



UBMA 2002 Conference Minutes

Lancaster University, Conference Centre

Tuesday 26th March 2002

The meeting began with a warm welcome from Prof T J McMillan, Dean of the Faculty and Institute of Environmental and Natural Sciences at Lancaster who briefly outlined the history: Lancaster is a '60's red brick university which has grown from 3000 students in the '60's to over 10,000 today. The Faculty comprises about 26% of the University and current issues are space and funding although a new building for NERC will be located at Grange over Sands.

AGM and Association Business

The Chairman welcomed members (old and new) and guests, especially Roger Dainty from NABBS

Apologies

Apologies were received from Basil Boam (who was unwell and to whom our best wishes were sent), Fiona Bowers, Peter Crosby, Phil Dearn (retired), Michelle Finnegan, Eric McEvoy, Roger Haslam, Peter Loxley, Linda Parkin, Carol Scott, Marian Simmonds, David Smart, and Helen Williams

Minutes of the previous meeting

Proposed, seconded and approved

Matters Arising

Noted: That it was agreed that Basil Boam should be president for life, but this would require a change in the wording of the Constitution

The Meeting for 2003 could not now proceed at Sheffield Hallam

The minutes of the Committee meeting held at Keele in September 01 were approved

Chairman's Report

The Chairman stated that the main aims of the association are to satisfy the wishes of the membership and to increase our profile; members were encouraged to promote the association wherever possible. He thanked John Dwyer for his excellent efforts in organising this year's conference. It was noted that 24 universities were represented by attending members.

Membership Secretary's Report

It was noted that membership currently stood at 70, an increase over last year. Membership lists were available to all members.

Treasurer's Report

The finances were tabled and accepted. Alison Bate and Jayne Bromley agreed to act as auditors again.

Election of Committee Members

John Dwyer took the chair for this part of the meeting. John Robinson expressed his intention to stand down as Secretary.

Chairman - Robert Campbell proposed by John Kent and seconded by Alan Wilcocks. Agreed.

Secretary - there were no nominations. Deferred.

Membership Secretary - John Kent proposed by Mark Cosgrove and seconded by John Dwyer. Agreed.

Treasurer - Mark Cosgrove proposed by Terry Lymn and seconded by Alison Bate. Agreed.

Ex officio members - Anne MacMahon proposed by Terry Lymn and seconded by John Cull. Alan Wilcox proposed by John Dwyer and seconded by Peter Whelpdale. Both agreed.

2003 AGM: Noted that it would not be at Sheffield Hallam, Easter will be early and that the AGM should be arranged for the Wednesday morning to allow time for appropriate "hustings" to facilitate election of the committee.

2004 AGM: To be held at the university of Bath 24-26 March. NB this is Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, a change from the usual days of the week.

The AGM closed at 10.15 am.

Discussion sessions

Breakout Groups

The following sessions were to be held in the afternoon with the facilitators who would report back to the membership. Members were invited to sign up for the session that was of most interest to them during the lunch break.

1. Managing Sick Leave - Terry Lymn
2. Appraisal Review - Alan Wilcox
3. Role of the Superintendent - John Kent
4. Managing Teaching labs through change - Derek Sellar
5. Risk Assessment for new and expectant mothers - Mary Pryce
6. Procurement Issues - Colin Chinnery

E-commerce update

Alan Wilcocks reported that following the presentation at Keele he had had a demonstration from Science Warehouse. He thought it impressive but was concerned that only about 30 companies had "signed up" and none of these were large.

Development continues with a working group. It was also reported that Leicester (Terry Lymn) who are currently using SAP estimate the cost of integration to be in the region of £1million. It was felt that the best strategy at present is to watch and wait! Kings (Mike Gover) reported that they are piloting a system with Hyperdata

and Science Warehouse and that good relationships were developing. Other members expressed concern at the level of effort required to make any realistic assessment of the system.

Presentations:

Dr Keith James. An interesting insight into the hazards of pet ownership! Of some 374 known pathogens all but 40 are to be found in animals; a functional reservoir for development and genetic exchange. Various mechanisms of transmission were examined along with some of the more common or well-known pathogens.

Declan Leyden, UCEA. An outline of the history and function of UCEA was given, in short, since its establishment in 1994 it has been the sector's focus for collective bargaining, senior salaries, conciliation and advice, research into employment related issues and data collection and analysis. It also gives seminars on related topics. All HEIs except one are subscribing members and it is run via a board representing UUK, SCOP etc

It aims to address:

- Recruitment and retention
- Equal pay for work of equal value
- Recognition of diversity and a vision for the future

The above is in line with HEFCE Circular 01/16 to target funding for:

- Recruitment and retention
- Development and training
- Regular reviews
- Annual performance reviews with related pay
- Action to tackle poor performance
- The above to cover all staff categories

There was a sea change from 25 June 01 with JNCHES replacing nine negotiating bodies and an agreed single pay spine and review date for all staff from 1 Aug 2002.

There are currently four groups, one working on each of:

- Equal pay and Role Analysis
- Pay spines and Grading
- Modernisation
- Post '92 lecturer's contracts

An agreement was made on 19 March 02 for, in principle, a single pay spine and related assimilation procedures with all groups except the AUT.

Sian Thomas (Grants Manager, Wellcome Trust). The Wellcome mission was defined as ".to foster and promote research with the aim of improving human and animal health" but it was noted that there is no commitment to teaching (which in some cases may cause conflict!).

Funding is generally available for:

- Research programmes
- Programme grants; Project Grants; Equipment

Personal Support
Centre Support

It was emphasised that Wellcome do provide technical support. In addition it is currently making grants for Career Development in terms of PhD Studentships, Advanced Training Fellowships and a range of other awards e.g. Research Technologists, Analysts, Overseas Fellowships and Research Leave Awards. These have "attributable costs facilities"

Grants are all awarded by External Reviewers and Panels. It is up to Universities to create a demand for Career Technologists

Wellcome are always interested in "novel ways to fund quality research" and enquiries for advice are always Welcome!

Brian Furman UKLSC. UK Life Sciences Committee was set up about 5 years ago by 5 founder member learned societies and currently has 17 member societies representing some 35,000 scientists, however there are some hundred or so learned societies which could join; there's a long way to go. Each society retains its own independence. The organisation came about due the frustration some scientists were experiencing in trying to deal with the government and the aim was to set up a recognised formal route of communication by which government officials could seek advice on various areas of policies.

It is currently involved in both proactive and responsive activities in areas such as science policy (9 issues last year), animal science and welfare, post graduate training, student stipends and 4-year PhD's. Internal communication is electronic with monthly reports on policy being communicated to Heads of Departments.

There are sub-groups such as Animal Science and Education. The committee is funded by subscription from member societies and is deliberating whether to form a federation rather than the existing committee structure, but there is a long way to go.

Hugh Pennington. A most interesting insight into outbreaks of various diseases ranging from Typhoid to Foot and Mouth, Anthrax, E coli 157 and BSE highlighted the fact that most of these were results of some sort of breakdown of inspection regimes and systems, which is often the case in accidental fatalities, c.f. Piper Alpha explosion where breakdown of monthly inspection of high pressure lines caused multiple fatalities.

Wednesday 27 March 2002

The day began with the nomination of Anne MacMahon for the position of secretary. Proposed by Robert Campbell and seconded by Terry Lymn. John Dwyer was nominated by John Robinson as ex officio committee member and this was seconded by Dave Diggins and Aylsa Hume.

Mike Gover from Kings had made contact with Marian Simmons and she had given him her contact details should any UBMA member wish to get in touch.

Breakout session reports

Sickness management. It was noted that in most cases this was locally managed (i.e. devolved down to first line supervisors) and that no software had been identified as being entirely satisfactory. It was also noted that no systems appeared to be functional for academic staff.

Appraisal. Virtually all had appraisal systems running and there were reports of up to 80% take-up for those who had voluntary systems operating, indicating that appraisal was seen as positive by a large majority of appraisees and appraisers. There was some concern expressed over implementation of performance related pay.

Procurement. There is a background of increased focus on purchasing practice from the Research Councils and this needs to be balanced against the wishes of the researcher, finance rules and regulations in independent institutions and audit requirements. Discussion identified a wide variety of practices, product loyalty and consistency. Most delegates reported good assistance from central purchasing offices where they existed. It was acknowledged that there is still room for improvement in terms of applying best practice, especially in the areas of early involvement and allocation of time. Whole Life Costing for the purchase of major pieces of equipment was being introduced in some HEIs.

Teaching Lab Management. The focus was on Glasgow Life Sciences which has some 4,800 medical and science students. Of note was that teaching still required dedicated labs and equipment and that research deployment during vacations had not been reported as successful by any contributors. There is more focus on the employment of lab assistants to cope with the huge amounts of preparation, lifting and shifting and that this category of staff required rather more management and supervision than other grades of technical staff. Soft money obtained for student demonstrators had been a useful factor in recent years.

The role of the superintendent. What's in a name? There was some difficulty over definitions but in essence the role was seen as a "bioscience sector resource manager". It was felt that a science background was an essential attribute since it enables a broader understanding of the practical issues associated with the subject area and a working knowledge of safety and other legislation. Also essential is the ability to multi-task, perhaps more in this role than any other.

David Allsop. Misfolded amyloid proteins and neurodegenerative disease. These are present throughout the body but seem to cause the most problems in the brain where they are associated with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. They are formed from about 20 proteins, all look very similar and are fibrillar (8-10m in diameter) and resistant to proteolysis, thus causing tissue damage in a range of diseases such as Huntington's and Down's. ESR spectra show these to be generators of free radicals, OH and H₂O₂., the latter being the most toxic.

Meeting Business.

NABBS. Roger Dainty was welcomed and he expressed his thanks for an enjoyable conference. He proposed that there be continuing collaboration between the two organisations and suggested a fixed agenda for discussion sessions at each meeting

in the future. He also saw joint meetings as beneficial to both organisations as there are many topics of interest to both. He also reported that NABBS have "associate members" from Industry who bring a valuable external perspective.

Survey. John Kent reported on the survey that some issues are unclear and further feedback will be required. He proposed to implement a web form for this.

UCEA. There was also a proposal to invite Declan Leyden for a workshop session on UCEA at future meetings.

HUBS representation. Robert Campbell reported that the committee had received a letter from David Smart indicating that he is willing to stand down as our HUBS representative. However, he is equally willing to carry on if nobody else is willing to take on the role. It was agreed that David would not be contacted until a clear decision had been made and this was left in the hands of the committee. Jackie Kowalski agreed to circulate UBMA literature at the forthcoming HUBS conference.

Use of UBMA Funds.

Proposed:

Travel Fellowships for members for personal development (one page report would be required)

Develop the web site and contract out to private web server

Funding for members to attend who could not obtain support from their employer

Insurance for future meetings

UKLSC subscription

Future meetings - Bath was confirmed as the venue for 2004.

Alan Willcocks proposed a vote of thanks to John Robinson as the outgoing secretary, Anne MacMahon as the "secretary elect" and John Dwyer for organising an excellent conference.