

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**Student Leadership Team (SLT)**

14 – 16 July 2023

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

The SLT is asked to:-

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

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.
2. The Board met on the 25th April 2023 on Campus and online via Microsoft Teams. The meeting minutes are available to view [here](#).
3. The BoT received an update on the strategy planning and strategy development group which has been set up to maintain oversight of the project. Trustees engaged in discussions surrounding the priority areas and these conversations would be fed back to the Strategy Development Group.
4. The Associate Director: Finance & Compliance gave an update on the Subvention cuts and three year budget projections. She outlined that funding received from the OU will be reduced by £265k over three years, however, due to savings already being made because of pre-pandemic changes, it was stated that the organisation could meet the current level of operating costs until July 2026 before seeing a deficit. However, savings would need to be made after this. Trustees agreed that the phased cuts mean no radical changes need to be completed straight away and the Association has time to plan and prioritise. The Chief Executive was tasked with seizing opportunities as they arise and considering future models to support sustainability.
5. The Head of Strategy and Insight, along with the Chief Executive, presented the options for future Conferences. Trustees discussed and voted on the three emerging themes for Conference, approving the model as recommended by the

SLT at the previous meeting. More work is to be completed in this area before a more public announcement.

6. The Chief Executive reported on the recent skills audit, completed by nine of the twelve Trustees, which focused on the areas of good governance highlighted in the charity governance code. The results showed a good level of confidence across the board, with many voting that they felt 'Very Confident', 'Confident' or 'Somewhat Confident' in most areas. The Associate Director: Finance & Compliance, offered one to one sessions as required, for those who felt they needed a better understanding on Risk and Financial Oversight of the Association. Additional training links on other areas will be offered to Trustees in the foreseeable.
7. Ashling Akosa, an EDI consultant joined the meeting to guide a discussion around representation on the Board and throughout the organisation. Trustees discussed current initiatives used to capture student voice and effectiveness, as well as the barriers the Association faces in reaching underrepresented students. Discussions concluded that there needs to be wider conversations within the SLT in making a strong commitment to EDI and accessibility and also improving the elections process to attract a wider, more diverse pool of candidates.
8. The President, Deputy President and VP Administration provided an Officer Trustee update. They highlighted engagement as a current issue within the SLT, with some members struggling to engage and commit to their roles due to extenuating circumstances which results in their workload falling on to others. It was agreed that future role descriptions need to be more honest and realistic about what the role entails – both the positives and negatives listed. This will be an action for the elections review.
9. The President, Deputy President and VP Admin gave an update on the last quarter within the SLT. They also acknowledged that the Marking and Assessment boycott commences on 20th April and the President and Deputy President were engaged on both sides to mitigate. Where the Association usually takes a neutral standpoint, there was discussions surrounding a need for a stronger view this time round in either direction. The SLT were polled on their views surrounding this and a vote was agreed.
10. Trustees were made aware of the Student Issues Reporting Tool which launched in March 2023. The Deputy President emphasised that responses so far had been very positive. Conversations continue surrounding the OU's decision to have online tutorial as default from September 2023, as due to the current financial situation there has been little progress.
11. Staffing matters: Following a restructure of the Senior Management Team, Jess Smith was successfully appointed in the role of Associate Director: Services & Projects. Alison Lunn has taken on a new role and slightly different remit as Associate Director: Finance & Compliance. Her team will now report to Magda Hadrys with the Finance and Resources team and Operations Team combining to create one central point, name TBC. Magda returned to work following her mat leave on 22nd June 2023 and is settling back into the Association and her role as Head of Operations, with the help of a handover period from Gemma Church. In May we said goodbye to Heather Bloomer, Senior Digital

Communications Officer, who started her secondment with the OU in a new Senior Comms position. Sarah Smerald will be returning from her maternity leave in September.

12. The last month has been extremely busy as we have been recruiting for five positions; Senior Fundraiser (on behalf of OUSET), Project Manager, Contents Officer, Campaigns Officer and Representation & Policy Officer. Tom Mitchell, Projects Officer (EDI) has been successfully appointed as the Project Manager with his start date to be confirmed. We are also pleased to announce that Gemma Church will be staying with us for longer as she will be OUSET's new Senior Fundraiser and will commence her role on the 7th August. Eleanor Sear has been appointed as Campaigns Officer, however the decision surrounding the Contents Officer outcome is to be discussed further. The Representation & Policy Officer interviews will take place on Monday 26th June.
13. The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Tuesday 25th July 2023.

Beth Metcalf
Chief Executive