



VC-NET

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Leadership Foundation for higher education

An initiative developed by Universities UK and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) to strengthen the leadership, governance and management of UK institutions has received the go ahead from their Boards and funding support from the UK funding bodies.

The next few months will see the establishment of a new entity devoted solely to leadership in higher education. It has been designed with a small central core of staff drawing its professional inputs from the leading experts throughout the world. The work of the Foundation is expected to embrace environmental scanning of developments in leadership and governance in the public and corporate sectors and analysis of the policy implications for university leaders of global economic and social developments. The findings from these activities and the policy seminars that it will organise will influence the Foundation in the design of development programmes to be commissioned from existing providers.

The activities of the Foundation will draw on experience from other similar public sector agencies in the UK covering the post 16 sector, the civil service and the national health service. Its programmes will embrace all types of developmental activity – mentoring schemes, exchanges, twinning arrangements and action learning projects – as well as a series of more conventional programmes targeted at existing and potential vice chancellors and senior managers in the sector. Existing activities such as the Top Management Programme for HE will be incorporated in the Foundation's work. The sponsors of the Foundation are hoping that its programmes and activities will come to be recognised as world class, through their use of the leading international specialists and thinkers.

Recruitment for Foundation staff will begin in the middle of 2003 and full operations should commence early in 2004.

Source: Discussions with staff of Universities UK and HEFCE. Further information will become available on www.universitiesUK.ac.uk For the Top Management Programme see www.hesda.org.uk

Singapore – NUS' entrepreneurial strategy

The last issue of VC Net mentioned Singapore's national drive to become a "learning Metropolis". This is being echoed by the National University of Singapore's innovative strategy to develop entrepreneurial skills in its graduates.

NUS has established three overseas colleges in what it describes as "the world's top entrepreneurial hubs" – Silicon Valley in California, Bio Valley in central Pennsylvania and Shanghai. Three more are planned elsewhere. Selected NUS students will spend a year in one of these colleges (with full scholarship support from the State) on a full time internship in a high technology company, but also studying part time under the wing of a designated partner institution. In California this will be Stanford University, in Bio Valley the University of Pennsylvania and in Shanghai Fudan University. Credits from these institutions will be

transferred to fulfil part of NUS' degree requirements. Fifty students a year will be involved in the two American sites.

Global thinking of this kind is to be expected from a university that can persuade the academic heads of Cambridge, Cornell, Drexel, MIT, Johns Hopkins, Peking, Roskilde and Tokyo to join an International Academic Advisory Panel and meet physically every two years in Singapore to advise on the long term development of the university.

Source: "Knowledge Enterprise", February 2003, a NUS publication. Information on the overseas colleges at www.nus.edu.sg/noc/index.htm

A different global research partnership

In previous issues we have reported on the formation of international university partnerships to respond to the global demand for comprehensive research capacity. Now a non-university competitor has been launched in New Delhi. It is called the Global Research Alliance and is a group of national technology research institutes with an interest in collaboration on research in energy, health, water, transport and the digital divide.

The impressive list of partners includes:

Batelle, from the USA
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, India
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, South Africa
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Australia
Danish Technological Institute
Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, Germany
Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research
SIRIM Berhad, Malaysia.
Technical Research Centre, Finland

The alliance will be run from the CSIR in South Africa but has yet to establish the basis for its funding, which it hopes to raise on a project basis from agencies such as the World Bank. If it can find ways of collaborating effectively, it could become a significant provider of advanced international research on crucial global problems.

Source: University News, New Delhi. Feb 16 2003. The Global Research Alliance site is at www.research-alliance.net and contains details of the partners and a series of position papers. Its nerve centre is managed by rbiesen@csir.co.za

Measuring links with business

The English Higher Education Funding Council has for some time been using the terms "third leg" or "third stream" to refer to funding generated from links with industry and business. Now a report commissioned by all the UK funding bodies provides the results of an investigation into the scale of the interaction between higher education and business and examines ways in which realistic data can be collected on these activities and used to inform central "third stream" funding allocations.

The basis for the report is a survey completed for 2000-2001 by 98 percent of the UK's 164 HE institutions. It was the second of its kind. The findings showed that:

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- Just under half the institutions had a strategy for third stream work.
 - 60 per cent were involved in the development and implementation of regional skills strategies and had partnerships with regional development agencies.
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- There is a gradual trend to providing incentives for staff to engage with industry and commerce, but almost all promotions committees still value research excellence more.
 - Almost 11,000 contracts were signed with “business” and 40 percent of these were with small to medium enterprises (SME’s), but these only represented 13 percent of the total value.
 - 58 per cent of institutions seek to monitor the “disclosure” of an invention by their staff.
 - 913 new UK patents were filed and 234 were granted and the numbers of software and non-software licences granted showed a considerable increase on the previous year.
 - Information on the extent of consulting activities is unreliable, although over 60 per cent of institutions have established central support units to encourage consultancy and try to collect data about it.
 - There is a growth in the number of offices managing commercialisation activities and the usual size of these is between 8 and 12 staff.
 - 220 spin off companies with some HEI ownership were created in the year.
 - Short courses for business are provided by over 60 per cent of institutions producing an income of just under GBP 150m for the sector.
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The report implies that an annual data gathering exercise will emerge, using some of the metrics it has explored, and that in due course these will be embodied in a funding methodology, which will replace the current range of special initiatives. The likelihood is that this will be formulaic and will take into account the research intensity of each institution.

Source: HEFCE, Higher education – business interaction survey 2000-2001. Publication 2003/11, available on www.hefce.ac.uk/publications

The editor, Svava Bjarnason, and author, John Fielden, are always pleased to receive comments on the usefulness and content of this briefing service. News from other Commonwealth countries, which might be of wider interest, is also most welcome. They can be contacted by e-mail on vcnet@acu.ac.uk or by fax on +44 (0)20 7387 2655.