

Dear fellow Board members

Welcome to the Board update for September 2021 and to the 2021/22 academic year. I hope you all have had a great summer.

There has been a considerable amount of work taking place over the summer in preparing the campus for the new academic year. I was delighted to see the campus populated again over graduation and I do hope the trend of increased in person engagement continues. Having said that, we must bear in mind that we are not yet clear of the pandemic and as such, while I hope that activities will be conducted on campus on a face-to face basis insofar as is possible, there will be no compromising on matters of safety. The Board will continue to take an active interest in the health and well-being of students and staff as this remains a key priority as we emerge into a new normal. Although the Government have confirmed that there are no restrictions on returning to face-to-face teaching, the Board is required to keep this matter under review.

Next, I would like to welcome The Reverend Trevor Critchlow to the Board of Governors. Trevor has been the Rector of Stepney, St Dunstan and All Saints Church, Diocese of London since 2011 and, amongst other skills, is heavily involved in the local community as a school board chair and governor and as a trustee and chair of numerous local charities. Trevor's reach in the local community should enhance our engagement with local stakeholders.

There will be several changes on the Board in this academic year. We are welcoming our two new student representatives: Kottikulam Aboobacker (the Students' Union Activities and Opportunities Officer and Lavanya Rajendran (the Students' Union Wellbeing and Community Officer) and are also losing a number of Board members this year. We are therefore seeking for two independent Governors and another academic staff representative in the coming months. This is also my final year on the Board and the search for my successor as Chair has commenced in earnest. I do hope we have some interest from within the board.

We are currently working on finalising the agenda for our first strategy session taking place prior to the Board meeting on 27 October 2021. This will cover four key areas:

- An overview of where the University is at the start of this academic year
- Looking at key growth projects for 2021/22
- Finalising institutional KPIs for 2021/2022
- Considering matters/strategic projects that are on the longer-term horizon.

If there are any matters you would like to see as a part of the agenda for this session, do please forward details to Jim.

In other news, we expect to have details of the Government's spending priorities through the comprehensive spending review over the next few weeks. We now also

have a new Secretary of State for Education in post, Nadhim Zahawi, and expect key changes will follow. With key legislation expected to proceed through parliament shortly along with mooted regulatory changes outlined in Jim's report, it is important that the Board understand and as is kept abreast of these changes which will undoubtedly impact UEL. We will spend a part of the Board strategy session getting properly acquainted with these issues.

Jim has highlighted academic governance as one of the activities that the Board needs to have greater oversight of in 2021/22 and beyond. We received papers outlining what this will entail last year and will receive the outcome of the effectiveness review of Academic Board along with its first annual report soon. Over the summer the executive delivered two Development Weeks to appraise staff members on our progress with Vision 2028 and to prepare for return to campus. There was also campus-wide training on compliance activities delivered as part of this programme. The Board cannot be remote from these activities, and I will ask that we consider so I hope we can consider what training and development we should be undertaking this year.

Finally, I am looking forward to seeing you all at the upcoming Board and committee meetings starting next week. The committee meetings in September and October will provide for the opportunity to participate online or in person. However, I would hope all Board meetings this year will be face-to-face events, starting with the Board meeting and away day on 27 October 2021 to be held on campus. I very much look forward to seeing you all then.