

From Dr R. Griffin

The Registry .

Dear Dr. Mead,

I write with a single comment on the proposals for University governance.

I do not think that there is any good reason to require more than 10 signatures to demand a ballot on a Grace. To my knowledge the system has never been abused - it is not as if there were a hard core of dissenters who objected to everything. All but a tiny percentage of Graces are approved without demur. No reason is apparent for making it more difficult for objections to be raised in the rare instances in which any exist.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Griffin .

Dear Dr Mead,

RE: UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: A CONSULTATION PAPER
Reporter 06/02/02

I read with interest this Consultation Paper. As comment is invited, I should like to make some remarks from the perspective of a resident Cambridge graduate.

Composition of the Council

An obvious omission from these proposals to widen membership of the Council is the lack of any mention of the rôle that alumni could and should play. Alumni represent the largest element of the University's membership. Most established universities have representation of their alumni on their governing bodies. It seems quite perverse to propose that assistant staff should have representation on the Council and yet deny it to Cambridge alumni except whereby, coincidentally, one of the proposed 'external' members might also happen to be an alumnus. I commented on this anomaly at a Discussion on 18 January 2000 but have yet to observe a response.

As a graduate of the University of Aberdeen I am entitled to use the University Senior Combination Room and am able to elect four representatives to the University Court, the governing body of the University. This and various other rights and privileges indicate that my opinions and involvement are valued.

Composition of The Regent House – Development of the Rôle of the Cambridge Society

It is proposed to substantially enlarge the Regent House. In this context I would suggest that the Council of The Cambridge Society be added to those qualified for membership of the Regent House. Although the total number added would be very small (a maximum of 40) it would be a positive step towards involving the University's most committed supporters in its government.

Yours faithfully



Camilla L. F. Haggott BA MLE
(Selwyn, 1995)

University Governance

I would like to make the following comments on these proposals. You will no doubt know that I accept that there is an urgent need to bring our administrative structure up to date. However, it seems to me that we need to think more carefully about the Vice-Chancellorship and also about the composition of the Council.

1. Effectively it is proposed that we turn the Vice-Chancellor into a CEO who would be accountable to the University Council. A parallel with industry is obvious where a CEO is accountable to the Board of Directors. It is a well-tested model that works well and I see no reason why we should not adopt it. However, the accountability of a CEO to the Board in industry is strengthened by the power of the Board to dismiss the CEO if they see fit. If the accountability of the Vice-Chancellor to the Council is to be meaningful then we need to change the Statute U-VII and give the Council, who have the power to appoint the Vice-Chancellor in the first place, the power to dismiss the Vice-Chancellor without recourse to the Chancellor. Without this power the accountability of the Vice-Chancellor to the Council will remain an empty phrase.
2. As far as the composition of the Council is concerned I can see a wall of opposition against the proposed composition with a large number of ex-officio members and a considerable reduction of the members of the Regent House. I would suggest that Heads of Houses should take their chance with the rest of the Regent House and the number of Regent House representatives should be increased from six to nine. I accept that the Council should reflect the broad constituency of the University and Colleges and that its members should be people of sufficient 'weight'. However, I am sure that with the new Council assuming a real executive and strategic role there would be no shortage of suitable candidates wanting to serve on it, some of whom would undoubtedly be Heads of Houses.

Yours sincerely



Dr R. Hanka

To: Cambridge Changing
From: Donald Hearn, Clare College
Date: March 2002
Subject: University Governance

I have looked at the proposals in the light of my experience at Imperial College, where I have been the Chairman of the Audit Committee and a Governor for a number of years.

Although I am sure these proposals are moving firmly in the right direction, I have two significant concerns:

1. The proposed Council is not going to achieve the objective of making it “effective in discharging its executive functions”.
2. The distinction between executive and non-executive responsibilities is dangerously unclear.

The proposed Council is not going to be an effective executive body because it is too large with 26 members and it does not contain four of the five Pro Vice-Chancellors.

The Vice-Chancellor, as Chief Executive, will certainly need to have an executive committee consisting of the key decision-makers (maximum twelve). This executive committee will be the driving force for actually implementing policy changes (once agreed by Council) and for proposing future policy changes or initiatives for Council to approve.

Council should be clearly defined as a monitoring body to check on the Executive. As such, it is essential that Council should be predominately non-executive in character and composition. The non-executive members could be elected (as proposed in their consultation paper) or be external appointments. To avoid confusion between non-executive and executive roles, it is certainly easier to have appointed “externals” rather than elected “internals”. My own view is that there is already more than enough democracy in the Regent House, and the Council should have at least six external members. It is much more important to have the right individuals (selected through the nominations committee) rather than trusting to the lottery of elections.

It is essential also that the Chairman of Council should be an external member (as proposed). This then allows the Vice-Chancellor to be clearly defined as Chief Executive.

I have a few other comments on the paper regarding the Council:

- External Council members should be appointed for a minimum of four years
- Representation from Heads of Houses looks underweight at only three
- Two students should be enough.

If you would like me to expand on any of these points I would, of course, be happy to do so.

The Registry
University Offices
The Old Schools
Cambridge CB2 1TN

Dear Sir,

UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

I refer to the proposals set down in the consultation paper dated 4th February 2002 and the invitation to comment. The University is to be congratulated in seeking to improve governance and in initiating and pursuing a radical review. I value the opportunity to make a contribution at this stage.

I am a graduate of the University, admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts 29th June 1973 and to the degree of Master of Arts 19th March 1977. Between 1970 - 1973 I was in residence as a pensioner undergraduate of St Catharine's College.

I continue to support the University through my College and additionally support for the University is more directly sustained in a range of ways. My Cambridge university Alumni Membership No. is 142071. I am a Life Member of the Cambridge Society and an active participant in the London Group of the Society. It has been a great pleasure to support the Cantab Fund and the Millennium Scholarship Fund in response to invitations extended by the University. I have offered support elsewhere in partnership and development initiatives pursued with MBNA, CUP and through the Development Office and Alumni Weekends. I have also been party to University Department support from the private sector (Architecture - Property Development).

Heads of Houses Representation

The College system brings a rare asset and strength to the University.

In the context of proposals for widening governance and an expansion of the number of Colleges the membership and representation of colleges should not be diminished. In my opinion there are strong grounds for it to be reinforced. I can see no argument put forward to support a reduction from four to three places.

Alumni

It is surprising that in a set of proposals focused on a widened involvement, the asset reposing in the alumni and graduate community is ignored. I have in mind the tens of thousands beyond those presently studying and working in the University.

The governance proposals identify a range of interests for inclusion or enhanced representation. The value and contribution of expertise from beyond the University is recognised. Yet the enormous community of graduates is overlooked.

The University has rightly identified it as a community sympathetic and ready to extend funding and other support. It is a community from which the University will seek increased support. The University will continue to share its aspirations, challenges and successes with this community, building on a base already sensitively established. The proposals for governance have a part to play.

Other universities recognise the contribution to governance that this graduate community can offer. The proposals at Cambridge should articulate a position with respect to alumni.

Cont.

University Governance
Observations of Lester Hillman
8th March 2002

I am mindful that responses have been requested by the 20th March. I have noted the intention to hold open seminars and would be most grateful if you could keep me informed of continuing progress in respect of the proposals.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I may be of further assistance in the meantime.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lester Hillman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'H'.

Lester Hillman

From Dr N. J. Holmes

18th March 2002

Dear Registry

Comments on the consultation paper on University Governance

Having regard to the proposals published in the Reporter (6 Feb 2002) and related matters, I would like to make some comments of the matters under consideration. I do not claim that all the ideas are original but they represent my personal opinions about the way in which the University should proceed. I hope that the Governance committee will scrutinise all the comments submitted (and that all contributions will be available to Council). Nevertheless to ensure my principal objections to the proposals in the discussion paper are not obscured in the detail, I emphasise them first.

A. The Council should maintain a majority of members directly elected by Regent House.

B. The check of Regent House members to call ballots, propose amendments etc. must remain a viable one. There is no valid reason to alter the number of signatures required for these purposes.

The Vice-Chancellorship and the Pro-Vice-Chancellors

1. While it is merely recognising the existing, and natural, role of the Vice-Chancellor to suggest that Statutes should recognise him/her as "the principal academic and administrative officer of the University", I believe that ultimate responsibility for the overall direction of the University should remain with the Council as the executive of Regent House. It would be more appropriate for Council to be given statutory authority to, revocably, delegate necessary authority to the Vice-Chancellor (as has been suggested by others).

Cont.

2. It is not immediately obvious that the Vice-Chancellor cannot be both accountable to Council and its Chair. Although it is more simple to see this simultaneous relationship in committees which directly elect their own Chair, I am concerned that the proposal for an external chair has two untoward consequences. The Chair of a committee needs to be thoroughly 'up' with the business before the committee to function effectively. This implies that they have had the time to master the paperwork and been properly briefed by the administrative officers. First, it will be difficult to obtain a sufficient proportion of the time of suitable external persons to chair Council. Second, in my observations of other 'external' committee chairs, the relationship engendered by the necessary briefing of the chair compromises their independence.
3. The Pro-Vice-Chancellors should be appointed by a committee which has a majority of directly elected members of Council.

The Council and the General Board

1. I feel that the idea of combining the University Council and General Board into one body has much to recommend it. Under the proposed, indeed the present, system much of the work is undertaken by joint committees of these bodies. If we really wish to empower the Council to act in an effective oversight role, then recognising the management authority of these subordinate committees and having one principal body which scrutinises the work of functional subcommittees could be a more effective means of control. Nevertheless, I will address the remainder of my remarks, especially about the composition of the Council, on the assumption that this fusion will not take place.

The Composition of the Council

The paper recognises the principle that academic self-governance should remain at the heart of our arrangements. It does not say so, but currently Statutes clearly define Regent House as the governing body of the University. This should remain the case. That being so, Council continues to be the executive of our governing body and as such should have a majority of members elected by Regent House. The present Council is *de facto* 60% elected by Regent House - the Heads of Houses are only nominally elected by Regent House since there has not been a contested election in my memory. The proposals reduce the representation of Regent House to 23%, unacceptably low in my view. My own compromise would be as follows

- (a) The Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of internal affairs
- (b) Two members appointed by the General Board
- (c) Two external members of Council
- (d) Two Heads of House (nominally elected by Regent House)
- (e) Twelve members of the Regent House, elected by the Regent House alone (rather than a combined electorate of the Regent House and the Assistant Staff).
Four of these places might be reserved for readers and professors
and eight for non-readers/professors as at present
- (f) Two places for members of the Assistant Staff, elected by the Assistant Staff alone
- (g) Three student members of Council (as at present)

Chairmen of Schools should have the right to attend Council, but as observers, otherwise the balance is shifted too far away from directly elected members.

I agree that Colleges must be properly represented. It is worth observing that a large proportion of Regent House is drawn from College Fellows and that at least some (two is my guesstimate) of the directly elected members from Regent House on the present Council are principally concerned with college work and that almost all are College Fellows.

The General Board and the Chairs of the Council of the Schools

The Chair of a School should not only be elected by their Councils but must be responsible to that Council. I know that the Chair of the School of Biology, both past and present, fully agree that they can only function with the support of their Council.

Regent House

Although the discussion paper was at its briefest on this issue it is one of the most difficult, contentious and important.

1. The Composition of Regent House.

It is certainly true that the current position is piecemeal and needs sorting out. I have real doubts about the proposal, suggested by Dr Johnson to mean in practise that all 'academic and related' employees would become members of Regent House at the first revision of the Roll after their contracts start. I have been a UTO for 16 years, but before that I was a postdoctoral fellow at Stanford University. I had no say in Stanford governance and nor did I wish any. In the four years I was there, I began to learn about the institution's culture but was, rightly, too occupied by my own research to pay much heed to wider matters. I have consulted postdoctoral (research associates) in my own Department. Most felt that membership of Regent House would be of little interest to them.

If there is to be an expansion as opposed to a clarification/tidying up of Regent House membership, I believe it would be best confined to more senior grades (e.g. Senior Research Associates, Computer Officer grades I/II) and those with more experience of the University (e.g. 3 years for research associates etc.). This argument applies *a fortiori* to the suggestion, made by some, that Assistant Staff be included in Regent House. Without wishing to be elitist, I have to say that I would find it hard to defend giving our longest serving glass-washer an equal role in the academic governance of University.

2. The signatory question

In my view there is no reason to change the existing arrangement whereby 10 members of Regent House may call for a ballot on a Grace, propose an amendment to a Grace or call for a Discussion on a matter of interest. There are many reasons for thinking this.

First, there is no evidence that the existing limit of 10 has caused any problems. If this limit, which I freely admit is low - there are good reasons why it should be, were being abused by

some minority we should expect to find evidence of it. There is little to suggest such a problem. Ballots are not being frequently requested by members of Regent House. Those ballots which are held at the request of members of Regent House are not resulting in a low proportion of *non placets*.

Second, the ability of members of Regent House to call for a ballot acts as a very important check on the power of the executive. It is vital that it is available to Regent House if even a small group have significant concerns. It is important to remember that, unless the majority of Regent House disagree with the Grace proposed, the effect of a ballot is only to delay implementation. I do not mean to trivialise the potential effects of such delay, but the fact is Regent House members use this power sparingly and responsibly. The truth is that a relatively small proportion of Regent House members have the time and interest to closely follow the business of Council. Our rare ballots are almost always matters of real concern to a significant proportion of Regent House, once it is drawn to their attention.

Third, the real limitation on collecting signatures is time. I am certain that I would not simply sign any ballot request put in front of me, even by a close colleague or friend. I, and I am sure most Regent House members, feel the responsibility of the power to call ballots very clearly. One must be convinced that the delay and expense to the University is justified by a conviction that, in this rare case, the central authorities have made a misjudgement. In fact, I have only signed such a request once in 16 years. Thus, proposers must spend time explaining the issues and their reasoning to potential signatories. Given that the maximum time between the publication of a Grace and its automatic approval is 9 days, that in reality many do not receive and certainly do not read their Reporters until 2 or more days after publication, time is genuinely short. I have heard it said that this time issue is an irrelevance, that the whole process of Reports, Discussions etc. should allow people to be ready to argue their case. However, I feel this overlooks the fact that most Regent House members do not know until a Notice is published, what view the central bodies will take after a Discussion - I hope we should not be expected to be so cynical as to assume that the Council or General Board will automatically reject any overtures for revision. One does not know when such a Notice will be published, many are, no doubt necessarily, months after the Discussion. Frequently the Grace to give effect to the proposal is published in the same issue of the Reporter. Even if the membership of Regent House was expanded, I cannot imagine that I would be able to collect even twenty signatures in the time available during most weeks in Term, given my normal advanced commitment of time.

Fourth, I do not think an expansion of Regent House necessarily requires an increase in the ballot trigger. As I suggest above, few potential new members will have time or interest to notice matters of University Governance. The present members of Regent House exercise their powers with great responsibility, if there is any doubt that newly enfranchised members will not act in the same way perhaps we should not be enfranchising them.



N. J. Holmes

University Lecturer in Molecular Immunology