



UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY PROFESSORiate

Open Letter to the Chancellor

Belinda Hutchinson AM

7 May 2020

Dear Chancellor,

We are writing as senior members of the University of Sydney with regard to the recently advertised search for a new Vice Chancellor. We recognize that universities throughout Australia have not been well supported by government over the past decade and that COVID-19 has increased the challenges for any new incumbent in this position. Nevertheless, this is a critical moment for the University and as leaders responsible for academic development across a broad range of disciplines, we thought it important to bring a number of key concerns to your attention:

- We feel strongly that the new Vice Chancellor should be a peer of outstanding scholarship and integrity. A major University cannot be run in the same way as a public company without risking damage to its scholarly identity.
- Students and their teachers form the core of every university, and a Vice Chancellor, along with senior management, needs to support their mission. This should involve collaboration between a Vice Chancellor, professors and other academic staff at every level of governance. Unrelenting emphasis on change management can often detract from the achievement of excellence in teaching and research.
- As Stefan Collini notes in his book *Speaking of Universities* (2017): “The abolition of departments, or their supersession by larger units or by interdisciplinary centres and programmes, which is so fashionable in Britain and Australasia, essentially weakens academic autonomy and empowers managers.” The University of Sydney has a long and distinguished history of academic achievement in research and teaching that stretches back 170 years, and any incoming Vice Chancellor should respect those traditions and seek to build on them.
- In recent times, marketing has become such a dominant force that even the University’s founding motto was removed from its crest and slogans appeared on buildings around campus that, in the eyes of many students and alumni as well as staff, seemed to undermine the University’s standing rather than enhance it. Though this strategy fits with a “modernization” agenda, there is evidence that it may risk becoming counterproductive if pursued further. Indeed, many students and potential sponsors (or donors) are drawn to the University precisely because of its rich heritage.
- Given that the object of the University of Sydney as prescribed in the Act is the promotion of scholarship, research, free inquiry, the interaction of research and teaching, and academic excellence, we urge the appointment of a Vice Chancellor who would consider all these objectives to be equally important.

Yours sincerely (pto)

Signatories

1	Manuel B.	Graeber	49	Alex	Chaves
2	Chris	Murphy	50	Min	Chen
3	Madeleine	Beekman	51	Peter	Cistulli
4	Bronwyn	Winter	52	John	Clark
5	Iver	Cairns	53	Annie	Clarke
6	Tailoi	Chan-Ling	54	Christine	Clarke
7	Richard	Christopherson AM	55	Lindy	Clemson
8	Les	Copeland AM	56	Linda	Connor
9	Rifaat	Ebied	57	Hans	Coster
10	Maria	Fiatarone Singh	58	Gillian	Cowlshaw
11	Ofer	Gal	59	Mary	Crock
12	Paul	Giles	60	Robert	Cumming AO
13	John	Hearn	61	Ian	Curthoys
14	Ivan	Kennedy AM	62	Carole	Cusack
15	Dianna T.	Kenny	63	Roger	Dampney
16	Rebecca	Mason	64	M. Ali	Darendeliler
17	Suzanne D.	Rutland OAM	65	Glen M.	Davis OAM
18	David	Alais	66	Joseph	Davis
19	Richard	Allen	67	Anna	DeFazio
20	Tim	Allender	68	Christopher	Dickman
21	Edward	Anderson	69	Cris	dos Remedios
22	Sally	Andrews	70	Tim	Driscoll
23	Steven	Armfield	71	Holger	Dullin
24	Derrick	Armstrong	72	Stewart	Dunn
25	Mark	Arnold	73	Itai	Einav
26	Tony	Aspromourgos	74	Alexander	Engel
27	Diane	Austin-Broos	75	Alan	Fekete
28	Richard	Banati	76	David	Fletcher
29	Lesley	Barclay AO	77	Jennifer	Gamble
30	Alexandra	Barratt	78	Iain	Gardner
31	Vivienne	Bath	79	Stephen	Gaukroger
32	Eugenio	Benitez	80	Penny	Gay
33	Geoffrey	Berry	81	Val	Gebski
34	Alison	Betts	82	Jacob	George
35	Marcela	Bilek	83	Peter	Gerangelos
36	Ben	Boer	84	Graeme	Gill
37	Anne	Boyd AM	85	Karen	Ginn
38	David	Braddon-Mitchell	86	Georg	Gottwald
39	Janette (Jennie)	Brand-Miller	87	Kerry	Goulston
40	Alex	Broom	88	J Richard	Green AM
41	Bradford	Buckley	89	Paul	Griffiths
42	Maria	Byrne	90	Ronald	Grunstein
43	Iain	Campbell	91	Joachim	Gudmundsson
44	Dee	Carter	92	David	Guest AM
45	Judy	Cashmore AO	93	Mitchell	Guss
46	Ian D.	Caterson AM	94	Gregory	Hancock
47	Danille	Celermajer	95	Justin	Harris
48	Pierre	Chapuis	96	David	Harris

97	Susan	Hayes	148	Corinne	Mulley
98	Dieter	Hochuli	149	Dominic	Murphy
99	Michael	Humphrey	150	Greg	Murray
100	Nicholas	Hunt	151	Michael	Murray
101	Harry	Iland	152	Kazuaki	Negishi
102	Christine	Jenkins	153	Luke	Nottage
103	Meredith	Jordan	154	Ben	Oldroyd
104	Douglas Edgar	Joshua	155	Robert	Ouvrier
105	Warren	Julian	156	Trevor	Parmenter
106	Vrasidas	Karalis	157	Asad	Patanwala
107	Judy	Kay	158	Laurentiu	Paunescu
108	John	Keane	159	Leo	Radom
109	Onur	Kesten	160	Stuart	Rees
110	Suk-Joong	Kim	161	Peter	Reeves
111	David	Kinley	162	John	Robinson
112	Iven	Klineberg AM RFD	163	Basil	Roufogalis
113	Ines	Krass	164	Janice	Russell
114	Mark	Krockenberger	165	Margaret	Sankey
115	Philip	Kuchel	166	Frank	Seebacher
116	Tim	Langrish	167	Markus	Seibel
117	Russell	Lansbury	168	Louise	Sharpe
118	Anthony	Larkum	169	Ainslie Glenister	Ross Sheil
119	Stephen	Leeder	170	Luming	Shen
120	Chengwang	Lei	171	Roberta B.	Shepherd
121	Miles	Little	172	Stephanie	Short
122	Nathan	Lo	173	David	Sillence AM
123	Frank	Lovicu	174	Michael	Skilton
124	Rosemary	Lyster	175	Jan	Slapeta
125	Jacqueline	Manuel	176	Vanessa	Smith
126	Lyn	March	177	Nicholas	Smith
127	James	Martin	178	Richard	Smith
128	Assaad	Masri	179	Chris L.	Smith
129	Andrew	Mathas	180	Frank	Stilwell
130	Laurence	Mather	181	Armando	Teixeira-Pinto
131	Clare	McArthur	182	Mike	Thompson
132	Iain	McCalman	183	Stephan	Tillmann
133	Geoff	McCaughan	184	Ronald	Trent
134	Michael	McDonnell	185	Jill	Trewhella
135	Paul	McGreevy	186	Garry	Trompf
136	David	McKenzie	187	John	Turtle AO
137	Donald	Melrose	188	Peter	Tuthill
138	Scott W	Menzies	189	Tim	Usherwood
139	Wieland	Meyer	190	Mathew	Vadas
140	Margaret	Miller	191	Nico	van Zandwijk
141	John	Mitrofanis	192	Claire	Wade
142	Gary	Moore	193	Merrilyn	Walton
143	Christopher	Moran	194	Qiyang	Wang
144	Peter	Morgan	195	Michael	Ward
145	Brian	Morris	196	Elizabeth	Webby
146	Soumyendra Nath	Mukherjee	197	Bill	Webster
147	Dietmar	Muller	198	Martin	Wechselberger

199	Anthony	Welch
200	Michael	Wheatland
201	James	Wiley
202	Peter	Windsor
203	Ruth	Zadoks
204	Ruibin	Zhang

Comment on related news item in Campus Morning Mail

The Campus Morning Mail newsletter distributed Monday 18 May reported a letter sent to the Chancellor by the University of Sydney Association of Professors (USAP) on behalf of the Professoriate. We are concerned that the report reinterprets our suggestion that interdisciplinary institutes can “weaken academic autonomy and empower managers” to “a defence of discipline-based departments against supersession by interdisciplinary centres and programs”. We agree that academic autonomy has been weakened and that managers have been empowered, but do not blame this on the multidisciplinary initiatives (MDIs) per se.

We strongly support the initiative to establish MDIs as a way of promoting innovative and dynamic research teams, and have all experienced the benefits of a number of MDIs including the Sydney Institute of Agriculture, the Sydney South East Asia Centre, the Marie Bashir Institute, the Sydney Policy Lab and Sydney Vietnam Centre. What has not always been well explained by our managers is the relationship between the structures and our disciplines and departments, and how the synergy stands to benefit teaching and research in the university. The University of Sydney has a long and distinguished history of academic achievement in discipline-based research and teaching that stretches back 170 years, without which true interdisciplinarity cannot effectively exist. These different structures should thus not be placed in competition with each other or with the disciplines.

Our concern is rather the need to defend the rigour of our disciplinary base against populist arguments for “job ready” graduates. As Professors we have experienced strong employment demand for our graduates, but our primary role is to train minds, not on-the-job training.

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Ruth Zadoks
Suzanne Rutland, OAM
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