Minutes of the School Meeting of the Academic Staff
held at 12 noon on Monday 12 April 2010 in the Slade Lecture Theatre

The Head of School, Professor Clive Baldock gave an introduction to the University Green Paper and the consultation process. He thanked Professor Mitchell Guss, Acting Dean of Science, for coming to the meeting to discuss the University’s Green Paper and to give some advice from the Faculty’s perspective.

Professor Guss

The Vice-chancellor initiated the Green Paper, which was aimed to promote discussion and to provoke thoughts and ideas. It will then be followed by the White Paper, which will subsequently form the basis for the University’s strategic plan.

Different Faculties have their own interpretation of what the Green Paper means. Some Faculties seem to be of the impression that it may dilute the power of the Deans. Science however, does not share this view, it sees it as a necessary step of an ongoing process, which began with the former Vice-chancellor. The Faculty of Science views it as the final step in a more formal consultative way. The response for the School has to be made by Monday, 19th April 2010. The White paper is being published in July 2010.

Professor Trevor Hambley, the incoming Dean of Science and Professor Guss’ view is that the Green Paper will provide the Colleges a chance to discuss curricula. The power currently resides within the Academic Board. There is no meaningful curriculum reform at the moment so the Acting Dean and Dean sees this as an opportunity to create a meaningful body to look at curriculum and have control over all curriculum. The body should have some say in curriculum, for example, whether it is fundamental teaching in Chemistry or Physics in a Health Sciences discipline.

Professor Guss acknowledged that some things mentioned in the Green Paper may be incorrect and may not be a true representation of the common view; for example, the idea that shared services is a good thing may actually be false.

For the first time there will be more transparency with financial reporting. All income that is earned will be seen in-house without taxation and will be used to pay for certain things e.g. Faculty services and other essential services. Space charges will potentially be the most controversial tax of all. For example, how does one measure space use required for an experimentalist as opposed to a theorist who needs less space but may be producing as the same outcome? What is the mechanism to assess this fairly? It will be up to the Faculty and School to ensure there is a proper balance.

There are a lot of things to stem from this new University Economic Model. First is to see what Schools own before seeing what we will be charged for. Some academic
staff were concerned that they will be required to apply to the ARC for a space charge allocation for their research. However, this idea was seen by the Acting Dean as inappropriate and unnecessary. The Acting Dean believed it would not come to that and would have to be processed internally and centrally within the University.

The School of Physics is seen as the most successful in the Faculty but appears to be losing most money. Hopefully the new economic model will help to evaluate things more. The Green Paper is not intended to diminish those groups that are seen as least profitable. The Green Paper is addressing the current issue in which decisions are being made without proper and robust financial information.

The Acting Dean and incoming Dean’s view of the proposed University structure is that it will be positive especially for teaching and curriculum. They believe it will improve the communication between interdisciplinary courses, as there never was a real forum responsible for these kinds of discussions.

The Head of School’s Powerpoint presentation is attached.

Currently infrastructure is the main issue for the School. What is the point of the Green Paper if we do not have the right facilities for our infrastructure and needs such as toilets and a lift for disabled student access to teaching spaces.

The aim of the meeting was to have a discussion and give a collective response from the School. The Head of School will send an email out to the school for feedback to consolidate a collective response. The Head of School would like to hear feedback from every academic staff if possible.

Chindy Praseuthsouk
April 2010
School of Physics Academic Meeting
The Green Paper

How does the Green Paper affect the School?

- University Economic Model
- Most Promising Students
- Research
- The ‘College’
- Vertical and Horizontal Units

School of Physics Academic Meeting
Organisational Structure
Preferred Model
Most Promising Students
- Students of low social economic status
- Research Training
  - "we propose the exploration of a new structure for the Sydney PhD."
  - "compulsory training for research students in areas such as research methodology, generic skills, ethics, commercialisation, planning a research program, and research grant writing"
  - Four-year undergraduate program (including the honours year) and a four-year PhD program
  - Three-year undergraduate program, with a two-year master’s, and a three-year PhD
  - Four-year undergraduate program with a one-year master’s and a three-year PhD

Research
- Vertical and Horizontal Units
  - Vertical units – faculties and schools
  - Horizontal units – examples:
    - Centre for Obesity, Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease
    - Brain and Mind Research Institute
    - Institute of Sustainable Solutions
    - "South-East Asia and China, where the University has a breadth and depth of expertise that was genuinely world class"
- Thoughts on how else does this affect the School
  - Develop the research capacity of staff at all stages of their careers
  - Develop an evidence-based understanding of our collective research strengths
  - Focus our areas of research activity to create critical mass, to support emergent fields of research, and to respond to issues of national and international importance
  - Astrophotonics
  - Nanotechnology
  - Quantum Science
  - Move towards an organisational structures that aligns with and support our areas of research strength in our sub-disciplines and cross-disciplinary research areas
  - Implementation of University Economic Model
    - Space Audit
    - Mechanical Workshop