

CURRENT ISSUES BEING CONSIDERED BY CONVOCATION COUNCIL

The following list of items have been compiled to provide an overview of current issues being considered by Convocation Council.

Strategic Plan

During the past six months, Convocation Council has been considering 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.

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.

At the March meeting of Council, the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan was approved by Convocation Council to guide our strategies over the next four years. A copy of the Strategic Plan is available on this website.

The basis for the Strategic Plan derives directly from UWA’s Strategic Plan and from the sections of the UWA Act and Statutes which designate the roles and functions 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.

To these Convocation Council has added another role (**Management**) to provide strong leadership and coordination so that Council’s statutory roles are fulfilled.

Annual Report of UWA

Another important document which aims to provide an overview of UWA activities and the progress it is making to achieve its objective of becoming one of the world's top 50 universities by 2050 is the Annual Report. Copies of the Annual Report of the University are available online for members of Convocation on the UWA website at <http://www.annualreport.uwa.edu.au/annual-report-2015> 'Hard' copies of this report are also available from the Convocation Office.

Review of University Acts

During 2015, the University was informed that the State Government was undertaking a review of the Acts that govern the arrangements for each university in Western Australia. The catalyst for this review were requests received from Curtin and Murdoch Universities for amendments to be drafted to their legislation to meet their future needs for development on their respective sites.

Since then, the terms of reference of the review has been widened to consider many other aspects including the size and composition of the governing councils of each University. Full details of what is proposed is now publicly available following the tabling in State Parliament of the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill on 29 May 2016. The latest advice received from the State Government is that further debate regarding this Bill will now not occur until August 2016 due to a back-log of other legislative priorities.

On 24 June, the Warden of Convocation sent an email to all members of Convocation seeking their views on the proposed amendments to the UWA Act. The responses to this email are now being considered by Convocation Council.

Use of Electronic Voting for Convocation Elections

One of the cost-saving measures identified by Convocation Council is to replace the costly postal voting arrangements required by the UWA Statutes with an electronic voting system for all Convocation elections.

Whilst Convocation Council still wishes to introduce electronic voting for Convocation elections, given the potential changes to the UWA Act foreshadowed by the State Government, this work has temporarily been put on hold.

Once a decision on the proposed changes to the UWA Act and Statutes is finalised by the State Government, a decision will be made on the best course of action to pursue to implement this cost-saving initiative.

UWA Magazines Review

Last year the University initiated a review to evaluate the magazines that it produces, including the Uniview magazine that is distributed to all graduates. Professor Terriann White, the Director of UWA Publishing, was appointed to undertake this review.

As the elected representatives of graduates, Convocation Council has been one of the main groups consulted as part of the review, in order to provide feedback on the content, format and timeliness of Uniview.

During the course of the review, Professor White has met with Convocation Council on two occasions and has had two further meetings with key members of Council. In addition, an appropriately qualified member of Convocation Council, Jim Paparo, was invited to be a member of the Review Committee chaired by Professor White.

Based on the feedback derived from these consultative sessions, one of the key recommendations arising from the review is for UWA to continue with printed editions of Uniview but to have it linked to a website in a similar manner to the Bostonia magazine produced by the University of Boston for its graduate community (see <https://www.bu.edu/bostonia/winter-spring16/>)

Following the retirement of the long-term Editor of Uniview Trea Wiltshire, a new Editor (Ms Liz McGrath) has recently been appointed.

Review of Graduation Ceremonies

Another review of great interest to Convocation Council is that currently underway to evaluate arrangements for the graduation ceremonies undertaken each year at UWA. This has been prompted by the significant increase in the number of graduation ceremonies resulting from the new course structure with many students now obtaining both an undergraduate and post-graduate qualification (and therefore attending two graduation ceremonies).

As a result, the number of graduation ceremonies has increased from 7-10 ceremonies in past years, to 23 ceremonies this year. The time and resources required from University personnel to attend and manage this number of ceremonies has become the catalyst for an evaluation of how to improve the process whilst ensuring that the unique UWA graduation experience is maintained and hopefully enhanced.

A Working Group has been established with representatives from all sectors of the University involved with organising graduation ceremonies. Chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Community & Engagement Professor Kent Anderson, this Group also includes representatives of all stakeholders including the Students Guild and Convocation. Work is still underway with specific improvements being trialled at individual graduation ceremonies held during 2016 with a view to more permanent arrangements being implemented during 2017.

Review of Friends Groups

Another recent review in which Convocation Council has participated is the review of Friends Groups conducted by Dr Sue Boyd announced by the Vice-Chancellor at the Second Ordinary Meeting for 2015. The aim of this review was to identify the role and functions of the various Friends Groups and to prepare recommendations on the governance, resource requirements and support these Groups require to effectively undertake their functions.

Dr Boyd's report was considered by the Senate on 14th March and by the Council of Convocation at its meeting in May. Convocation Council then prepared a response to Dr Boyd's review which was then considered by the University in the preparation of its response.

The University's response (including Convocation Council's input) to each of Dr Boyd's recommendations were considered by Senate at its meeting held on 20th June. Copies of these documents are available from the Convocation Office.

Convocation Day

Convocation Day celebrates the anniversary of the first meeting of Convocation which was held on 4th March 1913. This year, Convocation Day fell on a Friday in weeks surrounded by graduations. As a result, a decision was taken to undertake only a low-key celebration with the intention to plan for a major event next year, when Convocation Day will fall on a Saturday.

However, this year we commenced an annual tradition by inviting the President of the Guild to plant a tree on the campus to symbolise the close working relationship we are forging with the Students Guild.

A native red flowering gum tree was planted by UWA's 103rd Guild President, Ms Maddie Mulholland, in a location between the UWA Guild Tavern, Refectory and Shenton House.

It is hoped that this tree planting to celebrate Convocation Day will become an annual event to commemorate Convocation Day each year. The timing is apt, with the event falling at the same time as UWA graduation ceremonies – ceremonies where graduands receive their degrees and automatically become members of Convocation.

Planning is about to commence for Convocation Day on 3th March next year with the objective of encouraging all graduates to return to UWA by having a Saturday full of activities.

Convocation Council

While the topics highlighted above illustrate the range of issues considered by Convocation Council, it does not convey a coverage of the more 'routine' matters considered by Convocation Council at its monthly meetings. To implement our Strategic Plan more effectively, our committee arrangements has been re-structured so that issues pertaining to awards, scholarships and events can be more closely aligned to our strategic objectives, whilst freeing up resources for long-term strategic initiatives. All members of Council are encouraged to take an active role in at least one of these committees.

Convocation Council currently represents the membership of Convocation through a Council of 21 elected members who are individually elected for a 3-year term with seven Councillors completing their term on a rotating basis every three years. In addition, the Warden of Convocation and the Deputy Warden are elected on an annual basis for a one-year term. Convocation Council comprises the 21 elected members, the Warden and Deputy Warden as well as the Immediate Past Warden, with the Warden of Convocation chairing each monthly Council meeting.

Following the recent election, the current members of Convocation Council are as follows:

Warden of Convocation	Adjunct Professor Warren Kerr AM
Deputy Warden	Dr Joan Pope OAM
Immediate Past Warden	Associate Professor David Hodgkinson
Dr Mark Andrich	Council Member (2016-2019)
Dr Libby Feutrill	Council Member (2016-2019)
Dr Agi Gedeon	Council Member (2016-2019)
Dr Susan King	Council Member (2016-2019)
Ms Julie Matheson	Council Member (2016-2019)
Dr Doug McGhie	Council Member (2016-2019)
Ms Nee Nee Ong	Council Member (2016-2019)
Mr Peter Robinson	Council Member (2016-2018)
Mr Con Abbott	Council Member (2015-2018)
Mr Paul Appleton	Council Member (2002-2018)
Ms Devon Cuneo	Council Member (2011-2018)

Mr Garry Hawkes	Council Member (2015-2018)
Ms Diana Salvaris	Council Member (2015-2018)
Clinical Professor Lesley Cala	Council Member (2010-2017)
Mr Colin Campbell-Fraser	Council Member (2005-2017)
Ms Felicity Farrelly	Council Member (2014-2017)
Mr Graham Harmsworth	Council Member (2015-2017)
Mr James Paparo	Council Member (2014-2017)
Mr Jonathan Strauss	Council Member (2011-2017)
Mrs Pauline Tremlett	Council Member (1988-2017)
Dr Brett Davies	Council Member (2016-2017)

Further information regarding Convocation and full details of the background of each Councillor is available on the Convocation website www.convocation.uwa.edu.au