

Principal's Update July 2012

Colleagues

Academic Recruitment

The Academic Recruitment campaign continues to progress extremely well with over 1800 applications having now been received. The first appointments are now being made and it is exciting to see outstanding scholars set to enrich our academic community. The response to the Campaign is undoubtedly very encouraging but colleagues should be assured that we will be unswerving in our commitment to recruit only scholars of the highest quality from what is an extensive pool of candidates.

Staff Promotions

Congratulations are due to those colleagues who were successful in this year's promotions exercise. It is good to see junior staff progressing to the next stage in their careers here and I'm committed to making sure that, as well as striving to recruit outstanding new scholars, the University nurtures and develops our academic and non-academic staff and enables them to realise their full potential at Aberdeen. I am always happy to hear suggestions of how we can improve the opportunities for careers at Aberdeen to flourish.

Fundraising and Development

As colleagues will know, fundraising and development is a key means of harnessing the funds the University will need to realise our academic ambitions. It is very encouraging to note that over the past two years the University Development Trust has raised £30m in philanthropic support for a range of activities throughout the University including purchasing major pieces of equipment; scholarships for students; staff posts; supported research projects and major capital developments. Colleagues may also be impressed to know that our Alumni Annual Fund recently took a donation of over £100k from one individual and has in the course of this year raised over £700k. As the Sixth Century Campaign draws to a close, the Development Trust are in the process of agreeing with colleagues across the community a new Strategic Plan to identify the next set of fundraising priorities to help Aberdeen continue to advance its international reputation.

Research Awards

It is also brilliant, however, to see a number of significant new research awards being made to staff in the University in recent weeks, including six awards of over £100k in the College of Physical Sciences. Congratulations are due to all involved in these successful bids.

All Party Parliamentary University Group

In the last few weeks I had an opportunity to address the House of Commons All Party Parliamentary University Group on the subject of the future of postgraduate education in the UK. It was a useful discussion but I was particularly keen to use the opportunity to raise awareness of the increasing competition we face for postgraduate students from universities around the world and to highlight how the UK Government's approach to student immigration was putting us at a competitive disadvantage with key competitors in other countries.

Bestiary Exhibition

Many of you will have heard about the new exhibition in the Library the Aberdeen Bestiary. It is one of the highlights of our special collections and I very much recommend a visit to see this rare and ancient piece of which we are privileged to be the custodian.

Staff Survey

Steve Logan has also circulated this week the results of the staff survey. We are currently undertaking some qualitative follow up work and in the next few weeks I will be working with Heads of College to make some interventions to address workload in a number of areas. In the meantime, thank you to those of you who took the time to complete the survey.

British Science Festival in Aberdeen 4th - 9th September

I'm sure many of you will have by now seen the 'mini-guide' for the British Science Festival in Aberdeen. I hope you will agree it looks set to be a hugely exciting week for the University and the City. It is a major achievement that the University, working with Techfest and other partners, led the bid to bring the Festival to Aberdeen, and Professor Dominic Houlihan, Dr Ken Skeldon and his team are to be congratulated on pulling together such a diverse and impressive programme of events, many of which will feature colleagues from across the community. I would urge everyone to get involved at some stage in the Festival and to help us spread the word over the coming weeks about an event which can significantly raise the profile of the University in the City and beyond.

Queen's Birthday Honours

It was wonderful to see Professor Peter Sharp, Biomedical Physics, receiving an OBE and Ken Skeldon being awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours. They have both made important contributions to their field and to the success of the University and these honours are very much deserved.

It was also good to see Tessa Jowell MP, the former UK Government Culture Secretary, and an Aberdeen graduate, receiving the DBE in the honours list.

Graduations

Finally, can I send a note of thanks to all who were involved in making the Graduations run smoothly and, despite the miserable weather until today, as joyous an occasion as ever for the students and their families. It is easy for staff to become blasé about the ceremonies but they are such an important event for the students and it is good that the University makes a lasting and positive impression on them and their families and friends.

I wish all colleagues who are soon to take leave a very enjoyable summer holiday and thank you for all your respective contributions to the University over the past academic year.

Best Regards

Ian Diamond

Principal and Vice-Chancellor