

Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Board meetings

The University of Dublin

Trinity College

Minutes of Special Board Meeting, 21 April 2004

- Present* Provost (Dr J Hegarty), Vice-Provost (Dr J B Grimson), Registrar (Mr R A Stalley), Bursar (Dr J W O'Hagan), Senior Lecturer (Dr S M Greene), Dr L E Doyle, Dr S Duffy*, Dr J A Fitzpatrick*, Ms H Fychan, Ms A-M Gatling, Dr H Gibbons, Mr H Kearns, Ms M Leahy, Dr J G Lunney, Dr A N M Ní Chasaide, Dr J C Sexton, Dr F Shevlin, Ms E K Stokes, Dr D L Weaire.
- Apologies* Dr S P A Allwright, Mr B Connolly, Mr M Miley, Mrs J O'Hara, Mr M Dowling, Dr T T West, Dr H M C V Hoey.
- In attendance*
- (ex officio)* Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Secretary.
- (by invitation)* Professor John A Murray, Chair of the Working Group on Structures, Management and Systems
- (present for)* *10/258 – 10/260

10/258 Provost's Working Group on Structures, Management and Systems The Provost invited Board's attention to the Report of the Working Group on Structures, Management and Systems which had been circulated and to his accompanying memorandum, dated 13 April 2004. The Provost advised Board that the report was one of a series of documents which would be presented to Board over the coming months to address the Agenda for Change which had been approved by Board at its meeting on 17 December 2003 (minute 4/98 refers). The Board noted that the Working Group had been established to explore the principles that might underlie a new academically-driven resource allocation model and changes in structures and management that would be appropriate to its implementation.

The Provost invited Board's attention to the following problems which had been identified with the present structure of departments and faculties:

- (i) academic initiative is difficult to foster at departmental level and the implementation of agreed College policies is often slow and/or incomplete;
- (ii) current structures do not encourage the sharing of courses at undergraduate or graduate level and make it difficult to drop old courses and programmes and to start new ones;
- (iii) the present structures place rigid boundaries around Faculties and Departments thus making it difficult to respond to interdisciplinary developments and the changing intellectual clustering of subjects in both teaching and research;
- (iv) there is no direct connection to, and from, the basic academic unit and the Executive Officer Group, Council and Board to effect management decisions quickly, both in relation to academic and administrative/support units;

- (v) some Faculties are too small to justify effective devolution of key support services such as finance and human resources, which is essential if Deans are to be empowered to lead their Faculties. Equally, most of the current Departments are too small to provide cost-effective support by locally placed administrative staff, thus placing an increasing administrative burden on academic staff.
- (vi) most Departments are also too small to have an effective devolved system of financing in place, thereby reducing the ability of Heads to initiative and foster new teaching and research developments. This growing burden coupled with greater responsibility is leading to a situation where there will be very few academics willing to take on the responsibility of becoming a Faculty Dean or Head of Department.
- (vii) small academic departments are very vulnerable to the impact of the loss of a single member of staff, and all departments, large and small, are affected by fluctuations in students' demand;
- (viii) the core administrative information systems in College need greater integration and, in some cases, up-dating.

Professor Murray, Chair of the Working Group on Structures, Management and Systems, present by invitation, invited Board's attention to the Working Group's report, noting that recommendations had been made on two areas, viz. allocation of resources and changes in structures, systems and management.

1. Resource allocation

Professor Murray invited Board's attention to the principles which the Working Group had recommended should underlie the proposed new resource allocation model:

- (i) the academic integrity of the College and its mission as a university are paramount and resources and costs should follow academic activity;
- (ii) resource allocation is a matter of both academic and administrative/support and financial management;
- (iii) good structures and systems are transparent, accountable and equitable and provide incentives for desired performance;
- (iv) accountability in academic and administrative/support units should lie with those who have authority to initiate activities and commit resources;
- (v) students and research projects/programmes should be the basis of costs;
- (vi) funding must be provided for new initiatives and strategic contingencies.

The Board noted the recommendation that the College's new resource allocation model should, in the context of the principles above, have (a) a set of priorities, embodying university policy and (b) academic and administrative/support units to which income and costs would be allocated. Professor Murray advised Board that once the priorities were established they should be made clear to all units so that they can plan their future, noting that the framework, as it is envisaged, would, in time, require a minimum of bureaucracy.

Professor Murray invited Board's attention to the experience of other similar universities where equivalent changes in resource allocation models had been introduced, noting that the introduction of such changes can be difficult but that, after a period of transition, institutions have reported benefits from being able to respond to hostile and changing external environments.

A number of queries in relation to the proposed resource allocation model were raised and the Board noted that:

- (a) academic priorities would determine income allocation, noting that it was envisaged that Board and Council would agree the priority to be given to research activities, categories of students, including students entering College by non-traditional routes,

Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Board meetings

- types of courses and other strategic variables which would then be applied to the allocation model;
- (b) there would be a university strategy driving the application of a unified model across all areas of the College, noting that the model could include the transfer of resources between areas of College to meet specific needs;
 - (c) the use of different categories of students in the derivation of the formula for resource allocation would not impact on the experience of individual students in College;
 - (d) the resource allocation model would be academically driven with administrative/support areas providing the support necessary to achieve the College's academic objectives, noting that calibration of the costs of administrative/support areas would have to be kept under review and that consideration should be given to the introduction of service level agreements between academic units and administrative/support areas.

2. Structures, systems and management

Professor Murray invited Board's attention to the Working Group's recommendation that the College's structures, systems and management should be adapted to respond to the changes in both the internal and external environments. The Board noted that the objectives of the Working Group's recommendations were to ensure that structures would have clear and direct lines of defined responsibility, would act swiftly when necessary, and together with a resource allocation system that would be transparent and comprehensive, would support a high degree of devolved decision-making.

Professor Murray invited Board's attention to the following specific recommendations:

- (i) Schools, rather than departments should become the basic academic components of College; these should be sufficient in number to encourage initiative and ownership among staff and to drive learning and research, but few enough to ensure disciplinary integration, recruitment of the best international talent, credibility in pursuing research funding, flexibility in managing the changes in disciplinary popularity, nurturing new initiatives and the provision of adequate administrative support;
- (ii) Schools should each report to one of three Vice Provosts/Deans and, with them, agree multi-annual academic and resource plans with College;
- (iii) each Vice Provost/Dean should have the support of a 'faculty' or 'division' office, be a member of the Executive Officer Group and become the final budget holder and strategy coordinator for a portfolio of cognate schools. Each Faculty would have the support of a Director of Learning and Teaching and a Director of Research;
- (iv) Vice Provosts/Deans should be appointed by open competition and that, together with other Executive Officers, should be accountable to Board and Council for academic integration, the achievement of the College's strategic objectives and for resource deployment. Professor Murray advised Board that it was not envisaged by the Working Group that the total number of Executive Officers should change. The Board also noted the Working Group's recommendation that, as these appointments would be of such importance to the College and would require very specific skills, the College should give serious consideration to filling them by appointment rather than by election, further noting that filling these positions by appointment offered the opportunity to recruit people from outside the College. The Board noted that the Provost had identified this proposal as an issue for discussion within the College community;
- (v) the delivery of services by administrative/support areas must be subject to the same degree of discipline and clarity as that proposed for academic units.

The Board noted the experience in other universities which suggests that movement from a fragmented to a more cohesive structure had been beneficial for the academic development of these institutions.

Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Board meetings

In response to queries in relation to the proposed re-structuring, the Board noted that:

- (a) if the proposals were adopted, it was envisaged that there would be a review of the disciplinary interests of individual academic staff members to ensure that there would be an optimal arrangement of disciplines within the College structures, noting that there would always be academic diversity within Schools;
- (b) academic departments, in their current form, would not be relevant from a resource allocation point of view;
- (c) career development of junior academic staff would be enhanced by bigger Schools and by the appointment of professional human resource managers in Schools, noting that all personnel policies would have to operate within Board policies and guidelines;
- (d) the Working Group had considered that eighteen individual Schools would be too many to interact effectively with central College decision-making and had therefore recommended that Schools be grouped into three Faculties managed by Vice Provosts/Deans;
- (e) the proposed structures whereby there would be a smaller number of larger academic units than at present and where Vice Provosts/Deans would be members of the Executive Officers Group would place academic units firmly within the decision-making processes of the College;
- (f) the operation of the new proposals would have to ensure that Vice Provosts/Deans would include the encouragement of inter-faculty activities as part of their responsibilities and that the three proposed Faculties would not operate in isolation from each other;
- (g) the implementation of the new structures would have very little impact on students on a day-to-day basis. The Board noted the Senior Lecturer's comments that it would take some time to optimise the potential changes for the benefit of the student experience but that, in time, there would be an improvement in the quality of teaching and in the choice of courses and disciplines;
- (h) implementation of the proposals may result in a re-deployment of existing administrative resources, the effectiveness of which would depend on the development of sophisticated and integrated information systems. The Board noted that the administrative/support areas would carry the burden of implementing the new structures while at the same time ensuring that the College would continue to deliver its teaching and research commitments.

In the course of a long discussion, the following points were raised by Board members:

- under the new structural arrangements, decision-making, within the context of overall College policy should be devolved to Schools;
- care should be taken to ensure that the criteria used in the College's resource allocation model should not be in conflict with the HEA's funding model;
- the operation of the proposed system should not result in greater bureaucracy particularly in relation to decisions which are currently taken by Heads of Academic Departments;
- the proposed re-structuring should be used as an opportunity to remove artificial barriers which currently exist in some areas and to reinforce the concept of the College community;

The Board also noted Dr Lunney's comments in relation to identifying the full cost of research to the College.

In conclusion, the Board agreed that the Provost's memorandum and the Working Group's report should be placed on the College's website with an invitation to staff to send their comments to the Provost. It was also agreed that comments received would be placed on the website. The Provost advised Board that a series of briefings and consultative meetings

Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Board meetings

would take place over the next two months with a view to presenting a paper to Board for final decision on the principles of the re-structuring proposals in July 2004.

The Board thanked Professor Murray and the members of the Working Group for their report and in particular for reporting within such a tight timeframe.

10/259 Resource Management Working Group The Senior Lecturer invited Board's attention to a memorandum, dated 8 April 2004, which had been circulated for the Board meeting held on 14 April 2004 outlining the work of the Resource Management Working Group (RMWG) since its establishment by Board in December 2003. The Senior Lecturer also invited Board's attention to the procedures and guidelines by which the €1m emergency funds had been allocated to Faculties and Administrative areas. The Senior Lecturer advised Board that, on the basis of bids received, amounts in the order of €500,000 had been allocated to academic departments and €322,000 to support areas, noting that the balance of €178,000 had been returned to the *cista communis*. The Board noted that, as the Board had agreed to increase by €200,000 the funding available to the Personnel and Appointments Committee for pay-related emergencies in the current year, the RMWG had directed a number of bids for funding to that Committee. The Board also noted the role of the Resource Management Working Group in receiving and forwarding bids to the Research Committee.

The Senior Lecturer invited Board's attention to the RMWG's recommendation to the Finance Committee that, arising from the withdrawal of end-of-year balances from departments, amounts equivalent to (a) the non-EU fee income based on student numbers in 2002-2003 and (b) HEA targeted funding associated with increased student numbers should be transferred to departments.

10/260 Planning for 2004-2005 The Provost invited Board's attention to the possible financial situation in 2005 based on assumptions in relation to the level of government funding for 2004/2005. The Provost advised Board that, in order to ensure a planned approach to the next academic year, the levels of expenditure for 2004/2005 would have to be set as soon as possible and that they should be determined in the context of:

- (a) the Agenda for Change which had been approved by Board in December 2003 (minute 4/98 refers);
- (b) strategic investment in order to facilitate recruitment/maintenance of posts in key areas and investment in infrastructure to support the change agenda;
- (c) maintaining teaching and un-funded research at current levels.

The Provost invited the Board's attention to the proposal that:

- (i) the College would assume that there would be a requirement in 2004/2005 for an additional €10m to retain activities at their current levels and at the same time meet anticipated increases in pay and non-pay costs and not have a deficit at the end of that year;
- (ii) of the €10m, some €7m would be required to meet continuing pay costs and a further €3m would be available for discretionary activities, noting that €3m is a preliminary estimate of what might be available as a result of early retirements, non-renewal of contracts and other savings;
- (iii) of the €3m which it is proposed would be available, €1m would be ear-marked for strategic activities and €2m for emergency short-term expenditure;
- (iv) the €2m emergency funding would be allocated, for one year only, to the Deans' Committee and the Senior Administrative Group in proportion to their anticipated staff losses in the year 2004/2005, noting that both the Deans' Committee and the

Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Board meetings

- Senior Administrative Group would have discretion as to how their allocation would be disbursed within the areas under their remit;
- (v) the €1m ear-marked for strategic investment would be distributed by the Provost in consultation with Executive Officers;
 - (vi) should the anticipated increase in government funds not be forthcoming, the College would not disrupt staffing levels during 2004/2005 but would explore alternative ways of securing the required funds and, if absolutely necessary, budget for a deficit in 2004/2005.

In response to queries, the Board noted that:

- emergency funding could be used to fund services to students and the Strategic Fund would be used across College to support investment as outlined in (b) above;
- additional funding for the key strategic areas identified in the Strategic Plan will be sought for 2005/2006;
- any consideration of reviewing pay agreements already in place would be the subject of negotiation and discussion with all representative groups.

The Board, noting the risk that the government grant for 2004/2005 may not meet anticipated levels, approved the proposals as outlined in (i) to (vi) above.

10/261 HEA – Review of Recurrent Funding Mechanism – Consultation The Board noted the following correspondence which had been circulated for information and which would be the subject of discussion at a future meeting:

- (a) Letter from Secretary/Chief Executive of the HEA to Mr M McGrath, Director of CHIU, dated 23 February 2004 and Consultation Document, dated February 2004.
- (b) Letter from Mr M Kelleher, Secretary/Bursar, UCC and Chair, University Chief Finance Officers Group to Mr T Boland, HEA, dated 10 March 2004.

Signed:

Date: