



UBMA 2001 Conference Minutes

Keele University, School of Life Sciences

Tuesday 2nd April 2001

The meeting began with a warm welcome from Prof Carole Hackney who gave a brief history of the development of Life Sciences at Keele and raised some issues and current topics relevant to all managers in HE.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr T Croft (Sheffield), Ms M Finnegan (National University of Ireland), Mr T Lymn, (Leicester), Mr D Smart (Sheffield), Mr J Noble (Sheffield), Mr C James, (Cardiff), Ms H Williams (Manchester Metropolitan) and Mr M Warren (South Bank).

Mr Basil Boam thanked UBMA for their generosity in funding his attendance.

Minutes of the previous meeting

These were accepted subject to the following corrections:

Agendum 3 b) add "Conference" after "Glasgow"
Agendum 4.2 change "Biosciences" to "Bioscience"
Agendum 5 add "Treasurer Mark Cosgrove"

Matters Arising

Noted: That retired members are entitled to become Associate Members free of charge

Agendum 3.9 David Smart is willing to continue to represent the Association at HUBS (to be held 18 and 19 April at Reading).

Chairman's Report

(Received: Minutes of the Committee Meeting on 9 Oct 2000)

This was the first year that a committee had been involved in the organisation of the meeting and this has inevitably led to a little confusion in some areas, for which the Chair apologised. However it was hoped that the hosts (Aylsa and Jayne) had not found this too traumatic! The background to the reasons for the programme and the selection and invitation of speakers was given and it was noted that the original plans had been somewhat thwarted due to circumstances beyond our control.

Secretary's Report

(Received: Minutes of the Committee Meeting on 9 Oct 2000)

Members were invited to take UBMA "fliers" to promote the Association where possible. An A0 poster had been produced for, and displayed at, the Manchester HE Technical Managers Meeting and headed notepaper is now available. Letters had been written to retiring members and one had been received from Tony Medlen thanking members for their support and enclosing a donation.

Membership Secretary's Report

Current membership lists had previously been circulated in Excel format. It was noted that membership presently stood at 66 (55 last year) and that 45 HE institutions were represented.

Treasurer's Report

(Received: Financial Report for the Year ending 31/12/2000)

It was reported that there was a healthy closing balance at year-end and that this had continued to date. A grant of £500 had been made to Keele to underwrite any expenditure incurred during organisation of the conference. There are a small number of outstanding invoices to members which require sensitive handling.

There was then a debate on the issue of fees. Some HEI's expressly forbid the payment of professional association membership fees for staff.

Agreed:

Contact should not be lost with members who had not paid their fees

To maintain the current membership fee at £20

To appoint auditors from the membership; Alison Bate and Jayne Bromley were duly appointed

The chairman thanked the committee for their efforts.

Election of Office Bearers

Agreed: That it was inappropriate to elect the President and that he should be the President for life. That being the case, he took the chair for the election of the next Chairman.

Chairman:

Robert Campbell, proposed John Kent, seconded John Dwyer.

Secretary:

John Robinson, proposed Alan Willcocks, seconded Jayne Bromley

Noted: That the secretary wished to stand down

Treasurer:

Mark Cosgrove, proposed Paul Phillips, seconded Peter Whelpdale

Membership Secretary:

John Kent, proposed Bill Macdonald, seconded John Cull

Members:

Alan Willcocks, proposed Aylsa Hume, seconded Bill McDonald

Anne MacMahon, proposed Paul Phillips, seconded Fiona Bowers

Date and Venue for UBMA 2002

Cardiff unfortunately had to withdraw and therefore another venue would need to be found. The secretary had been in contact with Peter Loxley who confirmed that Sheffield Hallam would still be available for 2003.

AOB

This was held over to the following day.

Presentations

Mr Paul Tomany (Manchester NWUPC) gave a well-balanced view of drawbacks and benefits on e-procurement in the HE sector with up to date information on how this was developing (Copy of presentation available from Angela.Wilson@man.ac.uk)

Mr Ron McGeehan spoke on the Research Equipment Affinity Group (REAG) and forthcoming changes in auditing and purchasing protocols from the Research Councils. He also gave details of Procurement NVQs available at Manchester.

Richard Goulden and Mike Tunney presented Hyperdata 2001 which has additional facilities for handling foreign payments and additional reconciliation potential.

Mr George Orr, MSF Secretary for the HE Sector spoke on current developments with respect to the Bett Report and negotiations with UCEA. Although progress had been very slow it was hoped that a meeting scheduled for Friday 6 April would resolve several issues in the negotiation of a single pay scale with dual evaluation schemes for academic and support staff.

Mr Bob Hardwick, Assistant Director of HESDA outlined their role in staff development and training, in particular their focus on Investors in People (IIP), Occupational Standards, Vocational Qualifications, Skills Development and courses for laboratory managers. His view of Dearing was that of a visionary document, built upon by the Bett Report which then progressed to identifying operational details. Of

these, three major areas for consideration were liP, review and publication of policies and review of management. Of special relevance is the Union Learning Fund (ULF) which has now developed to some 30 courses for technical staff available in the northwest, north east and midlands. It is hoped to bid for a Scottish ULF. Key issues are still the lack of trainees, recruitment and retention, skill updating, ageing workforce and little or no succession planning.

The presentations were followed by a lively discussion session with the speakers covering such issues as short-term contracts and appraisal systems.

Wednesday 3 April 2001

Presentation

Prof Chris Arme: "How a tapeworm controls fish reproduction". An insight into a passionate interest in a complex system of parasite regulation of the host at several levels, from behavioural ecology to possible peptide hormonal control.

Discussion session. Delegates' questionnaires were circulated following collection and analysis the previous day. Agreed: to circulate to all members electronically.

Breakout Groups. To implement this would need a list of interests circulating before the next conference. Noted that interested parties would need to take ownership of this.

Agreed: to build in to next meeting.

Keep the focus biological. – suggestion that there be at least 2 scientific biological presentations. Noted: request was not supported by results of the questionnaire. Agreed: that there should be at least one session an others would be at the discretion of the host.

Venue for 2002. Following the cancellation of Cardiff a number of other possibilities would be explored. Individuals concerned should respond to the Chairman ASAP and the Committee should make the final decision.

Timing (dates) of meetings. It was suggested that other venues might be available if the conference were to be held at a different time of year. A vote of delegates present resulted in 14 votes for April and 15 votes for September. Agreed: to consult electronically with all members, also requesting reasons for non-attendance.

Regional Groups. Possible benefits were seen as an increase in membership from institutions not currently represented plus increased networking and local practical training. Noted: that existence of regional groups would be entirely dependent on individuals actively promoting a group.

Agreed: that in principle regional groups should be encouraged.

Future meeting content. Noted: need to consult membership and solicit views. Agreed: responsibility should lie with the committee to actively consult.

Netiquette.

Agreed that individuals responding to email list requests should give more consideration as to where to target replies. Some responses that were seen as personal had been inappropriately posted to the list. More care required.

HUBS. Noted:

1) that the Institute of Biology had produced a report on the strengths of various groups and had expressed a wish for a single "federation" of biology to encompass several subject areas, e.g. physiology, biochemistry, microbiology.

2) that there is a distinct difference between professional bodies and learned societies.

3) there is a need to seek further views.

4) there had been a lack of active UBMA input to HUBS.

Agreed: that we should invite a HUBS representative to our next meeting and respond to feedback from David Smart from HUBS 2001 (to be held after the UBMA meeting).

The meeting closed at 12.15 p.m. in order to accommodate various travel arrangements. Ann McMahon paid eloquent tribute to Aylsa Hume and Jayne Bromley and thanked them on behalf of all the delegates for their efforts in hosting, organising and arranging such an excellent and successful conference.