

MINUTES

Turnaround Board

Hendon Campus- Williams Building
WG17 Thursday 14th March 2013
13:00-15:00



TURNAROUND BOARD

In attendance: Shreya Paudel (Chair), Michelle D'Souza, Preeti Sogani, Phil Pilkington, Jacqui Boddington, Kat Stark (non voting) and Aadam Ali (Clerk).

Apologies: Santhosh Rengan and Ben Ward.

1. Minutes of the last Board Meeting

The Board confirmed the minutes from the last meeting were true and accurate.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Options for the Future

TB agreed on option C on the MUSU Options for Turnaround paper to extend KS's contract until July 26th which was communicated to KS.

3. MUSU's Future - to receive a paper on our future strategy and related activities & staffing which will include an appendix on the practicalities, benefits and risks of collaboration

Presentation from the Director

KS made a presentation of options for MUSU's Future to The Board. KS mentioned BW isn't able to attend this meeting but he has spoken to SP and PP and said he would send an email to update them with his thoughts. Updated The Board on the first draft of the strategic plan, and that the first draft focussed on stabilising MUSU whereas the second draft will show how far away MUSU is from excellence. The next point about resourcing the strategy details the different options.

KS mentioned that she would like The Turnaround Board reflect on her performance and appreciated feedback or The Board have given her so far. In particular, they have feedback 3 things, the first about not being provided with a job description for the lead staff member recruitment after turnaround period. KS said this is what her presentation will be regarding today. Secondly she wanted to address why the University was not consulted on Collaboration and why this hasn't come up until now. The latter 2 concerns were not deliberate, however regarding the job description, she accepts responsibility for this. The way she is presenting the paper is not an

attempt to ignore The Board however this is due to it being quite premature at this stage to give a job description before an option for the future is decided upon and accepts that this should have been mentioned The Board. Subsequently, she wanted to present to The Board to recruit but didn't want to ignore other potential opportunities and has brought something slightly different to the table. She suggested The Board looking at the Chief Executive recruitment without looking at collaboration wouldn't be acceptable. At present, KS and Deputy Director Ed Marsh have spent a lot of time looking at freedom of speech issues and the potential tribunal claim which she has given ED a lot of support with. On self reflection, she has found being managed by a Board quite difficult as there is no proper line management capability in terms of support. She thanked colleagues for feedback this week, and KS is

seeking coaching and help from a senior turnaround expert. She reiterated she would appreciate and welcome any feedback from the Board on her performance.

- JB asked who would be the external expert who would coach KS.
 - o KS responded this would likely be Jan Sowa.
 - o JB expressed concern that due to Jan's intricate relationship in turnaround processes in Student Unions' and MUSU, that there may be a conflict of interest.
 - o KS responded that this coaching would be more about skills as opposed to the current turnaround process for MUSU.
 - o JB said that he is not independent from the process and will have his own opinions on his self reflection of KS's coaching.
 - o KS will look into other potential options for turnaround coaching.

Actions:

- **KS to look into other potential options for turnaround coaching.**

KS presented that MUSU should be positively impacting on the lives of every student at Middlesex. In comparison to other Unions, SUEI gold and silver award winners show significant positive impact on every single student, not just pockets of students. In terms of distance and how far away MUSU is from this, the NCVO defines measuring impact:

“As a combination of all the effects an organisation has on everyone and everything involved with or influenced by its work. This includes intended as well as unintended effects, negative as well as positive changes, long-term impact and short-term or interim benefits.....it's the difference your organisation makes.”

NCVO, 2009

At present KS explained our measures for 2012/2013 include pure involvement numbers, changes in policy in the University and wider sphere, feedback from students and staff. The latter 2 will take place between April-June. KS presented graphs showing involvement of students with MUSU, breaking down by active and repeat involvement and passive one off involvement. It shows less than 20 percent of the student community are involved with MUSU. On the changes in policy graph, representation on University committees need to increase and the majority of impact measured in changes to policy is poor or mediocre. KS said for MUSU to fulfil its strategy, the purpose of this meet is to get us to a higher level of impact which will involve two different areas of progress- Advocacy and Student Voice and Student Opportunities and Skills. MUSU needs experts to lead this process and needs to be of an acceptable quality of support with greater capacity.

KS said especially within Post-92 institutions such as Middlesex, there needs to be increased socialising and networking opportunities creating a University vibe. The issue is that there is no track record of success in those areas except 5 or 6 distinct things have happened over the past years within this group of institutions. There are no examples of Post 92 institutions delivering this type of extracurricular scene. In the strategy that KS has put together, options would be working with proxy organisations like the Princes Trust and youth work. Post-92s face problems with this because the entirety of the rest of the movement is entirely built on that volunteer model. KS believes this model would be something that MUSU can achieve, a volunteer model specifically for MUSU. One option to resource this would be to have an internship model working with each

school breaking down each area of MUSU's services. Interns would aid the communication chain and would be on the ground to target students.

KS then presented 3 scenarios of resourcing the strategy. One is built on no additional funding and no investigation into collaboration the second is the idea of additional funding but no collaboration and the third is looking at collaboration. KS showed the current staff structure moving forward. Money has been saved from the Director being part time and possible strategic research being outsourced. KS argued MUSU would stabilise but not reach excellence. The size of the management team is small and the organisation is vulnerable to changes of the lead staff member. This closes doors to opportunities for the future and will not deliver the strategy that we want to deliver.

Other options include more capacity in particular, more leadership capacity. Either additional funding lead to an improved structure which could result in a restructure or, a collaborative structure could be looked at leading to a restructure. The benefits could lead to a better solution to the future. KS moved onto looking at recruitment options, the first being to recruit a permanent full time Director. The option of a permanent part time Director is in 2 parts, the permanent part time director could look at all options including collaboration or not, and the extension

of the contract of the Interim Change Director contract with a view for The Board to make a final decision on collaboration before the end of the contract. Though this may not necessarily mean appointing the person before the contract finishes. There are quite a few options at this point and in terms of recruitment of a full time Director, KS suggests enlist a recruitment agency. KS wants MUSU to move forward and wants MUSU to move forward, and recommends The Board to explore collaborative options to give MUSU the necessary skills and resources to achieve excellence.

Board Discussion

The Board wanted to ask questions before moving to the closed session. SP wanted to know what would the strategy be to look at options of volunteering and how would we want to see that happen.

- KS said the issue is we do not know for definite. MUSU has a history of putting on bad events and a perception of hoping students to come to them. Other Post-92s do not know either. A handful of events that have been okay, are mostly all staff led and not volunteer led. Proxy organisations could get different ideas and giving personal development outside of the traditional society model. That is what the strategy is and we don't know well enough at this stage in MUSU's current form.
 - o PP said it is worthwhile to view researching numbers. Not necessary on how it is delivered but whether it is formed by students or staff or a campaign. It is quite vague especially in the strategy.
 - o KS said that is correct but it is intended. It is difficult to name another organisation that has done anything that vaguely looks like success in this area. It follows a volunteer model. To get to the stage to run specific pilots, we do not have the means to do this yet but we can't put this in strategy at this stage.
- PP asked in terms of collaboration, regarding senior positions, how would this manifest when sharing resources and skills.
- PS felt confused also as to how it would look like.
 - o KS the structure presented is only model of resources that was drawn up which gives an idea of a structure that would allow us to reach where we want to go in this strategy. It highlights what would be manageable within the current block grant. The purpose is to give an idea of what the benefits are of collaborative work. This is a significant step change in the expertise and would allow more research.
 - o JB felt that what is missing from the proposal is the process and how we get to the funded costed model being implemented. It has impact against experience. It is a model, but when these things are ungrounded and are based on fantasy. The Board does not know how this will happen, as there is no evidence that the model has expertise within.
 - o KS said its open as a conversation at the University of West London Students' Union (WLSU) and it is legally and procedurally possible. There definitely needs to be a process and timeline with legal fees etc. If we want to go in this direction, KS needs more time to put these things in place.
 - o JB responded that there is still no evidence that people in roles at a collaborative organisation are have expertise and are more research based.
 - o KS said that the Unions do not attract high level staff however she believes this

model will attract the level needed.

KS said this would be a new environment in doing something new for talented staff. The majority of talented staff are in the Russell Group Unions. When management jobs are advertised, they reach a much higher level of applications.

- SP wanted to clarify if The Board was making a decision on collaboration today.
- KS said no, this is to give an indication of the direction The Board wishes to take. She is trying to put enough on the table to ask if it is worth prioritising a permanent full time Director before looking at other options. KS said bringing up the option of collaboration before now wouldn't have been the right time and is looking to see if the Board wants The Board to look at the processes on how this would be implemented. At the time, she has brought the management team up to date with the new strategy is putting processes and getting things ready to move forward. She knows JB wished this had happened sooner but believes the right time to put this on the table is now.
- JB said looking at Arts/London School of Economics Students Unions, all predicted measured distance forward is something that isn't evidenced or established. She wanted to know at what point the evidence arrives for The Board to make a decision. The proposal looks like a years work.

- o KS said it isn't a year, probably shorter.
 - o PP said to make a decision he would like to see a thorough analysis of what all collaborative options will be. Although, evidence would depend on the partner and evidence. WLSU are open to this and that it has worked at LSE SU/SU Arts.
- SP asked if sabbatical officers at WLSU have seen these proposals.
 - o KS said that sabbaticals at WLSU haven't and it is confidential but they are open to the conversation.
- PP said the principles that we may have to look at as a Board would be being responsible to 2 Trustee Boards intertwined and working out principles of accountability and control to look at this. How it is managed would need to be mapped out. The next stage would include accountability of employment in one place and how they complement each other. This may be a dilemma in terms of the Chief Executive being responsible to one Board for one and another Board for the other. Regarding the proposed Opportunities and Skills Director, 50% of their time is at both SUs. We need to account for that time due to SORP so there will be a cost and recharge as we are getting value from another charity. Will have to net each other out in terms of value. This would mean looking at the value of the service of another charity.
 - o KS said at SU Arts/LSE SU, they are two separate and joint staffing committees and the Chief Executive reports to both boards for each SU.
 - o PP questioned stability and that successors of sabbatical officers may throw the arrangement out later. PP asked how often the collaborative partnership would be reviewed, every 5 years for example.
 - o KS said it depends how it is set up. All situations will be looked at including if one partner wanted to leave or join another.
- PP raised the principles of using line management structure and whether there will be a conflict of priorities and interest. The role of the Chief Executive would be to maintain a balancing act and may lead to loggerheads. Accountability to the membership would have to happen also. The Board would need to look at the principles first and would need to work out other potential issues after e.g. how we cross charge for roles.
- KS said if we get all the legal paperwork together there will be room to develop things slightly different on each side. LSE SU and SU Arts are two different institutions with different parent institutions. They are different but the purpose and task of collaboration is what happened at SU Arts and LSE SU. They couldn't attract enough staff to get the management team bigger and everything followed from that problem. They are two elite organisations with demanding students. KS said we need to look at the future and developing a new model. There's a pattern of failure in Post-92 Unions. If there was a partner that was not threatening to Middlesex that could increase capacity, expertise and learning from each other, this would set the bar for success. KS it would be best considering partnering with an organisation similar to MUSU. There is some indication that WLSU in terms of potential competitors is not acute to Middlesex, but it is not the most unfavourable.

JB said these conversations would require a lot more time. Middlesex's position is that it would be unhappy if MUSU collaborates with Post-92 competitor and this is the position of Executive and the Vice Chancellor. Looking at merging would set hairs through the sector in what we are doing. JB felt

his hasn't been explored enough to put this on the table. The Executive colleagues do not want this to happen.

- KS responded that in terms of competition, Students Unions already talk and involve each other. What we are doing is different to the conversations that the University is doing. KS asked what data and is it the University concerned about
 - o JB it's partly to do with confidentiality and working effectively with a group of people to drive an organisation forward. It is also to do with another discreet organisation indicating to us who our likely partners are as Middlesex do not see our partner as being West London. To position us in that relationship is problematic with where the university wants to go in future. It's not so much about data and more about being in a partnership or a group with others that the University do not want to be in a group with.
 - o KS responded that there would not be a public WLSU/MUSU advertised or shown. There would be no documents or logo. Some may know that a few staff are shared between the two but this wouldn't be publicly known. This is not a merger but a partnership. The Student Unions' would still be student facing a focussed to each individual membership.

- PP said we are not about to dissolve the MUSU Board and merge with a new Board of Trustees but would work collaboratively. The contingent shown is that we might buy in services from another SU and would have to cross charge. PP asked JB if this would present a problem to The Executive.
 - o JB said not so much however two distinct organisations choosing to collaborate on certain services is on one thing but in the proposition, it in effect is dissolving power in a different way. This raises two things, firstly that Middlesex is nervous of the messages given to others in the sector and additionally this would be another years work where JB and Katie Bell (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Global Marketing and recruitment) thought MUSU would be at the end of this year.
- KS said she has consistently maintained that through turnaround, to get to a point to see results it would take 5 years. Now we have options, there is a balance of risk and gain in the short term and long term. The view of KS is the long term risks are not being looked at in the current structures and that there is no way for this to happen. If the University is satisfied where the Union is at, so be it. However, there is no way that in current funding and structure, that we will be rethinking and redesigning an SU. There is a real risk and vulnerability of staff, MUSU is a small Union in mediocre services may not be what the staff were recruited for as all were recruited on the impression of making a real change and doing something new with an SU.

PPthe fundamentals moving forward are accountability, strategic conversation with the University and what the views of the partner organisation is. This option has been put forward without a strategic conversation that hasn't happened yet, and would involve a risk assessment. PP asked JB how this collaboration would send hairs running in the sector and about what. The proposed collaboration is on an operational level though there is a bit of a net gain. Looking at the private market the skills needed, this would cost 5 times more. All the basic principles would still remain regarding accountability and the Boards. Time would be well spent if a strategic conversation could take place.

- JB still thinks this proposal doesn't present anything that she can usefully take back to Katie Bell. What KS is proposing is that through the Collaboration of mind, skill and expertise a step change would be made in the student experience. JB asked why it is a formalised process. She asked why couldn't 4 Post-92 Chief Executives meet and share ideas on a regular informal basis.
 - o KS said the next stage of investigation is about principles which she can bring and put evidence into a presentation. When institutions collaborate and it doesn't come from the top, they fail. Student Unions are so volatile and that line management needs to come from one place. NCVO advise and talk about personalities involved. If the impetus is two Boards directing two Chief Executives doing specific things, there is no one in charge of the shared process.
 - o JB responded that the Boards in each organisation will still with charitable aims.
 - o KS said The Boards oversee and look at the law which is the same. There would be two separate strategies and strategic plans and two sets of accounts. From the person in the middle, they would delegate and give out items through the

management structure. This goes back to what PP talked about where the accountability is. KS is asking The Board to have a look at it, though the final product doesn't have to be this. KS has given enough information to decide whether it is at least worth looking at. We can look for evidence and have discussions with The Executive but time is of the essence. There are not very many places available and open to this kind of partnership but WLSU is on the table.

- JB said to start a partnership, we can't go into it on the basis of who is opening the door.
 - o KS agreed however, now the door is open there which is rare. It's on the table so let's consider it. She thinks she has given enough to say let's have a look at it.

JB concerned that The Board is slightly crossing its' fingers that an appropriate strategic partnership happen. There was a discussion about London Southbank SU previously but this fell through as they changed their minds. It removes the control from this Board and is on the basis of no evidence and is opportunistic. Feels like NUS have pushed talented staff into Unions to think about this model and hoping they take to it. This could continue if WLSU says no and another organisation says maybe. At what point does The Board decide that all the doors are closed.

- KS said it is up to The Board. This is the first time that a real door is open and she has asked NUS whether it this particular proposal might be happening in other SUs or where else would be more appropriate. Part of KS's job to look at these options which some of that can't be written down on a paper. KS thinks we should look at the option to fix the problems present in Post-92 Unions. No one has fixed the problems yet, and

we need to take some risks if we want to take it further. There also needs to be a limit which is for The Board to decide.

- JB said she can see the logic but if what we are saying is to move forward and step change Post-92 SUs, there should be the certainty to direct the Director to look at these options in a strategic and timely fashion.
- KS said the problem is that this type of work is personality based, MUSU's current structure is so fragile and relies on KS being here to move forward. Not sure what would happen however it depends on a very different type of role to what a normal Chief Executive would have. The Board have the option to employ a permanent Chief Executive that looks at these options, and if The Board wants KS to continue the work she's doing, the Board needs to take a few more risks and look at collaboration options. It's difficult to have this conversation in a Board scenario as there are so many different variables.

PP thanked KS for sending the NCVO papers, the key questions are looking at collaboration. If the Board want to venture into collaboration, there would need to be a shopping list of what the Board would want to happen. There needs to be a serious conversation with KS, SP and JB to be certain of their position and what they would understand of collaboration. There needs to be some commitment from WLSU and West London University. There would need to be a risk assessment of a collaborative structure and employment queries with it. Answers would need to be given to The Board could work on. An NCVO checklist would be very useful to expose opportunities. The Board will need to use due diligence. PP asked is there an active London Post-92s group.

- KS said no.

PP touched on the internal discourse present in London unions. Coventry Students' Union are looking at immigration advice specialism and research projects with other Unions and joint campaigns. PP asked what the other possibilities of things like this happening in addition to the proposal.

- KS can give more information of London more widely. In her previous role at LSE SU and SU Arts, she supported sabbaticals for 3-4 years of bringing to NUS' attention of issues including how students can influence crime, housing and transport. It is NUS' responsibility to do this and definite the work that is happening.

SP asked The Board to consider moving to The Board discussion in the confidential section which they agreed to do.

4. AOB

No items of discussion were raised.

KS and AA left the room for The Board to discuss during the confidential section.

5. Confidential Trustee section

KS's proposal of a possible collaboration with another Students' Union stirred some positive energy for MUSU's future. However, the board concluded that it is necessary for MUSU to be more stable as a Union before venturing into larger projects such as collaboration. Hence, we have decided to recruit a Full Time Director. The Board will be ultimately responsible for the recruitment and KS is instructed by The Board to further the process in conjunction with the

Chair.

Actions:

- KS to work with SP on recruitment of Full Time Director.