CONVOCATION OF UWA GRADUATES

FIRST ORDINARY MEETING

MINUTES

4 MARCH 2015

The First Ordinary Meeting of Convocation was held on Friday 4th March 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Banquet Hall, University Club of WA.

The meeting was attended by the following graduates and guests:


The following members of Convocation asked that their apologies be recorded:


Ms Juanita Perez, Convocation Officer as Secretary

1. WELCOME

In opening the First Ordinary Meeting for 2015, the Warden of Convocation, Adjunct Professor Warren Kerr AM, welcomed the following guests:

- Guest speaker, Adjunct Professor Sue Murphy;
- Former Chancellor, Dr Ken Michael AC;
- Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Johnson;
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Community and Engagement, Professor Kent Anderson;
- Guild President, Ms Lizzy O'Shea;
- Deputy Warden of Convocation, Mr Paul McCann AM;
- Members of the UWA Senate and the Council of Convocation;
The Warden remarked that there were record numbers attending tonight and that as we were meeting on 4th March, it was Convocation Day, the 102nd Anniversary of the first meeting of Convocation. He then declared the meeting open at 6.32pm.

2. APOLOGIES
The Warden noted apologies from the Chancellor Dr Michael Chaney AO CITWA, and over 1000 other members of Convocation.

3. MINUTES OF THE SECOND ORDINARY MEETING 2014
A copy of the minutes of the Second Ordinary Meeting 2014 appeared at Attachment A of the First Ordinary Meeting 2015 booklet.

The motion to accept the minutes of the Second Ordinary Meeting held on 12th September 2014 (with the amendment of the date from the 19th September 2014); was proposed by Mrs Pauline Tremlett and seconded by Mr Paul McCann AM. The motion was carried.

4. BUSINESS ARISING
The Warden reported that following a question at the last meeting from Mr Ray Tauss, asking whether 6pm is the best time to commence these meetings, a survey was conducted of those Convocation members whose email address is known, an email was sent, asking whether they prefer 6pm or 7pm. The result was divided. Therefore, the Council of Convocation had decided that the start time for future meetings would be 6.30pm.

There was also a question at the last meeting raised by Mr Peter Farr regarding the number and value of prizes Convocation now provides each year. The Warden stated that a full list of these prizes and awards is provided in his Report, which is contained in Attachment D of the (First Ordinary Meeting 2015) booklet.

Following the last meeting, there was feedback from members indicating that they would like to have the opportunity to view the Agenda prior the meeting. The Warden explained that because of the cost involved with posting a printed copy to all members, the agenda papers will now be available online and a link provided in the reminder email sent in relation to future meetings.

5. CORRESPONDENCE
Following the Second Ordinary Meeting of 2014, the Warden reported that the largest amount of correspondence Convocation has received has been in relation to the development of the University endowment plans adjoining Underwood Ave
and Shenton Park. Because of this arrangements had been made for Convocation Council to receive a briefing on this issue and copies of the correspondence to be brought to the attention of the UWA Senate and the University's Executive team. Furthermore, the issues raised by Convocation members in this correspondence are now being considered as part of the ongoing decision making process in relation to the future development of these endowment plans.

6. RESULTS OF CONVOCATION ELECTIONS OF WARDEN, DEPUTY WARDEN, MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF CONVOCATION AND ONE MEMBER OF UWA SENATE

The Warden noted that each year Convocation conducts elections for the Warden, Deputy Warden and seven members of the twenty-one member Council of Convocation. The Warden and Deputy Warden are elected for a one-year term and each member of Council is elected for a three year term. This year there are two additional positions on Convocation Council to replace two members of Council who resigned last year.

In addition, Convocation also arranges elections for four members of the UWA Senate who will hold Office for four years. This year an election was held for one member of the Senate.

Declaration of election results for the Warden and Deputy Warden of Convocation

At the close of nominations, the Returning Officer was informed by the WA Electoral Commission that this year there was only one nomination for each of the positions of Warden and Deputy Warden of Convocation. The Warden was therefore advised by the WA Electoral Commission that he has been duly elected as the Warden and Mr Paul McCann AM, as the Deputy Warden. Both extended their thanks to those members who supported their continuation in these roles, especially during the implementation of the Reform program. Both will serve for a term of one year until March 2016.

Elections for Convocation Council

The Warden reported that there were nine positions up for election to Convocation Council this year. At the close of elections, the number of submissions was less than the available positions. Hence, each (valid) submission was elected unopposed. The Warden formally declared the following graduates elected to the Council of Convocation; each to serve a term of 3 years.

Paul Appleton
Devon Cuneo
He congratulated these candidates on their election to Convocation Council.

The Warden then paid tribute to the members of Convocation Council who completed their terms but did not seek re-election:

- Richard Harper;
- Arthur Hiemstra;
- Taiwo Sanusi;
- Tracy Taylor;
- Pierre Yang

Three of these members have been leaders; Tracy Taylor, Convener of Outreach Committee; Richard Harper, past Deputy Warden and Convener of the Awards Committee, and Arthur Hiemstra, Convenor of the Communications Committee and Treasurer for Convocation. The Warden thanked these retiring Councillors for their service to Convocation.

Since the close of nominations, a further four nominations have been received for the four vacant positions remaining on Council. Under the provisions of UWA Statue 9, the Warden indicated that if there were no further candidates, then he had the authority to declare these candidates appointed to Convocation Council.

As there were no further nominations, the Warden was about to declare these four candidates appointed to Convocation Council. However, one member of Council requested that the call for nominations at the meeting be repeated and in response to this second call for nominations another candidate indicated their interest in serving on Convocation Council. This meant that there were now five candidates for four vacancies. As a result, the Warden indicated that an election would need to be held for these positions.

As he did not wish to delay the meeting by conducting an election (estimated to take approximately an hour if all the procedures in the Statutes were followed) the Warden indicated that he would consult with UWA’s Legal Counsel as the most cost-effective way in which an election could be held.

(Subsequent to the meeting, one of the candidates who had submitted his nomination prior to the First Ordinary Meeting withdrew his nomination resulting again in their being four nominations for four vacancies. As a result the Warden subsequently declared the following candidates as appointed to Convocation Council:
Garry Hawkes;
Con Abbott;
Graham Harmsworth
Agi Gedeon

These results were subsequently notified to all members for whom we have email addresses in an email from the Warden.)

Declaration of the results of the election of one member of Senate by Convocation

The Warden stated that in November December last year (2014), there was also a call for nominations for one position on the UWA Senate. After being informed that a current member of the UWA Senate who’s term was due to end had decided not to seek re-election, the Warden indicated that he had submitted his nomination for the vacant position as he believed that there would be significant advantages in the Warden being a member of the UWA Senate. After the close of nominations, the WA Electoral Commission had informed him that he was elected unopposed. He indicated that he was surprised that there were no other nominations, but looked forward to contributing to UWA in this additional role on the UWA Senate.

7. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S REPORT

The Warden invited Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Johnson, to present his report.

A copy of the text of the Vice-Chancellor’s report appeared at Attachment B of the First Ordinary Meeting 2015 booklet.

In his address the Vice-Chancellor highlighted the following items that relate to his written report.

Federal Government’s Higher Education Reforms

The Vice-Chancellor indicated that he would not go through all the issues raised in his written report but wished to highlight two main issues - the Commonwealth Government’s attempts to have deregulation issues approved by Parliament, and the State Government’s intention to undertake a review of university acts and the opportunity this presented to again have the Warden represented on the UWA Senate.

He reflected that although national legislators were seemingly interested in the future of institutions of higher learning, their current deliberations were only causing uncertainty. In an attempt to provide some certainty for students, he indicated that
UWA had decided to give prospective students guidance as to what a fee regime may be, if there were to be deregulation.

However, at this stage there is no deregulation and no outlook as to what the legislative regime will be for universities in the future. This has consequences for students. By law the University is required to give fee information to international students before they enrol, yet it presently can’t give this information to domestic students.

The Vice-Chancellor pointed out that by June, 1700 highly specialized scientists and technicians will be made redundant across the country if funding does not continue. It will set Australia’s research capability back by years, if not decades, and highly skilled scientists world-wide will be severely discouraged from working in Australia. One of the research centres at UWA that will be affected by these proposed changes is the Indian Ocean Centre which collect information regarding the Indian Ocean. This will be closed down by the end of June if the Government does nothing. The Vice-Chancellor expressed that he felt despair in relation to the Federal Government’s inaction and stance.

As indicated in his opening remarks, the second main issue the Vice-Chancellor raised was the State Government’s decision to review university legislation that applies to all four public universities. He indicated that all four University Acts are outdated and need revision. He noted that Victoria undertook a similar review a few years ago. Although UWA hasn’t yet received a draft revised Act, he indicated that it did provide opportunities for improving the current legislation under which UWA operates. The Vice-Chancellor stated that one issue he would like to have considered is the opportunity for the Warden of Convocation to again become a member of the UWA Senate.

Following the Vice-Chancellor’s report, he agreed to take questions and the following queries were raised by members of the audience.

An attendee raised a concern, regarding the increased fee amount students are paying as a result of the Government funding reduction (which is by 20%). The Vice-Chancellor responded by describing how previous reviews had detailed how Australian universities were severely unfunded for teaching, so there needs to be an increase in fee amount to match that. The Vice-Chancellor explained that there are complexities in Government funding; that it’s paid differentially depending on the subjects studied. At UWA the majority of students study Science and Engineering. In line with this, how do we set a fee and make it clear to students what they are going to pay? Following the major curriculum reform in 2012, UWA is the only university in the country with a minimum entry threshold, where you can then study one of the four basic degrees as well as move between subjects. If
UWA took a stance that mimicked the Government’s differential funding, some courses would cost more than others, thereby discouraging students from following their intellectual passion. Therefore UWA has flat rated all undergraduate courses.

Next, Dr Joan Pope OAM expressed concern regarding the future of the UWA Extension Service, along with the non-renewal of the Director of the Extension Service contract. The Vice-Chancellor reflected how the Extension Service has been very important in the University’s history, however over the last 6 years it has dwindled to almost nothing. This has nothing to do with the people involved and everything to do with technology; with the huge access to online learning, people are no longer signing up for extension courses. However, the University intends to advertise public lectures including via Podcast. There is also consideration towards a Masters of Studies degree, aimed at members of the community who want to study because of the joy of learning.

Another attendee indicated their concern regarding the negative impact on the University’s reputation caused by media reports in relation to an academic member of staff who had been demoted. The Vice-Chancellor stated he does not discuss individual cases publicly and therefore declined to answer. He added that this policy applied to all those that were subject to investigations within the University, and therefore the University has not responded to these media reports.

On behalf of Judith Cullity, Michelle Marzo asked the Vice-Chancellor what the University is doing to redress the negligible, if any, presence of the Noongars in the Western suburbs, through their plans for Underwood Avenue. She raised reconciling with Noongar culture through acknowledging and actively sharing in their Ways, in plans for Underwood Avenue. She asked what the University’s intentions are regarding Aboriginal Title to that land.

The Vice-Chancellor responded that the University’s approach to Aboriginal Title is subject to broader agreements that are currently under discussion between the State Government and various Aboriginal Land Councils. He added that the University however, works very closely with Noongar Elders and is very proud of its record of Indigenous students who are studying and have graduated from UWA. In relation to recognising Noongar heritage, the Vice-Chancellor disclosed that there are plans to build a new School of Indigenous Studies, with a $15 million budget. As part of our Centenary fundraising campaign, there are also very substantial plans to build an Indigenous Cultures Museum, working very closely with Noongar Elders so that they are in the lead conceptually. If it can happen, it would be the most significant site of Noongar recognition in the City of Perth. The estimated budget is $70 million.
Mr Peter Alcock expressed concern regarding the future of the University of Third Age, as it is connected to the Extension Service. The Vice-Chancellor replied that essentially its connection is with the University as a whole.

Following these questions, the Warden thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his report.

8. **GUILD PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

The Warden invited Ms Lizzy O’Shea, the current Guild President, to present her report to Convocation. Miss O’Shea spoke to the Guild President’s report. A copy of the text of the Guild President’s Report appeared at Attachment C of the First Ordinary Meeting 2015 booklet.

The Guild President thanked Convocation for welcoming her into her role as Guild President.

**2015 Strategic Projects, University Executive Engagement**

Miss O’Shea reported that in 2015, she will be focusing on meaningful engagement between the UWA Student Guild and the University Executive. She will meet quarterly with the Executive, to showcase importance things the students are doing on campus.

**2015 Strategic Projects, Engagement**

Engagement with student groups who have historically been excluded from the various processes within the University and Guild is also a priority this year. There is currently no representative for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and disability groups.

**Student Activities, O-Week and Returners’ Week**

Miss O’Shea reported that O-Week was successful, with over 200 clubs on campus.

**Strategic Projects**

The Guild President touched on the half-cohort, with reference to the longer term; whilst this group progresses towards graduation.

She outlined the conflict between trying to have a university environment where students want to stay on campus; fostering a thriving student culture; and having a strong online learning environment. Miss O’Shea hopes to give an update regarding this in six months’ time.

**Government Issues**

With regards to fee deregulation, she takes the position, as a Member of Senate, that this isn’t the best for the University environment. She then touched on her
role on Senate and the conflicts between being an advocate as President and a representative voice on UWA’s governing body. While she conceded it is difficult, she strongly believes a student voice on the Senate is important.

Ms O’Shea then responded to questions from the audience.

Clarification was sought from an audience member in relation to the Guild President’s point regarding the distinction between her role as representing the Guild and her membership within the Senate. Miss O’Shea responded by reiterating that she felt that it is important to have the Guild President on the Senate; with the interests of the students; and not the Guild, at heart.

Next, Miss O’Shea was asked how she’s managing to run the Guild on a surplus budget. She responded by remarking on the work of her Finance team and stating that the financial deficit has been in place for a long time. They have learnt to cope with this deficit, by re-evaluating the catering strategy, for example. Her team also operates over a 3-5 year strategy.

Mr Charles Jesop asked what are the qualities looked for in Officers. The Guild President responded that the Officers are elected by the collective. To be broadly representative of such a diverse group of students, there are two such Officers, they are autonomous, and alternate in their roles. The Queer Department is a collective for students who identify as LGBTQI Plus; it is a safe place on campus and advocates for the needs of its members.

Following these questions, the Warden thanked the Guild President for her report.

9. WARDEN’S REPORT

The Warden, Adjunct Professor Warren Kerr AM, spoke to his report. A copy of the Warden’s Report appears at Attachment D of the First Ordinary Meeting 2015 booklet. The Warden highlighted the following issues from his report.

The Warden reported that in his previous report he had foreshadowed the appointment of a new member to the UWA Executive, with the responsibility for engagement with UWA graduates. He was now pleased to announce that Professor Kent Anderson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Community and Engagement had commenced his role in 1st October 2014 and welcomed Professor Anderson to the stage.

Professor Anderson thanked the audience for its welcome and said it’s a tremendous honour to be present. He compared his native Alaska to Western Australia and spoke about the notion of ‘community’, for UWA.
He then reported on the results of a survey that had jointly been undertaken last year as a joint initiative between Convocation and the Office of Development & Alumni Relations.

One positive aspect contained in the survey’s results was that half of UWA graduates have been back to campus in the past twelve months and recognised that UWA founded and continues to run and invest in the Perth International Arts Festival.

Professor Anderson reported that the Graduate Survey was the most extensive research done on graduates’ opinions. The Survey format was derived from Stanford University, and is benchmarked by forty other universities, world-wide. 6500 graduates completed the form, and Professor Anderson reported that generally graduates felt very satisfied with their experience at UWA, however there is still room for improvement. Pride was the top factor that excited graduates about UWA, including their continued experience, whilst students and the hub of knowledge; in the form of research, exchanging ideas and debate; was found central to the UWA experience. What didn’t resonate with graduates was global challenges, being amongst the top fifty universities by 2050 or being an accessible partner.

The survey found that graduates want to hear from students and professors/academics. Professor Anderson reported that this has already been responded to with the Alumni News. Mostly, graduates wanted continuing intellectual stimulation from the University, whilst career was important for young graduates. Volunteering was also found significant. Survey respondents mostly identified with UWA as a whole; not Faculties or Schools and regarded the campus grounds as very important. They preferred the use of “UWA”, not “The University of Western Australia”, with the young generation looking to further abbreviate this.

Based on this, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Community and Engagement stated that connecting, conversing and contributing back were his department’s strategic goals. In sum, the university aims for a better net promoter score, it recognises the importance of the student experience, the voices of students and academics and identifying with the university as a whole. He stated that graduates’ stories are the lifeblood of the University.

10. **CONVOCATION OFFICER’S REPORT**

The Warden stated that the Convocation Officer’s report appeared as Attachment E of the First Ordinary Meeting 2015 booklet. This report contains a list of graduates whose whereabouts have become unknown since the last Ordinary Meeting. Those attending the meeting were asked to review the list and to notify
the Convocation Officer Ms Juanita Perez if their contacts details were known to them.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

Before concluding the meeting, the Warden asked if there were any other items of business or questions that any member of Convocation wished to raise.

Dr Joan Pope OAM recalled how twenty-five years ago the Convocation newsletter “Crawley” had ceased and members wrote for “Uniview” instead. She expressed distress that for 2015, only two issues of Uniview were planned. She also pointed that that in the Graduate Survey 65% of respondents “got their information about UWA from Uniview”. She asked if this is because it is intended for the publication to be read online. Professor Anderson responded that the print publication is very important to the community and that Uniview needs to be reviewed.

Another attendee raised the bias of (approximately) 7000 survey respondents. Professor Anderson responded that the survey was sent to those graduates with known email addresses, and that in terms of benchmark, this survey saw more respondents. Also, using email resolves the geographical bias by including graduates who have moved elsewhere. Age distribution is also accounted for.

The Warden stated he’d received a request to ask if there’s any members of Convocation who wish to volunteer to assist graduands at the graduation ceremonies in March. If so please see Juanita Perez at the Convocation Office.

Conclusion

There being no further business, the Warden declared the meeting closed and introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Adjunct Professor Sue Murphy, 2014 recipient of the International Association of Australia’s Women of Water award, to speak on the topic “Water Forever: whatever the weather”.

Next Meeting

The Second Ordinary Meeting of Convocation for 2015 will be held at 6:00 pm on Friday 18th September 2015, at the University Club of WA.