

New Hall



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Consultation Paper on University Governance

Discussion of the Council's proposals on Governance (*Reporter No.5873, 6 Feb. 2002*) both informally, and formally in the College Council, produced a wide range of opinion. Both in fundamental educational terms and in the light of the very positive outcome in Cambridge of the College Fee negotiations and the growing success of "Collegiate Cambridge" in development terms, any downgrading of the role of the colleges in the governance of Cambridge was seen as a retrograde and potentially damaging step. The college also wished to sustain the democratic role of the Regent House (while strongly in favour of a reform of Discussions, the current form of which was not thought to have much to do with a sound participatory democracy.)

The College Council wishes to make the following responses in relation to the Sections of the original document:

4. Principles

New Hall Council agrees with the principles stated here. We would emphasise the need to reflect the central role of the Colleges in University affairs, given their key role in educational strategy.

5. Vice-Chancellor & Pro-Vice-Chancellors

5.3 New Hall Council agrees with the proposal that the Vice-Chancellor should cease to chair the Council.

5.4 New Hall Council suggests that the Vice-Chancellor should be supported by up to four (not five) Pro-Vice-Chancellors, none of whom should assume line management responsibilities in their role as Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

5.5 New Hall Council suggests that the work load of Pro Vice-Chancellors should be regarded as half-time rather than 2/3 time. This would allow a Pro Vice-Chancellor to devote sufficient time to another major endeavour (whether collegiate or departmental), thereby giving him/her something substantial to come back to once the term of office as Pro-Vice-Chancellor was complete.

5.7 New Hall Council agrees with the proposal that the Vice-Chancellor's term of appointment should be seven years.

6. The Council and the General Board

New Hall Council agrees with the principles stated here.

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7. The Composition of the Council

- 7.3 New Hall Council agrees with the proposal that there should be three external members of Council, (bringing Cambridge into line with other universities). Consideration should be given to the need for any remuneration or other form of recompense.
- 7.4 New Hall Council agrees that one external member should chair Council, and another the Audit Committee.
- 7.7 New Hall Council agrees that there should be places for three assistant staff on Council.

Cont.

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- 7.10 New Hall Council does not agree with the proposed reduction from four to three in the representation of Heads of Houses. Colleges might be invited to consider using any one of these four positions for another appropriate office (e.g., Senior Tutor, Bursar).
- 7.11 New Hall Council does not agree with the proposal that the Chairs of the Councils of the Schools should be *ex officio* members of Council. They have a role on the General Board, Planning and Resources Committee and Resource Management Committee. They will inevitably represent their own particular constituency, and there will be no 'fresh look' at Council on any of the business they have already transacted elsewhere. (There is also a view that if they were to become members of Council, the General Board should be abolished).

9. The Regent House

- 9.1 New Hall Council does not agree with the proposal to allow academic staff presently excluded to qualify for membership of the Regent House. This is partly because rules for eligibility for this group seem to be confused and hard to define, but it is also because of the resulting imbalance of department:college and science:arts interests in the University.
- 9.2 New Hall Council does not agree with the proposal to increase the number of signatories required to call for a ballot on a Grace, an amendment to a Grace, or a request for a Discussion beyond 10. However, if the size of the Regent House should be increased (as proposed in 9.1), then 20 would seem to be a desirable limit.

NEWNHAM COLLEGE
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18 March 2002

The Registry
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Dear Tim,

The Newnham Governing Body has discussed the proposals for changes in University Governance, and wishes to make the following comments

1 Connection between Governance and University Mission Statement.

As they stand the proposed reforms of governance are not connected to the University's mission statement, or to the strategic plan currently under development. Lack of connection to the strategic plan seems to us appropriate since the reformed University Council will have to take responsibility for initiating future changes in the strategic plan: so it is important not to embed a particular conception of the strategic plan. However it is hard to judge the adequacy of proposals that are not explicitly connected to the mission statement, and we would hope that connections will be made explicit in future drafts.

We were particularly concerned that the current proposals make little reference to teaching, or specifically to undergraduate teaching. We believe that this is not something that can be viewed as below the level of the Council's activity, or merely as a task of the General Board. We cannot take the University's reputation in Undergraduate education for granted, and University governance needs to provide explicit protection for teaching and in particular for undergraduate teaching. Since the Colleges are strongly committed to teaching, and specifically to undergraduate teaching, many of our comments on teaching issues relate them to College interests. We have focussed mainly on these educational issues and the overall proposals for governance rather than on more specific changes in University procedures.

2 The Office of Vice Chancellor

There was considerable support for the proposed changes in the office of Vice-Chancellor, and in particular for ending the role conflict that chairing the Council creates. The Vice-Chancellor should be freed to take on the role of principal executive officer of the University at Council meetings.

FROM THE PRINCIPAL: DR ONORA O'NEILL, CBE FBA

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3 External Membership of the Council

We support the proposal for external membership of the Council, with two provisos:

- a) External members need to command the support of the University, and its component institutions. Nomination by a body nominated by the Council is too incestuous to achieve this. Open nomination is clearly inappropriate for this particular task. We suggest that the nominating body be representative of constituencies within the University, and in particular that it include one or more representatives jointly nominated by the Colleges Committee and the Senior Tutors' Committee; we believe that this would ensure that due weight was given to the educational mission of the University in nominating external members.
- b) Many universities have drawn the external members of their Councils from few parts of society, usually from business. This would be too narrow for Cambridge. The nominating body needs to represent constituencies within the University so that it can ensure that external members command the support of the University.

4 Internal Membership of the Council

Considerable reservations were expressed about the proposals for internal membership of the new Council. If six Heads of School are members both of the General Board and the Council (not to mention their own School Boards) excessive weight will be given to research and managerial interests. The University should take careful thought before it formalises the power of the big 'barons' (or 'baronesses') to this degree, without securing comparable power for other interests, and in particular for education.

Under this Heading we also noted the following points:

- a) Reduction of the number of Heads of House to three in a larger Council reduces the representation of those most concerned for undergraduate education. The implications for University-College relations will be considerable, particularly since future Vice-Chancellors and Pro-Vice-Chancellors may not be (or have been) Heads of House. The University receives major funding for teaching and for undergraduate education: the structure of the Council should reflect this priority.
- b) It is unrealistic to view student members as representing the interests of undergraduate education, since they are likely to continue to focus on a narrower range of undergraduate interests. They in any case serve for too short a period to carry this task.
- c) The proposals are likely to create a polarised Council, in which powerful and knowledgeable Heads of Schools play a weighty role, while student members and assistant staff members will often have

much less extensive knowledge or experience. Yet the elected academic members of the Council may or may not be centrally concerned with or knowledgeable about teaching or undergraduate education. Although the General Board is primarily concerned with education, we believe that the proposed restructuring of the Council would secure too few members who were fully aware of undergraduate issues. There should be specific provision to secure experience of undergraduate education on the Council, for example by including an experienced Senior Tutor or experienced Directors of Studies.

5 Connections between Governance and Resource Allocation

The RAM proposals are ostensibly independent of the governance proposals, but there are close connections between them and the proposed structure for the Council. Both entrench the power of the Schools without countervailing structures to Support University wide interests. We offer some comments on these connections.

- a) We welcome the decision to top slice funding for undergraduate education, so removing and protecting those funds from disputes between the Schools.
- b) While it has been instructive to look at the proposed RAM, we believe that if implemented it would harm undergraduate education, the interests of the Colleges and the reputation of the University. We do not see why the University should follow HEFCE resource allocation assumptions, or why it should spend 4.2 times as much of all income on each medical student as on each arts students (how many such expensive students should the University accept?). HEFCE factors are not relevant in allocating non-HEFCE funding, and not mandatory in allocating HEFCE income. There is no reason to equate University turnover with success (we are not a company, we don't pay dividends; our success is measured in other terms). University autonomy should not be foregone in resource allocation decisions, which should reflect the University's own strategic goals.
- c) The effects of the changed balance of power on the Council and of the proposed RAM on the School of Arts and Humanities are particularly worrying for the Colleges. The Colleges already fund a large number of posts in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In some Arts faculties CTOs provide a high proportion of the RAE input, as well as providing infrastructure for Arts UTOs whose faculties do not always provide workspace. If University provision in these areas worsens demands on Colleges will increase.
- d) Arts and Humanities includes a number of Faculties which have high numbers of staff in relation to their numbers of students, including Oriental Studies. Most Universities do not support these fields, which would be endangered nationally if Cambridge used a HEFCE-based RAM. However, if the cost of supporting these fields is simply spread

across the larger Arts Faculties, reducing staff levels will create intolerable demands on some Faculties, and pressures to end the supervision system. We believe strongly that the current RAM is not an appropriate model for Cambridge unless it reaches a strategic decision to end the present supervision system. In the meantime any plausible RAM needs to take explicit account of the fact that the University is supporting minority and endangered subjects; the costs should be spread more evenly by providing special factor payments or top slicing.

6 Membership of the Colleges and of the Regent House

Opportunity should be taken to smooth out all anomalies in membership of the Regent House to include all full time College academic and academic-related staff, whether or not they are Fellows of Colleges. Membership of Faculties should also be made automatic for relevant College staff. Membership of Colleges for University academic related and other staff who are not UTOs is increasingly demanded and is not cost free: the reciprocal memberships which are virtually cost free should be automatic.

Yours sincerely



cc: Secretary, Colleges Committee



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Dr T. Mead
Registry
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13 March 2002

Dear Tim,

Governance

I enclose Pembroke's response to the consultation document as requested in the Vice-Chancellor's letter of 5 February. It results from an open meeting of the Fellowship, followed by discussion in the Governing Body. It reflects a considerable degree of consensus, though some strong individual views lie outside that broad area. But I think I should make clear one general point.

Pembroke's comments, like those of several other Colleges, appear highly critical. It is not our intention to obstruct change or to undermine the work of the drafters of the discussion document. There is much in it with which we agree and we share the conviction that the University for all its academic and research strength needs improved systems of administration and government. We will continue to work constructively to that end.

On a narrower point, I wonder (and this is not a College view since we have not discussed it collectively) whether it might not be wiser to separate reform of the Regent House from the wider proposals. Changes in the composition and procedures of the Regent House appear to address real but rather special problems and it would be a pity if the Regent House, feeling its own position under threat, were on that account to be more sceptical of the other proposals with which it will be faced.

*Yours sincerely,
Roger*

c.c. Secretary of the Colleges Committee.

Governance of the University

1. General Observations

1. The Consultation Paper is insufficiently explicit in describing the specific objectives that the proposed institutional reforms are designed to achieve and against which they can be judged. §§ 3.3 and 3.4 identify a number of claimed deficiencies in the present structures, but the Consultation Paper does not identify factors which have contributed hitherto to the success of the University and which should be sustained and enhanced through any institutional reform. The deficiencies identified in sub-paragraphs (i) to (vi) are insufficient in themselves to justify all the structural changes in the form in which they are proposed. For instance, the objective in § 3.3 (iii) to make the Council “more representative, more responsible, and more effective” would be better served by including a representative of the College Senior Tutors than by a representative of University assistant staff. More generally, we are apprehensive that the proposed structural changes are intended to repair situations in which mistakes were made or systems failed, but which are not themselves susceptible of systematic reform (cf. § 3.4 final sentence). We would urge that any revised paper should make clear how the objectives of the reforms relate to the specific proposals.

2. The success of the University is built upon the effective cooperation between departments, Colleges and the central administration. The Consultation Paper should have been more explicit about the ways in which the proposed structural reforms will enhance and facilitate that cooperation. We would endorse the central role recognised for Colleges in the University’s affairs in §§ 2.5 and 4.1 (iii). We consider, however, that the Consultation Paper gives little attention to how this might best be realised within the framework of the structural changes proposed. Indeed, the only specific measure concerns the reduction in the number of Heads of House on Council (§ 7.10). If the University is to enhance its capacity to take decisions and oversee their implementation in areas such as educational strategy, then further consideration has to be given to the mechanisms by which Colleges are involved in the processes of initiating policy.

3. At a number of points in our specific comments, we will raise issues concerning the lack of clarity in the organisational structure that emerges from the proposals. We suggest that an organisational chart setting out the relationships between the individuals and committees should form an annex to the revised proposals.

4. All organisational change has its costs. In addition, the creation of new leadership posts and their administrative support will increase the cost of central administration. These may well be beneficial, but they need to be rigorously costed with an explanation of where additional funding for the posts and ancillary support is to be found. In particular, it would be helpful for the Consultation Paper to identify ways in which the proposals will reduce administrative burdens on academic staff or will generate new opportunities or income streams.

2. The Need for Change and the Principles of Governance (§§ 3 and 4)

5. We consider that the structural reforms ought to explain more fully how existing contact between the Senior Tutors’ Committee and the central university will be developed. The Consultation Paper contains principles that acknowledge the important role of Colleges in educational strategy, but it has no proposals to turn this into a workable commitment (see § 2 above).

6. The principle of academic democracy, as exhibited in Colleges and Regent House, is a distinctive feature of Cambridge. § 4.1 (i) recognises its importance within the new arrangements. We are concerned that specific problems have been taken as the reason for systemic changes, which may actually diminish the values that the Consultation Paper seeks to promote.

7. We are unpersuaded that the proposals, as formulated, will enhance accountability and executive responsibility (§ 4.1 (ii) and (iv)). A clear statement of lines of reporting and accountability is required (see § 3 above and § 11 below).

3. Vice-Chancellorship and Pro-Vice-Chancellors (§ 5)

8. We welcome the proposed clarification of the role and functions of the Vice-Chancellor, and also the revision to the length of tenure of office. It is difficult to assess the contribution of other proposals in this paper without greater clarity concerning the revised functions that the Vice-Chancellor will perform. Any revised paper should at least summarise the main functions that it is proposed that the Vice-Chancellor should perform.

9. While it is clear that, under the proposals, the Vice-Chancellor will no longer chair Council, his role in relation to the General Board, Regent House and professorial appointments is not made clear. Greater clarity would enable a better assessment of the need for the Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

10. The role of Pro-Vice-Chancellors differs from institution to institution. In some institutions, they have executive functions, in others they are responsible managerially for parts of the administration, in others they function more as catalysts and facilitators for policy initiation and development. Without a clearer job description in the Consultation Paper, it is impossible to understand the role the proposed Pro-Vice-Chancellors will play (e.g. compared with the Chairs of the Councils of the Schools and the chief administrative officers) and to assess the need for the number of posts which is proposed.

11. We are concerned that the lines of responsibility of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors are unclear. Will they be responsible to the Vice-Chancellor or merely to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for internal University affairs? Will the relevant senior administrative officers in their fields (e.g. the Director of Personnel) report to them or to the Registry? (§ 5.5 and Annex 2 are very unclear about the sources of support upon which the Pro-Vice-Chancellors can call.) Overall, we consider that the prospect of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the Chairs of the Councils of the Schools, and the heads of the Unified Administrative Service all reporting to the Vice-Chancellor is unsatisfactory and is unlikely to work. Too many people are reporting directly to him such that he will find it hard to keep the team together. Some of the new post holders will have to report in only a mediated fashion. A clear statement of lines of responsibility here is required.

12. We welcome the procedure for application and nomination of Pro-Vice-Chancellors set out in § 5.6. We consider that an open process is desirable and that the nominating committee should contain some representative of the Colleges.

4. The Council and the General Board (§§ 6-8.1)

13. We are not convinced by the arguments in § 6 that the division of responsibilities between the Council and the General Board should be maintained. The paper itself admits the lack of clarity in the current division of responsibilities (§ 6.3). In addition, the paper suggests that major decisions will be taken by joint committees of the Council and the General Board (see §§ 5.6, 6.7, and 8.1). A single body, operating through sub-committees, would be a more coherent arrangement for establishing executive responsibility and accountability (§ 4.1, principles (ii) and (iv)). Such a single body would have clear lines of authority.

14. Should the Council continue in anything like the form proposed, there is a substantial body of opinion in favour of having external members on Council. The Consultation Paper should explain more clearly the contribution that the external members will make. Is their role to offer a distinctive source of advice to the University and to the Vice-Chancellor in developing the strategy of the University, or is it to be a visible sign of the public accountability of the University for its use of public and charitable monies? We consider that the issue of improving decision-making is the more important.

15. In broad terms, we do not think that the size of the Council should be increased substantially. A body of 26 members is going to be too large to work effectively as a decision-making organ. If the Council is to have a proper role in relation to policy and strategic development (§ 6.4), then it is important that there

should be a Senior Tutor represented in its membership. We consider this connection with the educational role of the Colleges as more important than the inclusion of three representatives of the assistant staff (§§ 7.7, 7.8, and 7.12). A significant number of us are concerned about the size of the *ex officio* representation proposed for the new Council. Are there other ways in which the Chairs of the Schools might be linked into the strategic and financial planning process, once devolved financial management is in place?

16. We note the enhanced role which members of the Council will play. If they are to have sufficient time to perform their duties, some attention will have to be paid to the issues of training and, possibly, partial relief from other duties.

5. Chairs of the Councils of the Schools (§§ 8.2-8.3)

17. We note the substantially increased role that the Chairs of the Schools will perform, particularly as resource-centre managers under the Resource Allocation Model. We accept that such a strategically important role requires them to be closely involved in the work of the University Council and the General Board (in so far as those bodies continue to exist in their present form). We agree that the functions of the Chairs needs to be clarified not only in the Statutes (§ 8.3 (i)), but also by a clear job description which should form part of the revised version of the Consultation Paper.

18. We note the additional costs associated with the growth of the role of Chairs of the Schools (§ 8.3 (iv) and (v)). In assessing the demands of the new functions, it would be helpful if the extent of transfer of resources from existing central university administration could be identified. We would be concerned if the effect of 'developing' the role of the Chairs leads, in practice, to a reduction in the overall amounts available for the academic purposes of the University.

6. Regent House (§ 9)

19. We can see some benefits from expanding the membership of Regent House to include all who contribute significantly to the achievement of the University's purposes and form part of its academic community. At the same time, we note that the expansion will shift the emphasis within Regent House towards graduate matters and departments (especially those with substantial numbers of research staff), and away from undergraduate matters and Colleges. The implications of the change in composition should be reflected in a revised version of the Consultation Paper. Furthermore, the proposals for a wider membership set out in §§ 7.6 to 7.8 and 9.1 need to be developed to set out clearly the full criteria for membership. In this respect, the statements in §§ 7.8 and 9.1 are not fully consistent.

20. Whilst we appreciate the disquiet felt about the conduct of business in Regent House, we are not convinced that § 9.2 proposes remedies which will cure the problems. The concerns about the business of Regent House relate primarily to the conduct of the Discussions, rather than any abuse of the processes for requesting Discussions or calling for a ballot. The appropriate remedy lies in reform to the rules of procedure of Regent House, rather than in an increase in the number of signatories required for a request for a ballot or for a Discussion.

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19th March 2002

Dr T.J. Mead,
The Registry,
The Old Schools,
University of Cambridge.

Dear Registry,

University Governance: response from Peterhouse to the 4th February 2002 consultation paper

The Governing Body of Peterhouse authorises me to comment as follows on the consultation paper on University Governance, published by authority of the University Council and the General Board on 4th February 2002.

In general, my Governing Body's primary concern is naturally with the impact of what is proposed upon the autonomy of the colleges: in this connection, it is disappointing that consultation with the colleges was not undertaken before the present proposals were formulated. Section 2.5 ('The Colleges are major constituents of the University, and are themselves self-governing institutions') is of course precisely correct; but there is little in the consultation paper that implies practical recognition of the central importance and autonomy of the colleges. Section 2.5 goes on: 'It is vital for the University's constitutional arrangements to secure representation of College interests and to be such as to promote close co-operation and collaboration': just so; but it is important that 'co-operation and collaboration' should not become euphemisms for the subordination of the colleges' interests to the management of a more overtly managed and directed University than hitherto. The consultation paper offers little by way of reassurance that the realities will match the rhetoric of section 2.5.

Indeed, the only substantive proposal in the consultation paper to refer specifically to the colleges is that at section 7.10: 'There would be a reduction from four to three [places on the Council] in the representation of Heads of Houses.' My Governing Body resists this proposal strongly. It notes that it would accord to Heads of House no greater representation than it is proposed to accord to assistant staff.

Against this general background, this College has the following points of detail on the various sections of the paper (marginal numbers refer):

3. It is to be hoped that the 'need for change' identified in this section is not driven too much by reaction to the CAPSA debacle: to the extent that it is, would adoption of the changes proposed prevent another such fiasco? It would be interesting to know on what model of corporate governance the proposals are based, and what view is taken of the applicability of the model in the unique circumstances of this collegiate university. Major constitutional changes of the sort implied by the proposals in the paper require a surer foundation than will be provided either by simple reaction to a particular crisis or by praying in aid the assemblage of fashionable managerialist *nostra* that appear at section 3.3. At 3.3(vi) there is a reference to the perceived need 'to empower the office of Vice-Chancellor, to give it adequate support and to sharpen its accountability'. Empowered with what powers (they are not specified) and to what end; supported in respect of what functions; and accountable to whom or to what?
4. The formulation at section 4.1(iii) – 'governance arrangements must reflect the need for the Colleges to be appropriately involved in University affairs, because of the key role of the Colleges in the educational strategy of the University' - is of course unexceptionable, but the consultation paper gives little comfort about what is likely to be considered 'appropriate'. It is necessary to be clear: while the colleges are indeed central to 'the educational strategy of the University', they are neither administrative sub-units of the University nor its agents, but autonomous bodies with their own agenda and their own priorities.
5. The clear thrust of the proposals is to augment the executive power of the Vice-Chancellor as (section 5.2) 'the principal academic and administrative officer of the University'. In this connection:
 - (a) it is not clear what the formula at section 5.2 means in practice. Such a formula would be true of most Heads of House; but how, in the context of the proposed enhanced managerial authority on the part of the Vice-Chancellor, is his distinctively *academic* leadership to manifest itself?
 - (b) at section 5.4, an explicit statement is needed about how and by whom the proposed (and very expensive) 'up to five' Pro-Vice-Chancellors are to be appointed. Should they, indeed, be appointed; should they, rather, be elected by, presumably, the Regent House?;
 - (c) at section 5.5, the assumption that Pro-Vice-Chancellors would serve in that capacity for some two-thirds of their time effectively rules out the possibility of the role being fulfilled by a Head of House. The effect, taken together with the introduction of further layer of senior University officers, will be a further step in distancing control of the central organs of the University from the colleges;
 - (d) at section 5.7, why does the perceived 'need to empower the office of Vice-Chancellor' (section 3.3(vi)) necessitate seven-year terms of appointment with no break point? My Governing Body would prefer the Vice-Chancellorship to be held for no more than two periods of

four years (or four plus three years), renewable once in the light of review at the four-year point.

6. The proposals in respect of the Council and the General Board will centralise a very great degree of power in the hands of the members of the General Board, who will also sit *ex officio* as members of the Council. Is this not too great a degree of centralisation of power?
7. There may or may not be a case for the introduction of external, 'lay' members of the Council, but there can be no pretence that the introduction of lay members will do other than weaken the University's traditional autonomy, self-determination and self-governing character. At 7.10, the proposal to weaken the representation of Heads of Houses from four to three, in the context of an expanded Council with new categories of membership, is wholly unacceptable. Additional Heads of House might appropriately be substituted for 'lay' members of the Council, especially bearing in mind that some Heads of House have wide experience outside the University world alone.
9. This College *per se* has no views on the composition of the Regent House, but many of its Fellows are uneasy about the dilution and weakening of its role implicit in the proposals.

Finally, it would be helpful to know how the comments of colleges, and of other bodies and of individuals, will be incorporated into the University's thinking, and how the debate will be conducted from that point.

*Yours sincerely,
John Nevill Thomas.*

The President
The Rt Hon. Lord Eatwell

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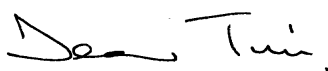
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15th March 2002

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Governance of the University

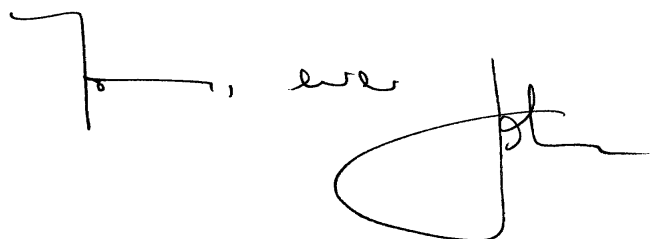
The Governing Body of Queens' College has considered the proposed changes to the governance of the University, and is broadly supportive of the proposals. In particular, the changed structure of the executive, and the enhanced support for the Vice Chancellor, were deemed to be essential if the modern University, taken as a whole, is to be managed effectively.

The specific comments which follow are concerned solely with the relationship between University and the Colleges.

The document is peculiarly reticent on the value of the collegiate university. This is a significant weakness. It would be helpful if the new governance structures were framed, at least in part, within a collegiate context (for example, taking note of the voice in governance which is exercised by members of colleges, through their college).

At a time when the organisational relationships between the University and the colleges are necessarily becoming closer, it is unfortunate that the proposed structure of the Council reduces college representation. It is also unfortunate that the document does not seek to incorporate the evolving structure of University-college committees (the 3+3, and so on). The proposals would be strengthened if these new links were seen as an integral part of the new governance structure.

Whilst fully understanding the case for an "outside" chair of the Council, and supporting the need for some "outside" members, doubts were expressed as to whether someone from outside the University could, in a reasonable time, attain the full grasp of how the University works that is a necessity for the chair. It might be better if the chair were taken by a head of house, thus ensuring not only inside knowledge, but also the close relationship between University and collegiate decision making that is essential if the University as a whole is to thrive.



ROBINSON COLLEGE**RESPONSE OF THE COUNCIL OF ROBINSON COLLEGE
TO THE CONSULTATION PAPER ON UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE**

Comments were invited from the Colleges to the paper, published in The Reporter on February 6th, setting out a Consultation on Governance upon which the Council of the University and the General Board requested views. These comments represent the response of this College by its Council, following discussion of the paper that took place at the most recent meeting of the College's Governing Body.

The Consultation paper on its face does not appear to impact much on the Colleges which are, of course, as is the case with the University, separate self-governing bodies. Some aspects of the paper, such as the inclusion in the Council's membership of the six chairs of the Councils of Schools, the inclusion of three members of the "assistant" staff (which smacks more of "tokenism" than effective substantive change) or the expansion of the composition of the Regent House to include research staff employed on "unestablished contracts", were matters upon which members of College Council expressed a variety of personal views but were also matters upon which it was thought departments and faculties could more appropriately comment than the Colleges. One might, however, note in passing that the more effective exercise of their powers by the Heads of the Schools, seen as an important element of any reform, is equally likely to impede their participation in the strategic and scrutinising functions of the General Board and the Council.

At a general level, however, this College did feel that the Consultation paper lacked a sufficient degree of specificity to enable much constructive comment to be made but

contained just enough to raise an element of concern and misgiving about its general thrust. There was mention of strengthening the Vice-Chancellor's authority, but no explanation of the group or groups of persons at whose expense that extension would take place. There is reference to the Vice-Chancellor's lack of sufficient explicit authority under the current system but no specific explanations as to how that is to be remedied. The paper purports to be based on the principles that academic self-government, accountability and responsibility are of paramount importance but does not explain how these principles relate to the principle of efficient and effective executive action or that of making the governance of the University more inclusive. The inherent tensions in these possibly conflicting objectives, and how those tensions are to be ameliorated or resolved, does not appear to be addressed in the paper. Members of this College's Governing Body, who were consulted on this paper, felt that many aspects of the University's current governance structure were obscure. There was little in the paper that indicated the proposed changes would make it more intelligible to members of the University – an essential requirement if transparency, democracy, accountability and responsibility are to be delivered.

Several questions are also "begged". For example, while the paper talks of the need for accountability and transparency, it does not really state the constituency or constituencies on whom these needs are to be focused. Accountability to the internal constituencies of the University would seem to call for effective internal checks and balances. However, the inclusion of lay members of the University Council, including a lay chairman, would seem to suggest that there is a need for a measure of "external" accountability also (reinforced by reference to public and charitable funds) though to be fair the lay representation is explained in the paper on the basis of the need to enhance Council's "executive and strategic capacity and its expertise", in themselves laudable objectives. Specific examples, either of the current "evils" to be addressed or the specific talents likely to be attracted, are not, however, given, save by inference in the references to the CAPSA fiasco. There is danger in making too much of this. It is almost a truism in business circles that management systems projects significantly over-run budget, are not delivered on time and fail to deliver some or all of the planned or anticipated functionality. This is not an argument for maintaining inefficiency but one should also guard against pushing the pendulum too far in the other direction.

In its references to transparency, the paper makes no mention of the group or groups to whom that transparency should be manifest. Clearly transparency to internal constituencies

requires one set of constraints, since presumably internal constituencies are familiar with the ways of the University, are thus more able to interpret information and disclosures which would be somewhat less than transparent to outside constituencies. However, producing transparency readily understandable by outside constituencies requires a totally different set of parameters that may well run counter both to the principles of efficiency and to academic self-governance.

The paper speaks of the Vice-Chancellor being accountable to the University Council and, as a consequence, he would cease to chair the Council. This gives the appearance, though again there are no specifics in the paper, of creating a Council that may undertake ex post facto review of the Vice-Chancellor's actions but not one among whose membership consensus needs to be sought in advance.

Further, the paper talks of the "key role of the Colleges in the educational strategy of the University" but proposes, in an enlarged University Council (where College representation would already thereby be diluted) to reduce the representation of Heads of House from four to three. There is further disparity between what is said about the importance of the Colleges and the extent to which they will have an influential voice in the governance of the University in the new proposals concerning the Pro-Vice-Chancellors. These are to be increased to five in number (roles and functions unspecified save in the most general terms in paragraph 5.4 of the Consultation Document) and they are to serve for a fixed term for approximately two-thirds of their time. Currently Heads of House are eligible to serve in this role but few Colleges are likely to have the resources to enable the Head of House to devote only one-third of his or her time to college affairs. This may mean, therefore, that Heads of House would, in practice, be unable to serve as Pro-Vice-Chancellors under these proposals. Several Heads of House have experience of or are selected from outside the academic world. They have a valuable experience that can be brought to the service of the University as well as to their colleges. Reducing the influence of the colleges in the governance of the University runs a risk of losing some of this. Despite what is said, therefore, about the role and importance of the colleges within the University, it is hard to see how these particular proposals can do anything but weaken their positions.

Members of this College were concerned, even recognising the proposed increase in numbers of the Regent House, that the principles of academic self-government and accountability were

unlikely to be furthered by increasing the number of signatures required to call a ballot on a Grace or for an amendment to a Grace or for a request for a Discussion to 50 unless the time limit for securing those signatures were extended. Extending the time limit, however, was considered likely to frustrate the objective of greater efficiency. Accordingly, this College feels that an appropriate balance of interests would be maintained by raising the present number of ten to twenty.

At its heart, the Consultation Document appears confused in its underlying principles. A university's main asset is its human capital – its people. Without them it simply could not function. Those people have to be extremely bright, articulate, imaginative and of independent thought. As such they will be constitutionally incapable of being pushed around or dictated to. They will work most effectively by consensus. Building consensus takes time and it is best achieved by a largely "bottom up" management system. "Top down" management may appear to be efficient by reference to some (now somewhat out-dated) corporate management model but it will be highly inefficient if it fails to ensure that those who are responsible for the success of the enterprise (and they are, by and large, not "the managers") actually deliver. Cambridge is, and is likely to remain, a very complex institution, requiring very careful management of change in the light of its many distinct constituencies. The colleges' interest, in particular, is focused on graduate and undergraduate teaching and care and this College's response to the Consultation Paper concentrates, in particular, on the impact of the proposed new structures on these primary college roles. A system which allows central 'executive' decisions to be made rapidly, if not very carefully worked out in all its detail, is likely either to create unforeseen problems and a great deal of extra work within the existing structures, or to require a substantial further level of administrators to make the decisions work locally. This, in turn, is likely to strengthen that sense of hostility towards the administration in general which the recent report of the CAPSA affair identified as a structural defect of the University. The authors of the Governance report are eloquent on the problem at 3.4, but it is as yet far from clear that their proposals will not intensify the conflict they seek to resolve.

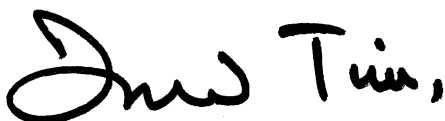
By confusing the process of management (which can be diffuse, delegated to smaller units of the enterprise and be consensus driven) with the process of accountability designed to ensure that checks and balances are in place to avoid abuses of executive power, the paper fails to

identify clearly either the specific ills to be addressed or the specific remedies needed to cure them. Without either, this College finds it impossible to make much helpful comment.

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19 March 2002

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Governance

The Governing Body of this College met on 15 March and discussed the paper on Governance in some detail.

1. The Governing Body welcomed the opportunity to discuss the Governance of the University and looked forward to a developing debate on the subject. Clearly change is necessary, although a good deal of discussion will no doubt be required before a final plan is developed.
2. There was considerable concern on the apparently unwieldy size of the proposed new Council. It was felt that a body of that size would not be conducive to crisp decision making.
3. There was also concern at the under representation of the Colleges on the new Council. Given that the Council is to be increased in size whilst the number of the College representatives is to be reduced, a clear message seems to be coming through that the Colleges are not regarded as an important component of the decision making process. This is at variance with the point made elsewhere in the document that the University of Cambridge is unequivocally a collegiate University.
4. There was also concern that the structure of the proposed Council could lead to under representation of Arts and Humanities subjects, with the potential for domination by the strong voices of the Heads of Schools from the scientific and technological disciplines.
5. The inclusion of Chairs of the Schools as members of the Council was debated at some length. In addition to the point made above, it was noted that the presence of Chairs of Schools would only be beneficial if the postholders were "jobbing"

academics who could adequately represent the opinions of the teaching staff in their Schools. This conclusion was prompted by the thought in the minds of some members of the Governing Body that in the future Headships of Schools might be full-time managerial positions, rather than posts held for a period by people whose normal duties would be teaching and research.

6. Linked with all of the above, there was concern that there might be under representation on the Council of rank and file University Officers – Lecturers, Readers and Professors. How one reconciles this with point 2, however, is difficult to see.
7. There was a strong view that the Vice-Chancellor should continue to Chair the Council. It was felt that the Vice-Chancellor, as Head of the University, should not be required to relinquish his authority to anyone from outside the University. This said, no view was expressed on whether or not there should be external members of the Council.
8. Notwithstanding the above, worry was expressed at the perceived centralisation of power in the Vice-Chancellor's office. It was felt that the case for making such a change had not been well made.
9. Serious concern was expressed at the prospect of monies being diverted from the academic activities of the University to foot the bill for reform in the central administration.
10. Finally, the majority of Fellows were very concerned at the proposal to increase the number of signatures required to call a ballot. It was felt that any increase would seriously disadvantage smaller departments, particularly in the Arts and Humanities.

The Governing Body recognised that the debate on Governance would continue and wished to emphasise that concerns expressed above were not to be regarded as in any way trying to block progress, but rather were intended to place on record the very legitimate concerns of its members.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font with a large initial 'D'.