

**ABSTRACT
PARALLEL WORKING SESSION**

OUTREACH & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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**Overcoming the Tyranny of Geography: the Evolution of the
University of the Highlands and Islands in Scotland**

UHI Millennium Institute is a federal and collegiate institution composed of 13 'academic partners'. These partners range from large and small further education colleges, specialist institutions (e.g. Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic College on the Isle of Skye) and major research institutions (e.g. the Scottish Association for Marine Science in Dunstaffnage). The mission of UHI is to sustain and enhance the educational, economic, cultural and social well being of the Highlands of Scotland and the over 100 inhabited islands. Courses have been developed to meet the needs of these diverse and varied communities. Where appropriate courses are developed on a networked basis and delivered using video-conferencing technology and a virtual learning environment (VLE). Research is also substantially focussed on local needs and opportunities e.g. nuclear decommissioning and environmental remediation in Thurso next to Dounreay - one of the world's first experimental nuclear reactors; Highland history reflecting the specific history of this part of the world notably the 'clearances' that took place in the 18th century and their subsequent effects; renewable energy to harness wind, wave and tidal energy which is in plentiful supply in the north of Scotland.

UHI is governed in such a way as to embrace the communities it serves. The Board of Governors (governance) is composed of all the chairs of 'academic partner' boards; and the Executive Board (management) is composed of all the chief executives of the 'academic partners'.

Sustainable communities in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland greatly depends on a tertiary educational institution overcoming the 'tyranny of geography' to deliver educational opportunities to these communities and to build a research base to underpin the development of a 'knowledge-based' economy.