

Principal's Update February 2012

Colleagues

This is my first update of 2012 and I hope that all of you had an enjoyable break over the festive period. We are, of course, already well into the New Year and I am certain that in 2012, the world of higher education will be as competitive as ever. I am equally certain, however, that we at Aberdeen are well placed to continue the great progress we have made over recent years and that 2012 will be an exciting and rewarding year for us.

Scottish Funding Council Financial Settlement for 2012/13

Just before Christmas we received notification from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) of the University's indicative funding allocation for 2012/13. The Scottish Government had given SFC a relatively positive budget to work with and, as expected, this has translated into a more positive financial settlement for the University than we have had in the past few years. Overall we will receive an increase of 6.9% from SFC which is clearly good news. It is important to also note, however, that because of the change to the fee position of Rest of UK (RUK) domiciled students, our teaching grant now includes no funding for such students. Instead we are able to keep the fees that we receive from RUK students. Therefore our real increase will be the sum of the government funding above and the fees from RUK students. The news from UCAS is that we have the highest number of students, ever, applying to study here. Within that we have a reduction in the number of applications from RUK students but, if we maintain our normal ratios of applicants to acceptances then we will recruit the number of students that we would hope. Clearly we will have to continue to work hard to attract students but I think we should feel confident but not complacent.

BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnership

As you may have already read, I was delighted by the recent announcement from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) to award the University £1.5m to fund studentships as part of a Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) in conjunction with the universities of Edinburgh, St Andrews and Dundee. This award is recognition of the excellence of our research environment and that we have developed a PhD programme that offers world-class training in the Biosciences. Congratulations are due to all who contributed to this success.

Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh

I recently held an event to bring together all members of staff from across the University who are Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Fellowship of the RSE is, of course, a considerable honour and as such the more members of staff who are Fellows the better the academic reputation of the University will be. I have, therefore, encouraged our existing Fellows to consider colleagues who might be nominated in the future and I would urge all academic colleagues to do the same.

Staff Achievements

There have been a number of recent achievements by members of staff three of which I'd like to mention. Fascinatingly, they comprise staff from each of our three Colleges and celebrate excellence in teaching and in research. First, I'm sure most of you can't have failed to notice the amazing success of Professor Paul Mealor, Music, who celebrated an unprecedented double Number One at Christmas with his album *A Tender Light* at Number One in the Classical Charts and his *Wherever You Are* performed by the *Military Wives* at Number One in the Singles Charts. This is a fantastic achievement for Paul and, of course, has promoted the University to a whole new audience.

Second, many congratulations are due to Professor Roger Pertwee, Institute of Medical Sciences, who has been awarded the Wellcome Gold Medal, by the British Pharmacological Society. This is a huge achievement as among previous Medal recipients, three have been Nobel Prize winners and sixteen of those awarded - including Professor Hans Kosterlitz of the University of Aberdeen who received his medal in 1987 - have been Fellows of the Royal Society

Similarly, congratulations are also due to Professor Andrew Hurst who was awarded the 2012 Grover E Murray Distinguished Educator Award by The American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) in recognition of his outstanding contribution to geological education. The AAPG is the largest professional geological society in the world so this is an internationally significant award.

These three successes are a striking reminder of how excellence in both teaching and research can have national and global impact and at the same time raise the University's profile nationally and internationally.

Long Service Awards

I had the pleasure, with the Senior Vice-Principal, Professor Steve Logan, recently of attending a further event held to recognise the contribution made by members of staff who had been with the University for 25 or 40 years. I observed at the ceremony that the staff at this, the third such ceremony this academic year, had contributed more than a millennium of service to the University. In total, across the three events we have recognised 14 staff who have been with us over 40 years and 146 staff who have been with us for over 25 years. For each colleague this represents an extraordinary personal commitment to the University for which we are hugely grateful. Equally, it is this commitment and professionalism over so many years that has allowed the University to thrive and in turn to make such a difference to people's lives be they our students or the way we have helped shape the world around us through our research. It is something to which we all should take pride in our contribution. I intend that we will now hold one such event every year and I look forward to celebrating the contribution of staff who reach 25 years of service as well as, of course, welcoming back those who reach 40 years!!

Centre Reviews

In the last few days we have learnt the results of the quinquennial review of the Health Services Research Unit in CLSM and of the Final Report of the AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies in CASS. Both reviews rated the respective groups as outstanding, once again pointing to the enormous strengths we have right across the University. I am sure you will want to join me in congratulating colleagues in both groups on this great news.

Best Regards

Ian Diamond

Principal and Vice-Chancellor