

South Lanarkshire College
BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING
Held on Tuesday 15th September 2020 at 1730 hours

Present in Boardroom	A Kerr (Chair), A McKechnie, C Gibb, P Hughes, G McClarence, C McDonald
Present on MS Teams	R Harkness, T Donnelly, J Carratt, C McDowall, S Dillet
Apologies	P Hutchinson, L Glen, Y Johnston, S Duffy, R Smith
In attendance:	A Allan, K McAllister

1. Declaration of members interests

Membership of the Lanarkshire Board was declared by A Kerr, A McKechnie, R. Harkness, J Carratt and G McClarence. Mr Kerr also declared his membership of the Scottish Funding Council.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Note – a sentence was incomplete on page 1: A vote of thanks to the officers of the Students Association.

The minutes of the 5 June Board meeting were approved by the Board.

3. Matters arising

Funding allocation: Negotiations are not finally concluded with the RSB. This is normally concluded in May and it was noted that the Finance committee has discussed the matter in full at its latest meeting.

4. Chair's update

The Chair welcomed the new Student Association President, Gemma McClarence to the Board and noted that the Vice President, Charlotte McDonald was expected to join the meeting.

He noted the significant efforts made by college staff to support a successful return to the campus for the new academic session and highly commended their efforts on behalf of the Board.

The Chair noted that the College had been shortlisted for two awards – the Inclusive College Award at the CDN annual awards ceremony; and the Imaginative Educator Award at the Festival of Innovation.

The Chair noted the retiral of the current Depute Principal, and in so doing recognised the significant contribution made by Angus during his lengthy tenure at the College, his detailed knowledge of college operations, his professionalism in role and his contribution to various all staff events and Board meetings. He noted that Angus would be sadly missed. The Chair had the pleasure in advising the Board of the appointment of Stella McManus as our new Depute Principal. She will take up her role on 14 December.

The Chair also advised that Lisa Beresford, HR Manager, is leaving the College to take up a new opportunity. Lindsey Ferries has been appointed on an interim basis until the formal recruitment process concludes.

The Chair provided an update on progress with efforts being made to progress the evolution of governance arrangements across the college region. The Board discussed the option outlined and concluded that there was unanimous support for the direction of travel. Ms Gibb noted that work was progressing, in parallel, to secure parity of funding.

5. Principal's update

The Principal noted that preparation for return to campus for the new academic session had been predicated on a risk-assessed approach, based on three key themes of: health, safety and well-being; financial sustainability; and contribution to social and economic recovery.

New academic session - the college re-opened on 24 August for 2019-20 deferred students, 27% of our student population. Most students had now concluded their qualifications and were now able to move onto the next stage of their lives. The 2020-21 academic session started on 7 September for 2020-2021, with student enrolment and inductions having taken place over the preceding three weeks. All teaching is being delivered on a blended approach to allow for all students to get a campus experience.

Student recruitment - recruitment figures were relatively positive in comparison to last year. Applications were down about 3.5%, with full-time offers up 1.5% but part-time offers down. There had been a huge cross-college effort to support our student recruitment – from faculties, student services and from our marketing team. The Principal advised that there has been a reduction in the numbers of school pupils in relation to the Developing the Young Workforce agenda, with different local authorities looking for a different type of blend of on campus versus off-campus delivery. School pupils started back on campus on 14 September. The Principal noted that there remained challenges regarding encouraging physical distancing for all campus users.

Campus readiness for 2020-21 - the Principal noted the significant efforts of all college staff across the summer to ensure we were ready for the new term. This had included substantial building modifications; clear signage about physical distancing and building circulation; new approaches to catering; and staggered timetables for staff and students throughout the day. Risk assessments were now publicly displayed in all learning spaces.

The Principal advised that our new approach to blended teaching and learning had been supported by significant investment in staff CPD for digital teaching (delivered by the Open University); investment in new ICT equipment, such as the VC in the board room and web cam's to broadcast teaching; and new laptops for loan to students. She added that some existing college space (library and bistro) had been adapted to create additional teaching space; and that the library now functions as a 'click, contact and collect' service.

Communications – The Principal noted that the college had significantly increased its internal and external communications since lockdown, and was making much greater use of social media and video platforms (evidenced by an increase in Twitter engagement of 244% and of LinkedIn engagement of 65%). She noted the value of the separate staff and student surveys conducted during last term in terms of supporting planning for the return to campus.

She advised of a number of important publications, such as the Student Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan; the Annual Construction Awards Year Book; various student and staff newsletters. And that the College had supported the Tackling Racism on Campus project led by Advance HE; sponsored the Young Scot Award for Diversity and Equality at its recent awards ceremony; was working towards the LGBT Youth Scotland Bronze Charter Mark Award; and have received confirmation that we have been shortlisted for the CDN Inclusive College Award and the Imaginative Educator award at the Festival of Innovation. The East Kilbride News is publishing an article on the college's COVID readiness 16 September.

The Chair asked about the impact of the SQA assessment approach. The Principal advised that there would likely be a mix of outcomes from this shift in approach and that one already visible impact was that the refusal rate from students was higher this year (we assume this is due to students choosing instead to take up a university place). Around 1000 students have declined a place compared to around 500 last year.

6. Regional Outcome Agreement

Mr Allan provided an overview of the ROA and the National Measures Table, noting that there had been a reduction of 0.5% in credits across the sector. He advised that the SFC did not plan to publish the ROAs for this year and asked for Board views on local publication. In the interests of public accountability, this was agreed.

A discussion took place regarding risks to student retention and attainment; and on overall sector performance. The Principal noted that SLC was currently the top performing college in Scotland for 10 out of 17 SFC performance indicators, and that we would work hard to maintain our position in relation to positive student outcomes. The importance of robust quality assurances process across the sector was recognised to protect the 'brand' and ensure no risk to the reputation of college qualifications or to employers' confidence in assessment results.

The Board was assured by the Principal and Depute about the rigour in the college's arrangements for Quality Assurance during the "lockdown" and that there would not be significant differences in overall students' attainment.

7. Finance

Keith McAllister noted that the Finance Managers of both colleges are making a presentation to the RSB Finance and Resources Committee in the coming weeks.

Management Forecast 2019/20

The Chair of the Finance Committee presented the report and drew to the Board's attention that the forecast for 2019-2020 is a break-even position, mainly due to the

success in securing furlough funding. The Committee was assured that the college has managed this process correctly.

The College had monitored its costs carefully during lockdown, particularly teaching costs in order to ensure a balanced budget.

With regard to estates, Ms Gibb noted that the College had worked hard to become COVID-secure; that estates investment was continuing and work is in train to secure economies of scale, benefitting from procurement through APUC. The Chair had considered the Covid secure protocols and was positive about the balance between keeping the college welcoming as well as safe. She noted that HSE was taking a keen interest in COVID-secure arrangements in employers.

K McAllister went through the management forecast for 2019-2020. He advised that he was still finalising accounts; awaiting clarification on figures from SFC to do with National Collective Bargaining; and on clarification from NCL on the regional funding allocations. The current forecast shows a surplus of £50,000. The Board noted the management forecast.

The Chair of the Finance Committee noted the positive management of the cashflow. This was noted by the Board.

Budget for 2020/21 – 2022/23

K McAllister noted the breakdown of funds allocated by SFC and in particular the capital funding allocations for 2020-21. The Board noted the contents of appendix 2.

The draft budget for 2020-2021 is again planned to be balanced but includes an amount of £190k that is still the subject of discussion with the Regional Board. K McAllister explained the commentary and assumptions in the draft budget.

With regard to Appendix 3a, this included reference to the college budgeting strategy to create a balanced budget; SFC guidance; risks; unit price; wages and salaries; salary uplift; non salary expenditure and commercial income planning. He noted that a modest surplus was forecast (see appendix 3b). Ms Harkness asked if the funding settlement was not concluded favourably whether the college would be in deficit. This was confirmed. Ms Gibb advised that the impact of this had been considered by the Finance committee.

Ms Donnelly asked if a deficit would have to be managed back to a balanced budget within three years. K McAllister confirmed this was the case. The Chair indicated that most colleges in Scotland were predicting a deficit. It was agreed that if the College was not successful in retaining the £190k incorporated into the Budget, a further version would be prepared and circulated to members of the Board.

K McAllister presented Appendix 3c, which outlined the key risks and financial sensitivities incorporated in the Budget for the three years to 2022/23. This was noted by the Board.

The Board noted the position regarding the budget, which was subject to further discussion with SFC and the RSB. It was agreed by the Board that further advice would be required from the Executive to allow it to approve the Budget.

8. Update from the Committees

Development Committee

The Chair of the committee presented the minutes of the meeting which took place on 1 September.

East Renfrewshire Council – he noted that our strategic goals may be at a different level of priority now and was advised that the conversations would be revisited in a year or so.

Assessment and Resulting – A Allan advised that the Quality Enhancement Group had developed a robust process in relation to the quality assurance of holistic assessments.

The Principal outlined actions being undertaken to mitigate potential impacts of changes to ESF funding and the differing potential positions of the UK and Scottish Government.

The Board approved the minute and report.

Audit Committee

External Audit

K McAllister presented the report of the meeting on 24 August. He stated that the College was on target to complete the accounts preparation as per the timetable agreed with the auditors. He advised that financial statements were being finalised for the External Auditors.

Internal Audit

It was noted that the Internal Auditor contract had been extended for a further year as a result of the Covid-19 situation. The Internal Audit Annual Report and Internal Audit plan were presented as part of the Audit committee report. It was noted that the internal audit plan for 2020/21 had been amended by the Audit Committee to incorporate a review of the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of teaching and wider college functions. The Annual Report was approved.

The Board approved the Audit committee report.

Human Resources Committee

The Chair of the Committee presented the report from the meeting on 26 August, noting that many of the key areas had already been covered by the discussion. Key matters to note included:

- Workforce planning – the committee had noted the detailed workforce planning and consultation that had gone into supporting the return to campus;
- Support mechanisms in place for staff were noted with the associated questionnaires. The effort invested in staff wellbeing was noted by the Board.

- The Scottish Government advice around Health and Safety and the regular updating of the COVID-19 risk assessment.

Ms Carratt noted the need for care with language in relation to equalities.

The Board approved the report.

9. Student Association Update

The Student President outlined key highlights from the Student Association report including: the student newsletter; SA training; Going Further for Carers Award; working towards the LGBT Youth Scotland Bronze Charter Award; the approach to Student mental health, noting a particular emphasis on men's mental health; Freshers week as a virtual event; college hoodies; and forthcoming events.

The President also outlined the counselling team's resilience workshops for students.

She noted the potential input to the question and answer session with Professor Jason Leitch, which was welcomed by the Board.

Face-to-face classroom visits had been undertaken to engage physically with as many class groups as possible.

10. Approval of papers for publication

The papers identified for publication were approved.

The Board acknowledged that the publication of the ROA should go ahead in terms of public accountability and that the two Principals should agree publication.

There being no further competent business, the Chair closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and contribution.