WARDENS REPORT FOR SOM 2015

Introduction
Since the First Ordinary Meeting in March there have been a significant number of issues addressed by the University. Many of these are outlined in the Vice-Chancellor’s report. One significant development has been the release of the new UWA Branding Strategy. As this was publically released on Tuesday 5 May, the Second Ordinary Meeting is the first opportunity for graduates to receive a presentation on the background and rationale for the new Branding Strategy. Consequently, I have invited Professor Kent Anderson, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Community & Engagement) to address these issues at the Second Ordinary Meeting.

Annual Report of UWA
When first established, the Ordinary Meetings of Convocation undertook the role of General Meetings of the University. In accordance with this tradition, I wish to draw your attention to the Annual Report of the University which is available online on the UWA website at http://www.annualreport.uwa.edu.au/annual-report-2014

A limited number of printed copies of the Annual Report will also be available at the Second Ordinary Meeting. Please advise the Convocation Officer Ms Juanita Perez if you would like to receive a copy.

Outcome of Elections for Convocation Council
At the First Ordinary Meeting, I reported on the outcome of the elections for Convocation Council for 2015. In accordance the requirements outlined in UWA Statute 9, nine positions on Convocation Council were available for election (the normal seven positions which become available each year at the conclusion of the 3-year term of the sitting Councillors) as well as two other positions resulting from the resignation of two Councillors during their term, due to the demands of new work-related activities.

Prior to the First Ordinary Meeting, the WA Electoral Commission (who conducted the elections on behalf of Convocation) received nine nominations for these positions and therefore recommended that they be appointed without the need to conduct an election. At the First Ordinary Meeting, as required by Statute, I asked if there were any other nominations. Initially there was no response, but subsequently one member of Convocation did indicate that they wished to be considered for election to Convocation Council. As a result, an election in accordance with the detailed requirements set out in the Statutes was required.

However, during the preparations for this election, one of the candidates who had submitted his nomination prior to the First Ordinary Meeting decided to withdraw his nomination due to the workload involved in taking on another Board appointment. As a result, we again were left with nine nominations for nine positions on Convocation Council and therefore by the authority vested in me by clause 65 of Statute 9, the following members of Convocation were declared as elected to Convocation Council:

- Paul Appleton
- Devon Cuneo
- Jennifer Low
- Kelvin Mahuka
- Diana Salvaris
- Garry Hawkes
The seven new members and two re-elected members commenced their terms on Convocation Council at the April meeting and are now making a significant contribution to current initiatives.

Possible Use of Electronic Voting for Convocation Elections

One of the current initiatives of Convocation Council is to improve the way in which we conduct these elections. As part of these investigations we are examining the benefits of introducing electronic voting for Convocation elections.

When I was elected as Warden in March 2013, I stated that I would like to reduce the cost of conducting Convocation elections. I have achieved some reductions in cost ($30,000 - $40,000) by out-sourcing the conduct of these elections to the WA Electoral Commission. However, it still costs approximately $177,000 to conduct these elections each year, primarily due to the detailed arrangements prescribed in the Statutes, which require the elections to be undertaken using paper based voting forms which must be mailed to every member of Convocation.

In my role as Warden, I believe that I have a responsibility to diligently investigate cheaper options. Obviously one option that could be considered is to simply “arrange” for an equal number of candidates to be matched to an equal number of vacant positions, and therefore avoid the need for an election.

However, having had the good fortune to be born in a democracy like Australia, I am a passionate and resolute advocate for democratic elections. I therefore wish to encourage everyone who wishes to contribute to stand for election, to have the opportunity to do so – however, I also believe that a democratic election should be able to be conducted for far less than $177,000.

Electronic voting would enable us to fulfill our legal responsibilities in a democratic manner at a cost far less than we are currently paying. Electronic voting is routinely used for a number of staff-elected positions within the University and the new Blackbaud software used to maintain the graduates database for UWA will shortly be able to provide this capability for members of Convocation.

During the past two months, I have held discussions with the responsible personnel within the University to explore how a change to electronic voting can best be achieved.

Part of the changes required will necessitate a redraft of UWA Statutes 9 & 12 to enable electronic voting to legally be used rather than the cumbersome paper-based arrangements currently specified. This will require the agreement of the UWA Senate, as it is the only body permitted under the UWA Act to initiate amendments to the Statutes.

Following receipt of support for this initiative and therefore for making the changes required to Statutes 9 & 12, the Deputy Warden Mr Paul McCann AM and I have met with Kim Heitman (UWA’s Legal Counsel) to seek his advice on both the process for making these changes and his endorsement for the proposed amendments to the Statutes.
He was impressed by the excellent work that has been carried out by the Statutes Committee in formulating the changes required to these Statutes to permit electronic voting to be implemented. I therefore wish to commend the work of this Committee and especially the individual efforts of Paul McCann, Garry Hawkes and Jonathan Strauss.

Hopefully their work will enable the changes proposed to the Statutes to become a reality during 2016 and therefore for Convocation to evaluate the benefits of introducing Electronic Voting for future elections during the following year. As part of these arrangements, an option will be offered for those who wish to continue to receive a paper ballot form.

**Volunteer Appreciation Function**

While the University has always ably demonstrated it appreciation to those who make financial contributions to UWA, it has not always formally thanked those who donate their time and expertise to University activities. This year as one of the initiatives of the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Kent Anderson, all volunteers and those that donate their time to the University were formally thanked at the inaugural Volunteers Appreciation function held on Wednesday 19th August.

On behalf of Convocation Council, I wish to express our thanks to Professor Kent Anderson for his decision to hold a Volunteers Appreciation function and for publically thanking Convocation Council for the work we undertake on behalf of the University.

**Adjunct Appointments**

Another group of those who donate their expertise and time to University activities in both teaching and research are those holding adjunct appointments at UWA. While there are over 1,000 individuals contributing to the University in this way, Convocation Council recognised that all were not treated equally. Those holding adjunct appointments who were UWA graduates were automatically members of Convocation and therefore eligible to both nominate for and to vote in elections for the UWA Senate.

However, many of those holding adjunct appointments who were not UWA graduates, were not aware that they were also eligible to become members of Convocation and therefore had the right to both nominate for and to vote in elections for the UWA Senate.

To overcome this discrepancy, earlier this year I wrote to all those holding adjunct appointments who were not graduates of UWA (and therefore not members of Convocation) to advise them of their eligibility to become life-long members of Convocation so that they can maintain a life-long connection with the University.

On behalf of Convocation Council, I therefore wish to extend a warm welcome to those new members who are eligible to attend an Ordinary Meeting for the first time.

**UWA Magazines Review**

During July, Professor Kent Anderson informed me that the University had taken a decision to review the magazines that it produces, including the Unview magazine that is distributed to all graduates. Professor Terri-ann White, the Director of UWA Publishing has been appointed to undertake this review.
As Professor Anderson was keen for Convocation Council to be consulted as part of the review, he requested Professor White to meet with members of Council to seek feedback.

As both Professor Anderson and Professor White were unable to attend the August meeting of Convocation Council, a meeting was arranged for Monday 17th August at 5.30 pm in the Convocation Council Room so that members of Council could provide their initial feedback.

Ten members of Council attended that meeting and were able to provide their feedback on the Terms of Reference, and to ask questions of both Professor Anderson and Professor White.

Those members of Convocation who wish to view the Terms of Reference for this review or who wish to provide comments on UWA magazines generally are invited to contact Professor Terri-ann White via email at terriann.white@uwa.edu.au

Engagement Framework for Convocation & UWA
During the past month, I have held two meetings with Professor Kent Anderson to develop an outline for what we have called an Engagement Framework to document how Convocation and UWA should relate to each other. The outline of the Framework is not yet fully developed and is currently a work in progress which we are both working on in our spare time.

One initiative already included is a proposal to allocate ‘strategic’ initiatives to the Warden of Convocation and ‘operational’ initiatives to the Deputy Warden of Convocation. As part of the Framework, we are proposing to prepare roles and responsibilities for both the Warden and the Deputy Warden so that once approved by Council, these could be used to inform future occupants of these positions of their duties and responsibilities.

During the next six months as a draft Framework is prepared, I will distribute it to Council for their consideration and input.

Strategic Plan
During the past six months, Convocation Council has also continued to consider its strategic priorities and how best to capitalise on one of the inherent strengths of Convocation - its unique relationship with the graduates of UWA and their role as life-long members of the University.

While many universities view their alumni as external stakeholders, the UWA Act created Convocation as an integral part of the University. In Section 4 of the Act and in Statute 17, it states that the University shall consist of the Senate, the staff, the students and the members of Convocation.

As a result, while graduates (and the other members of Convocation) may not regard themselves as on-going members of the University, legally this is their status under the UWA Act. The current staff and students are an important part of the University for the duration of their employment or studies, but it is only the members of Convocation who are granted life-long membership of the University.

This unique relationship has the potential to be a significant “point of difference” for UWA and therefore to enhance the benefits that may accrue to the University and graduates through this association.
Part of the challenge faced by the current Council of Convocation is to build on this relationship and to promulgate a clear understanding of the roles and functions of Convocation.

**Roles of Convocation**
In the current version of the UWA Act and Statutes, Convocation has been assigned five key roles. These can be summarised as follows:

**Representative Role**
- To represent the interests and opinions of members through effective communication and to present such views to the University and the community of Western Australia;

**Governance Role**
- To encourage members of Convocation to participate in the governance of the University through the election of Convocation members to the Senate and the review of amendments to University statutes;

**Contribution Role**
- To encourage members to support and contribute to the intellectual and cultural prosperity of the University community;

**Engagement Role**
- To promote professional and social links between members of Convocation by creating and supporting opportunities for graduate interaction; and

**Promotion Role**
- To promote the ideals and purpose of the University and Convocation to graduates and undergraduates, other members of the University and the community of Western Australia.

**Scholarships, Prizes and Awards**
One key way in which Convocation addresses its “Promotion” role is through the allocation of prizes and awards to promote academic excellence. Each year Convocation provides over 60 prizes and awards and we are keen to increase both the number and the financial quantum of these awards.

Over the past twelve months a considerable amount of work has been undertaken by the Awards Committee to realign these prizes and awards with the new UWA course structure.

Due to the excellent work undertaken by Clinical Professor Lesley Cala in her role as Convenor of the Awards Committee, we have also made substantial progress in increasing the number of prizes and awards, and in receiving increased funding for some of these awards. For example with the generosity of Professor Bryant Stokes AM RFD KSJ, for the next few years, the Matilda Award for Cultural Excellence will be funded at the increased amount of $5,000 per year.

Through her tireless efforts and those of the Convocation Awards Committee we were able to offer the following prizes and awards during 2015:

- 19 Post-Graduate Research Travel Awards each valued at $3000
- One Bryant Stokes Matilda Award for Cultural Excellence valued at $5000
- 35 undergraduate prizes (one per School) valued at $1000
• Sports Star of the Year with a value of $1000
• 2 Sports Scholarships (one male and one female athlete) each valued at $3000
• One Accommodation Scholarship for a student in one of the UWA residential Colleges valued at $4000

The total expenditure for these awards amounted to $114,000 per annum.

Convocation Awards Ceremony
This year, the Convocation Awards Ceremony was held on Friday 14th August in the Banqueting Hall of the University Club. I wish to commend Clinical Professor Lesley Cala, the Awards Committee and Juanita Perez for all their excellent work on both the awards program and the arrangements for the Convocation Awards Ceremony which resulted in another acclaimed outcome for Convocation Council.

Review of University Acts
Earlier this year, UWA was informed that the State Government would be undertaking a review of the Acts that govern the arrangements for each university in Western Australia. We are aware of discussions being held with Curtin and Murdoch Universities and that amendments have been drafted to enable the Acts of these Universities to meet future needs for development on their respective sites.

At the date of writing this report, we are not aware of any proposals for amendments to the UWA Act, although we anticipate that discussions will be held later this year regarding this issue.

Refurbishment of Convocation Council Room
As many members of Convocation will be aware, the monthly meetings of Convocation Council are held in the Irwin Street Buildings, which were restored with funding from Convocation to mark the 75th anniversary of the University. Given that no further works have been undertaken over the past 26 years, over the last twelve months arrangements have been made for the Convocation Council Room to be refurbished and upgraded to include provision for a screen and an electronic projector to more easily facilitate presentations to Council on the wide range of issues now being considered.

Convocation Council
In conclusion, I wish to thank all members of Convocation Council who have contributed to the successful delivery of our roles and functions during the past six months and to commend the splendid support we have all received from the Convocation Officer Ms Juanita Perez in her untiring efforts to implement our requests.

Adjunct Professor Warren Kerr AM
WARDEN OF CONVOCATION