Minutes of the School Meeting of the Academic Staff
held at 12 noon on Monday 16 August 2010 in the Lecture Theatre 2

New Building Update

The Head of School (HoS), Professor Clive Baldock gave a Power-Point presentation about the progress of the new building and discussed finding more space for the School.

The HoS attended a Project Governance Meeting on 4 August 2010. The current situation concerning the new building for the School is that a business case will be submitted to the University Finance Advisory Committee then the Building Estate Committee. Once approved by those committees it will be sent to the Senate for final approval as the University is co-funding this project.

The draft business case is not meant to include the design, layout or scheme of the new building but provides financial reasons to build with an outline of costs, benefits (eg. increase of student numbers, research outputs and increase of staff) and budget allocations. There will be some variation from the original EIF documentation as it will incorporate the new ARC Centres of Excellence (and nodes) awarded to the School from 2011.

The Dean will chair the Executive Steering Committee. The HoS will be deputy chair and other members will include the Director of CIS, The Director of Financial Services, DVC Research and DVC Education.

The HoS will be the Chair of the Project User Group (PUG) which will be responsible for specifying the building and it's requirements. The PUG will have specialist teams or Working Parties including a Research Working Party (to be chaired by Dr Chris Walsh) and a Teaching & Learning Working Party (to be chaired by A/Prof. John O’Byrne).

Currently, the business case is being updated by Dr. Chris Walsh and terms of reference are being developed for the Research and Teaching & Learning Working Parties of the Project User. Some of the items that will be addressed include the kinds of teaching space that required, future pedagogies and seating capacities.

Overall, the building has a maximum budget of $110 million (including $40 million for the AIN from EIF) to spend on the new building which is non-negotiable. The University will borrow $54 million towards the project.

If everything goes according to plan, it is anticipated that construction will commence in 2011. It is estimated that the construction will take approx 3 years, allowing 6 months for delay.
**Lecture Theatres**

There are many things to consider in terms of the size and scope of building a suitable lecture theatre. One can argue that a big lecture theatre makes sense for future in-house symposiums and conferences while at the same time, it could have a negative impact with the large amount of students travelling through the building affecting research laboratories such as the clean rooms. Hence, it is important to have broad representation on the committee to adequately address these issues.

The HoS had sought advice within the University about what the University’s position is on lecture theatres in terms of size, seating capacity and so forth. It is up to the School and Faculty (as it is a Faculty project) to make a decision that suits the needs of both.

The School is not looking at including 1st year laboratory students in the new building. It is more likely that the new building will include 3rd year laboratory and postgraduate coursework laboratory students, as well as providing extra research laboratories, teaching facilities and offices.

Concerns were expressed by some staff that the cost breakdown provided was in accurate. It seemed that a huge amount of the money was being allocated for lecture theatres and the estimated size of the theatres are bigger than most staff recalled from the original EIF document, which may mean that research laboratories will be reduced in terms of cost and space allocation. The HoS indicated that costs were as per the original EIF document.

**Research Labs**

The EIF bid seems to suggest one fifth of space be allocated to research labs, therefore we need the right people to accurately cost these lab space. Currently there is no-one at the University to do this, so we will have to recruit someone who can provide detailed costing. External consultants will need to be appointed to work with academic staff on this.

**Physics Annexe (A29)**

Although at this stage, the School has not been advised whether the Physics Annexe building (A29) will definitely be demolished it is most likely that it will be demolished. Once architects have been engaged however, this may change.

CIS is currently negotiating with St. Paul’s College to acquire additional land.

Transitional arrangements will include decanting A29 of staff. Before this takes place 30 new offices are required by mid next year to cope with existing project growth in numbers in the School. This immediate need is of concern and the HoS is speaking to CIS at regular intervals about this.

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