. RH replied that departments have been allocated different areas of focus and as engagement data from different demographics can easily be captured, it will allow responsiveness and agility in terms of action and targets. MW said she was very much open to qualitative measures of engagement. RS said that a case study / 'storytelling' approach is always powerful and provides a more holistic approach.

In response to MKN, RH confirmed that HSU has left the Campaigning arm of NUS which does require HSU to find different ways to involve themselves in national campaigns through strengthening ties with University Alliance members, with universities in the South and through the VC and Universities UK.

DB thanked RH and the staff team for their considerable endeavours in bringing a new Plan to fruition.

10. Remuneration and Appointments Committee update

DB noted the successful campaigns to find a new Chair of the Trustee Board and two new External Trustees, alongside the ongoing process to appoint a new Student Trustee. DB thanked all of the team who have been involved in the various recruitment processes, which puts the Board in a good position for the start of the next academic year.

11. Finance and Audit Committee update

The last meeting of the Committee reviewed the Year-end Forecast, 2023-24 Budget and the Reserves position, as discussed at today's meeting of the Board. From September, the Committee's

remit will also cover HR policy.

12. Statements from outgoing Trustees

On their retirement from the Board, AI, AT, OS and SI reflected on their terms of service. They thanked colleagues and Trustees for their consistent support and warmth. DB sincerely thanked the outgoing Trustees for their most valuable contributions to the Board.

13. AOB

None noted.

14. Chair's closing remarks

On his retirement from the Board, DB reflected on his period of tenure. He said it had been an absolute pleasure and privilege to work with the Board and he thanked Trustees for their support and contributions over the many years of his service.

Meeting closed at 6.00 pm.

Next Meeting: *Dates for 2023/24 academic year tbc*