

25 – 27 April 2025

Report of the Board of Trustees

The SLT is asked to:-

- i) **Note** this regular report from the Board of Trustees

Introduction/Background

1.1 There is a requirement under the Articles of Association for the Board of Trustees (BoT) to provide a report to the Student Leadership Team (SLT) at each meeting. This report is intended to provide the following:

- a) a formal opportunity for SLT 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 SLT or report on progression of any non-routine matters.

1.2 The Board met on the 29th January 2025 online via Microsoft Teams and in-person on the OU campus. The meeting minutes are available on the website [here](#).

Discussions and outcomes from the BoT meeting

- 2.1 The President presented the Officer Trustee update, noting most members were actively participating. The President outlined the formation of the project teams for the SLT's priority areas and referenced the upcoming student consultations happening in April. There was a concern raised regarding SLT members not fulfilling basic information requests, such as responding to invites to meetings which had a knock on effect on those planning events and the budgets assigned. Suggestions were made to better clarify role expectations during the election process and to remind the team about the need to be mindful of budget impact of not showing up to events where hotel rooms and catering have been booked.
- 2.2 The Director of Finance and People presented the financial report. Positive developments were noted regarding the Association hoping to receive the subvention grant in a lump sum, which will reduce organisational risk and

administrative burden. It was noted that the upcoming national insurance (NI) contribution increase would have to be absorbed this year, before the next subvention grant for 2025-26. Trustees discussed the absence of the monthly financial reviews, due to no VP Admin in post and resolved that the Finance Resource and Risk Committee (FRRC) should meet as a supportive discussion group while the review is underway.

- 2.3 The Director of Finance and People highlighted to Trustees challenges with the current financial system, Iplacit, noting her concerns around the complexity of the system. Trustees explored options for moving to Xero, and discussed how best to ensure that lessons were learned from the procurement and implementation of the last system (Iplacit) to make sure the organisation does not have similar problems in the future. Trustees approved the transition to Xero, and FRRC will monitor this process.
- 2.4 The Director of Strategy & Democracy and Deputy Director of Marketing and Communications presented the proposed rebranding to "Open SU". Trustees commented that it had similar connotations to the Association's 50th anniversary logo. Trustees approved the rebrand to Open SU ('trading as'), along with the new branding.
- 2.5 Remi Gruszka from One Company attended a BoT meeting to discuss AI and automation adoption for the Association. He emphasised the need to streamline operations by addressing inefficiencies like redundant manual data entry and siloed data systems. He illustrated how automating processes, such as volunteer onboarding, could allow staff to focus on meaningful engagement with volunteers and strategic tasks, and improve data security and decision-making. Trustees were interested in enhancing the student experience with AI, while concerns about training AI systems were addressed. Trustees agreed that AI and automation was the future, noting the need for phased implementation and further exploration of data sharing agreements and ethical considerations. Discussions on this matter will continue and it was agreed that automation and AI were different but that they would often need to be considered alongside one another. This discussion supported our strategic aim to be for data-driven and forward facing with regard to technology.
- 2.5 The standing papers were received.

Staffing

- 3.1 The last quarter has been a busy one with the pause on recruitment lifted. This was to enable the vacancies following the restructure to be filled. We are very excited to announce that Chantelle (Chan) Howell-Walker is joining us from the OU's Manchester Office to take up her new role as Student Belonging Officer. Alexandria Stradling has been appointed into the role of Student Advice Admin Assistant. She will provide some much-needed capacity back into the Individual Representation Service, following Charlotte Stone's departure at the start of the year. They are both due to start on the 8th April. Verity is very excited to have her team nearly up to full capacity! This follows Linda Aradi's return from maternity leave in March who is settling back in well.

Recruitment for the Management Accountant is underway with a very tough

shortlisting having taken place this week. Six candidates have been shortlisted for interview and these will be taking place w/c 31st March, with an estimated start date for the successful candidate to be mid May.

Whilst we are excited to welcome our new starters, we have also recently said our goodbyes to Jess Smith (Director of Projects and Services) on the 27th March, Hannah Prue (Projects Officer) on the 28th March and Pooja Sinha (Research and Insight's Officer) on the 1st April. We are very sad to see these fantastic, valuable and talented members of staff leave but we wish them best in their next chapters.

Beth Pacey
Chief Executive