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of Commonwealth
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A bright future

Promoting interfaith respect

The summer school trend

Broadening horizons; broadening minds

Bulletin

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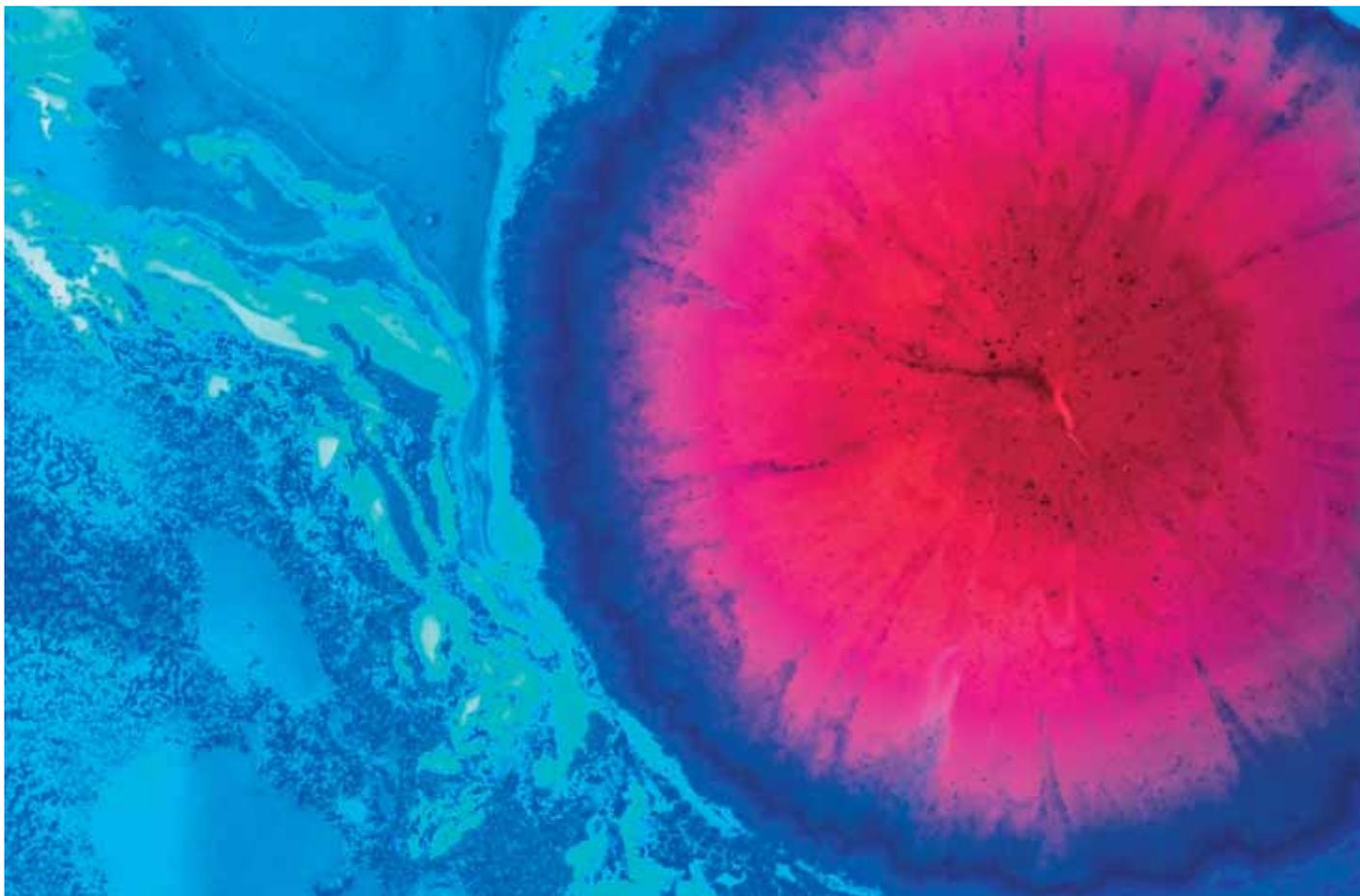
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Editorial



I cannot quite believe that this will be my last contribution to the *Bulletin* in my role as Secretary General of the ACU. During the past seven years, I have become acutely aware of the enormous contribution ACU members make to their societies and to the world at large. I have immense admiration for the heads of universities, who face challenges from so many directions. Yet there is one question that keeps surfacing and is summarised by a conversation I had with an old friend who heads a very successful university in the UK. I asked him how he planned for the future. He laughed and said 18 months ahead was as far as he could see and that the pressure of the job did not allow for long-term thinking.

Over time, I have been thinking, writing, and lecturing on my ideas for the future of universities. The current situation is probably best summed up by Professor Stephen Toope, incoming Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge (and former member of the ACU Council). He summarised the pressures on university leaders from external stakeholders thus: “‘We love you, we need you; now if you could just be different. You’re not commercial

enough; not pure research enough. Not practical enough; not innovative enough. Not local enough or national enough. Not digital enough; not real-world enough. Not enough.” Relationships! Expectations can be very hard to fulfill.’

My thinking on the subject was brought to a head in 2015, when Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana invited me to give three lectures on the future of universities. While this editorial isn’t the place to summarise the full breadth of my thinking, the titles of the three lectures may set the context. The first was called ‘Polycentralism and the global environment’, and focused on the tension between local and global demands. Where do loyalties lie for academics and students, as they become increasingly mobile both physically and virtually? The second lecture, ‘The soul of the university and the role of the prosumer’, explored the pressures from stakeholders – as highlighted in Stephen Toope’s remarks above – and asked whether universities have distinctiveness and values of their own or if they’re entirely dominated by external and internal (student-led) forces.

The final lecture looked to the future and was called ‘Open science and open innovation

– myth or reality?’. This focused on how the so-called ‘internet of things’ – with its reliance on interconnectivity, open data, and open access – will influence how universities fulfil their mission in the future. Solving global challenges requires a multidisciplinary approach, and I took as an example the IdeaSquare project, based at CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research). IdeaSquare brings together Master’s students from different cultures and disciplines to generate new ideas and work on conceptual prototypes in an open environment. This concept has now been taken up by several large research institutions and universities in Europe and, after leaving the ACU, I will be involved as chair of the board for the project.

It is both an exciting and challenging time for universities, and I am delighted to be leaving the ACU in the excellent hands of its new Secretary General, Dr Joanna Newman. With her international vision and drive to take things forward, I am certain the ACU will continue to thrive and support its members into the future. ■

Professor John Wood is Secretary General of the ACU.

The role of universities in promoting interfaith respect

A new ACU initiative seeks to highlight the crucial role of universities in promoting understanding and mutual respect between different faiths, bringing universities together to share their experiences and work towards a more peaceful world. **Susan Botros** reports.

Universities are often said to have a special responsibility to promote respect and mutual understanding among students, staff, and wider society. University campuses are crucial places for open dialogue about diversity, especially as students and staff bring to institutions a multitude of world views. Through a new initiative focused on faith and mutual respect, the ACU hopes to make a very public statement about the work its member universities are doing to promote understanding among those of different faith backgrounds. The initiative will encourage universities across the Commonwealth to share examples of new or innovative practice in this area, and identify common values that bind them together.

The initiative draws on the ACU's uniquely diverse membership, which includes faith-based universities from five major world religions. Designed to be highly practical in nature, it will identify various ways in which mutual respect can be actively promoted – such as through teaching, interuniversity partnerships, and extracurricular activities. Findings will contribute both to the work of participating institutions, and to wider international debates on the role of universities in creating open-minded graduates and moderate societies. Initial funding has been obtained from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The initiative arose from a session on universities, faith, and tolerance at the ACU Conference of University Leaders in 2016. The session, led by vice-chancellors from Islamic, Buddhist, and Christian universities, explored how institutions can help contribute to common understanding, emphasising the need for openness and dialogue. Many of those taking part in the session expressed an interest in further joint activity.

The latest stage of the initiative – a three-day seminar – saw vice-chancellors, senior academics, and university administrators come together at Liverpool Hope University, UK, to highlight the importance of working in unison

to promote interfaith respect. Delegates came from ACU member institutions in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, and the UK – with a majority from universities with a faith mission or strong faith context. The event was a chance to share experiences of best practice in promoting respect among staff, students, and communities, as well as a roundtable discussion of the following themes:

- Creating an interfaith environment – both physical and intellectual
- Religion in the curriculum
- Social and international development as a means of promoting respect
- Moral and personal development
- Engaging staff and students through extracurricular activity
- The potential for stronger links between institutions

Identifying common values

Discussions throughout the three days highlighted cross-cutting values, including an appreciation of differences and similarities, the common goal of transforming individuals into better citizens through education, the importance of working together to promote the benefits of interfaith collaboration, and the need for senior staff to lead by example. The interactive and inclusive nature of the event was praised by delegates, who came away with friendships formed and new ideas for academic and extracurricular collaborations across faiths and continents.

How do universities nurture interfaith respect?

The ACU invites staff and students at universities across the Commonwealth to sign up to common values that bind them together, and share examples of new or innovative practice in the area of interfaith respect. To sign up to our statement of shared values, submit a case study, or read contributions from colleagues around the Commonwealth, visit www.acu.ac.uk/respect. For further information, contact faith@acu.ac.uk

Commonwealth Secretary-General, Baroness Scotland, gave the event's keynote speech, in which she highlighted the role of faith-based universities in countering intolerance and radicalisation. The speech stressed that 60% of the 2.4 billion people living in the Commonwealth are under the age of 30, representing a huge resource that, if well motivated, well taught, and well nurtured, will contribute to a safe and peaceful world. Baroness Scotland went on to call for practical action from university leaders in promoting respect for different faiths, reminding delegates that understanding between faiths is possible 'by focusing on the 99.9% that joins us, not the 0.1% that separates us'.

The key debates

Discussions at the seminar centred around five main strands.

Creating an interfaith environment

The term 'environment' can be interpreted in different ways: the academic freedom to express or discuss faith or non-faith ideas, both in formal teaching and beyond; or the infrastructure and services that are the visible statement of a university's views. Some key points from the seminar:

- Students should be involved in creating an interfaith environment.
- Universities must set a tone of mutual respect at management level, to encourage a 'trickle-down' effect.
- There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach – each university needs to consider its own unique circumstances.

Religion in the curriculum: comparative material, core modules, and insights into other religions

It could be argued that religion has become one of the hot topics of discussion worldwide and is therefore unavoidable in an educational context. Interfaith modules in the curriculum can be seen as having similar goals to broader interfaith dialogue – fostering an empathetic understanding of other faith traditions and



promoting peace and mutual respect. Some key points from the seminar:

- Understand your own faith first – faith-based universities have a responsibility to educate their students about their own faith, providing a grounding and understanding of its values and views.
- Should interfaith dialogue be framed by practical challenges – such as the Sustainable Development Goals – or led by conversation and teaching methods? Delegates were keen to share successes and failures in this area.
- By the time students reach university, is it too late to make a difference to their views? Can we work with primary/secondary education to engage young people and create links to higher education?
- How can universities make the most of online and distance learning in this area?

Social and international development as a means of promoting respect

Poverty and social justice tend to be core concerns across many faiths. These shared areas of focus not only highlight the links between faith and development, they also speak to potential bonds between different faiths. While some maintain that religion and international development do not belong in the same sphere, the common ground they hold could be more important than any potential disparities. Some key points from the seminar:

- Issues around gender and disability need to be part of university agendas and priorities. How should institutions best engage with these topics within the context of their religious positions?
- How can institutions take values into the wider community? Demographics in some regions may lessen the opportunity to interact with people from different backgrounds.

- Staff and management, as well as students, need to be engaged and involved in social and international development.
- The Sustainable Development Goals are a platform through which students can learn about and engage with social and international development.
- Universities should consider possibilities for exchange programmes and summer schools in this area.

Engaging students and staff through extracurricular activity

Studies have shown that extracurricular activities create positive benefits in terms of social, intellectual, and emotional development. Through the social and personal challenges which arise from such activities, students are encouraged to develop a more complex outlook. In addition, extracurricular activities provide opportunities for integrating in-class experiences with real-life situations. Some key points from the seminar:

- Internships and extracurricular activity are a way to discharge social responsibilities and create well-rounded individuals.
- Extracurricular activity should arguably be termed ‘core-curricular’ because of its pivotal nature and its importance to holistic education.
- Community service needs to be undertaken by staff as well as students, so that they lead by example.
- Extracurricular activity is context-specific. Different cultures will have different ideas of what such activities should be.
- Can extracurricular activity be a preventative measure against radicalisation? Or is there a risk that exposure to more poverty and injustice may actually increase the risk of radicalisation?

The potential for stronger links

Interuniversity collaboration has broad benefits, with the potential to increase individual and institutional capacities on different holistic levels. Such collaborations encourage us to value and understand cultures that are different to our own, and can be particularly useful in promoting mutual understanding and respect. Given the immense potential for collaboration in an interfaith context, more needs to be known about what makes such partnerships effective. Some key points from the seminar:

- There is an urgent need for senior colleagues to pass on knowledge and relationships to junior colleagues to ensure the sustainability of partnerships.
- What is the ethos of a particular collaboration and is it beneficial? If a collaboration conflicts with a university’s ethos, do you still go ahead?
- Universities need to get creative in establishing links and go beyond traditional collaboration.
- How should such collaborations be funded? Universities need to think creatively about potential donors, pooling knowledge on how to approach and attract these.
- Examples of best practice are needed in order to understand better what makes an effective partnership.

Next steps

A new report will cover the emerging shared values and key messages from the seminar. Meanwhile, a pilot exchange programme is being developed.

The ACU has also launched a new campaign to ask ‘How do universities nurture interfaith respect?’ Framed by the 2017 Commonwealth theme of ‘A peace-building Commonwealth’, the campaign will showcase the practical ways in which universities are promoting interfaith respect. University staff and students are also invited to share their commitment to nurturing interfaith respect by signing up to a statement of shared values. Input and expressions of support are welcomed from all ACU members. ■

Susan Botros is a Project Officer at the ACU.

To find out more about the ACU’s faith initiative or to express interest or support, visit www.acu.ac.uk/respect or email faith@acu.ac.uk

Understanding okra: an underused crop with great potential

The ACU Titular Fellowships promote mobility among Commonwealth university staff and enable international collaboration on research projects. Here, **Jacob Agbenorhevi** reports on his research into the underused okra plant.

The okra plant is an underutilised crop with immense potential. Cultivated throughout the tropical, sub-tropical, and temperate regions of the world, okra has good nutritional and functional properties, a high economic value, and the potential to improve food security.

My research focused particularly on okra pectin – the polysaccharide content responsible for the slimy texture of okra extracts. This pectin is of major technological interest, with significant potential in nutritional, industrial, pharmaceutical, and medicinal applications.

Okra pectin can be used as an emulsifier, thickener, and stabiliser. It can be used as a substitute for egg white and fat in cookies, chocolate bars, fruit drinks, and dairy products. It can also be used for non-food applications, such as in the treatment of textile wastewater, as a brightening agent in the electrodeposition of metals, to prevent clumping or settling in paper and fabric production, and to reduce friction in pipe flow.

The okra pectin's medicinal applications include the treatment of gastric irritations and

dental diseases, relief from haemorrhoids, and its use as a plasma replacement. Physiological properties include its ability to mop up cholesterol, toxins, and mucous waste from the intestinal tracts. Large okra molecules, known as polymers, can also act as a laxative, treat ulcers, reduce acid reflux, and promote cardiovascular and gastrointestinal health.

Notwithstanding these myriad potential uses, okra remains underutilised in Ghana and other parts of Africa, with its use often limited to soup and stew preparation. The goal of my research was to study the effect of production methods and genetic makeup (genotype) on okra crop yields and pectin properties, as well as the impact of these on specific applications.

My ACU Titular Fellowship was a chance to continue my research, in collaboration with the University of Huddersfield, UK. The researchers at Huddersfield have developed considerable expertise in biopolymer research (e.g. carbohydrate chemistry), including knowledge about okra. They also have advanced facilities and equipment for analytical chemistry and rheological studies, the latter of which focuses on the flow of matter.

My research involved isolating pectin from the pods of six different okra genotypes, cultivated under the same conditions in Ghana. I conducted physical and chemical evaluations of the pectin, as well as studying emulsion formation and stabilisation. The results showed that individual okra genotypes produce pectin with different structural and functional properties. These different okra genotypes have the potential to provide new functional ingredients in food or pharmaceutical products.

On a personal level, it was exciting to return to the university at which I had previously undertaken my Master's degree on a Commonwealth Scholarship and doctorate degree on a scholarship from the University of Huddersfield. It was a wonderful experience to interact with supervisors, lecturers, researchers, and administrators, but this time as a visiting research fellow and professor. They were all very nice and helpful to me.

I also learned a lot from the research visit. It was interesting to note that a lot had changed since I was last there, in terms of infrastructure and state-of-the-art facilities.



Dr Jacob Agbenorhevi at the University of Huddersfield



The experience helped me to improve my knowledge, networks, and research skills, as well as to advance research-based teaching at my home institution in Ghana.

This was really inspirational to me. Our collaboration is still ongoing and we continue to work together on conference presentations and papers for publication in international journals. While in Huddersfield, I also had the opportunity to participate in a European Researchers' Night – a Europe-wide public event that aimed to showcase what researchers do for society.

The experience has helped me to improve my knowledge, networks, and research skills. As a result, it has also helped to advance research-based teaching at my home institution in Ghana. I hope that the outcomes of my research will be of interest to other

academic groups, the food and pharmaceutical industries, third sector organisations, and the general public. This project also presents an exciting opportunity to promote research into sustainable raw materials in Ghana – a country rich in natural resources – ultimately leading to future collaborations and investment. ■

Dr Jacob Agbenorhevi is a Lecturer in Food Science and Technology at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana.

ACU Titular Fellowships 2017

Applications are now open for the 2017 ACU Titular Fellowships. These provide funding for academic and professional staff at ACU member universities to undertake research or training in a Commonwealth country other than their own. The deadline for applications is **15 May 2017**. To find out more and apply, visit www.acu.ac.uk/titular-fellowships

The George Weston Limited Fellowship – awarded in the fields of agriculture, forestry, food science and technology

The Gordon and Jean Southam Fellowship – open to applicants from any Canadian ACU member university

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Fellowships – two fellowships are available. The first is open to applicants from ACU member institutions in Hong Kong, and tenable in a country other than Hong Kong. The second is open to applicants from countries other than Hong Kong, and tenable at any Hong Kong university with ACU membership

The Jacky McAleer Memorial Fellowship – awarded in the field of information technology, with priority given to the digitisation of record systems or computer-assisted learning

The Martha Farrell Memorial Fellowship – open to applicants from ACU member universities in Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. The fellowship provides training and support to instigate an anti-sexual harassment initiative

The Swansea University Fulton Fellowship – tenable at Swansea University, UK

The University of Oxford Fellowship – tenable at the University of Oxford, UK

The University of Manitoba Fellowship – tenable at University of Manitoba, Canada

The Wighton Titular Fellowship in Engineering – open to staff of engineering departments at any ACU member university in a low or middle income country

The Worshipful Company of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales Fellowship – awarded in the field of accountancy

The quiet impact of summer schools

Versatile and popular, summer schools are a fast-growing segment within international higher education. But what is their real impact on university performance and development? Here, ahead of the ACU's own annual summer school in August, **Pieter E Stek** explains why no university should ignore the summer school trend.

Summer schools can seem a world removed from the serious business of university rankings. They bring to mind excited young students travelling abroad for the first time, faculty teaching a niche course that really interests them, international students learning about each other's language and culture, revising class notes while lazing in the shade, and lots of social and cultural activities...

But summer schools actually have a lot to contribute in terms of university development. They can, for example, contribute to rankings performance by attracting international students and faculty. They can highlight the specific strengths of a university. Moreover, a well-promoted summer school with an innovative curriculum not only attracts international students and staff, it also gets noticed by academic peers.

However, the indirect effects of a summer school have the potential to make an even bigger impact on university performance. This is because a summer school is essentially a university in miniature, making it a 'sandbox' for testing innovations. It is also the perfect platform for what diplomats might call 'confidence-building measures'.

An internationalisation sandbox

A summer school is a mini university in the sense that it usually has an independent curriculum and quality assurance framework. That independence also creates the need for a separate admissions and recruitment process. Summer school students, many of them being international, will need specific support to find housing, arrange visas, and so on.

For a university with limited experience in recruiting and hosting international students, a summer school offers a steep but highly effective learning curve. It is a fully-fledged academic programme that aims to attract international students, but its short duration of just a few weeks makes it far lower risk and much more manageable than immediately launching an international degree programme. In the language of product development, a

summer school can be a prototype of a full degree programme.

One person or a small team can oversee the entire summer school process – from curriculum development and marketing through to course delivery and student services. This makes a summer school an excellent programme for a university's internal human resource development. In fact, a large number of senior university administrators have directed a summer school at one point in their careers.

A summer school can help provide relevant, real-life, and institution-specific answers to questions such as:

- What is the most effective way to recruit international students and faculty?
- What kind of courses and course delivery are international students and faculty interested in?
- What kind of services do international students and faculty require?
- How can we integrate international students and faculty into our institution?
- With limited resources, what services should we prioritise for international students?
- What is the correct business model for our international programmes?

These questions can only be answered through testing (i.e. organising summer schools) and seeking customer feedback (i.e. talking to international students and faculty). Getting reliable answers to these questions is essential

Summer schools can be strategically deployed to support goals as diverse as human resource development, marketing, and research collaboration.

to formulating a successful internationalisation strategy. While sharing best practices with other institutions is important, conducting independent practice-based research on one's own institution is essential to making internationalisation work.

But a summer school is much more than a tool for training staff or experimenting with internationalisation. It can also play a catalytic role in establishing and developing international partnerships – and serve as a potent recruitment tool.

A collaboration catalyst

International collaboration can be a highly effective tool to boost a university's research performance. Research suggests that international research collaboration – as measured by internationally co-authored scientific papers – has greater research impact in terms of citations than single-author or single-country co-authored scientific papers.

While theories about why this is so may vary, a number of explanations come to mind. International research collaboration enables the sharing of diverse ideas and perspectives, leading to better research. International research collaboration can also broaden access to more resources, be they physical (e.g. lab equipment) or intellectual. Collaboration may also attract more 'followers' from different countries who will take up these new ideas.

Whatever the reasons, successful international collaboration often depends on interpersonal relations, especially in its early stages. Yet establishing these can often be very difficult – barriers of culture, language, and trust still need to be bridged, and potential research outcomes may be highly uncertain.

One solution might be to invite (potential) collaborators to spend an extended period of time – perhaps a few weeks – on campus to let the scientific and necessary social links develop. But securing such a visit can be very difficult due to scheduling and funding restraints. Here, a summer school can be a perfect solution.



Students at the 2016 ACU Commonwealth Summer School in Rwanda

The potential collaborator can teach a course at the summer school, for which a budget is often available or tuition fees can be charged, thus solving the financial conundrum. The course will not take up their full day, however, leaving time to discuss research and get to know potential colleagues. These are the type of confidence-building measures that can lead to more substantial institutional collaboration in the form of joint research, education, and international mobility programmes.

A marketing tool

Seeing is believing – an adage that is certainly true in higher education. Spending some weeks at an institution is both a low-risk proposition and a way to know if there really is a ‘fit’ between person and institution. A promising young researcher may hesitate to pursue a PhD in a foreign country he or she has never visited, and a professor may be hesitant to offer such a position to a foreign candidate because there is a risk of misunderstanding or a fear of cultural mismatch. But a few weeks during summer? That is a relatively low-risk proposition for both parties.

Spending some weeks in a country, and under a professor’s tutelage, is a good timeframe for both parties to get to know each other. Research-focused summer schools are therefore a perfect tool to recruit graduate students and to showcase a university’s research prowess, as well as the overall quality of its academic environment.

Participants sharing these experiences is a powerful marketing tool in itself, as word-of-mouth and social media posts from friends and family are among the most trusted sources of information for making decisions about a product or service – including higher education. Therefore, organising a summer school, even if somewhat loss-making, can be a very cost-effective marketing tool for a university.

It is no surprise that summer schools are a rapidly growing segment within international higher education. They are not only popular with students and faculty, but can also be strategically deployed to support goals as diverse as human resource development, marketing, and research collaboration. Beyond these higher-level goals, summer schools can

fill unused dormitories and classrooms, and create additional revenue in terms of tuition fees and other student spending – funds that can be reinvested in research education.

Arguably, the versatility and popularity of summer schools may foreshadow more fundamental shifts in the higher education landscape. The university of the future may be similar to the summer school of today, meaning the summer school trend is one no university can afford to ignore. ■

Pieter E Stek is an Adviser at QS Asia, Singapore.

The fourth QS Summer School Summit will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 6-8 December 2017. To find out more, and learn about the most recent summit in India, visit www.qssummerschool.com

What do we mean by science diplomacy?

In December 2016, an ACU seminar highlighted the importance of science diplomacy to achieving sustainable development. Here, one of the event's speakers, **Robin Grimes** – Chief Scientific Adviser to the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office – and colleague **Patrick Bragoli** explore what we actually mean by science diplomacy and how it works in practice.

There are an estimated 30,000 scientists and engineers working for the UK government in the civil service and wider public sector. Their work covers everything from food safety to space exploration, from defence to nuclear fusion. They permeate throughout the civil service and percolate throughout committees, where they are called upon to offer remedies to a bewildering variety of ailments. Nevertheless, the idea of having a Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is relatively new.

Most UK government departments have a Chief Scientific Adviser, forming a network of CSAs working under the leadership of the Government Chief Scientific Adviser. Together, this group advises on all aspects of policy concerning science and technology. Further, they provide advice to their ministers, and identify and share good practice in areas related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, including the use of scientific advice in policymaking. Where the FCO role differs is that a key priority is to help embed science diplomacy in the FCO at all levels: with colleagues working in UK overseas missions,

with ministers in London, and with the Foreign Secretary. The purpose of the role is not to be all things science to all diplomats. It is about ensuring that science is a ready tool in the diplomatic toolbox.

Worldwide, there are currently only four other science advisers who focus on the science diplomacy agenda and are hosted mostly, or entirely, within a foreign service. They are in Japan, New Zealand, Senegal, and the USA. The first country to have such a post was the US, and the current Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State, Vaughan Turekian, is the fifth person to hold the position. For the other three countries, the incumbents are their first. However, it is likely that a number of other countries will soon embrace the idea and swell the ranks.

So, what is science diplomacy? In 2010, the Royal Society offered a definition in *New Frontiers in Science Diplomacy*, a joint

publication with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. They proposed three ways of looking at science diplomacy: science **in** diplomacy, science **for** diplomacy, and **diplomacy for science**.

Science in diplomacy

Science can be used in diplomacy to provide robust evidence to inform policy objectives. Immediately following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant after the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, the UK government activated the Scientific Advisory Group in Emergencies (SAGE). This group is responsible for ensuring that timely and coordinated scientific advice is made available to decision-makers to support UK cross-government decisions in COBR. COBR, which stands for Cabinet Office Briefing Room, is the name given to the crisis response committee that is set up to coordinate the actions of bodies within the UK in response to a national or regional crisis, or during events abroad with major implications for Britain.

Through SAGE, the UK government was able to use science to understand the progression of the accident and its implications for society, including



Delegates at the ACU's seminar on science diplomacy

British nationals in Japan. It used this scientific analysis to inform its citizens through the British embassy in Tokyo and through the media. Most British nationals based in Japan remained in the country throughout the period, as details of the accident unfolded. The UK government was confident in supporting this stance, as it was in explaining many comments made by the Japanese government and providing context for the data being issued.

The UK's response has had a beneficial effect on UK-Japan relations since the incident, and led to a detailed discussion of science advisory systems. The Japanese appointed their first science and technology adviser to their Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015.

The strength of our science and innovation relationship with Japan today helps to strengthen our foreign policy influence. That enables us to work in partnership towards solutions to global and national challenges such as climate change, antimicrobial resistance, and cybersecurity.

Science for diplomacy

Science can be used to build diplomatic relations, leading to improved political, social and economic links. The FCO's Chief Scientific Adviser recently participated in the second annual Science Forum South Africa. Active participation in such events reinforces the UK's commitment to overseas science and technology development, builds mutual understanding, and widens networks.

Science for diplomacy can be an effective tool even in politically difficult circumstances. Collaboration between the Argentinean embassy in London and the British embassy in Buenos Aires resulted in a successful four-day visit to the UK by Argentine Science Minister Lino Barañano. This substance-packed visit showed Argentina's appetite for engagement in this area and gave a platform to demonstrate UK expertise. It included visits to key laboratories, such as the Francis Crick Institute, the Sanger Institute, Rothamsted Research, and Kew Gardens. It also saw the first UK-Argentina Science Dialogue, which was hosted at the Science Museum in London. At the end of the visit, the UK Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Jo Johnson, signed a joint statement of intent for closer collaboration in life sciences, agricultural technology, advanced materials and nanotechnology, information and communications technology, oceans research, and palaeontology. Looking forward, it is now

possible to consider trilateral science and innovation partnerships, such as between Argentina, South Africa, and the UK.

Diplomacy for science

Scientists sometimes need our help as diplomats. They need us to make connections, influence policy to help create a framework within which they can collaborate internationally, or gain access to costly facilities that are not available in the UK.

An example of this is the strong, ongoing research collaboration between UK and Indian civil nuclear laboratories, supported by a UK-India civil nuclear cooperation agreement. This has been ongoing since 2010 and to date has resulted in more than 35 joint papers in scientific journals and around 25 conference presentations, with the number growing year on year.

This collaboration is based on mutual benefit. For example, it gives the UK scientists access to large-scale experimental infrastructure which is not available in the UK. On the India side, it provides access to expertise in aspects of engineering materials. Both countries fund their own parts of the project, with around GBP 1 million per year on the UK side coming from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

So, how else does the UK deliver science diplomacy? An important role is played by the Science and Innovation Network.

The Science and Innovation Network

The Science and Innovation Network has around 90 people working in more than 30 countries and territories around the world, building partnerships and collaborations in science and innovation. A quarter of those are Commonwealth countries (Australia, Canada, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Singapore, and South Africa). Officers based in British embassies, high commissions, and consulates work with their local science and innovation communities in support of UK policy overseas, leading to mutual benefits to the UK and the host country.

Science and Innovation Network teams develop their own country-specific action plans, focusing on thematic areas in which they can have the most impact for the UK. However, they all work to the same objectives:

- **Prosperity** – enhancing UK growth and exports; connecting innovative UK industries and scientific expertise with international opportunities

- **Security** – delivering solutions to global challenges such as health, energy, the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, and enhancing resilience to natural disasters
- **Influence** – strengthening the UK's foreign policy influence through science and innovation
- **Development** – supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and matching UK expertise to international need

Newton Fund

Another important mechanism for science diplomacy is the Newton Fund programme, which builds scientific and innovation partnerships with 16 partner countries to support their economic development and social welfare. It also develops research and innovation capacity for long-term sustainable growth. Four partner countries are Commonwealth members (India, Kenya, Malaysia, and South Africa). The UK is investing GBP 735 million from 2014 to 2021, with partner countries providing matched resources within the fund.

Driving innovation

The FCO Chief Scientific Adviser position has been successful in championing science diplomacy in the Foreign Office because it uses scientific evidence and science networks to establish and promote the conditions for the UK to progress its diplomatic, prosperity, security, international development, and cultural agendas.

But science diplomacy is not the exclusive domain of diplomats. Universities and their key science networks play a crucial role in improving cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. Research and the generation of new knowledge to drive innovation are international enterprises. The mobility of students and researchers is essential to this pursuit. If the UK is to maintain its international profile, the government must prioritise science so that other countries continue to see the UK as the place to come. ■

Professor Robin Grimes is Chief Scientific Adviser to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Professor of Materials Physics at Imperial College London.

Patrick Bragoli is Head of the Chief Scientific Adviser's Office at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



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and help shape your
membership**

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The ACU is your membership association.
We want to hear your feedback on our services and how we can
best meet your needs. Visit www.acu.ac.uk/survey to take part.

If you would prefer to receive a copy of the survey by post or email,
contact us at membership@acu.ac.uk or +44 (0)20 7380 6744



ACU Measures

The ACU's annual online benchmarking exercise for university management – ACU Measures – is now open for data collection.

ACU Measures is a unique opportunity for member institutions to benchmark their performance in key areas of university management in a confidential and non-competitive way.

In order to benchmark, you first need to participate – the more institutions taking part, the better the benchmarking will be.

Rather than seeking to rank institutions, ACU Measures helps universities to compare and contrast their practices and policies with their peers, supporting senior university management in decision-making and strategic planning. ACU Measures enables you to:

- Benchmark your institution's performance over time and demonstrate the impact of managerial changes
- Learn about performance in a given area
- Define your own comparison groups and produce individualised reports, tables, and charts
- Use the results to make a case for resources, staff, or training
- Share experiences and good practice with international colleagues
- Identify which issues are specific to your institution, as opposed to national or regional

ACU Measures covers four areas: **institutional profile**, **academic salaries**, **research management**, and **gender**.

Data is collected online and benchmarked using the ACU Measures platform. We require only one response per area, per institution. Every member vice-chancellor is invited to nominate colleagues to complete the respective sections of the survey by contacting measures@acu.ac.uk

Benchmarking will open in July 2017 to all registered users.

To take part, visit www.acu.ac.uk/measures or email measures@acu.ac.uk

Noticeboard

The ACU is delighted to announce that **Dr Joanna Newman** has been appointed as its next Secretary General. Dr Newman, currently Vice-Principal (International) of King's College London, UK, will take up the post on 3 April 2017. She succeeds Professor John Wood in the role.

Before joining King's in 2014, Dr Newman was Director of the UK Higher Education International Unit (now known as Universities UK International). Prior to this, she was Head of Higher Education at the British Library. Dr Newman is a faculty member in the Department of History at King's, and has taught history at University College London and the University of Warwick. In 2014, she was honoured as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in recognition of her work promoting British higher education internationally.

Professor Jan Thomas, Chair of the ACU Council and Vice-Chancellor of Massey University, New Zealand, welcomed the appointment, saying 'I am delighted that we have appointed such a talented and knowledgeable person to the role, and am confident that Joanna has the right mix of leadership skills and international experience to lead the ACU in its next phase of development'.

Dr Newman said 'I am honoured to take the helm of such a longstanding and prestigious organisation as the ACU. As universities are increasingly tasked with solving the grand challenges of our time, international engagement and collaboration becomes ever more important. I am excited at the prospect of leading an organisation with such a crucial role to play in connecting universities globally'.



Dr Joanna Newman

Higher education is often blamed for not producing more 'employable' graduates, but such criticisms ignore the huge amount that universities already do in this area. To address this, the ACU has agreed to prepare a paper on **universities and graduate employability**, to present to the 2018 Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Fiji. The paper will combine best practice from initiatives already under way, with recommendations for how universities can be better supported in their work. Member universities will be invited to contribute examples of their work for possible inclusion.

The ACU will also be offering staff with expertise in this area an opportunity to attend a specialist seminar in South Africa, and to author a background paper bringing together key evidence. Further details will be circulated to member institutions in April, or register your interest now by emailing membership@acu.ac.uk



Following the success of ACU-led workshops to promote gender equity in higher education, the ACU's **gender workshop grants** aim to help member institutions run their own such workshops. These may focus on a range of topics, including gender mainstreaming in universities, sexual harassment on campus, encouraging women in leadership, and the introduction of gender policies and practices. In 2016/17, workshop grants were awarded to ten member institutions:

- Assam Don Bosco University, India
- Charles Sturt University, Australia
- Nirma University, India
- University of Delhi, India
- University of Hong Kong
- University of Hull, UK
- University of Papua New Guinea
- University of Surrey, UK
- University of the West Indies
- Zambian Open University



Former scholar Masedi Tshukudu graduating from the University of Rwanda



The ACU was represented at the **2017 meeting of the Association of Indian Universities**, which attracted some 250 delegates to Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, in February. The event focused on identifying and celebrating the achievements of Indian higher education over the past seven decades.

The ACU delegation comprised Professor Nick Petford, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Northampton, UK; Professor Idris Rai, Vice-Chancellor of the State University of Zanzibar, Tanzania; Dr Carolyn Watters, Provost of Dalhousie University, Canada; and the ACU's Deputy Secretary General, Dr John Kirkland. All made presentations to the conference and took an active part in wider discussions, as well as developing new links and partnerships for their institutions. The delegation attended by special invitation of the hosts.

'All the delegates were delighted with the opportunity to learn more about Indian universities, and we are grateful that the invitation has been repeated for 2018,' said Dr Kirkland. 'We are discussing similar initiatives with other national associations for later this year.'

The ACU-led **Structured Training for African Researchers (STARS)** programme works with universities in Africa to develop structured institutional support for early career academics. Funded by Robert Bosch Stiftung, STARS offers online professional development training and mentoring, while helping participating institutions to strengthen their own support frameworks.

The STARS course materials, developed in collaboration with 12 African universities, have now been published on the ACU website under an open access license, enabling universities across the world to adapt and embed the material within their own professional development programmes. To find out more and download the materials, visit www.acu.ac.uk/stars

19 students have been awarded **Commonwealth Scholarships supported by the CSFP endowment fund** for the 2016/17 academic year. These scholarships give students from Commonwealth countries the chance to study a Master's degree at an ACU member institution in a low or middle income country. Visit www.acu.ac.uk/csfp-scholarships to find out more.

- Ishiyaku Babayo Ibrahim from Nigeria: MSc Physics at **COMSATS Institute of Information Technology**, Pakistan
- Sadeeq Muhammad Sheshe from Nigeria: MSc Biotechnology at **COMSATS Institute of Information Technology**, Pakistan
- Gbadebo Monday Elebiyo from Nigeria: MSc Agronomy at **Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology**, Ghana
- Abdur Rob from Bangladesh: MSc Information Technology at **Moi University**, Kenya
- Joseph Mensah from Ghana: MSc Soil Science at the **National University of Lesotho**
- Puso Sezuka from Botswana: MA Communication and Development Studies at **Papua New Guinea University of Technology**
- Chimwemwe Tembo-Phiri from Zambia: MSc Sustainable Agriculture at **Stellenbosch University**, South Africa
- Steven Mitini-Nkhoma from Malawi: MSc in Cellular and Molecular Immunology at the **University of Colombo**, Sri Lanka
- Henry Chukwuebuka Ezechukwu from Nigeria: MSc Cellular and Molecular Immunology at the **University of Colombo**, Sri Lanka
- Rashika Saman Kumari Abesinghe from Sri Lanka: MSc Criminology at the **University of Dhaka**, Bangladesh
- Martin Kuria Karanja from Kenya: MSc Economics at the **University of Malawi**
- Yustina Masanyoni from Tanzania: MSc Economics at the **University of Nairobi**, Kenya
- Michael Olanrewaju Olaniyi from Nigeria: MSc Animal Science at the **University of Pretoria**, South Africa
- Mamoud Abdul Jalloh from Sierra Leone: MSc Economics at the **University of Rwanda**
- Lazina Hossain Neshe from Bangladesh: MBA Business Administration at the **University of Sri Jayewardenepura**, Sri Lanka
- Paul Junior from Uganda: MSc Chemistry at the **University of Swaziland**
- Joachim Emeka Arikibe from Nigeria: MSc Chemistry at the **University of the South Pacific**
- Komla Amega from Ghana: MSc Economics at the **University of the West Indies**, Trinidad and Tobago
- Frimpong Adu-Gyamfi from Ghana, MSc Environment and Water Science at the **University of the Western Cape**, South Africa

Preparing for the unthinkable

All universities will inevitably face events for which no amount of planning can truly prepare them. Here, **David W Atkinson** reflects on his own experiences at MacEwan University in Canada, and on the complexities and considerations of coping with crisis.

No one would argue about the unpredictability of our world, and about how universities are increasingly forced to prepare for the unthinkable.

So it was for MacEwan University, which in a short period of six months confronted three very different crises, each with its own set of complexities. The first related to a wildfire in northern Alberta, which devastated much of the town of Fort McMurray. Some 2,000 families lost their homes. The second was losing a well-known and exceedingly popular student in the 2016 Nice terror

attack, who, along with five of his classmates, was studying there for the summer. Finally, we confronted a threat on social media of a shooter on campus, which threw the institution into immediate confusion and panic.

What connects these events is that they are things we do not routinely see, and for which, notwithstanding all our efforts at emergency preparedness, there is no one kind of defined response. Nothing one does in advance will prepare for the actual event. But having said this, there are a few things that are worthy of consideration.

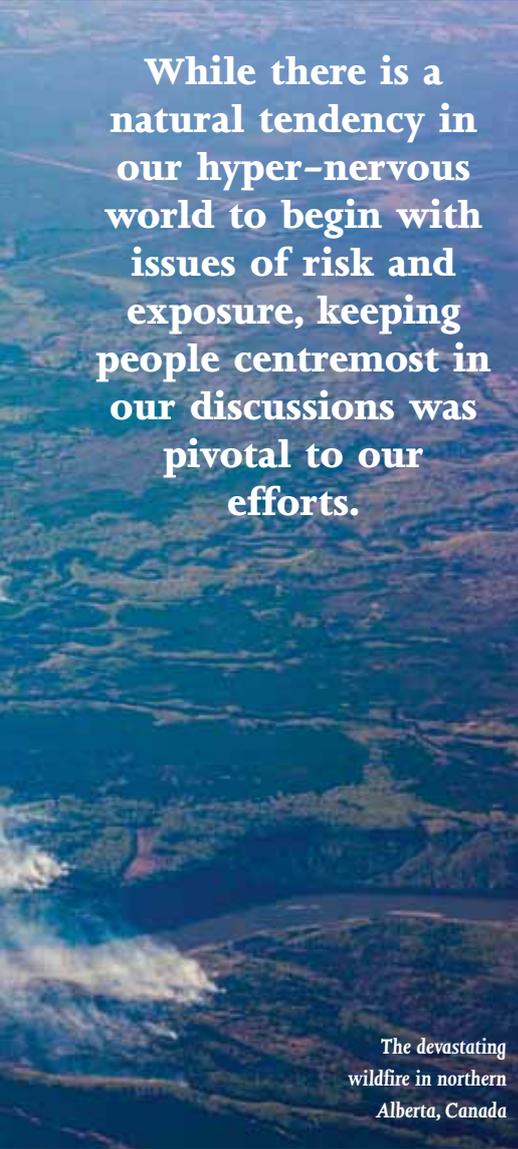
While there is a natural tendency in our hyper-nervous world to begin with issues of risk and exposure, keeping people centremost in our discussions was pivotal in mobilising our efforts in all three cases. When we started veering away from this principle, the decisions started to shift into a discussion that was not always in the best interest of those involved.

In the case of the Fort McMurray evacuees, the university became within hours a safe haven for many who were traumatised by their flight from the fires. Our primary concern was always to ensure that people who had lost everything had a safe and supportive place.



That many of the evacuees were new Canadians working in the Fort McMurray oil sands made this even more imperative. Overlaying this were significant logistical challenges concerning the integration of services and lines of authority, given the involvement of provincial and city governments, as well as the Red Cross and other social agencies.

The Nice situation presented three concerns. First, we needed to be assured that our other students were safe and provide whatever support was necessary. That we had a faculty member accompanying them helped immensely. Second, Aleksei's (not his real name) actual status was not confirmed for a few days, and we needed to talk with his family to ensure they got the support they



While there is a natural tendency in our hyper-nervous world to begin with issues of risk and exposure, keeping people centrest in our discussions was pivotal to our efforts.

The devastating wildfire in northern Alberta, Canada

needed. We maintained 24-hour contact with them. The French government arranged to have Aleksei's mother and brother fly to Nice for purposes of identification, but only after a painful few days of waiting for DNA evidence. Third, there was wide concern across the institution about Aleksei, given that everyone on campus had heard the rumours that were circulating.

We were the first to hear that Aleksei had gone missing, and it fell to us to inform his family. Complicating the matter was the fact that Aleksei was a landed immigrant travelling on a Ukrainian passport, and that his family was in Ukraine. The challenges of dealing with three levels of government – French, Ukrainian, and Canadian – added an enormous level of complexity.

A shooter on campus is any university's worst fear, and given the ubiquity of social media, rumours were swirling around campus almost immediately. A significant police presence on campus did not help the situation. We made the decision that our communications, while endeavouring to be timely, would constitute a single carefully crafted statement of what was actually transpiring. Our concern was to ensure the safety of faculty, staff, and students, and to mitigate panic.

A major dilemma in this regard was whether to shut the campus down, with the fear that we would, in fact, be locking the shooter in. In the end, we did not, and as it was, the individual involved was apprehended in a timely fashion. Some on campus nonetheless felt we did not respond quickly enough, but in this the Edmonton City Police had ultimate authority over how we proceeded.

We made the decision in each of these situations that the senior executive, with a few additional staff, would constitute the operations team, understanding as we did the risk of a potential misstep in all three situations. This group retained all final decision-making authority, with the President as the only voice speaking for the institution. This approach ensured that there was clarity with respect to the various roles people played.

Communications was a big challenge. Whether it was with the media or our internal community, we could never control completely how the message was communicated. Our evacuees understandably had concerns for themselves and their families –

how long could they stay, what support was available, where were the rest of their family, were they safe? Our communication needed to be consistent and clear, even as it recognised the worry and anxiety of those staying with us.

In Aleksei's case, we rigorously controlled the institution's message, and even though we knew early on that Aleksei was dead, we did not release any information until his identity was confirmed by the French authorities. This often entailed holding back information – something which the press suspected we were doing.

The situation of the shooter was very different in that we were working in real time. But always we resisted the temptation to over-communicate in the interests of ensuring that what we said was accurate. The one thing we learned from all three situations is that we can never get ahead of social media, and that this must frame all our communications.

Despite the best efforts of a lot of people, we were subject to inevitable criticism and a great deal of advice about how things could have been done better. In some cases, these criticisms were legitimate and worthy of serious consideration. In others, they were simply demoralising to those involved, and for this there is really no response except to support one's own staff.

Two other things are worthy of note. First, we have never assumed that we got everything right. In all three cases, we engaged in a comprehensive debrief to determine what lessons were learned and how we might do things better next time. At the same time, we were always aware that there is no one right way and certainly there are no instructions. The second was to be cognisant of the challenges faced by our own staff in confronting these events. Much of what people did was not part of their job descriptions, and it was important to extend both thanks and support to them.

We all hope events such as these will not happen. The bottom line in all cases, though, is to use common sense, to be very aware of the consequences of your actions, and to remember that it is all about people. ■

Professor David W Atkinson is President of MacEwan University, Canada.

Responsible rankings?

However controversial, global university rankings continue to matter. Yet as society looks to higher education to meet a range of social, cultural and economic needs, are rankings at odds with these objectives? Do they encourage social responsibility and citizenship or are they drivers of inequality?

Ellen Hazelkorn discusses.

Global rankings are the inevitable product of an internationalised higher education market and world economy, although their origins stretch back to the early 19th century. Since 2003, they have become a phenomenon in every world region, and in almost every country. Their rise to prominence coincided with the current phase of globalisation and growing dissatisfaction with the robustness of traditional collegial mechanisms of quality assurance. Hence, regardless of our views about their merits or otherwise, rankings continue to matter.

Rankings have acquired legitimacy because their methodology appears statistically rigorous and independent. They also appear to be the only way to compare performance and quality internationally. This is important because higher education plays a key role as the engine of the knowledge economy. The quality and status of our universities has thus become an essential and vital indicator of competitiveness, and a key differentiator – regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Rankings appear to provide a simple and useful way to measure and compare quality and performance. Because of their influence on students, stakeholders, governments, and so on, rankings are used by governments and higher education institutions. Being included in the rankings, almost regardless of the actual position, can send out a powerful message about an institution's reputation and status.

But rankings encourage prestige-seeking by becoming more selective: focusing on high-achievers who bring in revenue and aid performance indicators, limiting class or cohort size, shifting emphasis from needs-based to merit-based scholarships, and focusing on research rather than teaching, and on post-graduate rather than undergraduate students.

How do governments use rankings – and to what effect?

Around the world, governments and educational institutions are undergoing significant change and reform. This is in response to a number of factors, including broader demographic and labour market changes, and

How should we determine the best universities?

- Are the best universities those that help the majority of students earn credentials for sustainable living and employment, or those that best match the criteria established by the different rankings?
- Are the best universities those that emphasise their students' obligations to serve their communities and the nation at large, or those that adopt indicators chosen by commercial organisations for their own purposes?

recognition that democratic societies and economies require a higher education system able to meet their needs.

There is, however, mounting evidence that some changes are being introduced to correspond directly with rankings. This is because quality has become a geopolitical issue. Rankings can operate as a beacon to attract and retain mobile capital and business, at a time of demographic change and heightened competition for talent globally. They are interpreted as a link between a credential and career opportunities, salary, and lifestyle. For the public, rankings can indicate value for money and return on (public) investment, and convey a sense of pride.

Excellence initiatives – named after the German *Exzellenzinitiative* (initiative for excellence) introduced in 2005 – now operate in over 30 different countries, including Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Nigeria, and

Prestige and reputation can become dominant drivers, rather than student achievement, contribution to society, or equity and diversity.

Singapore. They work primarily on the philosophy of picking 'winners' and giving them additional resources – in the belief that the benefits of exclusivity will spill over to the rest of society.

However, rankings are essentially a driver of inequality. They measure 'resource-intensity' or inputs, and reward sustained concentration and selectivity in a few elite universities – rather than student and societal achievement or outcomes. The effect is to:

- Amplify the benefits and prestige of elite universities and their graduates
- Undermine the teaching mission and service to society
- Realign research towards the biosciences and medicine
- Intensify steeper hierarchies and social stratification

A help or a hindrance?

Rankings have become a dominant strategic driver of university decision-making. They have succeeded in focusing attention on quality, and positioning higher education within an international comparative and competitive setting. There is increasing evidence that rankings are also used to:

- Set explicit strategic goals
- Identify key performance indicators
- Inform academic recruitment and promotion, and identify under-performers
- Identify potential partners or networks

According to a survey by i-graduate, 80% of undergraduate and postgraduate students have a strong interest in rankings. This is particularly true for high achieving students and those from high socioeconomic backgrounds, who are more likely to make choices based on non-financial factors. International students continue to rate reputation and position in rankings as key determinants in their choice of institution, programme, and country. Indeed, there is a strong correlation between rankings, perceptions of quality, institutional reputation, and choice of destination. In addition to students and their parents, businesses, investors, policymakers, and the public are all influenced by rankings.



Performing well in the rankings is perceived as attracting benefit and prestige to universities. Given this significance, many university leaders have been heard to say they'll do whatever it takes to be in, or get into, the top rankings.

However, the financial costs linked to pursuing a rankings-led strategy are very high. In addition to the initial costs associated with investment in research and recruitment of international 'stars', there are significant ongoing costs. To meet the criteria requires most universities to abandon or refocus their mission, priorities, and resource allocation, and to prioritise global over national or regional commitments.

Influencing social responsibility

The relationship between universities and the nation state is changing everywhere. Of increasing importance is the extent to which higher education has the capacity and capability to meet a wide range of national objectives arising from economic competitiveness and sustainability, changing labour

How should we decide higher education policy?

- To move towards a mass knowledge society (where progress depends on the 'wisdom of the many'), or towards an elite knowledge society (where progress depends on the cutting-edge knowledge of the chosen few)?
- To improve the capacity and quality of the whole system or reward the achievements of elite flagship institutions?

markets and patterns of employment and lifestyle, and societal and cultural necessities and opportunities.

Projections suggest the number of students enrolled in higher education will rise from 99.4 million in 2000 to 414.2 million in 2030 – an increase of 314%. Accommodating the additional students will require more than four major universities to open every week for the next 15 years (Calderon, 2012). Yet the top 100 universities represent less than 0.5% of the almost 18,000 institutions worldwide, and approximately 0.4% of total tertiary students. Focusing on these universities provides a perverse view of the national system.

While society looks to higher education to meet a wider range of social, cultural, and economic needs, rankings measure contrary objectives. Prestige and reputation become dominant drivers, rather than student achievement, contribution to society and the economy, or equity and diversity. This occurs because other achievements – such as arts, humanities and social science research, publishing in a national language or journal, contributing to knowledge exchange, or working with small and medium sized enterprises – are neither measured nor valued by rankings. Furthermore, concentrating excellence in a small number of elite institutions may, unwittingly, undermine 'high-quality research being made by a wider set of higher education institutions... which are doing particularly good work in niche areas' (Chapman et al, 2014).

The tension between local, regional, national, and international missions is most pronounced in the 'world class university' model. This is defined according to the characteristics of the top 100 ranked univ-

ersities and, as discussed above, has become a government and university objective in many countries.

In contrast, the 'world class system' model emphasises the importance of a multiplicity of higher education institutions, each with distinctive missions, which complement each other to maximise capacity beyond individual capability.

Rather than using rankings, governments and universities should focus on benchmarking – such as that promoted by the ACU. Benchmarking uses a sophisticated combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to embrace and embed the full spectrum of teaching and learning, research and discovery, innovation and engagement. These are precisely the attributes that promote active civic engagement, enhancing the competitive advantage of cities, regions and nation states, as well as underpinning democratic values and active citizenship. ■

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Professor Ellen Hazelkorn is Policy Advisor to the Higher Education Authority, and Director of the Higher Education Policy Research Unit at Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland. Her latest book, *Global Rankings and the Geopolitics of Higher Education*, is published by Routledge.

HR steps up

In October 2016, delegates from 21 countries met in Mauritius for a conference focused on human resource management in higher education. The theme – ‘HR steps up’ – reflected the need for HR practitioners to think beyond the traditional role of human resources, and see it instead as essential to achieving organisational goals. Here, two of the event’s speakers – **Nasira Jabeen** and **Marilyn Thompson** – give a flavour of the richly varied programme on offer, from HR reforms in Pakistan’s public universities to workplace cultures in Canada.

HR steps up’ was a chance for HR professionals, scholars, practitioners, and researchers from around the world to take stock of existing HR practices in their specific contexts and define the strategic role of human resource management in higher education. As part of the programme, I was pleased to share my work on HR reforms and governance in Pakistan’s public sector universities.

In keeping with universal public management trends, the government of Pakistan has urged public organisations – including its public sector universities – to emulate corporate management practices to improve performance and governance. For higher education, these reforms have focused mainly on staffing, training and development, performance assessment, benefits and compensation management, and quality assurance. They have included the introduction of a new service structure – the tenure track system – and allowances to enhance the retention and motivation of teachers. However, while a lot of investment and effort is being made to implement these reforms, evaluation of the outcomes remains largely absent.

My research sought to evaluate the status of these reforms and determine their effectiveness, with a particular focus on the links between HR reform and good governance.

I was able to demonstrate significant variations in the implementation of HR reforms in public universities, with HR often in its more traditional role. Reforms related to recruitment and selection, training and development, and pay and benefits had been implemented in more than 50% of public sector universities. However, other reforms – such as hiring programmes for foreign faculty and virtual education programmes – had been implemented in less than half of public sector institutions.

My study showed that the reforms were largely being implemented using good governance indicators, such as accountability, selection by merit, regular testing of standards, and equity and fairness. The majority of those taking part in the study agreed that these indicators can significantly strengthen overall governance structures and performance.

Overall, the findings suggested a need to revisit and rethink HR reforms in view of the culturally-specific needs and requirements of the institutions involved. Any reforms should be implemented through a comprehensive process of participation, creative adaption, and continuous feedback, in order to fill the planning and implementation gap and facilitate a shift from traditional to more strategic human resource management.

My recommendations included a strengthening of HR legislation, the introduction of career development and succession planning initiatives, and an analysis of training needs, design, and long-term evaluation. My paper also argued that there should be a strategic link between university HR departments, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan’s HR department, and the country’s human resource development needs.

In the discussions following my paper, some very good points were raised, including useful feedback on positioning HR within university strategy, developing directories of HR professionals and academics, and establishing networks at regional levels which can then connect to global networks.

Overall, the conference provided a wonderful platform for networking, the sharing of best practice and exchange of ideas, and to explore opportunities for linkages and friendship. The beauty of Mauritius, the congenial environment, and the generous hospitality of colleagues at the University of Mauritius all added much charm to the event and multiplied the learning experience manifold. ■

Professor Dr Nasira Jabeen is Director of the Institute of Administrative Sciences at the University of the Punjab, Pakistan.



The conference delegates

My presentation introduced the University of Waterloo's approach to transforming the workplace, ultimately creating a culture built on a sound value system. As part of its strategic plan, the university has adopted the workplace influencers of excellence, innovation, and wellness, involving faculty and staff in new approaches to innovation, health, and engagement. Outcomes would include recognition of the university as a destination of choice for employees, the establishment of diverse and enriched career experiences, and the integration of quality standards in all administrative processes.

HR stepping up ... to drive excellence: The University of Waterloo uses a quality framework and evidence-based metrics to inform strategic HR direction and improve outcomes. Building on a shared excellence model between employer and employee, Waterloo's plan focuses on what each can do in the areas of wellness, leadership effectiveness, and promoting respectful workplaces. HR is leading workplace transformation by integrating standards of excellence, innovation, and wellness throughout its operations, functions, and programmes, and by fostering continual improvement and cross-campus collaboration.

HR stepping up ... to link excellence, innovation, and productivity: Our focus on people analytics uses established tools and practices to enable evidence-influenced decision-making. These tools have enabled HR to move away from a transactional approach and embrace a shared excellence model of client service. Activities at the operational level relate to broader strategic initiatives and, more importantly, can be shown to have a measurable impact on university-wide strategic priorities.

These analytics provide significant opportunities to use what we know about our employees to drive improved outcomes in areas such as workforce planning, leadership effectiveness, and employee health and wellness.

HR stepping up ... as a champion for wellness and mental health: A significant and growing body of evidence shows a link between employee health, lost time from work, and productivity. Employers with healthy workplace programmes have seen improved business outcomes, including reductions in lost time, improved employee effectiveness, and better business returns. As part of Waterloo's efforts to champion wellness and mental health, we have adopted the 'Not Myself Today' principles – an initiative to build greater awareness and understanding of mental health among the workforce and foster supportive workplace cultures. Tools found at www.notmyselftoday.ca have been very helpful in working with employees and their supervisors.

Waterloo uses improved people analytics to gain better insights into its workforce. However, to enable top performance from all staff and become a model of employee engagement, the culture and history of any institution matters, and will influence the success of any endeavour. A lesson learned for us has been that consultation is critical, even when you don't have to. It's important to hear from your employees at every stage to ensure there is engagement and that the outcomes are supported.

Outstanding staff and faculty are, and always will be, at the heart of accomplishing strategic goals for any university. The ability to recruit, support, and retain the best possible employees is critical to success. By strategically focusing efforts on their people, universities

can foster deep institutional pride and enable employees to reach their full potential. This commitment – at all levels of the institution – can position a university as a destination of choice for talented, motivated individuals, whose support and engagement will ensure the institution's continued success.

There is much we can learn from one another. 'HR steps up' was a perfect opportunity to learn from other institutions about their own journeys to excellence and innovation, and to get feedback on our initiatives. The theme led us to consider how, and to what extent, HR is driving operational performance within our own institutions. Fellow participants were encouraging and supportive in their feedback, and provided valuable insight into how to advance excellence by building on the knowledge of others, while staying true to one's own culture and context. ■

Dr Marilyn Thompson is Associate Provost for Human Resources at the University of Waterloo, Canada.

The ACU's HR in HE Community is a forum for all university staff working in human resources – from the most experienced HR directors to those looking to expand or develop the HR function at their institution. Formerly known as the ACU Human Resource Management Network, the community brings colleagues from across the Commonwealth together to compare good practice, showcase ideas and initiatives, and discover potential avenues for collaboration. To take part or find out more, visit www.acu.ac.uk/hr-in-he or contact hrm@acu.ac.uk



The ACU: broadening horizons

The ACU Early Career Academic Grants enable emerging academics from across the Commonwealth to attend conferences or academic meetings in other Commonwealth countries, thereby broadening their horizons and developing key international contacts. Here, recent recipients report on their experiences.

Dr Jane Bell – University of Sydney, Australia

My Early Career Academic Grant enabled me to attend the International Congress of Pediatrics in Vancouver, Canada – a global gathering focused on improving the health of children and young people around the world.

Based on research undertaken in Western Australia, I gave a presentation on the school performance of children born with cleft lip and palate. One in 500 children from the region are born with the condition, which can affect speech, hearing, appearance, and may lead to chronic adverse health and developmental issues. My presentation highlighted the need to identify learning difficulties early, thereby enabling intervention and improving school performance.

I also presented a poster on hospital admissions for children born with cleft lip and palate, and was fortunate to be allocated a session adjacent to a psychologist from the USA who works in a clinic treating children with the condition. This gave me the opportunity to compare my understanding of the psychosocial outcomes of the condition with his clinical observations, which was very helpful.

The opportunity to present my work and interact with researchers working in similar areas was invaluable. Interestingly, attendees who asked questions at the end of a session provided a way of identifying researchers with similar interests to mine, and led to discussions about potential collaboration. I have also been able to share my new knowledge with colleagues at my home institution, and identify ideas for future research.

Overall, the congress was very useful in providing context and background to my understanding of children's health globally, and I felt privileged to present my research and raise awareness of congenital anomalies and their lifelong impact.

Dulani Kuruppu – General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka

My grant enabled me to travel to London, UK, for the 7th International Conference on Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. The event was a golden opportunity to hear from subject experts from all over the world, as well



Dulani Kuruppu (right)

as to present my own research into the development of eco-friendly composite materials for aircraft construction – including experiments with materials that are local to my home country of Sri Lanka.

Attending the conference was enriching in many ways. As well as being a great opportunity to share my research with top researchers and academics in the field, I also received feedback on my presentation, which helped to build my confidence and improve my presentation skills. A huge highlight was when the conference organisers announced my name as a winner of 'Best Oral Presentation'! This was a great achievement in my academic life and I felt very proud.

Of great benefit was the rapport established between specialists in the field, and I made mutually beneficial connections with academic colleagues from all over the world. This expanded my network within the global research community and will, I hope, lead to collaborative research in the future. During the conference dinner, we were able to talk more closely and share ideas and experiences of different cultural practices.

The conference sessions were also very helpful to my growth as both a lecturer and early career researcher, and I have shared new ideas with my peers and undergraduate students. One of the plenary talks in particular

helped to further my ongoing research into digital detection methods for foreign objects on aircraft runways.

I was able to attend solely due to financial support given by the ACU and hope it will continue to offer these grants.

Aliyu Lawan – University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

Like much of the world, Africa is experiencing rising levels of disease and death linked to physical inactivity and increasingly sedentary lifestyles. The 2nd International Conference on Physical Activity and Sport for Health and Development in Africa – held in Nairobi, Kenya – focused on this challenge, and on possible ways to improve and enhance participation in physical activity on the continent. It was particularly interesting to note the diverse range of participants, which included public health professionals, exercise specialists, town planners, and athletes, to mention but a few.

I presented my research into patterns of physical activity among adolescents in Nigeria. Understanding the contexts in which physical activity takes place, as well as other key factors such as gender or socioeconomic status, would enable a more targeted approach to promotion and intervention. The presentation



Aliyu Lawan

was also a chance to compare Nigerian findings with those from other African countries.

I attended a number of high quality presentations on innovative research. Of particular interest were those on notable multi-countries studies, including one exploring physical inactivity and the global childhood obesity epidemic, and another looking at physical activity and active transport among children in Kenya, Nigeria, and Mozambique.

The conference culminated in the first ever African Declaration on Physical Activity, which aims to make the promotion of physical activity a priority for the African Union and its member states. I was proud to be a signatory to this historic declaration, and look forward to sharing the ideas and knowledge gained at the conference with colleagues and students.

Dr Lindsey McCarthy – Sheffield Hallam University, UK

The Energy Cultures Conference, hosted by the University of Otago, New Zealand, brought academics and practitioners from around the globe together to explore energy-related behaviour and its role in moving towards a sustainable energy future. Sessions explored determinants of energy demand, energy improvements in residential settings, new models of the grid, and creating behaviour change, among other themes.

I presented my research as part of a session on householder perspectives of energy. The presentation focused on a study of rental tenants in the UK, which sought to gain a nuanced understanding of experiences and expectations of energy performance in the private rental sector. The presentations were followed by an engaging Q&A session, and it was particularly interesting to share insights with housing and energy experts from New Zealand, where standards of energy performance in the private rented sector are problematic for a different host of social and structural factors.

The conference created new avenues for collaboration with academics based in New Zealand – whether around publishing joint papers or submitting funding bids. It was a great opportunity to meet like-minded peers who, without this opportunity, I would never have had the chance to network with. I also gained new and valuable skills from presenting at the event. Never before had I presented to such a large audience and, though the prospect at first filled me with dread, I realised it was

not only possible but actually quite enjoyable! The experience has boosted my confidence when thinking about future presentations to similar audiences.

Refilwe Morwane – University of Pretoria, South Africa

The University of Pretoria's Fofa Communication Empowerment Programme focuses on empowering young people in South Africa who have severe disabilities and cannot speak, giving them a voice through augmentative and alternative communication strategies. These can include simple systems such as pictures or gestures, as well as computer-based technology. My research for the Fofa programme focuses particularly on the construction of careers for people with complex communication needs, and forms part of my PhD on disability and employment issues.

My Early Career Academic Grant enabled me to present this work at the 'Communication Matters' conference in Leeds, UK – a conference focused on augmentative and alternative communication. The presentation was well received, with constructive feedback and input from an international audience.

The conference was a wonderful opportunity to meet researchers and clinicians working in the field, and I was particularly excited to hear the keynote speaker, Dr Angharad Beckett, who spoke on disability and politics in the UK. Her speech was inspiring and gave a clearer picture of the UK in terms of disability issues and employment. I was also able to form a connection between the Fofa programme in South Africa and 1Voice – a similar initiative in the UK. Both programmes guide young people with complex communication needs in using communication technology and devices, forming relationships, and preparing for the world beyond school. Staff from Fofa will visit 1Voice next year to take this collaboration further.

Dr Davison Murape – National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe

I used my grant to travel to Mauritius for the International Conference on Pure and Applied Chemistry, where I presented my research as part of a symposium on renewable energy for sustainable development.

My presentation explored the economic benefits of switching from grid electricity to solar water heating for a typical family in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. While solar water



heaters were first promoted in Zimbabwe nearly 20 years ago, the technology has not been widely accepted due to high initial costs and a lack of awareness of the potential savings. My analysis highlighted the negligible operational costs of domestic solar water heaters, as well as their 25-year life span, thus demonstrating the economic benefits gained by switching from grid electricity. I also highlighted the need for greater government subsidies to encourage domestic use.

I received invaluable feedback on my presentation from expert scientists, which inspired me to work harder, network, and collaborate. It was also a wonderful opportunity to interact with scientists from all over the world. These included a professor from the National Research Council in Italy, who offered useful suggestions for the development of cheaper solar water heaters, which could be locally designed and built in Zimbabwe. I also met the coordinator of the African Network for Solar Energy, who alerted me to a number of opportunities. I have joined the network and look forward to future collaborations. ■

To find out more about the ACU's grants for early career academics, visit www.acu.ac.uk/early-career-academic-grants

Recent publications

Nick Mulhern, ACU Librarian, summarises the latest titles in the field of international higher education.

Benchmarking Institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa

[Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET); 2016] bit.ly/2msMUPv

A valuable World Bank-supported analysis based on information from 31 institutions of higher education (Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia are among the Commonwealth countries covered). Inclusion, teaching and learning, research, community service, and governance are compared both in terms of performance indicators and what drives them. Internationalisation is also evaluated, as reflected in levels of internationally trained faculty, student mobility, and joint publications. One aim of the initiative was not to rank institutions but to act 'as a catalyst for these universities to carry out effective strategic planning'.

Connecting Classrooms: Using Online Technology to Deliver Global Learning

[Ward, H.; American Council on Education; 2016]

www.acenet.edu

A useful detailed study of collaborative online international learning – an approach developed by the State University of New York. It shows what the approach can achieve in practice and offers advice on adopting it. ('Faculty members in two or more countries collaborate to design a syllabus and co-teach a course, and students in each class must work together online to complete assignments.')

Cross Border Cooperation and Policy Networks in West Africa

[Tremolieres, M.; Walther, O. et al; OECD; 2017]

www.oecd.org/swac

Cross border cooperation, regionalism, integration, and networks in west Africa are reviewed and mapped with reference both to their potential and the existing effect of social, economic, and political disparities. Policy-makers can, it suggests, 'visualise the overall potential of cross-border cooperation in West Africa for the first time'. Although not referenced directly to education or research, the report provides valuable contexts within which collaboration in these areas could develop.



Evaluating International Research Experiences for Graduate Students

[Mitchell, B. et al; Council of Graduate Schools; 2016]

www.cgsnet.org

Recommendations for evaluating international research as discussed at an international workshop. This useful report reflects the meeting's practical goals: 'a need from funding agencies to justify the investment in international research activities that send student-citizens abroad; and a desire to better understand the impact international research experiences have on individual career and STEM workforce development'. It suggests support for early career researchers to develop international professional research networks, and that institutions should 'incorporate long-term participant career tracking into their formative and summative assessment activities'.



Global Report on Adult Learning and Education

[UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning; 2016]

uil.unesco.org

The third such comparative review of adult learning internationally, covering policy, finance, governance, and quality, among other areas. The benefits of adult learning are particularly considered, including health and wellbeing, justifying the need to see education not as a discrete sector but as part of a 'holistic, intersectoral approach'. Shifting attention away from adult learning and education, the report argues, would have 'very negative consequences for people of all ages'.

Graduate Jobs in OECD Countries: Analysis Using A New Indicator Based on High Skills Use

[Henseke, G.; Green, F.; OECD; 2016]

www.oecd-ilibrary.org

This OECD working paper considers redefinitions of 'graduate jobs', particularly with reference to evidence from an OECD skills survey, and in the context of a mass higher education system. It argues that a 'broader set of occupations and tasks' be included.



Higher Education in ASEAN

[Mallow, S.; International Association of Universities; 2016]

www.iau-aiu.net

A document summarising information on higher education systems, including qualification structures, in ASEAN countries. Institutions are also listed.

International Faculty in Higher Education: Comparative Perspectives on Recruitment, Integration, and Impact

[Yudkevich, M.; Altbach, P.; Rumbley, L. (eds); Routledge; 2016]

www.routledge.com

A set of contributed studies on 11 countries, which looks at how academic systems and institutions recruit international staff, and the role that such staff then play.

Mobilities of Knowledge

[Jons, H. et al (eds); Springer; 2017]

www.springer.com

A book exploring the movement of knowledge – people, institutions, ideas, and technologies – and the effect this mobility has had. Its second part brings together studies on academic mobility over time, several in a Commonwealth context. The book's historical perspectives show how 'mobilities of knowledge thus vary substantially', partly as a result of the type of knowledge involved.



Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report

[European Commission; EACEA; Eurydice; 2016]

ec.europa.eu/eurydice

Detailed comparative data on student movement and support within Europe – including language preparation, finance, socioeconomic status, and qualifications – representing the first such detailed monitoring in these areas.

The Economic Impact of International Education in New Zealand 2015/16

[Infometrics; National Research Bureau; Education New Zealand; 2016]

www.enz.govt.nz

This report shows that the economic value of international education in New Zealand for

2015/16 was NZD 4.28 billion – a 50% increase from 2014 – with much of it based on international students studying in New Zealand.

Open Doors

[Institute of International Education; 2017]
www.iie.org/opendoors

An annual statistical analysis on international students to and from the USA, and as such a context for international student mobility trends elsewhere. There were more than a million international students in US higher education for the first time in 2015/16 – China, India, and Saudi Arabia being the leading source countries. China dominates, with almost twice the number of students as from India.

Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth

[Phalachandra, B.; Abeywardena, I.; Commonwealth of Learning; 2016]
www.col.org/resources

A survey-based study on the availability and use of open educational resources in Commonwealth universities. The biggest reported challenges were lack of information on the quality of such resources and their scarcity in video and audio formats. The main barriers to use were ‘lack of time, lack of awareness, and low internet connectivity’.



Overall Assessment of the Higher Education Sector: Final Report

[Mahmood, K.; Higher Education Commission, Pakistan; 2016]
www.hec.gov.pk

A useful analysis of the higher education system in Pakistan and the issues it faces.

Reforms and Changes in Governance of Higher Education in Africa

[Varghese, N. (ed.); UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning; 2016]
publications.iiep.unesco.org

A book analysing governance and management change – national and institutional – with specific reference to Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. Related debate on autonomy and funding is included. The balance of government influence and the market has led, it suggests, to new priorities: ‘the role of the state is being redefined in terms of developing a framework for operation and regulating the system rather than in terms of financing, managing, and controlling institutions of higher education’.

Sage Advice: International Advisory Councils at Tertiary Education Institutions

[Altbach, P. et al; World Bank Group; Center for International Higher Education 2016]
www.bc.edu/cihe

The first study in a new series – *CIHE Perspectives* – considers the rationale, role, and structure of international advisory councils in higher education. Such councils aim to guide and support institutions in international issues, as well as ‘decisions about research strategy, regional development, resource allocation and institutional branding’.

The International Mobility of African Students

[Campus France; 2016]
www.campusfrance.org/en

A briefing on African student mobility showing the disparities between countries. Seven countries (Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe among them) account for half of the mobility recorded. Student flows within Africa are also increasing, including to South Africa and Ghana.

UIS Education Survey 2016

[UNESCO Institute of Statistics; 2016]
uis.unesco.org

Results of the 2016 UNESCO Institute of Statistics Education Survey are now available, including data on tertiary education students and graduates, and newly developed indicators with specific reference to the Sustainable Development Goals.

University Partnerships for International Development

[Blessinger, B.; Cozza, B. (eds); Springer; 2016]
www.emeraldinsight.com/series/ihtel

A publication exploring the aims and benefits of shared research in a development context, issued as part of the *Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning* series.



World Social Science Report – Challenging Inequalities: Pathways to a Just World

[International Social Science Council, Institute of Development Studies; UNESCO; 2016]
en.unesco.org/wssr2016

Internationally comparative analysis which confirms increasing global inequality, including in knowledge, with some sub-Saharan African countries being particularly disadvantaged.

Refugees

New titles on higher education’s response to the refugee crisis internationally include:

Refugees Welcome: Guidance for Universities on Providing Asylum Seekers and Refugees with Access to Higher Education

[Universities Scotland; Scottish Refugee Council; 2016]

www.universities-scotland.ac.uk

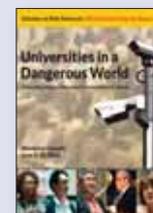
Summarised guidance on rights and entitlements, admissions, asylum, and resettlement to support universities. The guide acknowledges nevertheless that ‘the most transformational support that higher education institutions can provide is education’.

Not There Yet: An Investigation into the Participation of Students of Refugee Backgrounds in the Australian Higher Education System

[Terry, L. et al; National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education; 2016]

www.ncsehe.edu.au

A valuable literature and data review which could help to inform policy. While there are specific and defined needs, ‘the experiences of these communities cannot be easily subsumed under the term ‘refugee’ which bundles all communities and individuals into a monolithic group’. One concluding recommendation is that all universities ‘develop more nuanced and culturally specific ways to engage with diverse refugee background communities’.



Universities in a Dangerous World: Defending Higher Education Communities and Values

[Scholars at Risk; 2016]

www.scholarsatrisk.org

A report on debates and presentations given at the Scholars at Risk Congress in 2016, including higher education’s response to the refugee crisis internationally. Many institutions were interested in ‘learning what they can do to help, how to contribute to existing efforts, what the best practices are, and what innovations are taking place’. Contributions to a discussion on promoting values in international partnerships are also summarised.

ACU membership update

The current membership total (as at 1 March 2017) is 500.

New members

We are delighted to welcome the following institutions into membership:

BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology, Bangladesh

Bugema University, Uganda

Central University of Kashmir, India

IIS University, India

Jinnah Sindh Medical University, Pakistan

St John's University of Tanzania

University of Engineering and Management, Jaipur, India

Veltech Dr RR and Dr SR University, India

Returning members

We are delighted to welcome the following institutions back into membership:

Edge Hill University, UK

Edinburgh Napier University, UK

Liverpool John Moores University, UK

University of the West of England (UWE Bristol), UK

University of Wolverhampton, UK

Executive heads

Professor Cara Aitchison has been appointed President and Vice-Chancellor of **Cardiff Metropolitan University**, UK, as of 1 October 2016.

Professor Thandwa Mthembu has been appointed Vice-Chancellor and Principal of **Durban University of Technology**, South Africa, as of 1 October 2016.



Professor Joseph Gharthey Ampiah has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Cape Coast**, Ghana, as of 1 October 2016.

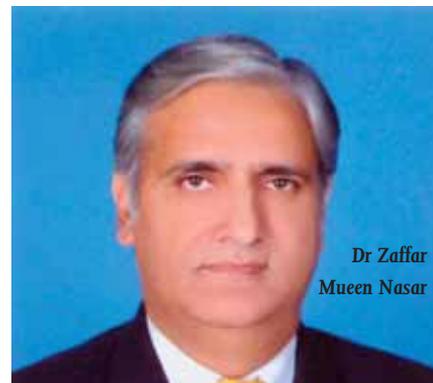


Dr Neil Fassina has been appointed President of **Athabasca University**, Canada, as of 11 October 2016.

Lieutenant General Rizwan Akhtar has been appointed President of the **National Defence University**, Pakistan, as of 20 December 2016.



Professor Dr Rukhsana Kausar has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of **Lahore College for Women University**, Pakistan, as of 20 December 2016.



Dr Zaffar Mueen Nasar has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the **University of the Punjab**, Pakistan, as of 28 December 2016.

Professor Abednego Feehi Okoe Amartey has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the **University of Professional Studies**, Accra, Ghana, as of 29 December 2016.



Professor Chris Day has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of **Newcastle University**, UK, as of 1 January 2017.



Professor Jan Thomas has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of **Massey University**, New Zealand, as of 23 January 2017.

Calendar

2017

April

6-7

European Universities Association: annual conference

Autonomy and freedom: the future sustainability of universities

Bergen, Norway

www.eua.be

24-27

Commonwealth Association of Technical Universities and Polytechnics in Africa

Issues and strategies for achieving accelerated industrialisation in Africa: the role of TVET

Cape Town, South Africa

www.capa-sec.org

May

22-24

British Council: Going Global

Global cities: connecting talent, driving change

London, UK

www.britishcouncil.org/going-global

22-25

Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association: annual conference

Celebrating 15 years of developing the research and innovation value chain

Windhoek, Namibia

www.sarimaconf.co.za

28 May-2 June

NAFSA Association of International Educators: annual conference

Expanding community, strengthening connections

Los Angeles, USA

www.nafsa.org/annual_conference

June

5-8

Association of African Universities: general conference and golden jubilee celebrations

AAU@50: achievements, challenges, and prospects for sustainable development in Africa

Accra, Ghana

events.aau.org/gencon14

13-16

Royal Society, UK, with the National Research Foundation, Singapore

Commonwealth Science Conference 2017

Singapore

www.royalsociety.org/about-us/international

16

ACU, in partnership with Nanyang Technological University

Developing creativity: a three stage approach

Singapore

www.acu.ac.uk

15-16

EUA Council for Doctoral Education: annual meeting

Doctoral education and harnessing digital possibilities

Tallinn, Estonia

www.eua.be

27-30

Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia: annual conference

Curriculum transformation

Sydney, Australia

www.herdsa2017.org

July

5-8

International Association of University Presidents: triennial conference (and concurrent Young Scientists Conference)

Innovation in education

Vienna, Austria

www.iauptriennial2017.com

August

5-13

ACU Commonwealth Summer School

Creating greener narratives through the environmental arts and humanities

Bath, UK

www.acu.ac.uk/summer-school

22-23

Education New Zealand and ISANA: New Zealand International Education Conference

Leadership in international education

Auckland, New Zealand

www.nziec.co.nz

September

3-6

European Higher Education Society: annual conference

Under pressure: higher education institutions coping with multiple challenges

Porto, Portugal

www.eairweb.org/forum2017

5-7

UKFIET: the Education and Development Forum

Learning and teaching for sustainable development: curriculum, cognition, and context

Oxford, UK

www.ukfiet.org/conference

12-15

European Association for International Education: annual conference

A mosaic of cultures

Seville, Spain

www.eaie.org/seville

October

17-19

International Council for Open and Distance Learning: World Conference on Online Learning

Teaching in the digital age: re-thinking teaching and learning

Toronto, Canada

www.onlinelearning2017.ca

17-18

International Association of Universities, with the University of Ghana and the Association of African Universities

Global Meeting of Associations

Accra, Ghana

www.iau-aiu.net

18-20

International Association of Universities, with the University of Ghana and the Association of African Universities

Leadership for a changing public-private funding higher education landscape

Accra, Ghana

www.iau-aiu.net

The Association of Commonwealth Universities

About us

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) is the world's first and oldest international university network, established in 1913.

A UK-registered charity, the ACU has over 500 member institutions in over 40 countries across the Commonwealth. We bring together many of the most prestigious and well-funded universities internationally with relatively new institutions in some of the world's least developed countries. What binds us together is a common belief in the value of higher education to society, the conviction that this value is enhanced by international collaboration, and a passion for rigour and excellence in everything that we and our member universities do.

With three distinct but interconnected areas of work – member services, programmes, and scholarship administration – supported by robust infrastructure and governance arrangements, the ACU combines delivering value to its members with achieving impact on the world of higher education and wider society.

Our mission

To promote and support excellence in higher education for the benefit of individuals and societies throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

Our vision

Vibrant and exciting universities that use their transformational power to:

- Create opportunities for individuals to fulfil their potential
- Increase understanding through international partnerships – both inside and outside the higher education sector
- Contribute to the cultural, economic, and social development of every nation

Our values

The ACU's set of values help guide the organisation in its mission. Our values reflect our aspirations, who we are, and how we do things, and are brought alive in everything that we do:

- Quality
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Respect
- Inclusion

Join us

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